

# APPLICATION OF THE LOCALISATION PLATFORM CROWDIN IN TRANSLATOR EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

This article is an attempt to briefly describe the potential of the online localisation platform CrowdIn for the education of the future translators at universities and in private courses or workshops. This description is provided on the basis of the information gathered through the user experience of the author and uses the example of the Khan Academy project carried out on this platform. The article juxtaposes this online localisation platform with commercial CAT software which is commonly used for translation training.

**Keywords:** translator education; CAT; CrowdIn; localisation

## **1. Introduction**

The article consists of three sections. Section 1 discusses the subject of translator education in general, points out the necessity of formal translation instruction, outlines the current views of linguists on how it should look and presents the reality of translator education in Poland. Section 2 describes the most important functions of the CrowdIn localisation platform using the example of the Official Khan Academy Translation project. It also compares briefly its functionality with the commercial CAT (computer assisted translation) software. Section 3 presents concisely the possible applications of this localisation tool in translation training.

## **2. Translator education**

Due to various types of factors conditioning the work of translators, their activity is far from being homogeneous taking into account translators' intellectual strain, technical difficulty, as well as the social and economic status of the translators. Thus, as Gile (2009: 5) states, the word *translating* is a hypernym "(...) covering a rather wide range of distinct occupations". Consequently, translator education also takes multifarious forms and various approaches are adopted, depending on the type of translation the students would like to be occupied with in the future.

Numerous successful translators attain the top-level performance through self-improvement during their work experience, sometimes even without formal translator education (Biel, 2011). As it is pointed out in the standard EN 15038 (European Committee for Standardization, 2006), which regulates the quality of translations performed in 29 European countries (the EU member-states, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland), a translator in order to be regarded as a professional with relevant competences should have a university degree in translation, or a university degree in a related domain plus two years of experience in translating, or, when not holding any university degree, at least five years of professional experience as a translator. Consequently, it seems formal education is not indispensable. Nevertheless, it helps to develop the translators' performance "to the full realization of their potential" (Gile, 2009: 6-7) and improve their translation skills more rapidly than through field experience, excluding the necessity of risking their professional reputation through learning by trial and error in real translation tasks. Additionally, formal education provides future translators with additional insight into the reality of the profession as well as with invaluable meta-knowledge, which could be used in explaining the choices of vocabulary or techniques used to the client or the target-text recipients.

### **2.1. General guidelines for translator training**

The subject of translator training has been attracting more and more attention of linguists, especially in the recent two decades. As a result of the fact that translation studies became an important subfield within linguistics at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scientists focused on outlining the most important aspects of the translator education. Małgorzewicz (2014) remarks that the properties and skills of the student are the central objectives of translation didactics. Grucza (2004) points out three most important competences of a translator: linguistic competences in both source- and target-language, transcultural competence, i.e. not only the knowledge of both cultures, but also the capability of presenting cultural specificities of one culture to the representatives of the other culture, and communicative competence, i.e. the ability to take part in communicative acts as both speaker and recipient. Żmudzki (2013) and Kumpulainen (2016) also underline the importance of the textual competence, i.e. the ability to understand the text as the intended recipient and to transfer the character of the text into the target language, which sometimes entails remodelling the text layout, structure, etc.

Other important skills of a professional translator, highlighted by Gile (2009), are adequate world knowledge, i.e. knowledge of areas and conventions of texts, and a good

command of the principles and techniques of translation. According to Kussmaul (1995), one of the most important among them is the ability to use a wide spectrum of paraphrasing skills, also called intra-linguistic translation. Apart from these competences the EN 15038 standard enumerates translating competence, i.e. the ability to translate in accordance with the client's requirements, information mining competence, i.e. using research tools to retrieve additional linguistic or specified information in order to optimise the target text, and technical competence, i.e. the ability to use hardware and software necessary for efficient translation.

