

PERCEPTION OF TRANSLATOR STATUS AMONG STUDENTS OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dorotea Sinković

Abstract

This paper presents a survey of the perception of translator status among graduate students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. The study included 126 respondents belonging to three groups – students of translation, students of modern languages but not of translation, and non-philology students. The research method used was an online questionnaire. Following Dam and Zethsen (2008, 2009), the statements were formulated to examine the four categories used to operationalize status – education, visibility, salary and occupational prestige. The primary objectives of the study were to investigate the students' perception toward translation as a profession, as well as to draw conclusions about the influence of study programmes on the respondents' attitudes by analysing possible patterns in their answers. The results indicate that non-philology students perceive translation as an average-status occupation, while both the students of languages and translation students perceive translation as an occupation of high status, with only a slight difference in their ratings.

1. Introduction

The present paper is the result of a survey on the perception of translator status conducted among the graduate students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. The main aim of the study was to obtain an idea of how the students saw translators and what knowledge regarding the translation profession they had.

As a translation student and an occasional translator, I have often encountered misunderstandings that people outside the industry have about the role of translators and the skills required to become one. In contemporary society, there is a general lack of understanding and appreciation for the job that

translators do. And, as if the general public's widespread misconceptions about the translation profession were not damaging enough, from one glance at the literature on the topic we can easily conclude that it generally focuses on the negative aspects of the translation profession as well:

[...] [the] literature draws a rather negative picture of the state of the profession and the working conditions of translators. Translation has, for example, been described as a peripheral, low-status, unskilled and poorly paid occupation, whereas translators have been characterised as invisible, isolated, unappreciated and powerless [...] (Dam and Zethsen 2016: n.p.)

It is rather odd that translators receive so little respect for the job they do in an age of globalisation and mass communications, where "[t]ranslation activities play a bridging and bounding role in promoting social progress, economic growth and cultural communication" (Wei 2014: 90). However, there are several possible reasons for such a state of affairs. From the very beginnings of translation studies and translation theory, there has always been a lot of discussion on whether translations should be identifiable as such, which has, almost naturally, put translators in a position of invisibility (Lesser 2002: n.p.). More often than not translators are perceived as "[...] shadows [...] whose highest aim is to remain at the very margin of visibility" (Lesser 2002: n.p.). Moreover, in most European countries, there are no academic or other formal qualifications required in order for someone to use the term *translator*. Anyone can call themselves a translator, which leads to the conclusion that the profession is lacking any form of institutional protection (Pym et al. 2012: 20).

Furthermore, in the last two decades, and with the emergence of sociology of translation, translation scholars have begun to investigate translators' position in society, but most research studies have mainly centred around translators' perceptions of their status. I believe that students, being educated members of the community, as well as future professionals, can contribute the most to positive changes in the industry, which is the main reason I have decided to focus my research on students' perception of translator status. The results of the survey are analysed in terms of students' attitudes regarding translator education and salary, the role and importance of translators in everyday life, as well as the prestige of the translation profession.

2. Previous research

Even though translator status is still a topic that does not arouse much interest among translation scholars, there are several research studies conducted by the experts in the field that give a valuable insight into the topic. Danish researchers Helle V. Dam and Karen Korning Zethsen have probably given the greatest contribution to research on translator status in the last decade. They conducted five closely related studies in which they analysed translators' perception regarding their income, education and expertise, visibility, as well as power and influence. They gathered responses from 47 company translators, 66 agency translators, 131 freelance translators and 63 staff translators working at the European Union, all of whom evaluated their occupational status through questionnaire-based surveys. Their findings showed that all translators, with the exception of EU translators, had lower average income than other similar professional groups. Moreover, all four groups of translators had a high level of education and saw translation as a profession that requires a high level of expertise, even though they rated their social and professional visibility, as well as their power and influence as low. For the purpose of my research, I have focused on Dam and Zethsen's 2008 and 2009 studies. The study that they conducted in 2009 is a continuation of their research on the status of Danish company translators in 2008. The aim of the 2008 study was to investigate the perception of translator status among in-house translators, as well as other employees of the companies in which Dam and Zethsen conducted their survey. They developed two sets of questionnaires, one for the company translators, and the other for the so-called core employees. The questionnaires contained questions that closely regarded the four parameters that the authors had previously identified as essential indicators of status—salary, education/expertise, visibility and power/influence. They gathered responses from 49 core employees and 47 translators, and the results showed that translation was perceived as a low-status profession both by the translators and core employees.

In their 2009 study, Dam and Zethsen devoted their attention to what they call "clear low-status" and "clear high-status" ratings, which were drawn from the 2008 questionnaire data. They focused on finding possible correlations between those ratings and the information gathered from the respondents' answers that

concerned demographic parameters, parameters indicating professional identity as well as the four status parameters, and, subsequently, on identifying the factors that influenced the perception of translator status. The analysis of the data indicated that both translators' and core employees' perception of translation as a high-status occupation tended to decrease with age. When it comes to gender, male core employees perceived translation mainly as a low-status profession, while female core employees perceived it as a high-status profession. No correlation between status perception and gender could be found among the answers provided by the translators. The researchers did not find any correlations between high-status perceptions and professional identity, either, even though the translators who had state authorisation and spent most of their working hours translating rarely characterised translation as a low-status profession. Moreover, translators with higher salaries perceived translation as a low status profession less frequently than translators with lower salaries, but no significant correlation was found between high-status assessments and salary levels. When it comes to education and expertise, the core employees did not seem to be concerned with the level of education and expertise required to translate, but what was important to them was the confidence in the quality of the final product. Furthermore, the degree of contact with other professionals working in their companies was found to be of great importance to translators, whereas they viewed power and influence as factors that did not affect their occupational prestige at all. What they noted as important was the degree of responsibility they had, as well as the level of appreciation they got for their work.

Following the example of her Danish colleagues, Minna Ruokonen (2016) conducted a survey on translation status and its parameters among translation students in Finland. She gathered 277 responses from students enrolled in translation programmes at five Finnish universities. The data was collected by means of an online questionnaire, which was based on Dam and Zethsen's questionnaires for professional translators and further adapted to fit the context of the respondents, that is, the students. The author decided to focus her research on four parameters that can correlate with status perception—income, expertise, visibility and power. The results of the study showed that Finnish students perceived translator status and visibility as average, while the average

income earned by translators was estimated as low. On the other hand, the students believed that a high level of expertise was required to become a professional translator. When it comes to power, that is, the influence translators have, students stated that translators had a high degree of influence on the quality of their translations and on their clients. It is interesting to note that most of the respondents cited translators' associations, translators themselves, as well as their clients to have the most influence on the development of translator status in society. The researcher drew the conclusion that the students' perception of translator status was similar to the one of professional translators – they were aware of the expertise required to become a professional translator, but they also believed that the outsiders did not recognise nor acknowledge it sufficiently. However, Ruokonen stated that Finnish students were still optimistic and convinced that translator associations and translators, by working together, could improve translator status in society.

Other researchers who have contributed to the topic are Jungwha Choi and Hyang-ok Lim (2002), Rakefet Sela-Sheffy (2006, 2008, 2010), David Katan (2009), as well as Robin Setton and Alice Guo Liangliang (2011). Jungwha Choi and Hyang-ok Lim (2002) gave an overview of translation and interpretation as professions in Korea, explaining the position and status of translators and interpreters in Korean society at the beginning of the 21st century. Since proficiency in English was a highly appreciated asset in any profession in Korea, interpreters were greatly valued and they had relatively high salaries. However, the average age of Korean interpreters was thirty because, interestingly enough, interpretation was not considered as a profession to which one should dedicate their entire career, but rather as an occasional job that brought a substantial extra income. In the case of translation, even though the need for translators was constantly growing, they did not enjoy high status and they had relatively low salaries. The authors attributed the reason of this lack of social recognition to the influence of Confucianism in Korean society, in which translators belonged to the service sector and were even less appreciated than, for example, merchants.

In her research, Rakefet Sela-Sheffy (2006, 2008, 2010) focused on the collective self-images of Israeli literary and non-literary translators, as well as on the ways in which they created their self-presentational discourses and status-enhancing strategies. In order to establish themselves as professionals and

advance their occupational prestige, Israeli translators adopted two types of strategies. While non-literary translators aspired to professionalism and institutionalisation of their profession, literary translators opted for a rather interesting approach in building their reputation. Seeking recognition as artists, they developed their public personae and presented themselves as cultural custodians and people of art.

