Translation studies:
Translator training vs employers' expectations

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Abstract
Currently various industries using translation services stress the necessity of analytical, critical and practical knowledge of 2 foreign languages, substantial skills of translation technologies, as well as transferable skills for professional translator performance. A changing translator profile causes a shift in translation study programmes towards the development of transferable skills along with translation-related skills. Therefore, the paper focuses on employers' expectations in relation to the abilities and skills of professionally trained translators. The outcomes of this study reflect the overall situation in the country, still undergoing significant changes in the translation-related industry from the perspective of employers who agree that together with translation-related skills graduates of translation programmes should possess a range of transferable skills, which empower them to act professionally in a changing environment.
Keywords: translation studies; expectations of employers; translator training; translator competences; European standard; international directives

Introduction
Recently, translation studies have developed both in depth and detail and have shifted from the structuralist approach towards sociocultural and political unity in translation. These trends have stimulated new ways of thinking and openness of the field to difference and diversity (Zhu, 2012). The field has, in a nutshell, become increasingly multidisciplinary. Employers note that the practice of professional translating encompasses various forms of communication as well as activities such as technical writing, language editing, localisation, specialist knowledge, etc. (Tennent, 2005). A translator specialising in one or two fields is no longer an attribute, but rather a necessity. Furthermore, some translation theorists already argue that the new model in training should focus on a broad variety of skills allowing graduates to be flexible in choosing their career (Pym, 1998).
Relatively few research studies have been concerned with the correspondence between translator training programmes and market/employer/stakeholder

demands and not so many have been interested in what competences and skills are actually required from translators in their real-world professional environment (Aula Int, 2005; Dongping & Jianhui, 2009; Lei & Dongmin, 2012; Li, 2000; Mackenzie, 2000; Sales & Pinto, 2011). To the best of our knowledge, no such studies have been conducted in Lithuania so far.

Therefore, the current paper focuses on the expectations of employers in terms of the abilities and skills necessary for the high-quality performance of professionally trained translators. The study seeks to reflect the overall situation in a country still undergoing significant changes in the translation-related industry.

Overview of translator training at university level in Lithuania and neighbouring countries

Translation studies in Lithuanian institutions of higher education are relatively new; in fact it is a relatively young field in tertiary education which has only been around for some 15 years. Therefore, the majority of translators on the market are self-trained. In contrast, the situation in Europe is quite different. First and second-cycle study programmes in translation are abundant in other European countries; however, they are not equally geographically distributed. For this reason, as noted by Pym (2012), there is an undersupply of trained translators in Central and Eastern European countries. In the Baltic States, a translator's qualification is awarded at both bachelor and master's level. In Lithuania, for example, three university-level institutions award the degree of translation to their graduates; in addition, a number of colleges offer to study translation and obtain the professional qualification of a translator. Translators are trained at Kaunas University of Technology (BA and MA), Vilnius University (BA and MA) and Mykolas Romeris University (BA)[1]. The programmes at Vilnius University focus on all types of texts, genres and registers, and students can specialise in translation or interpreting. The bachelor's programme at Mykolas Romeris University equally concentrates on both translation and editing. However, the programmes at Kaunas University of Technology are different from those implemented at Vilnius University and Mykolas Romeris University. They are unique due to the interdisciplinary nature of the study programmes with special focus on technologies. Not only do students get comprehensive preparation in translation theories, methodologies, technologies, terminology and linguistics, but they are also well taught in the localization of software, websites and media. In the master's programme, translation and localization are given similar attention. Furthermore, students get a deep understanding of the translation processes related to specialised and technical language and texts, which account for a large part of the market.

In other Baltic States, translation is also offered at both levels. In Latvia, the second-cycle study programme of Technical Translation has been implemented at Riga Technical University, preparing technical translators to work as personal assistants and researchers in various fields of engineering sciences. A Professional Master's Degree in Technical Translation and the Qualification of a Technical Translator – Desk Officer are awarded[2]. Ventspils University College offers a 1.5-year programme offering a master's degree in legal text translation and the translator's qualification. The programme, admitted to the European master's in translation network in 2011, prepares high-level specialists in the translation of legal texts[3]. In addition, a bachelor study programme in English-Latvian-Russian translation is offered. At the University of Tartu, Estonia, the study programme Translation and Interpreting Studies has been implemented at the master's level. Students have the possibility to specialise either in translation or interpreting, and the degree of Master of Arts in Humanities is awarded[4]. The master's programme in translation has also been implemented at Tallinn University, where students may choose between different specialisations of texts: economic, legal, technical and artistic translations [5].

