



# Who does it better? Comparing L1 to L2 translation results between foreign language students and translation students

*Marija Zlatnar Moe*  
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia  
[marija.zlatnarmoe@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:marija.zlatnarmoe@ff.uni-lj.si)

*Tanja Žigon*  
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia  
[Tanja.Zigon@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:Tanja.Zigon@ff.uni-lj.si)

*Tamara Mikolič Južnič*  
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia  
[Tamara.MikolicJuznic@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:Tamara.MikolicJuznic@ff.uni-lj.si)

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**Abstract:** The translation market is often characterised by a diverse group of translators, which includes those with formal education in translation and those who study foreign languages. Foreign language study programmes in Slovenia have on occasion claimed to prepare students for the Slovenian translation market in a similar way to translation programmes; however, a previous study has shown that this is not the case in translation from a foreign language into Slovenian. The study reported on here set out to uncover any differences in skills between the students of translation as opposed to foreign language programmes. The study focused on their ability to translate from Slovenian into a second language (L2), as this is an expected skill on the translation market. In the article, we first compare three foreign language study programmes and a translation study programme in terms of translation into an L2. Secondly, we present the results of translation quality assessment of translations from Slovenian into an L2 (English, German and Italian). The results show that the two groups of students approached and performed the task differently, in several of the analysed categories, highlighting the role of translation training and enhancement of L1 competence for the development of translation competence.

**Keywords:** foreign language students, translation students, translation quality assessment, translation into L2, L1 competence

## 1. Introduction

Translation from a mother tongue or first language (L1) into a foreign language (L2)<sup>1</sup> is a common occurrence: as Pokorn (2005, p. 37) notes, it is “especially

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<sup>1</sup> As the study programmes analysed in this article presuppose Slovenian as L1, all other languages are considered foreign. The abbreviation for second language (L2) will be used as a generic term for a foreign language, although it is possible that a certain foreign language is a person’s third (or fourth, etc.) foreign language.

common in languages with restricted distribution” but is also present “in larger linguistic communities which are pushed into a peripheral position because of the global distribution of power and in major-language societies when communicating with ethnic minorities”. For peripheral languages,<sup>2</sup> translators who would translate from the peripheral source language (e.g., Slovenian) into their mother tongue are simply not available for every language pair, therefore there is often no other option other than translators translating into an L2 (see Dollerup, 2000; Lorenzo, 2003; Kelly et al., 2006; Wang, 2011; Atkinson, 2023).

Aspiring translators working with peripheral languages, such as Slovenian, therefore, should be aware of the market’s expectations for a translator to be able to work in both directions. As stated in the abstract, translators may include not only those who graduated from translation programmes, but also graduates from foreign language programmes, i.e. programmes focusing on languages other than the main societal language, as well as individuals with other profiles. While the curriculum of translation programmes usually tries to account for the market needs and includes L1-to-L2 translation, that is not usually the case for foreign language study programmes. The latter focus on educating future language teachers and language specialists in general even though their curricula may list related competences (see Zlatnar Moe, Žigon & Mikolič Južnič, 2019). Competence is here understood as “the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development” (EMT Competence Framework, 2022). While the question of competence in translation has been discussed extensively (see, for instance, the edited volume by Schäffner and Adab, 2000), the present article focuses on translation competence as defined by Neubert (2000; see Section 2.2). When the plural (competences) is used, it is implied that apart from translation competence, other knowledge, skills and abilities which are typically listed in FL study programmes are included, relating to teaching foreign languages, analysing literature etc.

As it is still frequently assumed by the general public that knowing a foreign language is enough to be a translator (see also O’Neill, 1998; Shreve, 2012) our aim was to verify this assumption, also in view of the results of a previous study on L2-to-L1 translation (Zlatnar Moe, Žigon and Mikolič Južnič, 2019).

The present study is thus specifically concerned with translation from the L1 into an L2 by two groups of students at the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. The sample consisted of students of the BA programme in translation (TR) and students of selected BA programmes in foreign languages (FL), i.e. English, German and Italian, with comparable proficiency levels (see Section 3.1). BA students were selected because of the comparability of the study programmes, and, more importantly, because BA graduates of both programmes quite often enter the translation market without obtaining an MA degree, despite being less prepared than MA graduates. Naturally, the two types of BA programmes involved in the study have different aims and scopes – one preparing students for the MA in translation or interpreting, the other mainly preparing future language teachers and language specialists, but studies have

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<sup>2</sup> Depending on the authors, the category can have a variety of names, ranging from languages of restricted distribution (as above in Pokorn 2005), languages of limited or low diffusion (Whyatt and Pavlović, 2021) or peripheral languages (Heilbron, 2000).

shown (Mikolič Južnič, 2019; Pregelj, 2019) that a number of graduates of both types of programmes are indeed working as translators.