Numerous papers underline the significance of software expertise for the translation competence (e.g. Kelly, 2005; Goudaec, 2007; Gambier, 2009; O'Brien, 2012; Sikora & Walczyński, 2015; Krüger, 2016; Schäffner, 2016). They also point out that the training in the use of the technical tools necessary for translation should constitute an important part of the translator education. According to Gouadec (2007), such introduction to the computer literacy of a professional translator should involve not only the basic version of a translator's workstation, i.e. the combination of word processor, translation memory, terminology management system and the Internet, but also translation tools such as subtitling and localisation software or translation project management systems.

Małgorzewicz (2014) states that translation should be perceived as a decision-making process. Accordingly, the most important skill which should be the objective of translation didactics is the strategic-communicative skill, while the other competences constitute the basis on which this skill is to be developed. Moreover, the instructor should take into consideration the elements of the translation process which are performed semi-automatically as an element of the professional routine, e.g. some text editing practices such as deleting double spaces or tag control.

The translator should take into consideration all the factors which determine the function of the translation, i.e. "the knowledge, expectations, values and norms of the target readers, who are again influenced by the situation they are in and by their culture" (Kussmaul, 1995:149). Depending on the similarity between the source-language-text recipients and the target-language-text recipients the original functions of the whole text or its passages have to be preserved or modified. Accordingly, much attention in translator training should be devoted to a thorough semantic and pragmatic analysis of the text. These elements of the process are time-consuming and might be criticised by those practitioners who underline the importance of the time that translation takes, especially nowadays, when competing translation companies concentrate on speeding up the process (Sikora & Walczyński 2015). However, Kussmaul (1995) remarks that an intensified emphasis put on text analysis

during translator training may result in the internalisation of the most important principles of this analysis. By way of their frequent use during the training stage some conduct algorithms may become automatised, and, as a consequence, the semantic and pragmatic analysis will become less time-consuming for those who completed formal translation training.

For a long time the didactics of translation concentrated much more on the final product, i.e. the translation text, than on the very process of translation (Kubiak 2009). However, nowadays as a result of research done at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g. Kiraly, 2000; Kelly, 2005; Biel, 2011) increased attention is being devoted to the effectiveness of this process and the majority of linguists suggest the use of a process-oriented approach (e.g. Gile, 2009; Płużyczka, 2011; Małgorzewicz, 2014; Sikora & Walczyński, 2015; Schäffner, 2016).

Kubiak (2009) presents several stages of the translation training process which require various attitudes to the cooperation between the lecturer and the students. Initially, this cooperation is based on observation and repetition. Consequently, students can internalise correct problem-solving frameworks without making mistakes, but learning them from other's mistakes. The next stage, called *coaching* by him, is more heuristic. The lecturer supervises the independent work of students on a real translation task and may give hints, e.g. on the terminology or types of sources which should be used. However, students are given more and more independence in decision making. Finally, when the lecturer observes that the correct conceptual framework has been formed, full independence is given to the students.

Kussmaul (1995: 149) claims that translator education is concentrated on building the students' self-confidence through self-awareness. Kiraly (2000: 1) names this element of translator training *empowerment*, i.e. letting the students "acquire the expertise and thus the authority to make professional decisions; assuming responsibility for one's actions; and achieving autonomy to follow path of lifelong learning" (Kiraly, 2000).

Małgorzewicz (2014) remarks that in order to create translator's autonomy it is important to provide the student with sufficient background knowledge on the source language and the target language, cultures, intercultural differences, translation methods and ways of finding the relevant information. Kubiak (2009) adds that while the very process-oriented approach focuses on the translator and not exclusively on the translation text, the future translators will feel more confident about the decisions they make.

