

THE CONTRIBUTION AND BEST PRACTICES
OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT,
FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES,
TIRANA UNIVERSITY IN CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR
THE UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE
PROGRAMMES IN TRANSLATION AND
CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

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Abstract

The presentation focuses on theoretical and practical aspects related to the implementation of the 1998 restructured four-year curricula, the 2005 new three-year curricula, the 2008 two-tier system of vocation-based translation and conference interpretation training curricula for undergraduate and graduate degree courses of translation and conference interpreting, in general, and the one-year vocation-based taught Master Program of Pragmatic Translation at the English Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Tirana University, especially emphasizing previous departmental experience, expertise and qualifications, the local and international labour market, as

well as the students’ needs, the course objectives, content, course duration, knowledge and competences characterizing the course of study, cultural and professional background of the students at the end of the programme, academic staff professional profile and skills, and the future action required in this respect.

Keywords: institutional experience, translation and conference interpreting curricula, two-tier system of vocation-based translation and conference interpretation training, English Department, local and international market, Master Program of Pragmatic Translation, future action

I. DEVELOPING THE TWO-TIER VOCATION-BASED TRANSLATION AND CONFERENCE INTERPRETER TRAINING AT THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, THE TIRANA UNIVERSITY

The Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana, established in 1960, is the largest of this type in Albania. The undergraduate students are currently trained in three specialised tracks: linguistic and literary study, translation and conference interpreting, and cultural studies. In addition to acquiring more profound knowledge in English language, culture and civilisation, they are offered the chance to learn a second and/or third foreign language.

During the 1998-1999 academic year, the restructured four-year curricula envisaged two other tracks, respectively Translation and Conference Interpreting, as well as British and American Studies, in addition to further improving the existing traditional ELT (English Language Teaching) course of studies. A considerable number of translators and interpreters, graduates of English, Translation and Conference Interpreting Track, have been employed by the Albanian Government, International organisations, Tirana-based Embassies, NGO-s, translation agencies, etc.¹

In October 2005, the new three-year curricula were introduced and developed, in line with the requirements of the Bologna Process, finally giving way to the introduction of the two-tier system of vocation-based

¹ More detailed information is provided in the following sections and subsections.

translation and conference interpretation training, in October 2008.

In addition to teaching, in view of their proficiency of specialised language in various areas, predominantly in the specialised areas of legal English, Business English, English for Public Administration, English for International Marketing, English for International Affairs and Diplomacy, etc., as well as specialised proficiency in English language for specific purposes taught at the Department of English, and the long-term commitment to translation and conference interpreting, our Department staff have been and are providing translation and conference interpreting services to the various national and international agencies.²

As early as 2007, in line with the efforts underway to improve translation practices in Albania, the Ministry of Integration was expected to cooperate with the Department of English Language with a view to involving in this process a number of highly qualified department staff and possibly students, likewise signing a Protocol of Co-operation and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of English Language. According to this memorandum, the recruitment of students/department staff in the fields concerned would be envisaged, as well as redeveloping the curricula to better meet the students' needs and expectations for their vocation-based training.³

1.1. Bologna process curriculum

Following the implementation of the Bologna process requirements, the higher education system in the Republic of Albania has been regulated by the Laws "On Higher Education in the Republic of Albania", respectively No.9741, dated 21.05.2007 and No.80/2015, dated 22.07.2015. According to these laws the tertiary education system is organized based on three levels⁴, respectively.

² The Department of English constitutes the principal resource for practicing and officially recognised and certified translators and conference interpreters in Albania, in addition to the free-lance translators and conference interpreters.

³ RISTANI, V. (2009), "*Researching and assessing the translation and conference interpreting services and the training capacities in Albania*", presentation delivered at the International Conference "Across English language and culture", organized by the English Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages University of Tirana, 17 – 18 April, 2009. Published in the Conference Proceedings.

⁴ The information provided is based on "Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Albania" no.9741, dated 21.05.2007 and no.80/2015, dated 22.07.2015

a. *Bachelor Degree* is awarded upon completion of the first level programme of studies. It aims at providing graduates with common-core expertise on general and scientific methods and principles, as well as specialised and specific skills in a variety of professions and specializations. These programmes correspond to 180 credits (under the European Credit Transfer System, ECTS) and take a maximum of 3 years to complete. The first two years focus on common-core modules and electives. During the third year of undergraduate studies, the students of English are trained in three specialised tracks, respectively: *language study, translation and conference interpreting; British and American Studies*. The Bachelor's degree allows transition to the labour market, access to the civil service and the subsequent Master degree programmes.

b. *Master of Science/Art Degrees* stand/s for the degrees awarded upon completion of the second level programme of study. These programmes provide the postgraduate students with an advanced level of theoretical and/or practical education and training in translation and conference interpreting and/or specialised translation, respectively. The English Department at the Faculty of Foreign Languages offers two programs, one specialising in *Translation and Conference Interpreting*, envisaging 120 credits (under the European Credit Transfer System, ECTS) with a maximum of 2 years to complete, and another one specialising in *Pragmatic Translation*, envisaging 60 credits (under the European Credit Transfer System, ECTS) with a maximum of 1 year to complete.

c. *Doctoral Studies Programmes*.