There are certain predictable differences in the curricula of the two types of programmes (discussed in Section 3.1), with consequent predictable differences in competences. Additionally, previous research (Zlatnar Moe, Žigon, and Mikolič Južnič, 2015) showed that despite a presumably good competence in L2 expected for FL students, a lack of sufficiently developed L1 competence influenced translation from L2 into L1 to a critical degree. L1 competence seems to be taken for granted in FL study programmes, as no particular courses are devoted to its development. Translation, however, requires a professional competence in L1, which students may not possess when entering university. In fact, the international surveys of reading literacy in Slovenia (Pezdirč Bartol, 2001; Štraus, Šterman Ivančič & Štigl, 2016; Bon & Perenič, 2016; Šterman Ivančič, 2019), as well as other studies (see, for instance, Zlatnar Moe & Grahek Križnar, 2012; Rot Vrhovec & Godec Soršak, 2024), have shown that Slovenian students come to the University with inadequate reading skills in their L1.<sup>3</sup> This raised the question whether a similar effect of L1 competence could also be identified as a factor in students' translation into an L2.

The research question addressed in the present paper is therefore whether focusing on a foreign language alone in a traditional language programme can help students develop the competences necessary to enter the world of professional L1 to L2 translation, or, conversely, whether better translation competences can help students overcome a potentially less than optimal knowledge of an L2. Additionally, the authors also explore the question as to whether a potential lack of competence in L1 could have an impact on L2 translation.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Translation into L2

Since the 1990s, research in the field of translation from the L1 into an L2 has grown, even though researchers have encountered a number of issues, starting with the terms used to define the L1 and L2 within this context.<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, the prevailing viewpoint was that only translation into one's L1 can be done with sufficient quality,<sup>5</sup> and that nothing good or "natural" or "fluent" (cf. Zahedi, 2013) can come out of translation into L2 (see also Newmark, 1988). However, Pavlović (2008, p. 81) counters that although "there are many examples of suboptimal quality in L2 translation [...] there are just as many examples of bad translations done into L1." In fact, Pokorn et al. (2020, p. 58) show that "factors other than directionality impact translation quality more decisively." As Pavlović (2013, p. 150) says, there is a need for "a realistic theory that could accommodate the specific situation of the communities speaking LLDs [languages of lesser diffusion] and provide an efficient basis for

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<sup>3</sup> Skills are defined as "the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems" (EMT Competence Framework, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> See Pavlović (2007, p. 80) for a discussion of the problems concerning the terms mother tongue, L1 and L2.

<sup>5</sup> See Pokorn (2005) for a historical overview of translation into L2.

both the education of future translators and the development of a translation culture”.

Translation from the L1 into an L2 is therefore an unavoidable fact in numerous language communities, but the question remains whether young language experts who wish to become professional translators are properly prepared for the market and have the necessary skills and competences to successfully accomplish the demanding task of L1-to-L2 translation.

There is little agreement in the literature as to whether the competences and processes involved in L1-to-L2 translation are similar or not to those linked to L2-to-L1 translation. Campbell (1998, p. 57) states that “translating into a second language is clearly very different from translating into the first language”, while other scholars do not completely share this opinion. Pedersen (2000, p. 110) and Zahedi (2013, p. 48), for instance, both see similarities between the two translation directions. Kościuczuk (2016) proposes a middle ground, according to which L2 translation is at least partly different from L1 translation and comes with its own challenges, both in practice and training. Translation technologies, for instance, play an important role in making L2 translation easier, as Siepman (2004, p. 63) emphasises. Furthermore, he adds that to produce an adequate L2 translation, translators need “a sound knowledge of L2, a thorough grounding in contrastive linguistics and the ability to make a judicious use of range of data-handling tools and translation strategies” (ibid., p. 54). This would call for a step-by-step approach in teaching those skills to novice translators. Similarly, Kościuczuk (2016, p. 21) points out that “[f]inding and mastering [online resources] takes time, so translators will benefit from learning about them in [sic] classroom”. When young translators enter the market without such skills, this might have a considerable impact on their performance, despite a possibly high language competence.

Another relevant factor seems to be L1 competence. The importance of L1 in foreign language teaching, learning and communication has been emphasised in several studies, for example in Butzkam (2003), He (2012), and Atkinson (1987). Atkinson (1987, p. 245) states that the mother tongue opens the door not only to thinking, communicating and understanding the L1 grammar, but also to understanding any grammar. L1 competence is thought to be crucial in text formation and communication in an international and multilingual environment, as well as in translation. Yet while several studies which emphasise the importance of high competence in L1 are focused on L2-to-L1 translation (e. g. Carreres, 2006; Lang, 1994), studies aiming to explore the influence of L1 competence on translation into L2 are much less frequent. In one such study, Kościuczuk (2016, p. 6) states that in translations into an L2, “mistakes are often caused by a misunderstanding of the source text rather than insufficient competence in the target language.” Based on these findings, one of our aims is to explore potential differences in the competences of TR and FL students as they are reflected in their translations.

