

#### 4. Innovations in the training of translators and interpreters

##### 4.1. Description and analysis of the current spectrum of professional activities

The last few years have witnessed a significant rise in the amount of translation in the Spanish business world due to the economic boom experienced in this country, which has meant that translators have become increasingly necessary in many fields, such as the translation of contracts, business communication, specialised reviews, technical documents, etc. In addition, the increase of the new technologies and Internet, which often rely on contents created outside Spain, require the mediation of translators to present these contents in Spanish. Consequently, there is little doubt that technological, legal and economic translation are most flourishing areas at the present time. It must also be mentioned that Spain is one of most important countries in the world in the field of publishing, which is a tribute to the quality of the work of Spanish translators in general, as most of the books published are, in fact, translations.

The figure of the “in-house” translator is gradually disappearing from many large companies. Translation is conceived more and more as a service which should be subcontracted from outside the company and this has produced an increase in the number of translation companies offering this kind of service, although the translator himself, being the weakest link in the chain, is often under-paid, especially when compared to other European neighbours. So, although it is true that the number of translators employed is on the increase, this does not necessarily mean that translation as such has received the full recognition it deserves.

In spite of this situation, it is true to say that the importance of translation is gradually being recognised in Spain and there is an increasing awareness of the nature and the complexity of the activity. This is in part due to the increasing awareness, even in official circles, of Spanish as a major world language spoken by a vast number of people, which makes it hard to understand why its potential role in international communication has been overlooked in the past.

As in the field of translation, Spain’s entry into the EU meant a substantial initial increase in full-time openings for interpreters. However, the trend nowadays, as laid down by European Commission Vice President Kinnock, is to contract less full-time interpreters both in the European Commission and in the European Parliament. This tendency favours free-lance interpreters, especially those residing in Brussels or Luxembourg.

In the home market, in spite of the efforts of the professional associations such as AIIC (the international association of conference interpreters) and AICE (the Spanish association of conference interpreters) to establish acceptable standards of interpreting, fees and working conditions, the organisers of congresses, etc., not infrequently elect to employ people who have received no specific training, with a corresponding sacrifice in quality. It is only to be hoped that, thanks to the creation of this relatively new degree, the public at large will gradually become better informed, appreciate the complexities of both translation and interpreting and realise the benefits to be obtained by paying for fully professional work in both areas.

## 4.2. Institutions responsible for training

The *Licenciatura en Traducción e Interpretación* (four-year degree in Translation and Interpreting) is at present offered in 15 Spanish universities. For more details, see sections 2.1. and 2.2. of the national report on the training of translators and interpreters in Spain presented at the Jyvaskyla Conference:

<http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/JyvaskylaConference/materials/nr-es.htm>

This report only mentions 14 universities, but, this degree is now also offered by another centre, the *Centro de Estudios Superiores Felipe II*, which is located in Aranjuez and depends on the *Universidad Complutense* of Madrid. The website is:

<http://www.mcm.es/info/cesfii>

Cluny-I.S.E.I.T. (*Instituto Superior en España de Interpretación y Traducción*), which depends on the Faculty of Arts of the *Université Catholique de Paris*, offers a private, four-year degree in Translation and Interpreting.

## 4.3. Content, objectives and structures of programmes

### 4.3.1. At first-degree level

The general picture presented in section 2.2. of the Jyvaskyla national report still holds.

### 4.3.2. At postgraduate level

#### (1) Ph.D. level

The Ministry of Education and Culture lays down the following rules for all Ph.D. programmes in Spanish universities. The initial requirement is that all students wishing to obtain a Ph.D. must obtain 32 credits to certify that they are able to do Ph.D. research: 20 credits must be obtained by following courses offered by the universities in each particular area of study and the remaining 12 must be obtained by submitting a research paper. On completing the 20 credits of courses, the student is awarded a postgraduate teaching certificate (*certificado de docencia de tercer ciclo*); on completing the research paper for the 12 remaining credits, he is awarded a certificate in research competence (*certificado de suficiencia investigadora*) and he can go ahead with the Ph.D. thesis.

The following universities offer Ph.D. programmes:

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona

Universidad de Granada

Universidad de Jaume I

Universidad de las Palmas

Universidad de Málaga

Universidad de Pompeu Fabra

Universidad de Salamanca

Universidad de Valladolid (together with the Universidad de Soria)

Universidad de Vic  
Universidad de Vigo

For the content of these programmes, see the websites of the universities.