Another important aspect when it comes to the translation students' empowerment is the variety of contexts. Kubiak (2009) underlines the importance of confronting the students with various translation tasks which will need using different strategies, as well as encouraging the students to use various methods while translating one text. According to

Weigt (2003), the translation course programme should gradually come from simple LGP (language for general purposes) texts, through press texts and popular-scientific texts in order to finally introduce specialist texts from a given field. However, Kiraly (2000) and Kubiak (2009) state that it is important to confront the learners with authentic translation tasks from the very beginning of the training (even if they are simplified). Małgorzewicz (2014) adds that providing the students with real translation tasks from the very beginning is the best method of developing their creativity. Consequently, the tasks should not be simplified, as solving authentic problems strengthens the students' intuition and gives them experience indispensable on the labour market.

Furthermore, teaching the students a critical approach to own translations is also important in building their awareness and self-confidence as translators (Małgorzewicz, 2014). Kubiak (2009) points out that the lecturer should discuss the final results of the students' work and make them look critically at their own effort even if the translation was done in a proper way. Students should be taught to approach critically also the ready solutions, e.g. the target-language equivalents for official names of institutions, which are not always suggested by professional translators (Małgorzewicz, 2014). The theoretical components introduced through formal education may help the students to avoid some errors as well as to solve particular problems easier and faster (Gile 2009). Accordingly, Małgorzewicz (2014) remarks that the lecturer should demand explanation of the choices made by the students, which improves their awareness of their translation meta-knowledge.

Undoubtedly, it is not possible to avoid mistakes during the training process. Kussmaul (1995) remarks that the majority of translation errors arise from erroneous text analysis. However, not all places which have been classified by the trainer as potentially problematic cause mistakes and certain mistakes are made in seemingly non-problematic fragments, e.g. where language errors occur. It is crucial to show the student what type of error was committed, whether a cultural, situational, illocutionary, semantic or grammatical problem has caused the error. Małgorzewicz (2014) states that the students, when compared to professional translators, display deficits when it comes to creativity, sensitivity to transcultural factors and differences. Moreover, numerous mistakes of translation adepts stem from the lack of a strategic approach to the translation task and holistic assumptions made in the given text. As in any assessment, it is also important to underline the positive aspects of every student's translation and point out the difficulty of the translation problems they have solved correctly. In the case of errors it could be highlighted how difficult a given passage would be for an experienced translator.

## **2.2. Translator education in Poland**

As extensively described by Sikora (2014), the education of translators in Poland most frequently takes place either at universities, at professional translation schools or at private courses and workshops organised by translation agencies and professional associations, e.g. TEPIS – the Polish Society of Sworn and Specialized Translators or STP – the Association of Polish Translators and Interpreters.

The universities offer under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate studies at faculties of applied linguistics or philology. Apart from the very translation process, students at such faculties familiarise themselves with linguistic meta-knowledge in the field of translation studies. In education offered by other institutions the practical guidelines when it comes to the translation process predominate over the meta-knowledge. Moreover, the training there is narrowed down to a particular branch of translation, e.g. legal, medical or technical translation.

Sometimes practical translation classes at universities diverge from the real translation tasks on the labour market, giving only a hint of what the translation process looks like. One of the problems is that not all the translation labs are fitted with computer equipment. Due to this fact the students sometimes have to work on their own devices which they bring from home. In other cases translations are performed in handwriting, which is very rarely the case in real translation tasks. Such classes concentrate exclusively on working with the text and do not present the technical aspect of the translator's workshop.

The computer labs at universities use CAT tools (SDL Trados, MemoQ, DejaVu, etc.), as such software is used most frequently by translation companies. Due to the fact that this software is costly for individual users, numerous faculties purchase a group license for the computer labs and more and more frequently also free activation codes for students. These activities improve the quality of instruction and enable students to experience real working conditions. The use of online localisation platforms, as suggested by Michalak (2015), is extremely rare, but it may introduce variety to practical translation classes.