The master's degree programmes in Latvia and Estonia are similar to the programme implemented at Kaunas University of Technology in terms of translation orientation towards specialised texts. The Programme implemented at Kaunas University of Technology demonstrates its uniqueness through the focus on localization, predetermined by the contemporary translation industry needs.

Graduates of translation programmes are able to pursue careers not only as freelance translators/localizers or translators and language editors in companies, but also as translators in European Union institutions; they also establish their own private translation agencies or work as translators/localizers or translation project managers in various companies, including foreign capital-based ones. It should also be noted that the majority of translators employed by various translation agencies are self-trained.

Since nowadays universities become more flexible and ready to adapt to changing employment trends, they foster the improvement of study programmes in compliance with market demands.

Quality assurance in translation study programmes in accordance with international directives

Translator education often focuses on specialising graduates towards different thematic fields or domains. A number of study programmes have been and still are training translators in a limited range of domains such as legal, medical, technical, economic, artistic, media fields, etc. However, many translation theorists (Fawcett, 1987; Coulthard & Odber de Baubeta, 1996; Gouadec, 2007; Meersseman, 2004)

have acknowledged that translator education should provide graduate translators with a set of "transferable skills that will place them in a position to deal confidently with any text, on any subject, within any situation at any time" (Tennent, 2005, p. 24) rather than shape a finished product in a specialised field.

One of the main priorities in the preparation of translators is the conformity of their knowledge and competences of translation to the relevant needs of national and international labour markets, focused on official documents defining quality standards in translation services: European Quality Standard for Translation Services EN-15038 (2006); European Reference Framework for a Master's in Translation (2009); and Translation Services – Requirements for Translation Services ISO 17100 (2015). These documents define in essence the competences required in today's labour markets. Five different competences are defined as essential in relation to translators, which are listed as follows:

- translating competence, i.e. the ability to translate texts and to assess the problems of text comprehension and production;
- linguistic and textual competence, i.e. the ability to understand the source language and having an excellent knowledge of the target language in the context of a wide range of texts, including specialised genres;
- research competence, i.e. the ability of information mining and efficient application of information sources;
- cultural competence, i.e. the ability to apply source and target language- and culture-related information, e.g. behavioural standards and value systems;
- technical competence, i.e. the skills to operate technical resources.

Therefore, higher education institutions implementing translation studies and granting degrees in translation are aimed at the level of studies providing the competences mentioned above.

Translating competence is usually acquired through different courses focusing on translation of various text types and genres in different language combinations. Knowledge and skills of translation may also be broadened through localisation projects, i.e. localisation of commercial, open source software, applications, websites and games in terms of linguistic content, its relation to graphics, symbols/icons and text that is available to software users by means of user interface. Since the translator profession requires multidisciplinary knowledge, students analyse texts in different registers, genres and types, including texts of technical sciences (physics, chemistry, civil, electric and mechanical engineering, etc.). Furthermore, institutional, legal, economic and business texts are given equal significance. The peculiarities of summary translation and abstract translation might be mastered. Students may acquire knowledge and understanding of concepts, types, technological and linguistic characteristics in relation to

translation; they develop abilities to analyse and critically evaluate translations in the context of general translation theories; they solve various problems arising when translating and make informed choices of appropriate translation strategies and methods.

Linguistic and textual competence may be acquired through tasks where specific translation-related problems of language are analysed: lexical, grammatical, stylistic, text structure and coherence. Special attention is devoted to accuracy, clarity and stylistic adequacy of a specific technical text in translation and to the observance of linguistic norms. Terminology modules may focus on both theoretical and practical aspects of terminology work. A lot of attention is devoted to terminology-related software freely available and widely used on the market. As mentioned, the European standard EN 15038 and the international standard ISO 17100 emphasise the linguistic and textual competence in the source language and the target language. Therefore, the focus should not be on grammar, stylistics, semantics or pragmatics separately; instead, there is emphasis on a text as the whole, and the nature, theory and representation of the meaning are discussed as it applies to technical texts within the frame of text linguistics. Students should consider the relationships between grammar, lexis, context and meaning and how it functions in the translation practice. Study modules may be aimed at familiarising students with the major concepts and analytical tools of text linguistics and pragmatics they require for research in these areas and the ability to apply the theories in translational and interpreting practice. In such study modules, students learn to analyse a variety of texts in a foreign language; they apply linguistic methods of transformation and componential text analysis, use lexicography and terminology resources, and identify lexical and grammatical features of texts in corresponding languages, translation patterns and possibilities. In addition, students usually learn to apply principles of adaptation and grammaticalisation of proper nouns, understand the relevance of a text type, its sociocultural and pragmatic aspects. The required linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences of foreign languages are developed. Students use various translation strategies, perceive relevant translation problems and are capable of solving them; they are able to use the procedures for conveying grammatical meaning and re-creating structures in the target language text. Students learn to analyse and solve issues of text cohesion, coherence, expression of modalities, etc. The linguistic and textual competence is of vital importance in translator's performance because of increasing multiculturalism.

