



***Curriculum and Approach Towards Teaching Medical Translation in the
Master's Level - A Comparative Analysis***

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Abstract:

A university's reputation is designated by the quality of the program it offers for its students who show a big concern, from day one, about the outcomes of their learning journey, and who are after the most banal goal; employability. Conversely, different universities opt for different methods applied to build the necessary knowledge ensuring for its students a proper training to improve their chances of success in the academic life and hone the skills that conform the demands of the professional career market. This paper purports to fathom the components of two university curricula allotted to train future translators in the field of medical translation, and understand the differences between them, as well as finding the approaches used in medical translation education through an analytic comparison.

Keywords: *educational curricula; medical translation; Scientific translation; translator teaching; translator training.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The recent developments in the modern world impose an intrinsic shift in the centre of focus towards science and technology, and since it goes without saying that translators play a pivotal role in the human communication, notably in the flow of knowledge between the various nations in diverse fields, the translation market is coerced to update its demands to match the advances in those fields, as a result, there's a huge increase in the need for scientific and technical translators. In this regard, the educational systems are always required to emulate that advancement by ensuring the incubation of future translators so that they match the market demands accordingly.

Translation teaching has secured an enormous importance all over the educational institutions, be it universities, translation schools or institutes, and teaching scientific translation is, nonetheless, as equally, or even one of the most important scopes of concern nowadays. Therefore, the aim of this research paper is to examine and compare two distinct curricula that were built-up to teach medical translation to Master's level students, besides discussing the different approaches that have been deployed for the above-mentioned purpose.

1. The Importance of Teaching Specialized Translation

In the last decade, English has become the most spread lingua franca for the scientific and specialized domains. Scientists and researchers in any scientific or technical field are required to be able to express themselves and their knowledge with eloquence if they desire to blend in the international academic community. However, despite the fact that the competence in the English language of specialists nowadays has improved gushingly, it is reported that a big number of them still rely to a far extent on literature translated into their native languages, which explains the need for translators working on the specialized fields.

So why is there a need to teach it separately?

The increased demand for translators in specialized domains (such as the scientific domain, technical domain, legal domain, medical domain, localization...etc) urged the universities to adjust their curricular for the sake of meeting the market needs, knowing that these domains require new approaches to modelling and training the translators; for, knowledge of the languages to translate from and into, despite how thorough it could be, is not enough. Hendrickx states that "The teaching of languages and of translation [...] should be complemented by some kind of specialization, e. g., in electronics, medicine, commerce, agriculture, chemistry, the fine arts." (Hendrickx, 1975: 102). That is to say that the education in language and translation would indeed benefit from specialised knowledge, and hence the value of all the other essential qualities that separate a specialized translator from a general translator. From what Hendrickx stated, we can infer the importance of supplementing the linguistic aspect in translation education with thematic knowledge in the target fields which encourages the students to bridge language proficiency with knowledge in specific domains including their texts specifications, terminology mining, localization, technical equipment skills, data management... to name but a few. This way, the translation trainees could use their language skills the same way experts in the target specialized field they translate from.

Current trends in the translation industry reveal a remarkable expansion in the scientific field, and the employers are requiring candidate translators to be well-knowing of field concentration translation, in other terms, to be specialized translators. That's why there is an increasing concern about the employability after graduation amongst translation students and future translators. In consequence, it is important to induce students' motivation and increase

their interest and gain their trust in the curriculum which imposes an obligation on learning experiences to align with both; language learning, and industry requirements.

2. Cases of the Study

The cases in this analysis are two educational curricula; the first curriculum in focus is entitled “Medical and Health Translation”. It pertains to the university of Jaume I, in Valencia, Spain, offering a Master’s degree in the medical translation, for a period of time of 12 months. It consists of the following modules:

Table (1): Modules of the Master’s Curriculum at the University of Jaume I, Spain.