## (2) Master programmes

The Ministry of Education and Culture only regulates undergraduate degrees (*diplomaturas* and *licenciaturas*) and Ph.D. degrees, but not other types of degree such as Master-type degrees, which come under the heading of *titulaciones propias*. However, there is an agreement between most Spanish universities that Master degrees should only be awarded in programmes consisting of at least 50 credits (that is, 500 hours).

The following centres offer private Master degrees in either translation or interpreting:

CES Felipe II: Master in Dubbing and Subtitling

<http://www.cospa.es/cluny/1master.htm>

Cluny-ISEIT: Master in Specialised Translation and Language Industries  
Master in Conference Interpreting

<http://www.cospa.es/cluny/2master.HTM>

Universidad Complutense: Master in Translation

Universidad Europea de Madrid: Master in Conference Interpreting

Universidad de Granada: Master in Sign Language Interpreting

Universidad Pompeu Fabra: Master in Lexicography

Universidad Pontificia Comillas: Master in Conference Interpreting

Universidad de La Laguna (Tenerife): Master in Conference Interpreting

Universidad de Vic: Master in Conference Interpreting

### 4.3.3. At the level of continuing education

Most higher education in Spanish universities is devoted to officially recognised degrees at undergraduate or Ph.D. level. But, apart from Master degrees, whose design depends on each university, it is difficult to obtain reliable information about other sorts of courses that universities put on to meet the demands of continuing education.

### 4.4. Career prospects for graduates

See section 2.5. of the Jyvaskyla national report.

### 4.5. Recent changes in content, objectives and/or structure of programmes

#### 4.5.1. At first-degree level

At national level, the recent modifications in the Law of University Reform have obliged all universities to make the following adjustments to all the officially recognised university programmes they offer:

(i) The student can now only take six subjects at any one time, whereas the previous ruling had only stipulated the maximum number of credits but not the number of subjects.

(ii) Subjects that last all year must now have at least 9 credits, and subjects which only last one semester must have at least 4.5 credits. This means that no subject can have fewer than 3 class hours per week.

Both these changes are clearly intended to stop universities requiring students to study too many subjects of just one or two hours a week. However, although the principle may be commendable in most degrees, in Translation and Interpreting it has meant curbing the variety which was one of the more attractive features of this field of study.

The degree in Translation and Interpreting is relatively new in Spain as the Ministry of Education and Culture only approved it at the start of the 1990s. However, although some universities have just made minimal changes to their programmes to bring them in line with the new legislation, others have taken the opportunity to introduce fairly major changes in the light of their initial experience in this field. In order to list these changes, a questionnaire was sent out to the fifteen faculties and the following is a summary of the innovations included in the nine answers which have been received to date.

- Lengthen the degree from four to five years for various reasons (Vigo, Málaga). In Vigo, for example, all students go abroad in the third year to learn a third foreign language. In Málaga, the number of credits devoted to the C languages has been increased and the students are now able to take Interpreting courses in these languages as well as in their first B language.

- In most universities the electives of the second cycle (the last two years) are grouped together in two or more specialised areas (*itinerarios*) such as “legal translation” or “technical translation”; the number of these specialised areas depends on the number of students, which varies considerably from university to university. Another frequent *itinerario* is “interpreting”, which is an important attempt on the part of Spanish universities to palliate the problems laid out in section 2.2.2. of the Jyvaskyla report.

- There is a growing tendency for different university departments to join forces and offer specialised courses. For example, in the University of Las Palmas, the Department of Translation and Interpreting together with the Department of Special Didactics (*Didácticas Especiales*) offer an elective course which introduces the students to sign language. In other universities, such as Málaga, where the degree already contained a number of courses offered from other university departments, there has been an attempt to offer content more closely related to the future professional needs of the students.

In relation to this question of specialised content areas, mention must be made of Salamanca, which is unique in limiting its offer of subjects in translation and interpreting to a minimum (just over 150 credits) and requiring the students to complete the remaining credits (up to 300) by following courses in other fields of study offered by the university, such as Law or Economics.

- The inclusion of courses in the new technologies (internet, translation programmes, text design, etc.), which are already having a considerable impact on these two professions.

- A lot of the electives offered in the final years of the degree are not limited to the student’s B or C language. The aim of most, if not all the universities is that the students

should reach a level of competence in their C language which will enable them to follow translation courses which require a level previously only attained in the B language.

- A number of universities (for example, Málaga, Alfonso X, Comillas, Salamanca) have either increased the number of credits devoted to the study of the students' native language or created new subjects (like *Spanish Rhetoric and Stylistics* in Málaga).