Research competence is ideally related to an overview of methods of research work that can be applied in the field of translation, localisation and linguistic studies. Students discuss the originality of various translation-related research topics. In acquiring the research competence, students gain knowledge of major

sources of research, as well as the tenets/principles of information retrieval and processing. The skills of planning and organising the process of research are also acquired. Students may further develop research competences by focusing on problems of the most complicated chosen research topics, analysing possible solutions and looking for appropriate methods to solve those problems, both theoretically and practically.

Cultural competence. Throughout many decades, culture has been considered as one of the components of translation (Hansen, 1997). Therefore, cultural competence is acquired in practically every module in translation study programmes. The cultural competence may also be acquired through various modules where students analyse the quality, importance and problems of linguistic localisation, get to know the relations between target language and source language, and understand the importance of correct usage of the native and foreign languages. Students also get an insight into the current situation of localisation on the market. As noted by Ramière (2006), translation involves cultural embedding of the whole text grounded on specific cultural referents. Therefore, students become familiar with the principles of conveying names of culture-specific items and are able to apply these principles in the process of translation. Since translation and culture are interdependent, cultural competence is acquired in a variety of modules in order to improve graduates' knowledge about different cultures.

Technical competence. Technical competence involves knowledge of both information and communication technologies (ICTs) and specific translation tools, software and functions, i.e. computer-aided translation (CAT) tools. As Thelen (2011) argues, professional translation requires the usage of technical resources, which means that "they cannot be left out from the curriculum" (p.169). Therefore, technical competence may be acquired not only in modules devoted to information and cloud-based technologies alone or in those that are particularly meant for translation memories, like Trados, MemoQ, OmegaT, etc. and other CAT tools, such as spell checkers and grammar checkers, terminology management software, etc., but also in modules that focus on translation practice, which may offer place and time for development of skills in many technical resources. More specifically, general university education modules on ICTs students usually acquire skills of computers as professional tools and may learn how to communicate and collaborate in cyberspace. In relation to their speciality, they acquire skills of complex document creation, management principles and tools and are able to develop professionally designed documents. However, in translation practice modules, they develop skills of using specific internet resources, online encyclopaedias, dictionaries and databases that can be consulted for translation purposes. In addition, ideally translation tasks are performed using CAT tools and

translation memory technologies, also offering space for mastery of skills in the establishment of individual databases, term banks and networks. Free machine translation systems may be incorporated into the process of translation since, although they are relatively new and largely unreliable resources, they might sooner or later find their more substantial way into the contemporary translation industry. Some theorists argue that machine translation and, consequently, post-editing should be included into translator training curricula (De Almeida & O'Brien, 2010). In translation practice modules, students may learn to take advantage of parallel corpora and use individual databases in the translation process, apply open source software used in localisation.

Knowledge of one or more source/target languages and cultures, intercultural management, along with academic background are the main employment criteria for professional translators. Development of transferable skills together with additional competences such as localisation, multimedia and/or technical translation are usually essential for successful employment.

Results and discussion

According to a number of translator trainers, taking into consideration the demands of the market is a must in translator training (Aula Int, 2005; Biel, 2011). For this reason, real world criteria should be incorporated in translator training curriculum. Translation graduates should, as such, be ready to adapt to a changing professional environment. Employers expect graduates with a degree in translation to possess not only translation-related skills but also transferable skills, enabling them to be "abreast of changing requirements" of the market (Tennent, 2005, p. 24). Graduates should also be prepared for continuous development and improvement in their professional careers. Therefore, employers expect that translation programmes will also develop in compliance with unstable requirements of the professional environment.