<p>Semester 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theoretical Approaches in Translation Studies - Discourse Analysis Applied to Translation - Methodology, Proofreading and Editing - Professional Practice, Terminology and Information Sources - Introduction to Medicine - Pre-Translation
<p>Semester 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Translating in the Publishing Sector - Translating in the Pharmaceutical Sector - Intercultural Mediation in the Healthcare Domain - Interpreting Techniques in Public Healthcare Services - Translating Research Genres - Translation in Medical and Healthcare Institutions
<p>Year long</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's Thesis (Professional) - Master's Thesis (Research) - Professional Work Placement - Research Methodology in Medical and Healthcare Translation

Retrieved from: <https://ujiapps.uji.es/sia/rest/publicacion/2018/estudio/42166>

The second one is suggested as a course annexed to a curriculum entitled “Master in Intercultural Communication and Public Service Interpreting and Translation”, pertaining to the university of Alcalá, in Madrid, Spain. It is, as its nomination indicates, for the level of Master’s degree for a period of time of one-year, full time, and the course is called “Medical and Healthcare Resources”. The curriculum consists of the following modules:

Table (1): Modules of the Master’s Curriculum at the University of Alcalá, Spain.

<p>Module on interlinguistic and intercultural communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional communication with foreign population. - Interlingual communication.

- Techniques and Resources for Translation and Interpreting Studies (TISP).
Module on Healthcare Translation and Interpreting:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpretation in the healthcare field. - Specialized Translation: Healthcare domain. - Medical and healthcare resources (documentation resources, CMT and corpus based approach, CAT tools, terminological tools.
Internships in companies and institutions.
Master's thesis.

Retrieved from: <https://uahmastercitisp.es/modulos-y-creditos/>

II. Comparison of curricula elements

In the ever evolving field of education that builds up the sector of scientific and medical translation precisely, marking the linguistic expertise along with the understanding of specialized scientific concepts expected to be met by future translators, institutes and universities are working hard to present the adequate training to the student who aspires to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge as well as either the best chances upon accessing the translation market after graduation or the soundest foundations to pursue further in the academic field.

This comparative analysis aims to illuminate the distinctive features, pedagogical approaches, and educational philosophies embedded in the Master's programs at the university of Jaume I and the university of Alcalá. By juxtaposing these two curricula, we endeavour to discern the approached and strategies employed to cultivate expertise in scientific medical translation.

2.1. Objectives

Students enrolled in both universities already know what they are signing up for, they hitherto made a choice in what specialty of translation they want to receive training, they have a clear goal and thus they are not going to waste effort on studying multiple specialties at the same time in order to pick the one that suits their interest the most. In this regard, both universities are aware of the constant growth spotlighting the market of the medical and health translation that equate quite a large proportion of all scientific and technical translation, and are focused on the objective of graduating students specialized in the field of medical translation precisely.

To encapsulate, what has been mentioned reveals that the broad objective of each of the two curricula was to guarantee career opportunities for its students as translators in the public health sector, i.e., working in the field of health and medical translation.

2.2. Duration

Both curricula were offered and studied during the year 2018-2019. It is pertinent to observe that the program put forth by the university of Alcalá spans over a one-year duration and is exclusively designed to target the Master's level students. Notably, its primary emphasis

lies within its devotion to what serves building corpora², that is to say: Corpus-based approaches to medical translation and interpreting, corpus management tools, and documentation resources, reflecting the dedication to fostering a profound understanding and management of such a crucial skill in this specialized field. On the other hand, the university of Jaume I equally suggested a one-year master's program that bifurcated into two semesters; where the first semester focused mainly on introductory units (Theoretical Approaches in Translation Studies, Discourse Analysis Applied to Translation, Methodology, Proofreading and Editing, Professional Practice, Terminology and Information Sources, Introduction to Medicine, Pre-Translation). Whereas the second semester was devoted to more field-specific units (Translating in the Publishing Sector, Translating in the Pharmaceutical Sector, Intercultural Mediation in the Healthcare Domain, Interpreting Techniques in Public Healthcare Services, Translating Research Genres, Translation in Medical and Healthcare Institutions) ranging between compulsory and optional.