## ***2.2 Translation competence and translation quality assessment in translator training***

To answer our research question, it is essential to define translation competence, as well as a manner to objectively assess it. While the concept of translation competence has been defined in a number of studies in different ways (e.g., Kiraly, 1995; Orozco and Hurtado Albir, 2002; Gonzalez Davies, 2004; Schäffner and Adab, 2000; PACTE, 2000; Bernardini, 2004), in the present study the term is defined as the ability to undertake a complex performance task

that consists of several interrelated sub-competences, in line with Neubert's (2000) definition. Neubert (2000) names five main components, which map perfectly with the aspects most relevant to this study: Apart from language competence, which is considered a "*sine qua non* of translation" (ibid., p. 7), he identifies textual competence, reflected in the choice of textual features and stylistic shifts, subject competence, i.e. "the familiarity with what constitutes the body of knowledge of the area a translation is about" (ibid., p. 8), cultural competence, linked to the degree of "cultural embeddedness" (ibid., p. 10) of different text types, and transfer competence, "the tactics and strategies of converting L1 texts into L2 texts" in order to "produce an adequate replica of an original" (ibid.).

The subcompetences listed above can be observed through translation quality assessment (TQA). While TQA can be performed in several ways<sup>6</sup> and for a variety of reasons, in this study we focused on structured models that can be used as pedagogical tools. Structured models of assessment with a point-counting grid system can be found in Waddington (2001), Robinson, López, and Tercedor (2006), Colina (2009), and Orlando (2011).<sup>7</sup> Unlike these models, which basically only focused on deficiencies, however, an approach that also gives positive feedback was adopted, comparable to the one used in González Davies (2004) (see Section 3.2).

Based on the above premises and on our research question, two hypotheses were developed and tested in an experiment: 1) TR students are more familiar with various translation tools and resources and will use a wider range of them; and 2) Due to the different aims and scopes of the observed study programmes, FL students' translations will display a better command of some areas (L2 grammar, orthography, style) than TR students' translations, and vice versa, TR students' translations will be stronger in other areas, such as lexical changes, omissions and additions.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants were 96 third-year BA students of the Department of Translation, the Department of English, the Department of German, Dutch and Swedish (with the sample only including those studying German), and the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (with the sample only including those studying Italian). The departments at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana offer either single-track courses or double-track courses, where a student combines two main subjects from the humanities or social sciences. All the students of German and Italian were studying in the double-track study programmes, mostly a combination of two languages, while the students of English were single-track students. Participation in the experiment was voluntary, ethics approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts (University of Ljubljana), under number 490-2026. The experiment included 46 TR students: 14 translated into English, 21 into German and 11 into Italian,<sup>8</sup> while out of the 50 FL students, 8 translated into English,

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Hale (2014).

<sup>7</sup> See also Verplaetse & Lambrechts (2021) for an overview of error taxonomies.

<sup>8</sup> Students of the BA in Translation take two foreign languages, apart from Slovenian as their L1: one of the foreign languages is always English, the other one is either French, German or Italian. The number of credits is the same for both foreign languages.

15 into Italian and 27 into German. All the participants were native speakers of Slovenian, all had passed the *matura*, the national secondary school exit exam, and were aged between 22 and 23 years.

The general L1 competence of all students on entering the programmes is considered equal since they all passed the same national examination before entering university. In contrast, although L2 proficiency is possibly more diverse at the beginning of the BA cycle due to the different scopes of language instruction in pre-university education, differences are linked to individual L2s rather than to groups of students enrolling in different study programmes. While English is an obligatory *matura* subject, students may have different levels of proficiency in German and Italian, depending on the area they come from within Slovenia.<sup>9</sup> Such differences, however, are not limited to either group (TR or FL), as students from all backgrounds are enrolled in both types of programmes. In addition, the experiment involved students in their 3rd year, who had passed the same exams in their respective study programmes in order to progress. This further minimized some of the potential initial differences.

TR and FL study programmes are fundamentally different as they aim to achieve different learning outcomes and graduate profiles, yet among the general skills and competences that the students should acquire, all study programmes involved in the experiment list either some kind of “ability to work in a interlingual and intercultural environment”, or an “ability to act as an interlingual mediator and to overcome communicative barriers”.<sup>10</sup> This implies that, to a certain extent, all the programmes take into account that the graduates might end up being involved with interlingual mediation, i.e. translation.