## **3. The Khan Academy translation on online localisation platform CrowdIn**

The Khan Academy ([www.khanacademy.org](http://www.khanacademy.org)) is an online educational platform which was established by Sal Khan, an MIT graduate who published short videos for his private mathematics lessons on YouTube. Due to their raising popularity, in 2007 Khan decided to create a non-profit organisation with a purpose to provide people all around the world with

free educational materials ([www.khanacademy.org/about/the-team](http://www.khanacademy.org/about/the-team)). The website offers users tutorials and exercises in exact sciences, e.g. chemistry, medicine, computer programming, as well as in humanities, e.g. English grammar, music, history of art. The mathematical section is the most developed among them. Not only is it divided into various subjects, but it also provides materials for various grades of education, from simple arithmetic to the calculus. Figure 1 presents an example of a video tutorial about reduction of arithmetic expressions from the Polish version of the portal.

The screenshot shows the Khan Academy Polish interface. At the top, there is a search bar and the Khan Academy logo. The main content area features a video player with a math problem:  $2(3x + 5)$  and its simplified form  $2(3x)$ . The video player includes a play button, a progress bar, and a volume icon. Below the video player, there is a section titled "Upraszczanie wyrażeń" (Simplifying expressions) with two tabs: "O nas" (About us) and "Transkrypt (w języku angielskim)" (Transcript in English). The transcript text reads: "Znamy już kolejność działań, wiemy też, jak łączyć wyrazy podobne. Dodajmy do tego jeszcze zasadę rozdzielności. Stworzone przez Sal Khan." Below the transcript, there are social media sharing options: "Udostępnij" (Share), "Tweetnij" (Tweet), and "E-mail".

Figure 1. The layout of the Khan Academy portal

Apart from the main mission to provide “a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere” ([www.khanacademy.org/about](http://www.khanacademy.org/about)), the objective of the portal is to enable users to learn at their own pace. All the materials on the portal are available without registration. However, creating an account is free of charge and enables users to save and track their own progress. The portal is also helpful for teachers who can check with which parts of material the students have problems and analyse the average results of the class as well as ones for individual students.

The official translations of the Khan Academy materials into 65 languages are performed by using the localisation management platform Crowdin ([www.crowdin.com](http://www.crowdin.com)). The platform is used by more than 35,000 companies and organisations from various fields, including Microsoft, Reddit, Telefonica, Khan Academy and FIFA, in order to manage their localisation, i.e. translating the content of websites, mobile applications, desktop software and

related assets into various languages and creating content in the target language versions. The platform helps in organising the process with translators who have been hired by the customer. It also gives an opportunity to find professional translators for the project among those involved in other projects being performed for other Crowdin customers. Alternatively, the customer may choose the method of *crowdsourcing*, i.e. giving the very users of the application or website the opportunity to co-create its language version in their mother tongue. The term ‘crowdsourcing’ is formed as a blend of the words *crowd* and *outsourcing*.

A great advantage of the platform is its instant translation preview, including the final layout of the website with all the materials, links, pictures and videos, and real time content updates (cf. Figure 2.). Thanks to this view the translator knows where the particular translation segment belongs to and can decide, e.g. where the text needs to be reduced due to the window size. Additionally, this enables translators to find their own mistakes and it facilitates the process of proofreading.