1.2. *Institutional Experiences In Translator And Conference Interpreter Training*

During more than 30 years onwards, even prior to introducing the two-tier program of translation and conference interpreting, the Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages and its staff have been involved in the following academic, curriculum development, training and research activities:

- Participation in in-service training and vocational training courses introduced and funded by various International Agencies, Universities, and Embassies, as from 1988.

- Establishment and functioning of the Translation and Conference Interpreting Department for a few years until 1996.
- Participation in a TEMPUS-funded JEP (Joint European Project), focusing predominantly on Translation and Conference Interpreting with the participation of University of Westminster and Paris IV University, 2003-2006.
- Introducing and developing the curricula for the Translation and Conference Interpreting track prior to the implementation of the Bologna Process, four-year Undergraduate Diploma Degree, *a combined curriculum of two-year common-core subjects followed by two-year mixed curriculum of common-core and vocational training subjects in collaboration with the University of Westminster, UK* (1998-2008).
- Restructuring the curricula for the Bachelor's degree in Translation and Conference Interpreting following the implementation of the Bologna Process, three-year Undergraduate Diploma Degree, *a combined curriculum of one-year common-core modules followed by two-year mixed curriculum of common-core and vocational training modules in collaboration with the University of Westminster*, (2005- 2010).⁵
- Restructuring the curricula for the Bachelor's Degree in Translation and Conference Interpreting following the implementation of the Bologna Process, three-year Undergraduate Diploma Degree, *a combined curriculum of two-year common-core modules followed by one-year vocational training modules proper only*, (2008- onwards).⁶
- Introducing and developing the curricula for the *research-based Master's Degree and Doctoral Degree in Translation Studies*, 2003, which has substantially contributed to training the then junior staff of our faculty involved in teaching the vocation-based Translation and Conference Interpreting modules, and the then junior staff of the regional universities teaching translation for instructional purposes.

⁵ Basically, the common-core subjects under the four-year undergraduate diploma degree, prior to the implementation of the Bologna Process, were packed into the modules developed under the three-year undergraduate Bachelor's degree diploma introduced, following the implementation of the Bologna Process. The translation and conference interpreting modules were preserved intact and the modular model was originally introduced.

⁶ The common-core subjects under the three-year undergraduate Bachelor degree diploma, pursuant to the Bologna Process, are taught during the first two academic years to be followed by one year of vocation-based translation and conference interpreting modules proper.

- Introducing and developing the curricula for the *vocation-based Master’s Degree in Translation and Conference Interpreting*, within the context of the programme for the post-graduate second level diploma, 2008.
- Restructuring and further developing the curricula for the taught course of *Master’s Degree in Translation and Conference Interpreting*, within the context of the programme for the post-graduate diploma, in collaboration with Université de Strasbourg, ITIRI (Institut de Traducteurs, d’Interprètes et de Relations Internationales), 2016-onwards.
- Introducing, as from 2017, the *60 ECTS Specialised and vocation-based Translation Master Program*. Its scope and duration correspond to 60 credits, under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and takes a maximum of 1 year to complete.
- Supporting and working jointly with the Greek Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Tirana University, in introducing and further developing the curricula for the taught course of *Bachelor Degree in Translation and Conference Interpreting, Greek-English-Albanian*, in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting (DFLTI), Ionian University, Corfu, Greece, 2021- onwards.

2. MSc. COURSE IN TRANSLATION AND CONFERENCE INTERPRETING

The accession of Albania to the Bologna process presupposed its integration to the European Higher Education Area. Among the several components of a successful transition, two of them, respectively reforming the structure and reforming the content of the vocation-based training for the translators and conference interpreters in Albania have been singled out. In view of the fact that the training of translators and conference interpreters has become a challenging pedagogical prospect, considering that “translation competence is most effectively developed at an academic institution”⁷, apart from switching to the two-tier

⁷ SCHÄFFNER, C. & ADAB, B. (Eds.). (2000), *Developing Translation Competence*, p.x, Amsterdam

system Bachelor-Master in vocational training proper for translators and conference interpreters, and developing sufficient educational programmes, which could meet the requirements of the contemporary Albanian and international market, one of the most painful steps, especially in the earlier stages of curriculum development for the undergraduate degree, as highlighted later by international experts in translator and conference interpreter training, was to make the institution management aware of the imperative need to introduce the translation and conference interpreting program at the undergraduate level, and the changing attitudes in translation and conference interpreter training with respect to combining educational and vocational ingredients in order better to meet real-life criteria⁸, hence gradually making possible for the clear-cut distinction between T&I institutions and programs, and modern language and philology faculties, as described by Snell-Hornby (1988:8), Klein-Braley (1996), Klein-Braley and Franklin (1998), and quoted by Ulrych (2005)⁹ to disappear.