The number of contact hours<sup>11</sup> dedicated to L1/L2 training in each study programme was examined (see Table 1) to compare the levels of L1 and L2 training the participants had had. The figures include courses in language and translation, excluding literature, culture, society, historical grammar and similar, even though they contribute to the training in the L1/L2, albeit in a less direct way. It should also be noted that L2s studied at the Department of Translation have a symmetrical programme and consequently the same number of teaching hours for each language.

Table 1: Contact hours in L1 and L2 and in translation courses\*

Course types	TR	FL		
		English	German	Italian
<b>L1 courses</b>	350	0	0	0
<b>Translation into L1</b>	150	30	30	60
<b>L2 courses</b>	450	1300	510	660 (+60 elective)
<b>Translation into L2</b>	60	30	45	0

\* Overall number in the 3-year BA study programmes

<sup>9</sup> Slovenia has common borders with both Italy and Austria and consequently the presence of each language is stronger in the relative areas.

<sup>10</sup> See the Faculty of Arts webpage (<http://www.ff.uni-lj.si/>) and the pages of the individual departments for more details. See also Zlatnar Moe, Žigon, and Mikolič Južnič (2015).

<sup>11</sup> The distribution of hours was valid at the time of the experiments but has changed recently.

The TR students in our study had 500 hours of L1 training including translation into L1 courses, while FL students had 30 to 60 hours. On the other hand, the number of hours focusing on the L2 was lower compared to the amount of L2 training at the FL departments. The significantly larger number of contact hours of the English as FL study programme is due to the fact that the English students participating in the experiment were all single-track students, while the rest of the FL students had dual-track study programmes.<sup>12</sup> The TR study programme combined three languages (L1 and two L2), therefore the number of contact hours was closer to the double-track study programmes. It is worth noting that there was a significant gap between the TR and FL programmes regarding the hours devoted to L1.

### **3.2 Method**

To test the hypotheses, a twofold approach was used: assessment of the students' translations and post-task questionnaires.

The students were asked to translate a text of 212 words from Slovenian into English, German or Italian. They were given one week to complete the assignment and were free to use any translation tools, methods and strategies they considered appropriate. The instructions accompanying the source text were: "Translate the following text so that it will be appropriate for a promotional web page aimed at tourists from the EU." The source text, entitled *Hrastovci stopili skupaj za doživetje v Hrastovljah* [Inhabitants of Hrastovlje join forces to offer local experience] was published in a national daily newspaper (*Delo*, 19 February 2014), and slightly shortened for the experiment, with the crossed-out part still visible.

The translations were assessed by the authors of this study. Each set of translations was assessed by one researcher. To avoid bias in marking, codes were used to hide the individual translator's affiliation (TR or FL). For each language combination, one researcher randomly assigned the translations while another one assessed them. Only after assessing all the translations, were the keys to the coding system provided to sort the texts into two groups (FL/TR) for further analysis.

The translations were assessed according to the criteria usually used for marking translations at the department: an assessment grid (see Appendix 1) was used with a starting score of 20 points. This grid involves points being subtracted for mistakes and errors in various areas or added for particularly apt solutions (see below for more details). A native speaker of each language, who is a member of the teaching staff at the Department of Translation, was consulted in ambiguous cases. The focus was on selected aspects of three of the five subcompetences identified by Neubert (2000), language competence, text competence, and cultural competence. These subcompetences were selected because of their relevance to our research questions and their quantifiability and consequently relative ease of cross-linguistic comparison. A separate category for particularly apt translations was added, similar to that of González Davies's (2004) positive feedback. The categories analysed are the following:

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<sup>12</sup> In a single-track programme, students focus on one specific field or discipline throughout their studies, which leads to deep specialization in the chosen subject, making graduates experts in that specific field. A double-track programme allows students to pursue two areas of study simultaneously, often leading to two degrees or specializations.

1. Omissions and additions, e.g. “the most famous village of Istria”, where the source text has “of the Slovenian Istria” or “the famous Slovenian artists Jože Pohlen and Viktor Snoj”, where only the artists’ names appear in the source text;
2. Orthography: capitalization, punctuation, lack of adaptation to the target language orthographical rules, lack of coherence, e.g. using capital letters for motifs in the church frescoes, treating them as titles;
3. Grammar: morphological and syntactical mistakes, mistakes in word formation, e.g. the use of “nearby” instead of “near” in “The inhabitants of Hrastovlje (nearby Koper)”;
4. Lexical changes: “a quarter of the price” instead of “a quarter of a Euro”;
5. Stylistic changes: a broad category including formality, register, information structures, modality, pragmatic functions, illocutionary force, etc.;
6. Outstanding translation solutions, awarded, for instance, when a student suitably solves a translation problem that their peers struggle with, or when the general impression is particularly positive (see González Davies 2004).