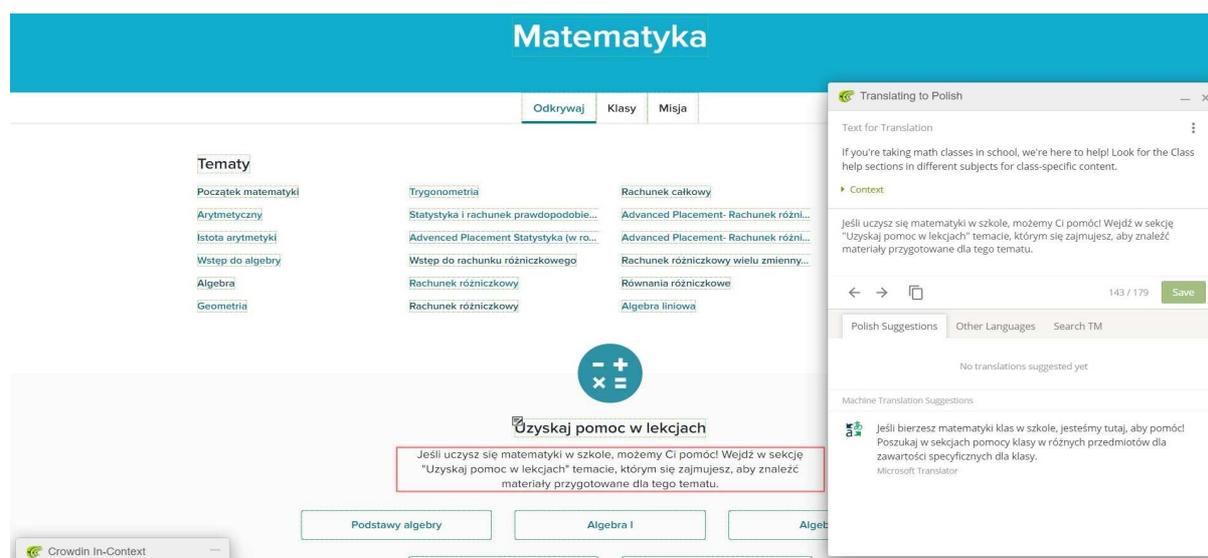


Figure 2. The instant translation preview in Crowdin localisation platform

The layout of the interface is lucid. In fact, this translation tool could be used even on a tablet or a smartphone, as it is operated in a Web browser. However, on smaller screens the sizes of interface windows would not render a comfortable translation possible.

Unlike in the case of numerous CAT tools, the use of the Crowdin localisation platform is free of charge for translators, only the source language content provider pays for the use of the portal. The tool offers the translator numerous functions characteristic for commercial software. Each project has its translation memory, where the accepted translations

are stored. Moreover, the operation memory of the portal groups together segments with a high degree of similarity; the *patterns* could be viewed by using the option *Group by pattern*, as presented in Figure 3. The function *Smart translation* (marked with a ⚡) enables the translator to automatically translate the segments which differ from the ones included in the memory only with some data items, e.g. the graphic file, the numbers or first names appearing in the exercise instructions. The use of this function considerably speeds up the translation.

The screenshot shows the Crowdin interface for an exercise titled "adding-decimals-without-the-standard-algorithm-6". The main view is "Group by pattern", showing a list of segments. Each segment has an original English version and a translated Polish version. A "Smart translation" icon (lightning bolt) is present next to the "Add 14 smart translations" button. The right-hand side shows a translation window with machine translation suggestions from Microsoft Translator, including a 93% match for a Polish translation of the original text.

Figure 3. The “Group by pattern” view in Crowdin localisation platform

This function is similar to auto-population in other CAT tools, i.e. the possibility to pre-translate some segments in accordance with their similarity to the content of the translation memory. However, sometimes the algorithms of this platform fail to identify all similar segments and some of them have to be translated manually. The fact that Polish is an inflectional language also hampers the usability of this function as is the case of segments presented in Figure 3, where two case endings are necessary; nonetheless, the correction of the segments is faster than when translating each of them manually.

Other functions characteristic for CAT tools and facilitating the translation process are the possibility of inserting the original segment (marked with a □) or terms from the glossary – in Figure 3 underlined with a dotted line, one is highlighted in yellow – which could also be filled-in by translators. Moreover, even if the segment was not grouped in a *pattern*, Crowdin also shows the most similar fragments from the translation memory, and it suggests a machine translation (cf. the right-hand bottom part of Figure 3).

In case of difficulties the translators can discuss them on a forum with their more experienced colleagues. Alternatively, they can check the translations of a particular segment into other languages, as shown in Figure 4. This function is helpful for those translators who know more foreign languages, and it enables them to see how other translators have coped with a particular problem.