David Katan (2009) carried out a global survey whose aim was to investigate the habitus of translators. He gathered around 1000 responses from professional translators and interpreters, scholars, as well as translation and interpretation students. The results showed that both translators and interpreters had a strong sense of responsibility towards the original text and the final product, whereas their readers and other clients did not seem to be of any significant importance to them. Moreover, they did not ascribe a great deal of importance to translation theory, even though scholars were rather convinced that the theory was indispensable for the work that professional translators do. It is interesting to note that the translators perceived themselves as having low professional status, while the interpreters, on the other hand, saw themselves as high-status professionals.

Robin Setton and Alice Guo Liangliang (2011) conducted the first survey on the translation profession, status perception and job satisfaction in the context of Chinese and Taiwanese translators and interpreters. The ever-growing importance of China in the global economy created a demand for translation and interpreting, which led to the development of formal training, certification and research activity. Both translators and interpreters had fairly high salaries and were satisfied with their jobs, even though interpreters enjoyed higher status than translators. Furthermore, the researchers stated that most respondents had a modest perception of their contribution to society, and tended to reduce the importance of their role as cultural mediators.

3. Theoretical framework and key concepts

In order to understand the disciplinary context of the present research, we must first explain the development of sociology of translation. Since, at the beginning, translation studies was a branch of applied linguistics, translation research

mostly focused on linguistic analyses of texts, “[...] ignor[ing] the cognitive, social and cultural constraints under which translators operate” (Prunč 2007: 40). When translation studies became established as a separate academic discipline in the 1960s, and particularly after the so-called cultural turn in the 1990s, the concept of the social nature of translation gained more prominence, eventually allowing for the growth of the importance of the translator as well. The focus shifted from the translation product to the role that translators have in the construction of cultures. Scholars started studying various social contexts of translation activities and soon efforts were made “[...] to methodologically frame translation and its contexts as a social practice [...]” (Wolf 2007: 2). The idea of translation as a social practice was then further developed and incorporated into the framework of sociology of translation, a sub-discipline of translation studies that “[...] centres on the social nature of translation, aiming at promoting reciprocity between translation and society” (Wei 2014: 88). Some of the most prominent scholars in the field are Andre Lefevere, Lawrence Venuti, Theo Hermans, Daniel Simeoni and Michaela Wolf, to name a few.

Since sociology of translation is one of the most recently developed areas of translation studies, its full extent and content are yet to be determined, which makes it a fertile ground for the development of new and innovative research topics. One of such topics is that of the status of translation as a profession and of translators as professionals. The present research focuses on the perception of translators, with the terms *profession* and *status* being central for the understanding of the phenomenon.

Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines the term *profession* as “any type of work that needs special training or a particular skill, often one that is respected because it involves a high level of education.” While the most basic definition is sufficient for obtaining a general idea about the jobs that can bear the title of a profession, a more detailed explanation is necessary in order to describe the issue of seeing translation as a profession. According to Benveniste (1977: n.p., cited in Robinson 2007: 39), “[a] profession is an occupation that requires the application of skills based on technical knowledge, advanced education and training, formal testing of competence, controlled admission, professional associations, code of conduct and sense of responsibility to serving the public.” As it was previously mentioned, the main issue with acknowledging

translation as a legitimate profession, instead of a mere side job that anyone with the knowledge of a foreign language can venture into, is the lack of some of the above cited requisites. An education founded on theory and practice, prominent institutional bodies and professional certification are some of the elements that should play the most important role in establishing translation as a legitimate profession.

Since there is no singular and precise definition of the term *status* within the field of translation research, the present study will adopt the concept which is described and explained in the report *The Status of the Translation Profession in the European Union*. Pym and his co-authors (2012: 11) define status as “[...] the set of social signals that create, first, the presumption of some kind of expertise, and second, the presumed value of that expertise.” It is important to underline the fact that status is therefore seen as “[...] the presumed value of expert skills, rather than the skills themselves” (2012: 3). Furthermore, translator status is an aggregate of many elements, so people with high status are usually associated with values such as trustworthiness, prestige, authority, higher pay and a degree of professional exclusivity (Ibid.). Translators therefore see status as something that needs to be obtained along with the actual translation skills. In other words, translators need to know how to translate, but they also need to know how to present their skills to potential employers (2012: 12). The clients, on the other hand, depend on different social signals of status that rank translators as professionals. Signals such as trustworthiness, rates of pay, recognition and prestige are usually the deciding factors since “[...] someone who needs a translator cannot judge objectively how well that translator performs” (2012: 9). This brings us to the most important point when it comes to translator status. The status of an individual translator should never be understood as their translating abilities since “[i]t concerns the perception of a translator’s value – what people think a particular translator can do, and how well or badly the translator is assumed to do it” (Ibid.), rather than what a translator can in fact do.

Moreover, in order to conduct research regarding status, we must first establish the means of rating status as such. The approach selected for evaluating and measuring status perceptions for the purposes of the present study is the one that was first introduced by Dam and Zethsen in their 2008 and

2009 studies. Dam and Zethsen established four categories that they saw as clear indicators of status: salary, education/expertise, visibility and power/influence. Salary is often seen as one of the most important status parameters, even though in the case of the translation profession it is not necessarily the crucial element, since the literature shows that translation remains a low-status profession despite average salaries (Dam and Zethsen 2009: 14). Education and the development of expert skills are important elements as well since, from the point of view of potential clients, they are the signals that guarantee the quality of translators' work (2009: 18). Power and influence that certain professions are known to have are the elements that are, along with salary, most often seen as essential indicators of high status. For the sake of clarity, I have decided to refer to this category as *occupational prestige*, and view it as the social value that translation has in comparison with other professions. Lastly, the category of visibility is somewhat modified in order to adjust it to the context of the research. For this category, Dam and Zethsen (2009: 21-22) intend both physical visibility, that is the location of translators' work space with regard to other employees, and professional visibility, which is understood as the level of professional contact that the translators involved in their research had with other employees. However, in the present study it denotes the importance that the translation profession has for the day-to-day functioning of communities and society in general.

4. Objectives and hypotheses

As it was previously mentioned, most studies regarding translators' occupational prestige generally focus on translators' and their clients' perceptions of translator status. The literature suggests that, from the point of view of the general public, the translation profession is characterized as having relatively inferior status (Sela-Sheffy 2008: 609), while research studies on translators' job satisfaction indicate that translators are mostly content with their jobs (Dam and Zethsen 2016: n.p.). However, the attitudes of the younger generation, that is of translation students and their colleagues, are usually neglected by researchers. For that reason the present study focuses on students' perceptions of translator status.

The main objectives of the present study are therefore to investigate students' perception of the translation profession, to detect potential similarities and differences in the answers provided by the three groups of respondents (students of translation, students of modern languages, and non-philology students), as well as to determine the extent to which different graduate degree programmes and exposure to translation-related courses influence the respondents' views.

The four hypotheses that stem from the main objectives and that are examined in the study are the following:

1. Non-philology students perceive translation as a profession of low occupational status.
2. Modern languages students perceive translation as a profession of high occupational status.
3. First-year translation students have a higher perception of the translation profession than second- (final)-year translation students.
4. Translation students change their perception of the translation profession as they acquire professional experience.

5. Methodology

The present research was conducted with the aim of gathering information about students' perception of translation as a profession and translators as professionals. It is a respondent-oriented study that sought to collect and analyse attitudes and opinions of graduate students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb regarding translator status. The approach used for investigating students' perceptions was mixed qualitative and quantitative, and the data was collected by means of an online questionnaire.

5.1 Data collection

The data was gathered via an online questionnaire¹ that was partially based on an existing survey and adapted to conform to the context and the needs of the

¹ The questionnaire can be found in the Appendix.

present research. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was designed to elicit the respondents' attitudes and opinions regarding translator status, and it comprised of statements and open-ended questions. The eight statements were followed by a seven-point Likert scale, with the end values being *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (7). The statements were formulated to examine the four categories used to operationalize status – education, visibility, salary and occupational prestige. The decision to use a seven-point Likert scale was made in order to enable the respondents to rank their answers as precisely as possible. The four indicators of status listed above were adopted from Dam and Zethsen's 2008 and 2009 surveys, even though their original questionnaire was not consulted during the preparation of the present study. Furthermore, every Likert item was followed by an open-ended question in order to give the respondents the opportunity to explain their closed-ended answers in more detail. The second part of the questionnaire served to collect general information on the respondents, which included gender, year of study, degree programme and work experience in translation, if any. The acquisition of background information was important for establishing potential correlations with the questions from the first part of the questionnaire during the data analysis. The questionnaire was made available online during the period from November 2016 to January 2017. The link to the questionnaire was distributed in several ways. It was sent to an internal mailing list containing e-mail addresses of most of the students enrolled at the Faculty, and it was shared via a distance learning platform, in closed online groups that bring together students of various degree programmes, as well as through personal contacts. The estimated time required to complete the questionnaire was 20 minutes.