The post-translation questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was used to collect demographic data, time and information on translation tools used, as well as to shed light on the different approaches to the text by the two groups.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Time and tools

The results of the questionnaire indicate that on average the TR students used slightly more time to complete the translation, i.e. 150 minutes, compared to the 137 minutes reported by the FL students. Furthermore, TR students more frequently spread their work across several days (up to four). Students also treated the deadline differently: the vast majority of the translations done by TR students were delivered within the deadline, and the remaining few arrived within 24 hours with an apology for the delay, while among the FL students, only the German group respected the deadline, the students of English and Italian being often late in submitting the text, some of them even not submitting it at all even after several reminders.

Regarding the first hypothesis, the questionnaires showed that TR students used a greater variety of translation tools than FL students (see Table 2).

Table 2: Average number and type of translation tools used per student

Tools used	FL students	TR students
<b>All translation tools</b>	3.7	4.3
<b>Bilingual dictionaries</b>	1.5	1.5
<b>Monolingual dictionaries</b>	1.1	1.3
<b>Other language aids</b>	1.5	2.4
<b>Other (e.g. informants)</b>	2	2.6

While the average use of bilingual dictionaries was the same across both groups, TR students usually used more recent versions: in the Italian FL group

there were two students who used dictionary editions from the 1970s, and one who used a pocket dictionary from the 1980s. Furthermore, TR students used a greater number of different monolingual dictionaries; notably, unlike FL students, they also used the Slovenian monolingual dictionary. This could indicate that TR students approached the source language in a more cautious, tentative way, with more attention to detail where meaning was concerned.

Other language aids included machine translation tools, general corpora and various reference websites. While both groups used collocation dictionaries, only the TR students used corpora and a thesaurus. The two English groups used the greatest variety of tools, which is most probably linked to the greater availability of English sources on the internet compared to other lesser resourced languages.

TR students also used a greater variety of other, non-linguistic translation tools: while FL students mostly relied on language tools, Google and Wikipedia and, in sporadic cases, other people as informants, TR students, who are trained to use a greater range of resources, both primary and secondary, used blogs, municipal web pages, tourist guides and a variety of other web pages. All this confirms the findings of Zlatnar Moe, Žigon, and Mikolič Južnič (2015) in that TR students see translating as a more interdisciplinary and intercultural activity, involving a great variety of sources, even other vehicular languages, extra-textual knowledge etc.

In conclusion, the results of the questionnaires seem to imply that the TR students are overall better acquainted with available translation tools in the broadest sense, which could have proved to be their comparative advantage in this experiment.

#### ***4.2 Translation quality***

Prior to the experiment, the expectation was that due to a greater focus on all aspects of the target language and culture, the FL students would produce overall better translations than TR students. The difference in quality between the two groups, however, was expected to be relatively small, as TR students received additional training in the use of translation tools and technologies, and in translation itself. Considering the strong influence of L1 competence on translation observed in Zlatnar Moe, Žigon, and Mikolič Južnič (2015), it was reasonable to expect this factor to have some impact as well.

The results were in line with our predictions. In general, as seen in Table 3, the two groups produced very similar results, with rather low scores, namely an average of 12.5 out of 20 points for TR students and 11.4 out of 20 points for FL students. This low level of performance is not surprising considering that at the time of the experiment, the students were still in the middle of their translation courses. Although graduates of the 3-year TR or FL programmes sometimes enter the translation market, their competence and skills are often insufficient and would have to be further developed by additional training provided at MA level.

Contrary to our expectations, however, the TR groups scored slightly higher than the FL groups in all but one of the analysed categories (see Table 3). While all FL students achieved similar scores, the results of the TR group were more varied, with the German TR group achieving the highest overall score and the Italian TR group coming last. Except for the German group, the variation between the groups' scores was less than 10% of the total score.

Several reasons could account for these differences, such as a potentially different entrance language level, or a particularly good general language skill level in that particular generation, or even individual teachers' profiles. As an

example, the teacher of the Italian FL group is herself a prominent Slovenian translation scholar and has a special interest in teaching translation.