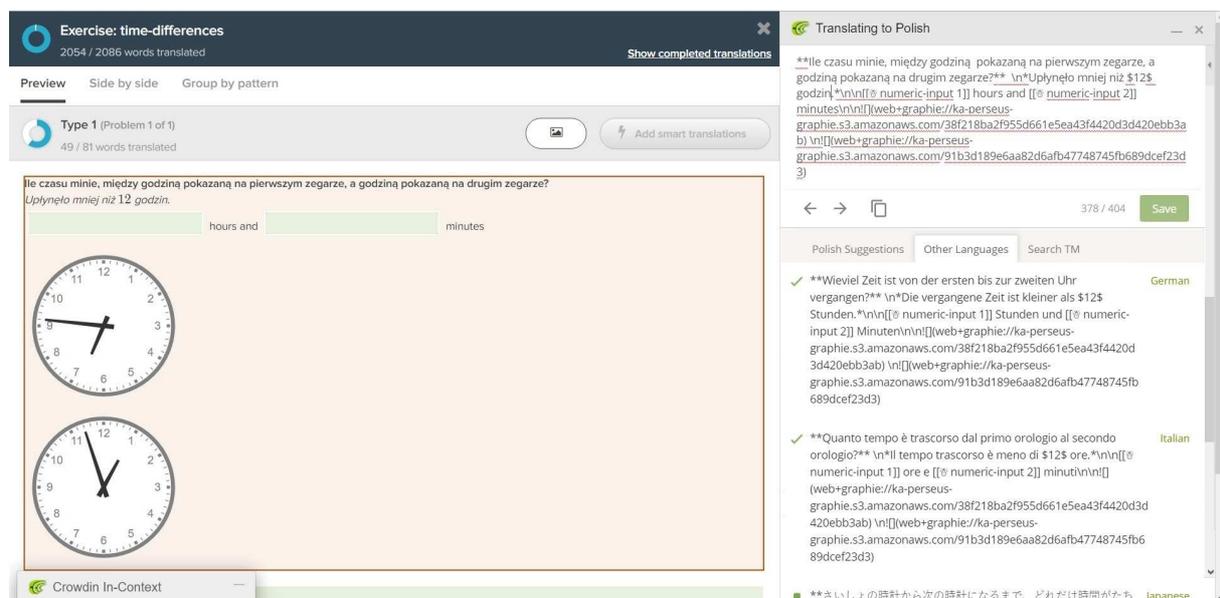


Figure 4. Checking other target-language versions in Crowdin localisation platform

The translators using the Crowdin platform should take into consideration the HTML code tags, underlined in red in Figure 4, as the fragments of the original which should never be omitted or modified. Unlike CAT software, Crowdin does not enable to copy them automatically. This may pose an inconvenience, especially for beginning translators; however, it may be used as an educational asset for teaching website content translations, as the users learn how important tags are in that they see that any error in copying them may disorganise the text and render it incomprehensible. Due to these elements, translating graphic files is also quite onerous in Crowdin localisation platform.

Sometimes the translation segments are longer than one sentence, which may pose some inconvenience, the more that it is not possible for the translator to segment the text and merge fragments on their own (unlike in CAT software). Fortunately, sentences are hardly ever split into two segments.

#### **4. The implementation of the Khan Academy project on the Crowdin online localisation platform in translator education**

Due to their online nature, localisation platforms such as Crowdin could be successfully implemented in both in-class and Internet translation courses. Using them at university classes would enable students to receive course credits without the necessity of full attendance, which might be a convenient solution for them.

Moreover, nowadays numerous smaller translation projects (especially for non-profit organisations) are performed via such online localisation platforms. This is not a considerable part of the translation market. However, introducing such translation tools to the curriculum would undoubtedly broaden the students' experience and help to develop their empowerment by adding new real-world translation tasks.

The fact that the tool is operated in a Web browser and requires no installation, consequently it occupies no space on the hard disc of the device which is used to operate it, makes this tool considerably accessible. This is an important advantage of Crowdin, especially at the faculties facing a deficit of computer equipment in the translation labs, as is sometimes the case at some higher education institutions (cf. section 1.2.).