5.2 *The respondents*

Since the main idea of the present study was to gain an insight into translator status from a relatively new perspective, which does not include either professional translators or their clients, students seemed to be the most appropriate choice. All the students who participated in the survey were at the time enrolled in various graduate programmes at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences consists of 23 departments, which offer undergraduate and graduate, single- and double-

major programmes. The areas of study include a wide range of languages, as well as non-philology programmes. Even though it would be interesting to find out the opinions and attitudes regarding the translation profession of all students attending the Faculty, the decision was made to focus exclusively on graduate students, the main limitation being the lack of translation-related programmes on the undergraduate level. The graduate students who decided to take part in the survey were guaranteed anonymity and were further grouped into three categories – students of translation, students of modern languages but not of translation, and non-philology students. At this point, it has to be explained that students with double majors were placed in categories depending on whether they were language or translation students or not. To give an example, if a student stated that they were studying Anthropology and English, they were placed in the category of modern languages students. Similarly, a student studying Italian Literature and Culture and French Translation was placed in the category of translation students.

Initially, the overall number of respondents who decided to take part in the online survey was 135. However, after the data were analysed, the number decreased to 126 respondents in total since five respondents were undergraduate students, and other four respondents did not provide information about their degree programme, so their responses could not be properly analysed. Of the 126 respondents, 87% (109 respondents) were women and 13% (17 respondents) were men. It is important to note that the ratio of first- and second-year graduate students was almost equal, with 48% (61 respondents) of respondents being first-year graduate students and 52% (65 respondents) being second-year graduate students.

The first category of respondents, non-philology students, comprised 30 respondents (24% of the overall sample). The category of modern languages students consisted of 44 respondents (35%), while the category of translation students included 52 respondents (41%). The reason for such an uneven ratio of respondents lies in the fact that the majority of the students enrolled at the Faculty usually study at least one language, which is reflected in the rather low number of non-philology students that participated in the survey. The high number of translation students that participated in the survey possibly indicates

that they had the greatest interest in the topic since it was closely related to their future profession.

In the category of non-philology students, 53% of the respondents were first-year graduate students, while 47% were second-year graduate students. Regarding the study programmes, 90% of the respondents were single-major students, while 10% were double major students.

In the category of modern languages students, 45% of the respondents were first-year graduate students, while 55% were second-year graduate students. Regarding the study programmes, 45% of the respondents were double-major students enrolled in two philology programmes, 18% were single-major students enrolled in a philology programme, while 37% were double-major students enrolled in one philology programme and one non-philology programme.

In the category of translation students, 48% of the respondents were first-year graduate students, while 52% were second-year graduate students. Moreover, 23% of the respondents were double-major students enrolled in two translation programmes, 52% were double-major students enrolled in a translation programme and another philology programme, while 25% were double-major students enrolled in a translation programme and a non-philology programme.

5.3 *Data analysis*

Data analysis consisted of three procedures, depending on the type of data. The quantitative data was first used to calculate the mean values of the answers, which were rounded to two decimal places. In addition, the responses on the seven-point Likert scale were grouped in the following manner: the responses 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 2 were categorised as low agreement, the responses 3, 4 and 5 as average agreement, while the responses 6 and 7 (*strongly agree*) were categorised as high agreement. Furthermore, the qualitative data was summarized and organized into thematic categories that best represented the answers, that is, the views and opinions provided by the respondents in replies to open-ended questions.

6. Results

The first part of this chapter is dedicated to the structure of the respondents and of their work experience in translation, while the second part focuses on the respondents' opinions and attitudes. Their opinions and attitudes are grouped around the following categories: education, visibility, salary and occupational prestige. At the end of the chapter, the most common elements are listed that the respondents cited as having major importance in the formation of their individual perception of the translation profession.

6.1 *The respondents' work experience in translation*

When it comes to work experience in translation, affirmative answers were present in all three groups of respondents (Fig. 1).

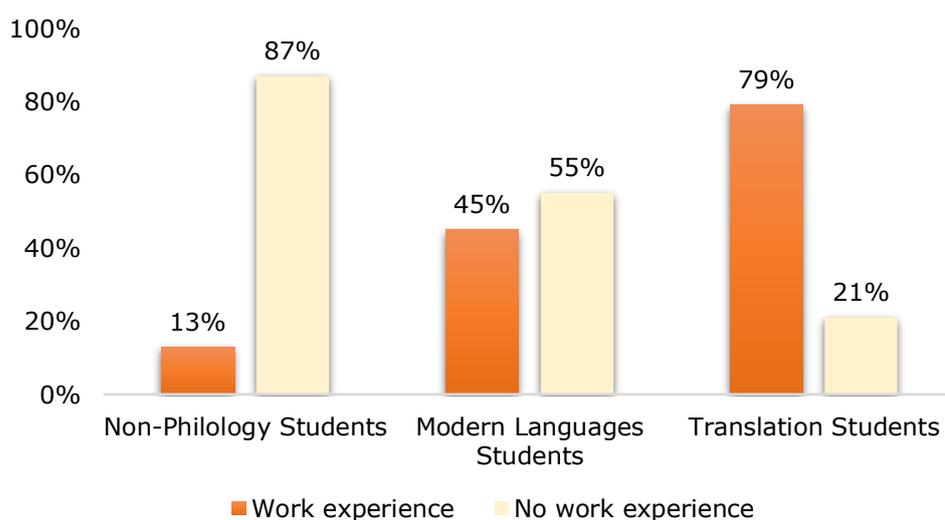


Figure 1 – Work experience in translation, all respondents

As hypothesised, the highest number of respondents who reported having some work experience in the field was recorded among the translation students, while the respondents with the least experience in the field were non-philology students. Among non-philology students, 13% reported having some work experience in translation, which included volunteering, internships and part-time jobs. In the category of philology students, 45% had work experience in translation, which included part-time jobs, occasional non-paid jobs, full-time jobs, volunteering and internships. In the group of translation students, 79%

had work experience in the field, which included internships, volunteering, student jobs, as well as occasional-non paid jobs.

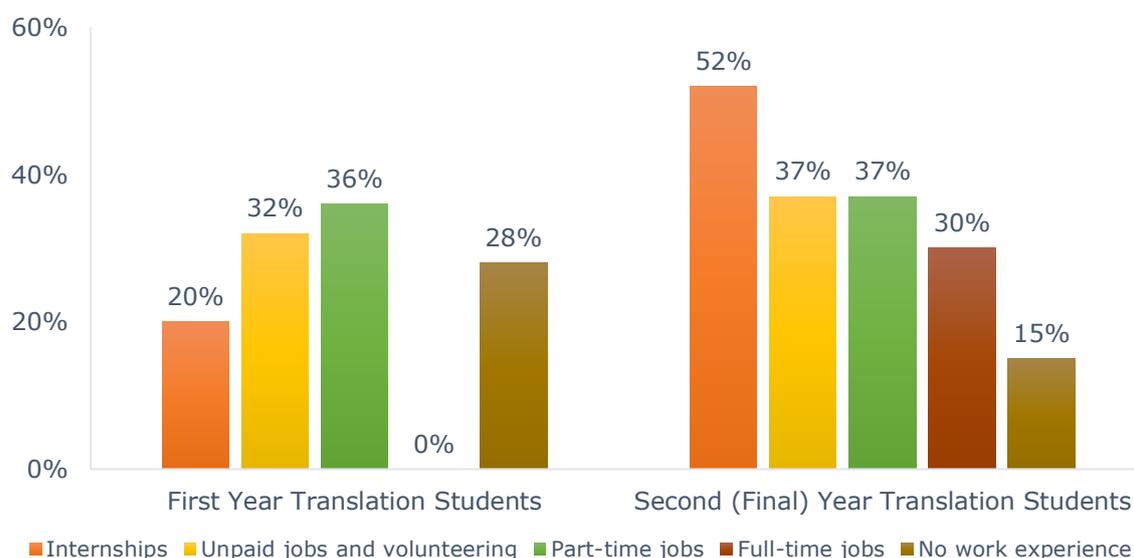


Figure 2 – Work experience in translation, translation students

Furthermore, the analysis of the responses provided by first-year and second-year translation students showed that 72% of first-year translation students and 85% of their older colleagues had work experience in translation. While the percentage of the respondents with work experience is high in both groups of translation students, it has to be noted that most of the first-year translation students reported having part-time translation jobs (36%), as well as occasional unpaid jobs (32%) (Fig. 2). Moreover, 20% of them acquired translation experience through internships, whereas 28% reported having no experience in the field. On the other hand, the majority of second-year translation students gained translation experience through internships (52%), occasional unpaid jobs and volunteering (37%), as well as by working part-time (37%). In addition, 15% reported having no work experience, while 30% had full-time jobs in translation, which presents the major difference in comparison with first-year students, none of whom reported having a full-time translation job.

