

Looking for the perfect balance: language centres and the (in)visible position of translation practice in academia

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Translation is understood as being set within the scope of the so-called technical-intellectual labour, developed in a complex network system (Strauss, 1987) within a specific “community of practice” (Wenger, 1999) including both people and institutions involved in the production of “immaterial and incorporeal goods” (Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007). Given the complex nature of translation and interpreting as a holistic socio-cultural event involving language(s), no single discipline can offer a complete picture. Translation is also a strategic and powerful profit-generating activity, set within the scope of service provision, marked by specific business-oriented goals and management-oriented procedures, associated and built upon the concept of the production of commodities. In a time where multilingual communication pervades society in general, and university discourse in particular, as a crucial tool for the dissemination of global knowledge, the importance of language centres as pivotal elements in communication strategies needs to be carefully assessed in order to map the exact position of translation and interpreting in the field. Based on my previous experience as the head of the translation / interpreting department of BabeliUM, the University of Minho's language centre, this paper is aimed at reflecting upon the role and status of translation service provision within academia, whilst addressing more specifically the role of stances and positionings found in professional practices. By assessing professional and market dynamics, this presentation will offer a brief overview of the language industry scenario in Portugal, and provide new insights into professional and educational expectations. In the end, the case study under review, as well as the relevant data and information to be presented, will eventually lead to the reshaping of translation practice according to prescriptive professional standards and to new business-oriented settings.

Biodata

Fernando Ferreira Alves is a lecturer at the University of Minho, Portugal. Currently teaching Specialised Translation, Localisation and Project Management both at undergraduate and post-graduate level, and also in charge of the coordination and professionalisation issues associated with work traineeships. He holds a PhD in Translation Studies (Sociolinguistics). He is also a professional translator and head of the translation/interpreting department of the BabeliUM, the University of Minho's language centre. He is a scientific advisor on the journal *Confluencias - Revista de Tradução Científica e Técnica*, in the fields of Translation and Engineering Studies. Part of his current research involves the notions of professionalisation, identity, ethical and socio-professional issues as applied to the language industry.

Fernando Ferreira Alves é professor auxiliar convidado do Departamento de Estudos Ingleses e Norte-Americanos (DEINA) da UMinho. Doutorou-se em Ciências da Linguagem (ramo Sociolinguística) com a tese "As faces de Jano: Contributos para uma cartografia identitária e socioprofissional dos tradutores da região norte de Portugal." Para além de aliar a profissão de tradutor à de investigador e docente, é vogal da Direcção do BabeliUM - Centro de Línguas da Universidade do Minho e presidente do Conselho Nacional de Tradução (CNT).