2.3. Content

The programs at both the university of Jaume I and the university of Alcalá were designed to train the student on the medical texts and the medical translation sharing a common focus on providing the students with skills specific to the medical field. Noteworthy, neither program devoted a separate part for the thematic competence which pertains to medical knowledge, so the emphasis on developing linguistic skills and translational skills rather than in-depth medical expertise mean prioritizing the first over the latter. However, the only exception was observed at the university of Jaume I where students were introduced to a course called "Introduction to Medicine" during the first semester, providing the singular educational element on the medical content, and despite its miniscule value, it can be deduced that the university of Jaume I slightly adopted the interdisciplinary approach by combining thematic knowledge with linguistic and translational fields.

2.4. Teaching Staff

While the university of Jaume I did not mention any special specification pertaining to the teaching staff, the case of the university of Alcalá stands out with a keen interest in the teaching staff. It has been highlighted that this latter comprises of a team of university professors, translators, and interpreters, each equipped with extensive experience in the field of translation and a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies associated with employment agencies, whether individually or collectively. This means that the university is paying a great attention to piece the gap between the academic environment and the employment market through: 1) emphasis on its teaching staff with commitment to the quality of training provided to students. 2) ensuring a well-rounded and a diverse range of expertise. 3) Interweaving academic qualification and background (university professors) with practical experience (translators and interpreters) which means the blend of theoretical and practical skills. 4) Preparing students for the intricacies of the professional practice through the inclusion of people from the field and maintaining a constant connection between the academic life and the updates in the novelties in the professional life.

² The term "corpora" is the plural form of the term corpus, and it is used to refer to multiple collections or bodies of texts, data, or information, often analysed for linguistic, literary, or computational purposes. In this case, it refers to collections of texts or information related to the medical field which the students use to expand their background in the thematic knowledge and the genres related to this field for the purpose of handling medical translation.

2.5. Technological Training

As for the technological training for the aspired future medical translators, the curriculum adopted in the university of Jaume I appears to lay special focus on documentation skills and research techniques for example, through the help and the integration of ICT (Information and Communication Technology), which include assisting programs such as Computer-Assisted-Translation tools. In addition to this, the whole curriculum is indeed presented through the Online Virtual Learning method. On a different note, the curriculum that was offered at the university of Alcalá was uniquely and explicitly structured with a primary focus on the incorporation of CMTs (Corpus Management Tools), as well as technology-mediated learning. Students were subjected to cultivate proficiency in terminological management tools. In addition to that, the curriculum offers training in Computer-Assisted Translation tools (commonly known as CAT tools) and terminological tools for medical translation.

In the light of the presented information, it can be deduced that both curricula placed heightened attention to the skills of mastering technologies especially catering the needs of those working in the field of translation, for, the role of technology extends beyond merely streamlining and expediting tasks, it has become a necessity and one of the fundamental prerequisites mandated by translation employers, that is why these training institutions are clearly committed to equip the students with the necessary skills in utilizing technologies and software in order to guarantee that these future translations are well-prepared to fulfil employment requirements.

2.6. Learning Outcomes

Retrospectively, in order to offer insights on how students benefit from this type of training, it is essential to delve into the learning outcomes that represent the educational endeavour through highlighting the different skills that are honed such as language proficiency, translational skills, technological tools management...etc. for the purpose of a holistic formation of the aspired medical translators.

2.6.1. Linguistic Proficiency and Translation Skills

Each of the previously analysed curricula pays a notable attention to linguistics and translation, evident in the array of courses it offers (such as discourse analysis applied to translation, interpreting techniques, (Jaume I) and Interlinguistic communication, Specialized translation (Alcalá)). These courses have been designed to contribute in the enhancement of the language proficiency and effective translation skills.