6.2 Quantitative analysis: overall results

As it was already mentioned, the first part of the questionnaire consisted of several statements regarding education required of translators, their visibility, salary and occupational prestige, as well as a hypothetical statement. Each of the statements was followed by a seven-point Likert scale, on which the respondents rated the degree of their agreement with the given statement (Table 1). The statements were the following:

1. Translators must hold a university degree.
2. Translators must hold a degree in languages.
3. Translators must hold a degree in translation.
4. Anyone with a knowledge of one or several foreign languages can take up translation as a job.
5. Translator services are indispensable for daily functioning of individuals and communities.
6. Translators earn above-average salaries.
7. Translation is a highly appreciated profession (similar to medicine, law, etc.).
8. I would use the services of an unqualified translator whose rates are lower than the rates of a qualified translator.

Table 1. Mean values of the respondents' answers

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Non-Philology Students	6.13	5.43	4.10	3.97	5.10	3.40	2.90	3.30
Modern Languages Students	6.25	5.93	4.00	4.00	5.45	3.34	2.73	2.59
Translation Students	6.41	6.20	4.80	3.31	6.10	2.92	2.57	2.29
All Respondents	6.26	5.85	4.30	3.76	5.55	3.22	2.73	2.73

When it comes to the first three statements, regarding education required of translators, the mean values of the respondents' replies show that all three groups of respondents expressed the highest agreement with the first statement (university degree) and the lowest agreement with the third statement (degree

in translation). Translation students have the highest mean values for all the three statements. It is also interesting to note that, for the first two statements, the mean values of the respondents' answers increase with the degree of exposure to translation-related courses. However, when it comes to the third statement ("Translators must hold a degree in translation"), philology students who are not translation students express lower agreement than non-philology students. This is most likely so because they see themselves as potential translators, even though they are not enrolled in a translation programme. A similar situation can be observed with regard to the fourth statement.

Regarding the fifth statement ("Translator services are indispensable for daily functioning of individuals and communities"), the mean agreement ratings of non-philology and philology students are quite similar, while those of translation students are moderately higher.

Regarding the last three statements, the mean values of the respondents' replies are inversely proportional to the degree of exposure to translation-related courses. Now we will look at the replies in more detail.

6.3 Education required of translators

The first four statements of the questionnaire were related to the education required of translators. This is a category that consisted of most survey items since the present research was carried out in the context of higher education, and therefore it was considered highly important to gain a precise insight into the respondents' opinions on education that is required in order for someone to become a translator. The statements were the following:

1. Translators must hold a university degree;
2. Translators must hold a degree in languages;
3. Translators must hold a degree in translation;
4. Anyone with a knowledge of one or several foreign languages can take up translation as a job.

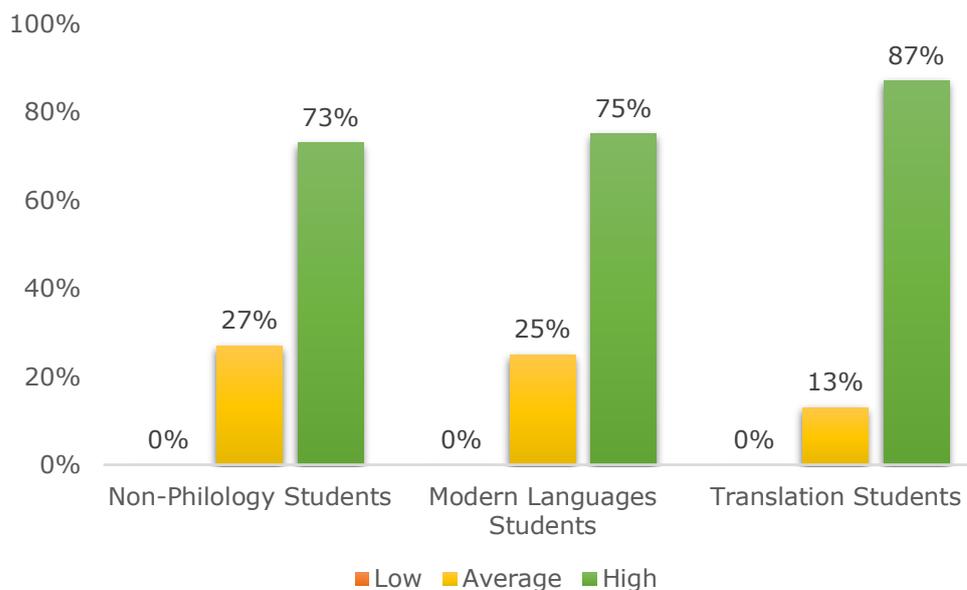


Figure 3 – “Translators must hold a university degree”, all respondents

In all three groups of respondents, the majority expressed high agreement with the first statement, that translators should hold a university degree (Fig. 3).

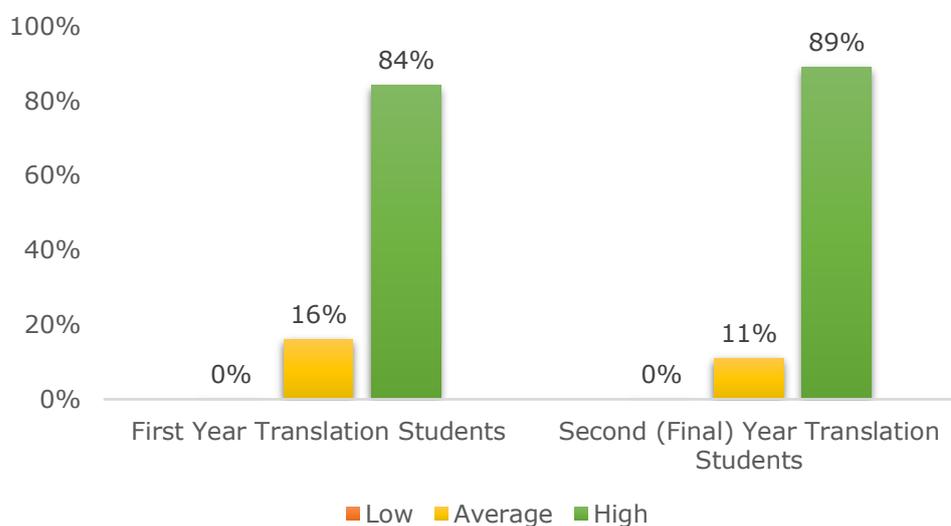


Figure 4 – “Translators must hold a university degree”, translation students

The results further show that both first- and second-year translation students expressed high agreement with the first statement (Fig. 4).

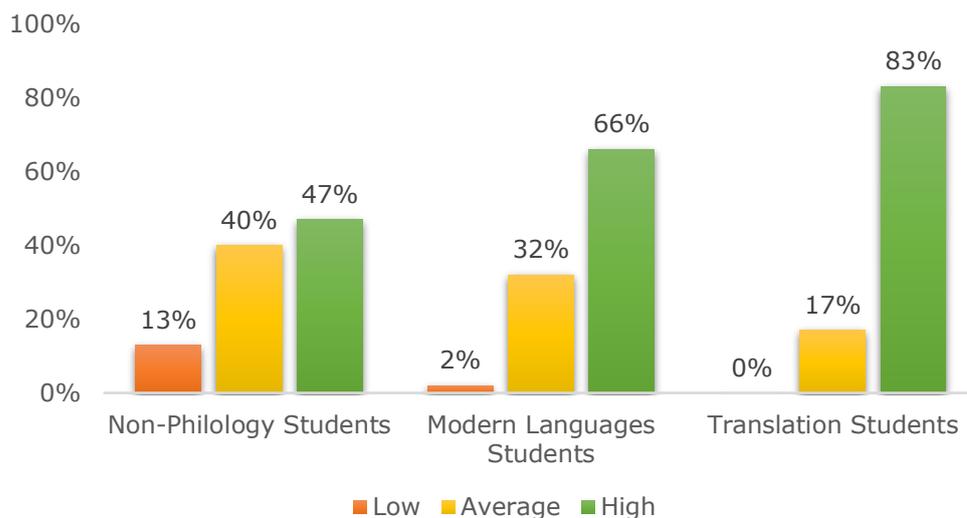


Figure 5 – “Translators must hold a degree in languages”, all respondents

Most of respondents in all three groups expressed high agreement with the second statement (Fig. 5), even though it should be noted that translation students’ ratings differ the most.