Working with online localisation platforms could be situated somewhere in between independent translation, performed with the use of the text editor and dictionaries, and computer-assisted translation, performed by using professional software. This is because localisation platforms possess some of the features and functionalities of CAT tools, but frequently in a simplified form. Also, the interface of the Crowdin localisation platform is not excessively complex. Therefore, familiarising translation students with the principles of its work is not a time-consuming process. Consequently, this software meets the *learnability* criterion of Krüger's CAT tools usability model, i.e. the aspect of "how easily new users can familiarise themselves with a given software system" (Krüger, 2016:131). Due to this the platform could be applied as an introduction to the use of commercial CAT software, helping the students to understand the principles of the functioning of those more complex tools.

Furthermore, the Crowdin Khan Academy translation project could be used even in the early stages of translator university education. It could be implemented as a way of introducing specialised vocabulary in a given field during academic classes. The simple one-sentence translation segments, which are frequent in mathematical tasks available within this project, could also be used for practical testing of internalised vocabulary, e.g. at classes devoted to scientific vocabulary. Undoubtedly, that type of testing should always be preceded by an introductory explanation of the functioning of the platform. Such a form of testing

would both check the vocabulary and teach the students practical skills. Moreover, the platform facilitates the assessment process, since each translated segment is assigned to the translator who translated it.

Another possible application of Crowdin is using it in more theoretical classes in translation studies, where other language versions could be used for presenting as well as developing various translation methods and strategies, e.g. the “salami” method, i.e. dividing one complex sentence into shorter ones, or antonymous translation, i.e. using a negated antonym of the target-language equivalent of the original phrase. The various language versions of one content item could also be used during contrastive grammar classes in order to show differences of expressing one idea in the two juxtaposed languages.

The fact that the translation memory apart from the source-language items and the default target-language items also includes other target-language segments could be very useful for training students at faculties of applied linguistics, where they usually specialise in two foreign languages simultaneously.

The variety of views offered by Crowdin localisation platform is undoubtedly its great asset. This function renders it possible to show translation adepts multifarious modes of work with the translated material. The possibility of translating every segment in the context of the whole translated content is very important to ensure the proper quality in localisation, the more so because on Polish localisation market the localisers are sometimes compelled to translate the segments out of context due to the policies of publishers, e.g. in the video games industry (cf. <http://innpoland.pl/129995,zapomnij-wszystko-co-wiedziales-o-tlumaczeniach>).

## **5. Conclusions**

Online localisation platforms could be used in the initial training programmes, i.e. for students who have had no contact with professional translation, rather than in further training programmes (cf. the distinction between the two notions in Gile, 2009: 11). However, taking into consideration the claim by Gouadec (2007) that optimising the translation skills is a life-long process, familiarising oneself with any new tool is also advisable for experienced translators.

The Khan Academy project on the Crowdin localisation platform illustrates a great educational potential of such translation tools and could be used in various translator training contexts. Due to its lucid interface it requires no time-consuming introduction. Despite the fact that the platform lacks several features present in commercial CAT software, e.g. the tag control, dividing and merging the segments, it shows the most important work principles of

these translation tools, such as translation memory, glossary or auto-population (the *Smart Translation* function).

Furthermore, the localisation project described is suitable for translation training. The diversity of difficulty levels of the materials comprising the content of the portal renders it possible to use the Khan Academy project on Crowdin platform at all stages of translator education, e.g. as introduction to CAT tools, at scientific English vocabulary classes, at contrastive grammar classes or at online content localisation classes. Due to the international character of the project it could be used not only for translations from English into Polish but also into other languages taught at faculties of applied linguistics, e.g., German, Italian or Russian.

Another characteristic feature which calls for the application of the platform in translation training is its accessibility. The tool is free of charge for the translators (only the content provider pays for using Crowdin) and it is operated through a Web browser, which renders it possible to use Crowdin on any mobile device with Internet access.

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