For the purposes of this particular study, the request to fill in the anonymous questionnaire was sent by e-mail to a number of randomly selected translation agencies (large and medium-sized) and enterprises employing full-time translators. The translation agencies were included into the study because they are the major players in the translation industry in Lithuania. Enterprises employing full-time translators were randomly selected from list of top 100 Lithuanian companies. Because of their specific industries oriented to foreign markets, the enterprises tend to hire in-house translators. In total, the questionnaire was sent to 80 translation agencies and companies. The response rate was 46%; 37 correctly filled in questionnaires (19 by translation agencies and 18 by business sector enterprises) were returned, which shows that employers are concerned about the quality of translator training and understand the importance

of well-trained translators. The sample gathered is considered to be representative and sufficient since Lithuania is a small country and the translation industry is also relatively small, with the approximate number of translation agencies being 60 (according to the data from the annual report on the Lithuanian translation market at the Conference of the Association of Lithuanian Translation Companies). The questionnaire consisted of 3 blocks of questions. There were 2 blocks of statements related to important practical translation-related skills and translator's transferable skills (15 questions each). The respondents were asked to rate the given statements according to the Likert scale. The third block consisted of open-type questions on the criteria used by translation agencies and/or enterprises in employing freelance or in-house translators and on the skills that employed professional translators currently lack.

As the data of the study illustrated in Figure 1 show, employers agree that the abilities to translate into a foreign language and to the native language are equally significant in the work environment. The ability to translate specialised texts in a range of fields and specialised knowledge of other fields are also considered essential. Although the majority of the respondents indicate translation experience as a key attribute, there is a recent observation that novice trained translators are offered a job more often than self-trained translators with substantial experience. These results are in line with those obtained by Gouadec (2007) who claims that "[p]rior experience in translation is considered less important than domain-specific knowledge or proficiency in the use of specific technology" (p. 340).

It ought to be pointed out that the statement related to the awareness of professional ethics and translation standards was rated by 60% of the respondents as somewhat important, which may be considered unsubstantiated because currently a number of the largest translation agencies aim at implementing the ISO 17100 standard ensuring the highest standard of quality in their performance.

The obtained data demonstrate that a university-level degree in translation is valued more than a university-level degree in another field, which means that trained translators are considered to show more potential than specialists of other fields with good linguistic knowledge.

The ability to translate from more than one language is of special value in the professional environment. As argued by Robinson, Lopez Rodriguez and Tercedor Sanchez (2006), a wide range of linguistic combinations guarantee better employability and traditional obstacles of translation only to one, the native, language "have been trampled into the dust" (p. 115). However, in reality, it is very difficult to achieve and there are only few translators able to translate from more than one language equally well. It is worth mentioning that text-editing skills are becoming an attribute of trained translators, which is in line with theorists

claiming that translators nowadays perform a variety of tasks and are multifaceted.

Figure 1: Importance of translation-related skills from the employers' perspective
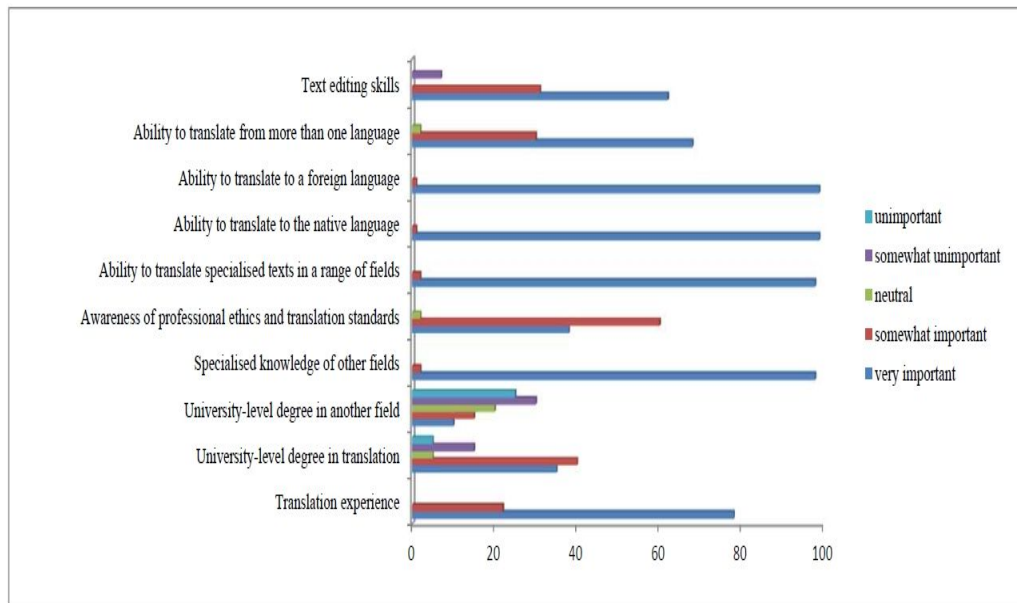