Table 3: Average score out of 20 points

Language groups	TR students	FL students
All	12.5	11.4
English	11.4	11.0
German	16.6	11.7
Italian	9.5	11.7

After exploring the categories in greater details, we noticed that the differences among the two groups of students were more prominent in certain cases, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Average number of mistakes/good solutions per translation

Category	TR Students	FL students
Stylistic changes	5.5	6.3
Grammar	8.7	7.8
Orthography	3.1	3.4
Lexical changes	1.6	2.5
Omissions/Additions	0.4	1.2
Particularly apt solutions	1.6	1.3

One of the categories with which both groups struggled the most were stylistic changes, which reflect Neubert's (2000) language, textual and transfer subcompetences. This category comprises problems such as word-for-word translations resulting in awkwardness and wrong word order (Example 1), unusual collocations (Example 2), inappropriate use of idioms (Example 3) and discursive field (Example 4). FL students made 14.5% more of such mistakes on average than TR students.

1. a. SLO: Hrastovci, prebivalci v svetu najbolj znane slovenske istrske vasi (pri Kopru), so združili moči in verjetno edini v Sloveniji ponudili doživetje vasice (Hrastovelj) z eno samo skupno vstopnico. [The inhabitants of Hrastovlje, the most famous village Slovenian Istrian village (near Koper), have joined forces to provide perhaps the only tourism offer that lets you experience the village on a single joint ticket.]  
 b. ENG: The inhabitants of Hrastovlje (nearby Koper), the most famous village of the Slovenian Istria, joined their tourist forces *becoming probably the only ones in Slovenia* that offer the experience of Hrastovlje on one single ticket.
2. a. SLO: [izlet] v povsem zapuščeno vasico Zanigrad [(an excursion) to the completely abandoned village of Zanigrad]  
 b. GER: [ein Ausflug] in das komplett verweiste Dorf Zanigrad [(a trip) to the completely referred-to village of Zanigrad]
3. a. SLO: [...] in si poleg tega za silo "privezal dušo". [as well as (have) a hearty meal (literal translation: you can bind your soul)]  
 b. ITA: L'esperienza può legare l'anima per almeno un giorno. [the experience can bind your soul for at least a day]

- c. GER: [...] und darüberhinaus kann man seine „Seele zusammenhalten“ [and furthermore it can hold his soul together]
4. a. SLO: [Hrastovci] so združili svoje turistične moči in (...) ponudili *doživetje svoje vasice z eno samo skupno vstopnico* [The inhabitants of Hrastovlje (...) have joined forces to provide [...] the only tourism offer that lets you *experience the village* on a single ticket]
- b. ENG: “[they] have joined forces and *turned their village into a hotspot for tourists.*”

The most common grammatical mistakes were related to the use of the (in)definite article in all three TLs, as in Example 5, where the missing article is indicated by a line, prepositions (Example 6), tense and aspect (Example 7), singular/plural or gender (Example 8), and other syntactical problems (Example 9). Here, TR students made 11.5% more grammar-related mistakes on average than FL students.

5. a. SLO: Z vstopnicami si bodo poplačali vloženo delo in stroške [Their tickets will pay for the work and expenses invested]
- b. ITA: Gli abitanti si rimborseranno con la vendita dei biglietti \_\_\_\_ lavoro investito e i costi
6. a. SLO: [...] verjetno edini v Sloveniji ponudili doživetje vasice (Hrastovelj) *z eno samo skupno vstopnico*. [[they] have joined forces to provide perhaps the only tourism offer that lets you experience the village *on a single joint ticket.*]
- b. ENG: [they] offer the experience of Hrastovlje *for* one single ticket.
7. a. SLO: Hrastovci [...] so združili moči [the inhabitants of Hrastovlje *have joined forces*]
- b. The inhabitants of Hrastovlje [...] *joined forces*
8. a. SLO: [...] bo lahko izbiral med več možnostmi degustacij domačih dobrot, vina, olja, klobas in sira na turističnih kmetijah [The two remaining coupons] let you choose from a range of options: tastings of home-made delicacies, wine, oil, sausages and cheese on tourist farms]
- b. ITA: [...] serviranno per la selezione delle degustazioni del vino, dell’olio, delle salsicce, del formaggio e delle altri specialità locali presso le fattorie turistiche [will be needed for the selection of the tastings of wine, oil, sausages, cheese and other local specialities at tourist farms]
9. a. SLO: [...] so združili svoje turistične moči [has unified its tourism offer]
- b. ENG: [...] they came together to promote themselves to tourists

The German TR group was an exception in this category, faring considerably better than their FL peers, having 3.6 vs. 8.6 mistakes per student respectively.

Orthographical mistakes were mostly results of incorrect use of punctuation, especially the comma, as in Example 10, where all the commas in brackets were missing, and capitalization. FL students made 9.7 % mistakes more on average in this category compared to TR students. It seems, however, that the incorrect use of capitalization was due to inadequate source text comprehension rather than target language competence, as seen in Example 11, where motifs of frescoes were confused with names of paintings and consequently capitalised.