#### 4.5.2. At postgraduate level

As at undergraduate level, the Ministry of Education and Culture has also recently introduced important modifications in the norms referring to Ph.D. degrees (see section 4.3.2. above). This new ruling came into force in 1998 and has meant that all universities have had to alter all Ph.D. programmes. Before 1998, students were required to study 320 hours (32 credits) of Ph.D. courses (that is, face-to-face classes), although there existed the possibility of asking the student to devote some of these credits to writing a dissertation. However, since 1998, students are required to obtain 20 credits from following courses and the remaining 12 credits from a dissertation, which can not be used as part of the final thesis.

Consequently, all Ph.D. programmes in Translation and Interpreting have been redesigned to concentrate what had previously been taught in 320 hours into the present mandatory 200 hours, and it is still far too soon to have any information of the effects, positive or otherwise, of the new ruling.

#### 4.5.3. At the level of continuing education

#### 4.6. Examples of good practice

There are two reasons why it is difficult to point out particular instances of good practice in this area at present in Spain.

The first is that, with the exception of Cluny-ISEIT, all the fifteen centres that offer the officially recognised *licenciatura* in Translation and Interpreting have to conform to the norms laid down by the Ministry of Education (see section 2.2. of the Yvaskyla report). Although the core content stipulated for this degree only accounts for about 35% of the total number of credits, which should in principle leave the individual university with a considerable degree of freedom, in practice this freedom has either not been used or is possibly less than would at first appear. This may be explained by the fact that, although the Ministry only lays down a third of the total content, it also stipulates whether this content should be taught in the first cycle (2 or 3 years) of the degree or in the second cycle (2 years), which clearly limits the field of action of the centres. In addition to this, the core subjects related to languages, translation and interpreting are generally given too few credits to be fully effective as they stand and all universities have seen fit to amplify most if not all of them, which means that the common core area usually covers at least 50% of the degree subjects, if not more.

The second reason is that all the Faculties have had to modify the curricula of their degrees in Translation and Interpreting to bring them in line with the latest norms of the University Reform Law and most centres have taken advantage of the opportunity to make other changes based on the experience acquired since the new degree was set up in

Spain in 1992. This means that the present moment is a time of considerable change, even within the limits laid down by the Ministry, and it is far too soon to see the effects of these changes, let alone judge the consequences.

#### 4.7. Reasons underlying these changes

The following are the reasons underlying the changes mentioned in 4.5.1.:

- The translation market in Spain requires translators to be able to tackle specialised texts and, although the degree provides a good grounding in two foreign languages and in the basic techniques of translation, most universities are preoccupied by the lack of true specialisation in at least one area. This problem is further complicated by the fact that the students need to have studied at least 24 credits in legal and/or economic translation to be able to apply for the title of *traductor/intérprete jurado* (official translator/interpreter), which is mentioned in section 2.3.3. of the Jyvaskyla report; this means that all the universities are under considerable pressure from their students to provide this minimum requirement in this particular area to the detriment of other specialised fields.
- This is one of the reasons why some universities (such as Málaga) have lengthened the degree from four to five years: among other things, it has afforded the possibility of increasing the number of credits in the specialised fields of legal and literary translation.
- Innovations related to the students' native language are the result of the universities' concern with the increasingly relaxed standards of written production in Spanish secondary education which mean that students need supplementary training in this area which is of vital importance in this degree.
- There is a constant demand by associations of the deaf and dumb for more interpreters who have specialised in sign language. In Spain the official qualification in this area depends on the *Federación de Sordomudos* (The Federation of the Deaf and Dumb), but the elective offered in Las Palmas aims to familiarise students with this important field.

#### 4.8. Identification of needs

##### 4.8.1. At first-degree level

#### 4.9. Measures to be taken at institutional, regional, national and European level to meet the needs identified

##### 4.9.1. At first-degree level

Some universities still feel that this degree should be divided clearly into either Translation or Interpreting, with an initial common core (of two or three years) and then a second two-year cycle in which the student would have to choose between one of these two possibilities. At present this is not possible because the Ministry of Education and Culture stipulates that both translation and interpreting have to be studied in one and the same degree, which means that in the second cycle all students have to study a number of subjects from both areas. As has been seen above, a lot of universities try to palliate this potential problem by offering separate specialised courses (electives grouped under

*itinerarios*) in each area, which can then figure on the final degree certificate and thus clarify whether a student has specialised in one of these areas or not.

4.9.2. At postgraduate level

4.9.3. At the level of continuing education