Translation programmes seek to correspond adequately to the needs of employers in respect to the development of graduates' transferable skills. Although these are difficult to achieve, as noted by Calvo (2011), the development of these skills should be a continuous process throughout university studies as well as professional careers.

The results of the conducted study on employers' opinions on the importance of transferable skills (see Figure 2) demonstrate that the most significant competences of trained translators in the professional field include interrelated skills of independent work and responsibility for performance results. The respondents also indicate skills in computer software and the ability to use databases as crucial, most probably due to more effective time management, consistency in the terminology used and reduced possibility for errors.

Another set of transferable skills marked by the respondents as important is creativity in problem solving, effective communication and teamwork skills. In today's market, translators are regularly required to work in teams, as they often

need to consult specialists and professionals as well as demonstrate perfect communications skills with clients, which in fact in itself is very much interrelated with teamwork skills. More than two-thirds of the respondents agree on the importance of life-long learning skills as it allows them to develop professional competences as well as transferable skills continuously throughout the professional career.

Figure 2: Importance of transferable skills from the employers' perspective
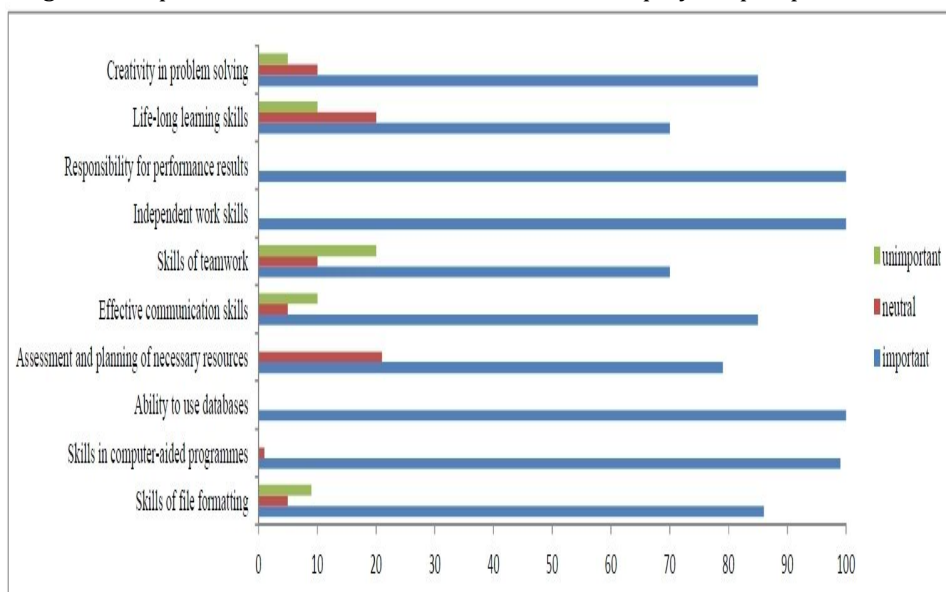
Another set of transferable skills marked by the respondents as important is creativity in problem solving, effective communication and teamwork skills. In today's market, translators are regularly required to work in teams, as they often need to consult specialists and professionals as well as demonstrate perfect communications skills with clients, which in fact in itself is very much interrelated with teamwork skills. More than two-thirds of the respondents agree on the importance of life-long learning skills as it allows them to develop professional competences as well as transferable skills continuously throughout the professional career.

Moreover, assessment and planning of necessary resources and general computer skills are also valued as important due to the rapid advancement in technologies and their penetration in everyday performance. According to Thelen

(2011), even though technical resources are necessary tools for translators to cope with tight deadlines, they are important means to deliver and guarantee quality in translator's performance. In addition, professional usage of the tools empowers the translator to become more competitive on the market because of the continuous progress of new technologies as well as their users.