10. a. SLO: Vasica z znamenitimi freskami, ki prikazujejo *izgon iz raja, prizore iz pasijona in predvsem Mrtvaški ples*, je združila svoje turistične moči. [The village with the famous frescoes depicting the creation of the world, the expulsion from Paradise, scenes from the passion, and most importantly, the Dance of Death, has unified its tourism offer]

b. GER: Das kleine Dorf mit seinen berühmten Fresken(,) die Schöpfungsgeschichte, die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies(,) Passionsszenen und vor allem den Totentanz zeigen(,) bündelte seine touristischen Kräfte.

11. a. SLO: Vasica z znamenitimi freskami, ki prikazujejo *izgon iz raja, prizore iz pasijona in predvsem Mrtvaški ples*, je združila svoje turistične moči. [The village with the famous frescoes depicting the creation of the world, the expulsion from Paradise, scenes from the passion, and most importantly, the Dance of Death, has unified its tourism offer]

b. ITA: Il villaggio con i famosissimi affreschi che mostrano *La Creazione del mondo, La Cacciata dal Paradiso terrestre, gli episodi della Passione di Cristo e soprattutto La Danza macabra*, ha unito le forze turistiche.

Changes to messages due to inappropriate or incorrect choices of lexical items, i.e. the changes that probably impact the quality of the translation the most, were more frequent in the FL groups (2.5 for FL vs. 1.6 for TR group, i.e. as much as 52.6% more for FL students). The changes seem to be mainly due to superficial reading of the source (L1) text, which points to a lack of sufficient language competence, or more specifically reading competence, in the source language, i.e. in the students' L1. One such instance is found in Example 12, where three wrong variants of the same source-language sentence are shown, which seem to be the result of a misunderstanding of the source text in the sense described by Kościuczuk (2016).

12. a. SLO: četrt evra od vsake vstopnice [a quarter of a euro for every ticket]

b. ENG: a quarter of each Euro / a fourth of every sold ticket / one quarter of the ticket price

The source text was a general text, not requiring much specific topic knowledge nor any specialised terminology. Frequent mistranslations of this type among FL students, coupled with their lesser use of monolingual dictionaries and other resources in general, thus seem to be a result of an overconfidence in the FL students' Slovenian language competence.

Another type of lexical change is the incorrect use of L2 connectors, such as “but above all” instead of “most importantly” in Example 13, where the meaning of the message is altered using a different connector. This could be a result of incorrect understanding of the source text connector, an inappropriate choice of a TL connector, or both.

13. a. SLO: Vasica z znamenitimi freskami, ki prikazujejo stvarjenje sveta, izgon iz raja, prizore iz pasijona in predvsem Mrtvaški ples, je združila svoje turistične moči. [The village with the famous frescoes, depicting the creation of the world, the expulsion from Paradise, scenes from the Passion, and most importantly the Dance of Death, has unified its tourism offer.]

b. ENG: The village with the renowned frescoes depicting the creation of the World, the expulsion from paradise and scenes from the passion of the Christ, *but above all*, the Dance of Death, joined its tourist forces.

Omissions and additions were often present, and they were thrice as frequent in the FL groups compared to the TR groups. Most of the omissions were the result of failing to translate the photo caption, which happened much more frequently in the FL group. Some omissions, however, were potentially more problematic, such as, the omission of “Slovenian” in Example 14, which results in extending the fame of Hrastovlje to a larger territory than intended, i.e. the whole Istria, a region which is mainly in Croatia, not only in Slovenia.

14. a. SLO: Hrastovci, prebivalci v svetu najbolj znane slovenske istrske vasi [The inhabitants of Hrastovlje, the world's most famous Slovenian Istrian village]  
b. ENG: people of the most famous Istrian village

Additions are considered a mistake when superfluous information is added to the text, unnecessarily lengthening it. Such additions were also more frequent in the translations by the FL students. A possible cause might be the greater focus on the FL during their study, which gives them a more detailed knowledge of the target culture, while the lack of intensive translation training does not equip them with the skills needed to know when to keep additions to a minimum.

Finally, particularly apt solutions were slightly more frequent in TR students' translations (23.1%), although in both cases there were only a handful of such instances, which is rather in line with our expectations considering the overall level of the students.

To sum up, contrary to our expectations, overall, FL students did not perform better in their translation task compared to TR students. The only category in which the FL students performed significantly better was the category of grammar. In all other categories TR students fared better, though the differences were not very extensive.

Considering the background of the students, as well as the results shown in Zlatnar Moe, Žigon, and Mikolič Južnič (2015), several possible reasons for such results can be identified. Minimal differences in the category of orthography may be ascribed to less strict orthographical rules in English and Italian compared to Slovenian – especially concerning punctuation – on the one hand, and to the similarity between the German and Slovenian punctuation systems on the other hand.