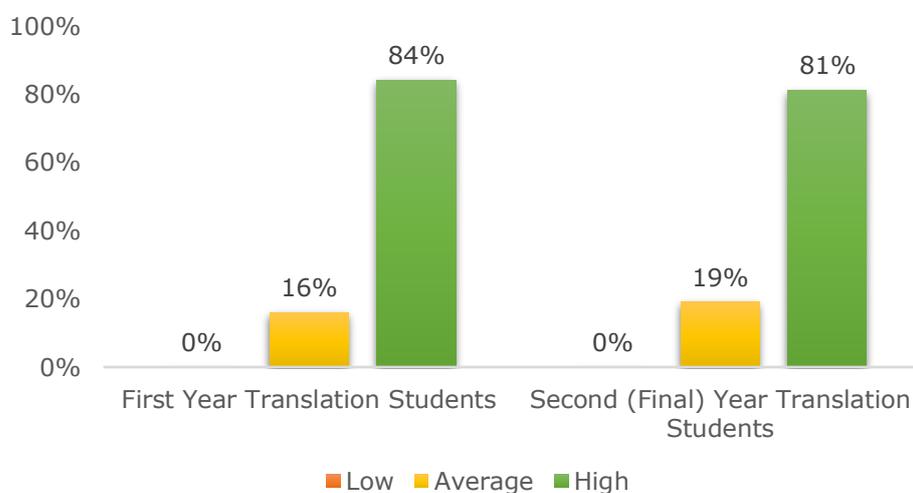


Figure 6 – “Translators must hold a degree in languages”, translation students

The results also show that the vast majority of translation students expressed high agreement with the second statement, with little difference between the first- and second-year students (Fig. 6).

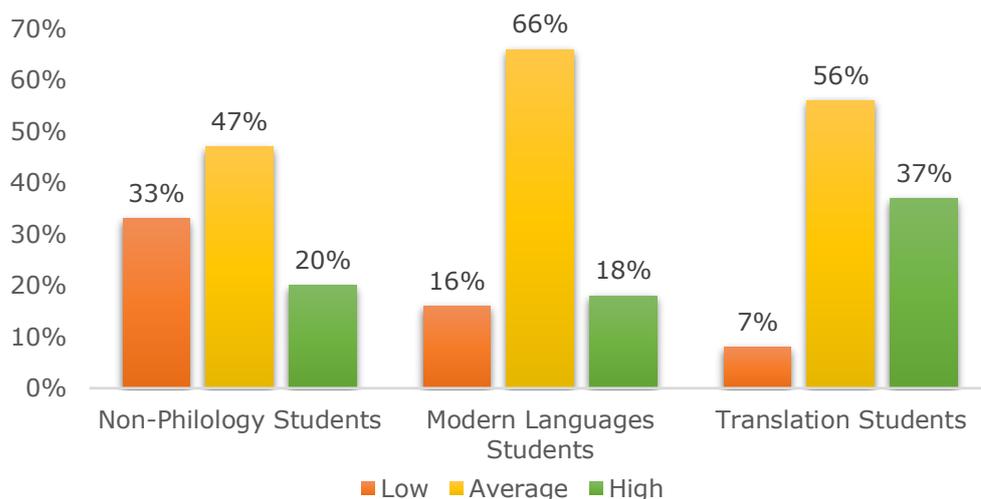


Figure 7 – “Translators must hold a degree in translation”, all respondents

The responses regarding the third statement (Fig. 7) showed that most of the respondents expressed average agreement. Most high-agreement ratings predictably came from the translation students.

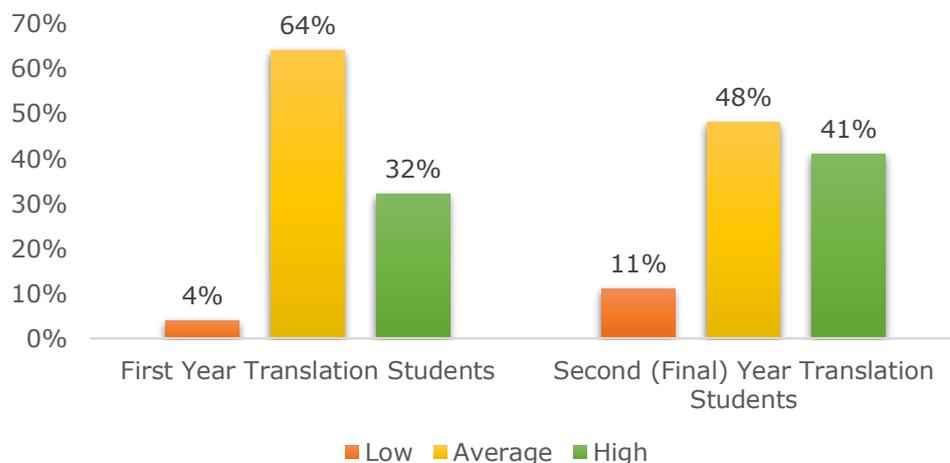


Figure 8 – “Translators must hold a degree in translation”, translation students

In the group of translation students, the majority of first year students reported average agreement, while in the category of second-year students, the respondents' replies were almost equally divided between average and high agreement (Fig. 8).

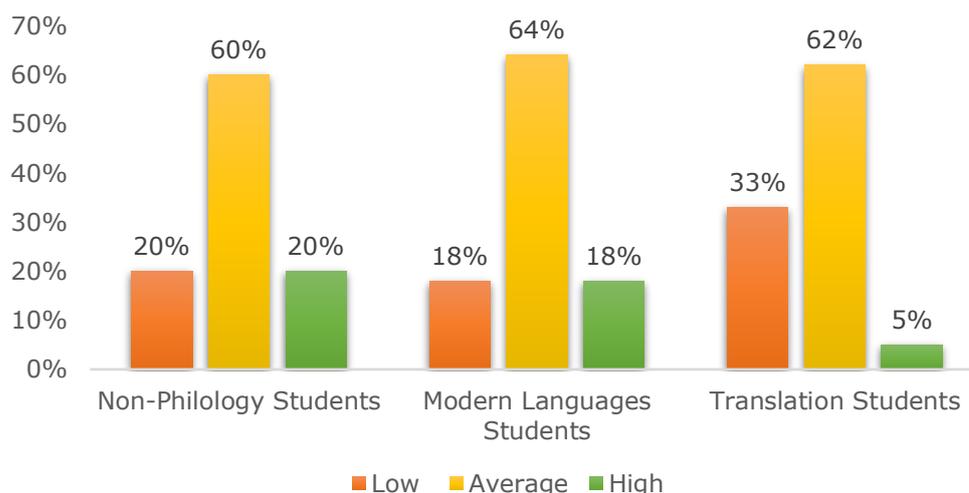


Figure 9 – “Anyone with a knowledge of one or several foreign languages can take up translation as a job”, all respondents

Most of respondents in all three groups expressed average agreement with the fourth statement (Fig. 9). Fewest high-agreement ratings came from the translation students.

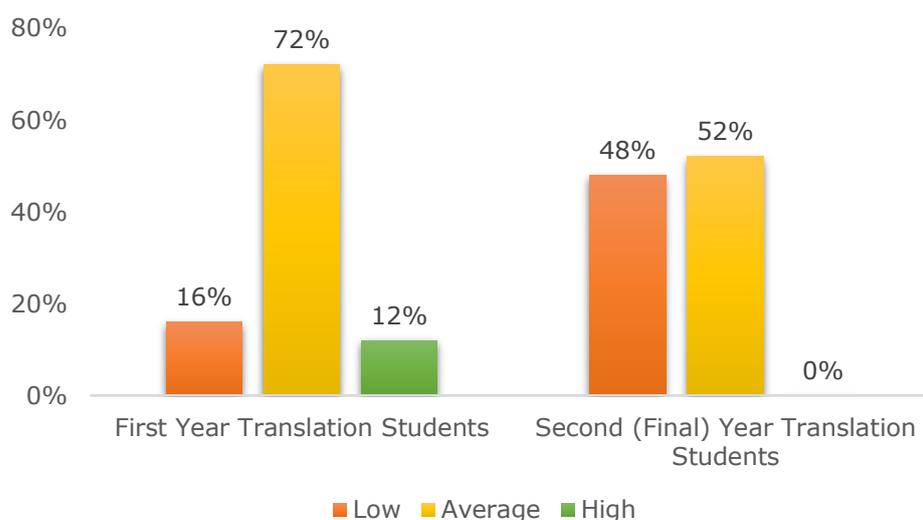


Figure 10 – “Anyone with a knowledge of one or several foreign languages can take up translation as a job”, translation students

The results show that the vast majority of first-year translation students expressed average agreement with the fourth statement (Fig. 10). Among the second-year translation students, the replies were equally divided between low agreement and average agreement, while none of the respondents in this group reported having high agreement.