2.6.2. Thematic Expertise

Despite the fact that none of the curricula under the spotlight devoted a separate section for thematic knowledge, it can be said that the idea of specialization in translation itself suggests a type of focus on thematic application, especially in the courses based on the skills in information mining and terminology management. Students, therefore, are encouraged to apply their language and translation skills in practical and professional settings, in relation to the specialization in a pre-defined field of science (medical, in this case) obtaining a certain preparedness for the specialized domain. In addition to this, Corpus Management tools can be of a great benefit when it comes to specialized knowledge because they consist of exposing the students to original medical texts and medical notions which enhances their subject matter expertise.

2.6.3. Technological Skills

Students are expected to develop proficiency in utilizing pivotal technologies that are essential for the translation profession, as demonstrated by the emphasis on Learning through technological mediation and Corpus Management tools which enables them to access medical texts and manage specialized medical terminology databases to promote context-specific language usage, rectify inconsistencies, and produce high-quality medical translators. The application of CAT tools assists in preparing students to join professional translation industry with honing their skills in terminology management, collaboration, time management, post-editing skills among others. The exploration of documentation and terminology resources helps the students in mastering the specialized vocabulary used in the medical texts, ensuring a deep contextual understanding and accuracy in the selection of terms when translating, besides a time management and speed in performing translation tasks.

III. Approaches to Teaching Medical Translation

An approach is, as Bin Tareedi (2010) defines it; a theoretical framework comprised of a set of principles upon which the development of a curriculum is based. It involves the selection of teaching and assessment strategies, in addition to forms of feedback. That is to say that the approach is a comprehensive concept and the choice of approach is foundational in the formulation of a curriculum. In spite of that, it is not necessary nor is it mandatory to utilize a single approach at a time; a curriculum can indeed make use of a number of approaches simultaneously as it is seen in the two curricula under the spotlight.

The objectives of the curriculum, for one, reveals the adoption of the market-based approach. Even though there was a slight difference in the way adopting this approach, both curricula take the professional practice into account and thus direct major effort to guarantee professional experience for their graduates through a number of implemented strategies and a series of competences such as honing their skills in the use of CAT tools or ICTs in general, or even resorting to the professionals themselves in the training as seen in the case of the Alcalá university.

Furthermore, examining the different aspects of the two curricula illustrates leveraging the interdisciplinary approach, considering the fact that they have established a specific domain to place emphasis on (i.e., medical translation), even being implicit given that there was no distinct devotion to teaching the field of medicine separately during the training. The suggestion of integrating specialization with language and translation education implies the presence of this approach that fosters a holistic understanding of medical translation field which incites students to consider medical texts not only linguistically but also in the broader context of healthcare.

IV. CONCLUSION

To sum up, this study has presented the most important components of two post-graduate curricula from two Spanish universities (Alcalá and Jaume I) that were established to train future translators specialized in the field of medical translation. It explores the significance of teaching specialized translation and the need to align learning experiences with both language acquisition and market requirements. The comparison shed light on the convergences and divergences.

Both curricula share common objectives aiming at securing career opportunities as translators in the public health sector for their graduates through the implemented methodologies guide-lined by what the adopted approaches dictate, specifically the market-based and interdisciplinary approaches. The combined philosophy of those approaches enriches the outcomes of the curricula and ensures students not only acquire market-relevant skills but also develop a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics and specification inherent in medical translation and medical discourse.

Additionally, teaching staff diversification strategy employed by Alcala, besides the thematic content focusing on medical translation in both universities highlight their commitment to providing specialized expertise. While the emphasis on technological training incorporating ICT, corpus management tools, and CAT tools underscores the curricula's dedication to preparing students and equipping them with technological skills crucial in the translation profession. The identified learning objectives, encompassing linguistic proficiency, translation skills, thematic expertise, and technological proficiency, signify a comprehensive strategy aimed at nurturing a diverse range and well-rounded set of competencies in students.

The collected data and conclusions drawn from the comparison offer a great foundation for educators and curriculum designers serving in tailoring convenient and effective specialized translation programs to meet the ever-growing demands of the translation market as well as students' expectations.

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