Other types of changes are related to either the meaning of the source text or the way this meaning is conveyed in the target text. In both cases, TR students most probably had a slight comparative advantage in view of their translation training and their courses in the L1 medium. In the case of TR students, translation competences acquired over preceding years, although mostly related to L2-to-L1 translation (see Section 3.1), may well have been transferred to L1-to-L2 translation. This may have increased students' awareness of the context, conventions, etc., as well as enhancing their internet searching skills and creativity when looking for solutions to translation problems. Additionally, incorrect word choices and subsequent changes in meaning may be often associated with lack of target language competence, however our results show that they are sometimes also caused by superficial reading or even lack of real comprehension of the source text. This is particularly evident given the very generic nature of the text in question, which does not include any complex concepts or specialised terminology. Such errors might support our hypothesis that source language competence is vital when it comes to L1 to L2 translation.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to verify whether competences acquired in TR and FL study programmes prepare BA graduates for the translation market in a comparable way. The experiment highlights specific differences between FL and TR groups of students, both in their approach to the source text and in their finished translations. The hypotheses expressed in Section 2.2 were mostly confirmed. As expected, TR students displayed a greater awareness of the

variety of internet tools available and used a wider range of resources compared to FL students, which had a positive impact on their translations, in line with Siepmann's (2004) findings. Contrary to our predictions, however, FL students did not produce better translations than TR students: overall and in almost all the analysed categories, TR students showed better results. Admittedly, there were significant differences in quality between individual TR groups, which calls for further research. However, better scores in the categories that most affect the quality of the translation, i.e. lexical changes, omissions/additions and stylistic changes, seem to indicate that both better research skills and more experience in solving translation problems might give TR students a slight edge, especially at the start of their translation careers. Furthermore, a detailed look at the changes in the texts produced by both groups seems to confirm that TR students' L1 competence, combined with additional translator training, helped compensate for possible shortcomings in terms of L2-related language and cultural competence. Investing time in L1 competence thus seems to pay off both in enhancing a better understanding of the L1 ST and, also possibly in a greater awareness of the existence of conventions that influence text creation in any language. The latter is a topic that certainly deserves further investigation.

The relatively small sample of students' translations used in the experiment is the main limitation of the study, but a future longitudinal study could build on the data collected and consolidate the validity of the results or place them into their rightful perspective. Another possible limitation is the fact that the proficiency of the participants in their L2 was not measured when they entered university. However, as all the participants had gone through a similar L1 and L2 language learning process in pre-university education and passed the same final secondary school exams, we may reasonably assume that they started out with similar skills and competences.

To conclude, we agree with Siepmann (2004) that L2 translation requires both linguistic skills and technical skills, as well as translation strategies, but translation students possibly also need an equally sound knowledge of L1 (see also Maček 2018, Udovič 2016). Since such L1 knowledge is not inherent, it should be further developed at university level, in the same way other translation competences are.

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### Appendix 1: Translation Assessment Grid

Error category	Minor error (no. of points)	Serious error (no. of points)	Critical error (no. of points)
Lexical changes	- 2	- 3	- 5
Style	- 1	- 2	- 3
Grammar	- 1	- 2	- 3
Orthography	- 0.5	- 1	- 2
Omission/addition	- 1	- 3	- 5

Positive feedback	Apt solution to average translation problem	Apt solution to greater translation problem
Particularly apt translation solutions	+ 1	+ 2

Starting no. of points: 40

### Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Please answer to the following questions about the translation aids you used. As you remain anonymous throughout the research, please be sure to include everything, even those things that you might consider unimportant or stupid. Your answers may be very short, e.g. written as bulleted lists, just titles of volumes and similar. Please hand in your answers with the translation.

1. Study programme:
2. Age:
3. How long did it take you from the beginning to the final version of your translation?
4. What translation aids did you use (please state also if you used the paper or electronic version)?
  - a) Bilingual dictionaries (please write the title and year of publication)
  - b) Monolingual dictionaries (please write the title and year of publication)
  - c) Other linguistic aids (corpora, manuals of style, terminological databases, parallel texts – for printed volumes, please write the title and year of publication, for electronic references, give the name and link to the page)
  - d) Other general reference works (Google, Wikipedia, web pages of organizations, individuals, newspapers, news web pages, lexicons, encyclopaedias, maps and so on (please write the names and links to the pages))
  - e) Other people (experts in a field, people with experience in the subject matter of the article, fellow students, relatives, more experienced translators, linguists (no names)). For each person, please write how they helped you.
  - f) Anything else that helped you translate the text