6.4 Visibility

The fifth statement aimed to examine the respondents' perception of translator visibility in contemporary society, that is, the importance and the role that the translation profession and translators have in everyday life.

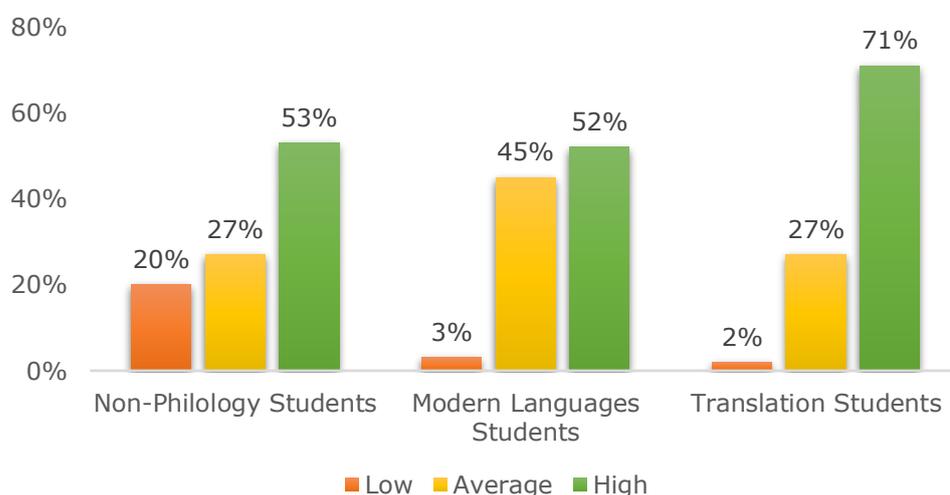


Figure 11 – “Translator services are indispensable for daily functioning of individuals and communities”, all respondents

Although in all three groups of respondents the majority expressed high agreement with the fifth statement (Fig. 11), there are also differences among the groups. The percentage of high-agreement ratings in the non-philology and philology groups were similar, while the translation students had a considerably higher proportion of such ratings. Modern languages students had the highest proportion of average-agreement replies, and non-philology students the highest proportion of low-agreement ratings.

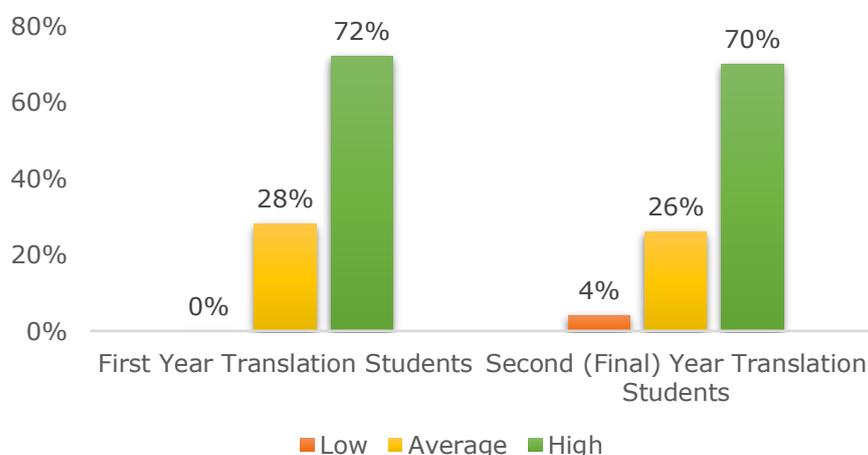


Figure 12 – “Translator services are indispensable for daily functioning of individuals and communities”, translation students

The responses indicated by first- and second-year translation students were almost identical, with high agreement recorded among the majority of the respondents in both groups (Fig. 12).

6.5 Salary

The sixth survey item was related to salary, and it was introduced with the purpose of examining the respondents’ opinions on the average income rates in the translation profession.

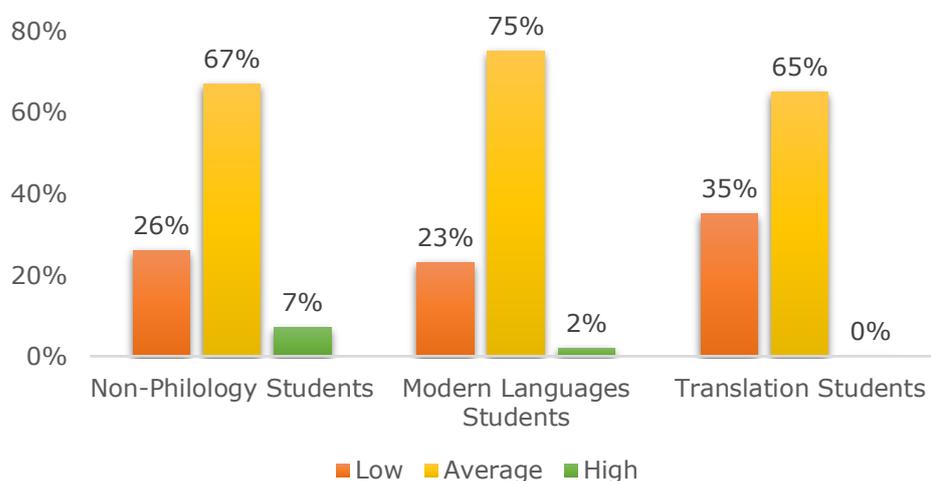


Figure 13 – “Translators earn above-average salaries”, all respondents

In all three groups of respondents, the majority expressed average agreement with the statement (Fig. 13). Very few respondents, and none in the translation students group, expressed high agreement.

When we compare first- and second-year students, we can see that the higher-year students agree less with this statement than their younger colleagues (Fig. 14).

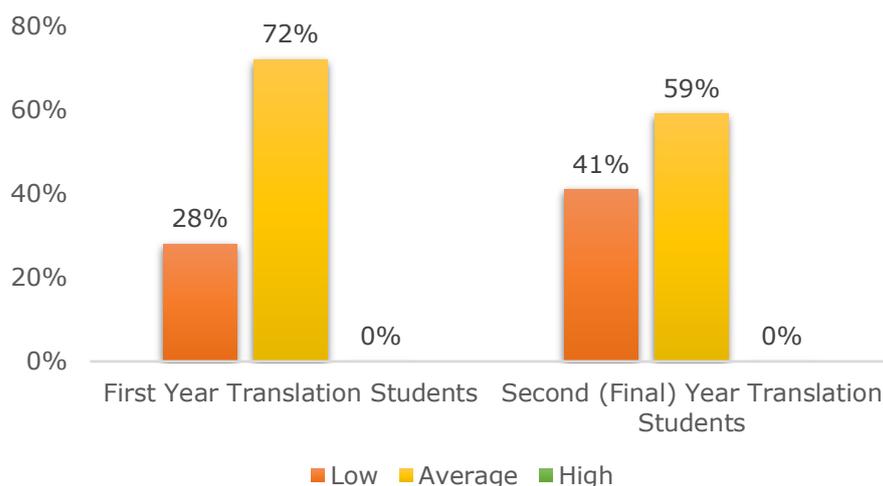


Figure 14 – “Translators earn above-average salaries”, translation students

6.6 Occupational prestige

The seventh statement concerned the way in which the respondents perceived translators and their profession with regard to others, such as the medical or legal profession.