In spite of the fact that the respondents were representatives of different types of enterprises (translation agencies and business companies), their responses to open-type questions demonstrated similar criteria in employing translators. The representatives of translation agencies emphasised translation experience as well as skills in computer-aided translation programmes together with university education in translator training. The business representatives indicated that the most important criteria were translation experience, language combinations, speed and quality of implemented translations projects. University-level degrees in translation were mentioned as an advantage, but not a prerequisite. The difference between the responses of the representatives of translation agencies and business enterprises in the requirement to have a university degree in translator training in order to be employed might be explained by the fact that translation agencies pay more attention to a set of specialised skills such as text editing, use of CAT tools, etc. Meanwhile, the business enterprises that employ in-house translators are more oriented towards the end product quality, rather than the translation process peculiarities.

As for the lack of employed translators' skills necessary for their performance, the representatives of translation agencies indicated that skills in computer-aided translation programmes and text editing were usually missing. Besides, in terms of less commercially popular languages, the numbers of professionally trained translators are low and, therefore, translation agencies have to rely on self-trained specialists who sometimes provide lower-quality translations. Translators of less commercially popular languages tend to lack elements of formulaic language, which ensures a natural, native-like flow. On the other hand, the business representatives indicated lack of knowledge in a specific field as a major shortcoming of employed translators. One fact worth noting is that the vast majority of the respondents repeatedly indicated Google-like translations as an issue.

Employers agree that together with translation skills, graduates of translation programmes should possess a range of transferable skills, which empower employees to act professionally in a changing environment. In Lithuania, it might be worth following the good practice of the UK, the USA and Nordic countries where translators are able to acquire accreditation certificates, as it would guarantee enhanced quality and translator accountability. This would be another step for bridging the gap between study programmes in translator training and

market demands. Consequently, study programmes aiming at high quality should closely follow the standards of translator training set in international directives.

Conclusions

Multiculturalism has conditioned the increasing demand for translation. Translation studies are more and more oriented towards the needs and requirements of the market. However, along with the orientation of translation studies towards the labour market, academic background is also of key importance for professional translators.

In the Baltic States, translation studies are offered at various study levels and the majority of the study programmes are domain-oriented. In Lithuania, like in other European Union states, translation studies have been established and are being implemented following the international directives and standards, which define 5 major translator competences: translating, linguistic, cultural, research and technical. However, because of high requirements of the labour market, the criteria for quality assurance in the study programmes of translator training are of special importance.

The results of the study conducted demonstrate that employers expect translation graduates to possess skills related to translation as well as a set of transferable skills. In terms of translation-related skills, employers highlight the ability to translate specialised texts in a range of fields to both a foreign and native language along with excellent specialised knowledge of other fields as the most important attributes of a professional translation. All these translation-related skills emphasised by employers correlate with the competences set by international directives, which are taken by study programme implementers as core competences in translation study programmes. This is one of the factors ensuring correspondence between the demands of the market and translator training. However, university education in translation is considered to be an advantage although translation experience is sometimes given a priority over university-level degree in translation or another field.

With regard to transferable skills, essential ones include the ability to work independently and take responsibility for translator's performance and results, which is conditioned by the specifics of the profession. In addition, employers also note skills of using the term banks and databases together with computer-aided translation programmes as important skills for translators. Such results are conditioned by inevitable penetration and advancement of technologies.

In general, all these results demonstrate the importance of decreasing the gap between professional translator training and the labour market. The fact that the research was performed in one Baltic country is considered to be a limitation of this study. Therefore, broader research encompassing the labour markets in other

Baltic States could be of high value to implementers of study programmes of translation in order to bridge this gap.

Notes

1. AIKOS, an open vocational information, counselling, and guidance system providing a wide range of users with information based on public, departmental, and other databases and registers in Lithuania. Available at: http://www.aikos.smm.lt/en/Pages/Default.aspx
2. Description of the study programme Technical Translation at Riga Technical University, Latvia. Available at: http://fsd.rtu.lv/resource/show/229, http://www.studyinlatvia.lv/niid_search/program/7738?qy=translation&level_1=8
3. Description of the study programme Translation of Legal Texts at Ventspils University College, Latvia. Available at: http://venta.lv/studijas/tulkosanas-studiju-fakultate/magistra-studiju-programma/
4. Description of the study programme Translation and Interpreting Studies at the University of Tartu, Estonia. Available at: https://www.is.ut.ee/pls/ois/!tere.tulemast
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