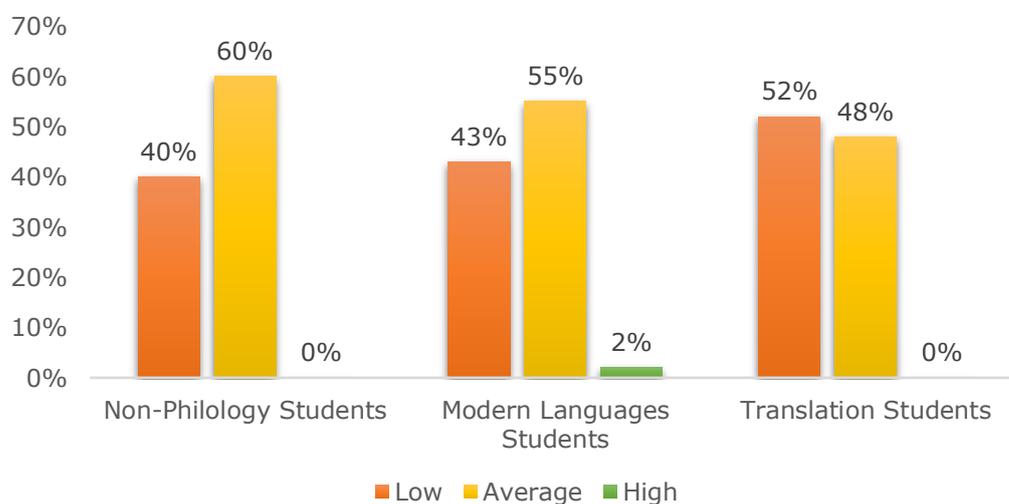


Figure 15 – “Translation is a highly appreciated profession (similar to medicine, law, etc.)”, all respondents

The responses provided by non-philology and modern languages students indicated that the majority of them had average agreement, while translations students expressed mostly low agreement. It is interesting to note that almost

none of the respondents in any of the three groups indicated having high agreement with the seventh statement.

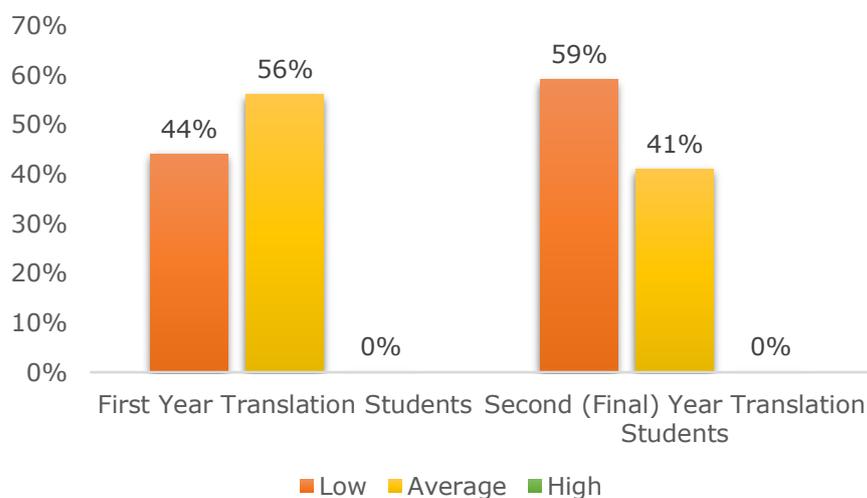


Figure 16 – “Translation is a highly appreciated profession (similar to medicine, law, etc.)”, translation students

First-year translation students mostly expressed average agreement, that is, their ratings were similar to the two non-translation groups, while second-year translation students mostly reported low agreement with the seventh statement (Fig. 16).

6.7 Hypothetical statement

The idea behind the last survey item was to present the respondents with a real-life situation in which they would need translation services and, based on their responses, to determine whether their opinions and attitudes would be consistent with the rest of the questionnaire.

The results indicate that the majority of non-philology students had average agreement with the eighth statement, while the majority of modern languages and translation students reported low agreement, which was particularly prominent in the translation students group (Fig. 17). It is interesting to note that 9% of modern languages students expressed high agreement, whereas none of the non-philology or translation students did so.

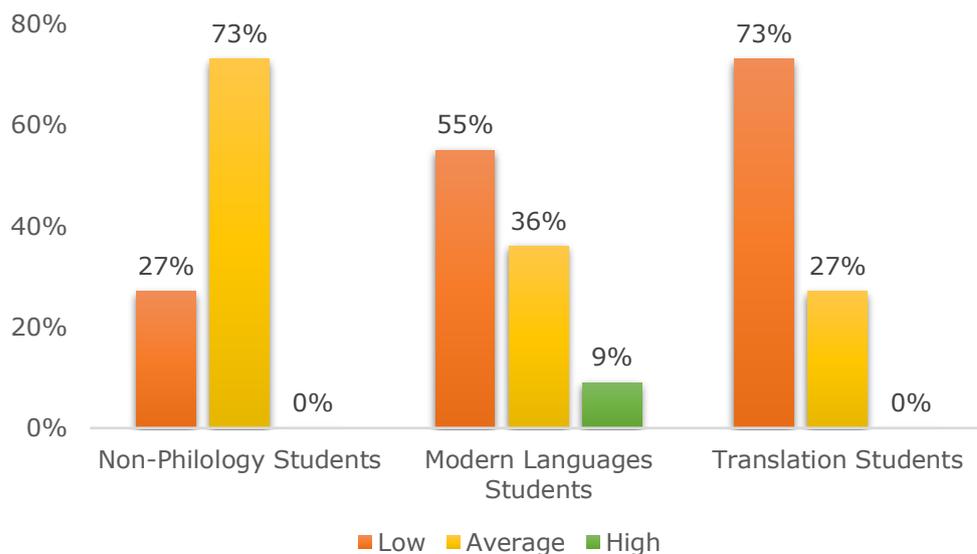


Figure 17 – “I would use the services of an unqualified translator whose rates are lower than the rates of a qualified translator”, all respondents

Lastly, the majority of both first-year second-year translation students expressed low agreement with the eight statement, with second-year students disagreeing with it more strongly (Fig. 18).

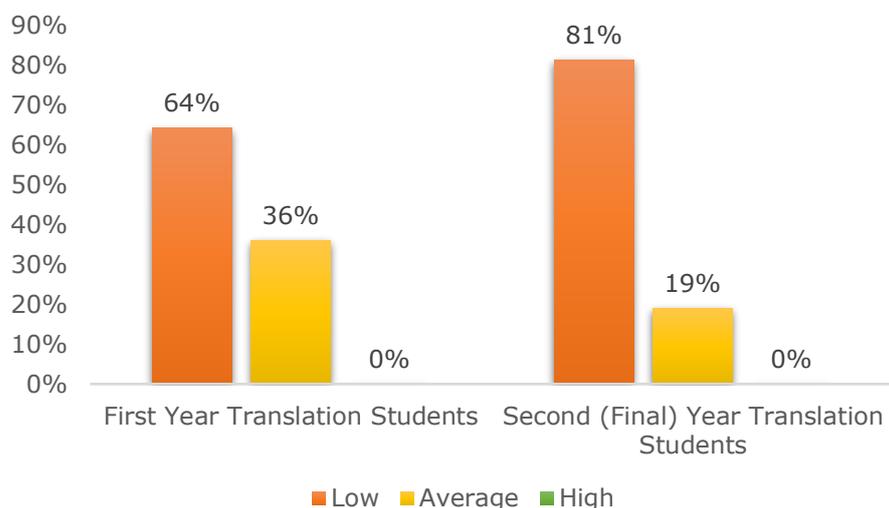


Figure 18 – “I would use the services of an unqualified translator whose rates are lower than the rates of a qualified translator”, translation students

6.8 *Influences on the respondents' perception*

In order to have a clearer understanding of the respondents' perception of the translation profession and professional translators, it was considered important to gain insight into other elements, in addition to their degree programmes, that have shaped their perception. The elements that non-philology students listed as having an impact were their individual interest in learning foreign languages, reading translated books and watching subtitled films, listening about experiences of their acquaintances and colleagues who study languages and translation, and who are professional translators, as well as their personal experience, that is, their need for translation services. Similarly, modern languages students cited their interest in learning foreign languages, listening about experiences of their acquaintances and colleagues who study translation and who are professional translators, but also their university education, listening about experiences of their professors, as well as their personal work experience. Translation students listed their university education and exposure to translation-related courses, personal work experience, as well as listening about experiences of their professors, colleagues and professional translators. In addition, second-year translation students also cited internships in translation agencies, analysing and producing subtitles and reading various types of texts in both original and target language.

7. Discussion

The general picture arising from the results, and, more specifically, from the mean values of the respondents' answers, indicates that, contrary to expectations, all three groups of respondents have average to high perception of translator status. It has to be noted that their perception varies across the four categories used to operationalise status, which allows us to make conclusions about the elements that each of the three groups of students regards as most significant when it comes to translator status.

To begin with, the results regarding non-philology students run contrary to the first research hypothesis since, according to the responses, they have an average perception of professional translators and translation profession. Non-philology students perceive higher education as being important for the

translation profession, even though the majority of them do not consider having a degree in languages or translation as a crucial factor for developing a successful professional career in translation. Furthermore, they think that the translation profession is indispensable for the functioning of contemporary society, as well as that translators earn good salaries. However, the majority of respondents perceive translation as only a moderately respectable profession. Lastly, more than a half of the respondents stated that they would turn to an unqualified translator with low rates for translation services, justifying their responses by the fact that, even though they were aware that those translations would probably not be of the highest quality, they would nonetheless do it because of the low rates. There are several possible interpretations of such a perception of translator status. The first lies in the fact that, even though non-philology students do not have a profound insight into philology as a scientific discipline, they are in constant contact with language and translation students throughout their higher education, which, to a certain degree, allows them to form informed opinions on the topic. The second interpretation may be found in the fact that non-philology students generally do not have experience working in translation, and therefore their attitudes are mostly based on their subjective impressions of the working conditions in the field.

As regards to modern languages students, their responses confirmed the second hypothesis and demonstrated that they have a high perception of translator status. According to modern languages students, higher education and, more specifically, a degree in languages is highly important for the translation practice, while a degree in translation is seen as an asset, but not as a necessary requisite for becoming a professional translator. Moreover, they perceive translators as professionals with high levels of significance for society, who, unfortunately, are not paid accordingly and who earn average salaries. Similarly, they think that translation is a reputable profession only to a certain extent since, in their opinion, the general public still does not recognize the true importance of professional translators. Finally, more than a half of the respondents in this category stated that they would not hire an unqualified translator with low rates, explaining their answers by the fact that, when it comes to translation, quality should always be the first priority, regardless of the price. The possible reasons for the high perception of modern languages students

lie in the fact that, being philology students, they are much more aware of all the elements that shape the translation profession, as well as in the fact that they have had occasional work experience in translation.

Translation students perceive translation as a profession of high occupational status. They consider education to be a crucial factor for the translation profession, even though, surprisingly, not all of them agree that a degree in translation is essential for becoming a professional translator, explaining that translation theory that is taught in translation-related courses can be learned outside the academic context as well. In relation to visibility, the majority of translation students regard translators as being among the key figures that are responsible for everyday global communication. However, they think that translators' salaries are only average in comparison with other highly trained professionals. When it comes to occupational prestige, the respondents showed similar attitudes to those of Finnish translation students in the research carried out by Ruokonen (2016: 206): they are aware of the importance of translators and the proficiency needed to translate, but they believe that people outside the field generally do not appreciate the translation profession. Ultimately, the majority of the translation students stated that they would never ask for translation services of an unqualified translator with low rates, citing the already mentioned issues of the quality of the final product, as well as the moral and ethical reasons that, being future professionals, would prevent them from doing so.

Regarding the differences in the responses provided by first- and second-year students of translation, it has to be noted that first-year students do not have a significantly higher perception than second-year students, which is contrary to the third hypothesis. Even though it was believed that the lack of exposure to various translation-related courses and work experience in translation would affect the responses provided by first-year students, the results indicate that the only difference in the responses can be observed in the category of occupational prestige. While second-year students do not view translation as a respectable profession, first-year students regard translation as a moderately respectable profession. Although the difference in the responses is not substantial, it was noted that the majority of first-year students believe that the general public has a common understanding of the translation profession and the tasks it entails.

When it comes to professional experience as an element that has an important role in the creation of the perception of translator status, it can be concluded that the perception of translation students does not change considerably as they acquire professional experience. As it was already mentioned, both first- and second-year students reported similar attitudes regarding the four categories used as indicators of status. However, slight differences that were noted are interesting to comment on. It can be observed that first-year students, who mostly reported having work experience volunteering and in part-time jobs, and who therefore probably do not have a comprehensive understanding of the translation market, tend to have an idealized view of the translation profession. For example, the majority of them think that having a translation degree is indispensable for becoming a professional translator, as well as that translation is as respected profession as medicine or law. On the other hand, second-year students, the majority of whom have acquired work experience through internships in translation agencies and full-time jobs, and who are consequently likely to have a more profound knowledge of the current state of the translation market, have a more objective view of the translation profession. To illustrate, they are well aware of the fact that nowadays almost anyone can call themselves a translator, regardless of their educational and professional background, as well as that translators rarely get acknowledgement for their work.

8. Conclusion

The present research has investigated and analysed the perception of translator status among the students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. The aim of the research was to determine how and to what extent the respondents' degree programmes affected their opinions and attitudes regarding the translation profession. Three groups of respondents (non-philology, modern languages and translation students), were invited to complete a questionnaire concerning four indicators of status (education, visibility, salary, occupational prestige).

The results indicate that students of humanities and social sciences who participated in the research have relatively positive views of the translation profession. Based on their responses, it is concluded that non-philology students

have an average perception, while modern languages students and translation students have a high perception of translator status. Even though the respondents' perception increases with exposure to translation-related courses, the differences in the responses provided by the three groups of respondents are not as substantial as it was expected. This could imply that the respondents' academic environment considerably influences the ways in which they perceive translation and translators.

Despite the fact that the present research was carried out on a relatively small sample and within a single higher education institution, it could serve as a valuable starting point for conducting similar studies. It would be interesting to find out the opinions of other students of both humanities and social sciences and other study fields in Croatia, as well as of professional translators and their clients. Such studies could greatly contribute to increasing awareness among the general public about the role and the importance of translators in contemporary society.

References

- Choi, Jungwha & Hyang-ok Lim. 2002. "The Status of Translators and Interpreters in Korea." *Meta* 47(4): 627–635.
- Dam, Helle V. and Karen Korning Zethsen. 2008. "Translator Status – A Study of Danish Company Translators." *The Translator* 14(1): 71–96.
- Dam, Helle V. and Karen Korning Zethsen. 2009. "Who Said Low Status? A Study on Factors Affecting the Perception of Translator Status." *The Journal of Specialised Translation* (12): 2–36.
- Dam, Helle V. and Karen Korning Zethsen. 2016. "‘I Think it Is a Wonderful Job’ On the Solidity of the Translation Profession." *The Journal of Specialised Translation* (25): n.p.
- Katan, David. 2009. "Translation Theory and Professional Practice: A Global Survey of the Great Divide." *Hermes* 42: 111–153.
- Lesser, Wendy. 2002. "The Mysteries of Translation." URL: <http://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Mysteries-of-Translation/27545>. Accessed 8 August 2017.

"Profession." *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. 3rd ed., 2008.

Prunč, Erich. 2007. "Priests, Princes and Pariahs: Constructing the Professional Field of Translation." In: Wolf, Michaela and Alexandra Fukari (eds.), *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing. 39-56.

Pym, Anthony, François Grin, Claudio Sfreddo & Andy L.J. Chan. 2012. "The Status of the Translation Profession in the European Union." *Studies on Translation and Multilingualism* (7).

Robinson, Douglas. 2007. *Becoming a Translator: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Translation*. New York: Routledge.

Ruokonen, Minna. 2016. "Realistic but not Pessimistic: Finnish Translation Students' Perceptions of Translator Status." *The Journal of Specialised Translation* (25): 188-212.

Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. 2006. "The Pursuit of Symbolic Capital by a Semi-Professional Group: The Case of Literary Translators in Israel." In: Wolf, Michaela (ed.) *Übersetzen – Translating – Traduire: Towards a "Social Turn"?*. Berlin: LIT Verlag. 243–252.

Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. 2008. "The Translators' Personae: Marketing Translatorial Images as Pursuit of Capital." *Meta* 53(3): 609–622.

Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. 2010. "'Stars' or 'Professionals': The Imagined Vocation and Exclusive Knowledge of Translators in Israel." *Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación* (2): 131–152.

Setton, Robin & Alice Guo Liangliang. 2009. "Attitudes to Role, Status and Professional Identity in Interpreters and Translators with Chinese in Shanghai and Taipei." *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 4(2): 210-238.

Wei, Qingguang. 2014. "A Sociology of Translation: From Text World to Life World." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 4(1): 88-92.

Wolf, Michaela. 2007. "The Emergence of a Sociology of Translation." In: Wolf, Michaela and Alexandra Fukari (eds.) *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing. 1-38.