Within the framework of the Bologna Process, in view of the practical and academic experience acquired, as well as the translation and conference interpreter training capacities available, as from October 2008, the Faculty of Foreign Languages introduced a second-level postgraduate diploma programme in Translation and Conference Interpreting. Further, in this context, we would like to share our experience in developing a Master's Degree Programme in Translation and Conference Interpreting at the Tirana University, Faculty of Foreign Languages, in tandem with all the other language departments, introduced in 2008, relying on the curricula developed and implemented in the other European Translation and Conference Interpretation Training Institutions.

Considering the Albanian market needs and the post-graduate students' needs, the Faculty of Foreign Languages introduced a joint course equally majoring in Translation and Conference Interpreting.

and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

⁸ ULRYCH, M: *Training translators, programmes, curricula, practices*, published in "Training for the New Millennium Pedagogies for translation and interpreting Edited by MARTHA TENNENT, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 5.

⁹ ULRYCH, M: *Training translators, programmes, curricula, practices*, published in "Training for the New Millennium Pedagogies for translation and interpreting Edited by MARTHA TENNENT, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 5.

The scope and duration of the programme corresponds to 120 credits, under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and takes a maximum of 2 years to complete. As envisaged in similar translation and conference interpretation training programmes, it focuses primarily on the translation and conference interpreting components of training, not on the language skills and language acquisition components, which have already been mastered in the other Bachelor’s Degree programs, hence introducing the two-tier system of translation and conference interpreter vocational training.

- a. *The main objective of the second cycle post-graduate programme in the Translation and Conference Interpreting two-year program, as stated in the relevant documentation and other programmes¹⁰, is associated with training qualified professional translators and interpreters mastering the entire range of the basic skills required of a professional translator, who are capable of carrying out demanding translation and translation-related tasks and of acting responsibly as members of their profession.*
- b. *Cultural and professional background of the students at the end of the programme.* The curricula leads the students to the range of personal and interpersonal competences that can be used freely in the field of exchange between countries and peoples, whose languages have been selected, between international organizations in the field of pragmatic, technical-scientific and literary translation.
- c. *Knowledge and competences characterizing the course of study include:*
 - high proficiency of English and Albanian, and mastery of a third foreign language at an advanced level;
 - in-depth knowledge of the principles and techniques of translation and interpreting, of the cultures and institutions that are related to the languages selected, as well as the basic disciplines of social, economic and legal sciences.
 - further upgraded expertise focusing specifically on the internal and external labour market-oriented issues.
 - computer literacy and ability in using audio-visual devices in the fields of specific competences;

¹⁰ European Commission, Directorate-General for Translation, The Director-General, *European Master’s in Translation (EMT)*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Interpretation, The Director-General, *European Master’s in Conference Interpreting (EMCI)*.

d. *Employment opportunities*

- Future graduates could be employed as translators and/or interpreters in the public and private institutions;
- Future graduates could be employed in international organizations, foreign and domestic associations as operators and mediators of the relations between our country and other countries. They could also serve in the public administration, various non-profit organizations, local entities etc;
- Future graduates could be employed by various print and electronic media, publishing houses, where they can be involved in translating works or essays having literary, publicity technical, socio-economic, informational, literary content etc;
- Future graduates could also be employed in the various organizations operating in the field of cultural cooperation through utilizing the background, abilities and their capacities as translators and/or interpreters;

Later, as from 2016, the curricula for the taught course of *Master's Degree in Translation and Conference Interpreting*, within the context of the programme for the post-graduate second level diploma, was restructured and further developed in collaboration with Université de Strasbourg, ITIRI (Institut de Traducteurs, d'Interprètes et de Relations Internationales), 2016- onwards.

3. INTRODUCING AND DEVELOPING THE 60 ECTS SPECIALISED AND VOCATION-BASED TRANSLATION MASTER PROGRAM (2017 – onwards)

Considering the labour market needs, the students' needs, and the experience already acquired, the Department of English, Faculty of Foreign Languages, introduced and has been offering, as from 2017, the *60 ECTS Specialised and vocation-based Translation Master Program*. Its scope and duration correspond to 60 credits, under the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and takes a maximum of 1 year to complete.

As envisaged in similar translation training programmes, it focuses primarily on the pragmatic and specialised translation component

of the training, not the language skills and language acquisition components, which have already been mastered in the other Bachelor’s Degree programs.

A. The main objective of the 60 ECTS Specialised Translation Master Program, as stated in the relevant documentation and other programmes, is associated with training qualified professional translators introduced to the entire range of skills required of a professional translator, capable of carrying out translation and translation-related tasks, trained as professional translators for specialised and pragmatic translation tasks.

B. Cultural and professional background of the students at the end of the programme. The curricula will lead the students to the range of personal and interpersonal competences that can be used adequately in the field of pragmatic and specialised translation.

C. Knowledge and competences characterizing the course of study include:

- proficiency of English and Albanian language and culture;
- in-depth knowledge of the principles and techniques of translation and interpreting, the cultures and institutions related to the languages selected;
- further upgraded expertise focusing specifically on the local, national and international labour market-oriented issues;
- computer literacy and ability;

D. Employment opportunities:

- Our graduates have been employed as translators in the public and private institutions;
- Future graduates could be employed in international organizations, foreign and domestic associations, as linguistic and cultural mediators;
- They could also serve in the public administration, various non-profit organizations, local entities etc;
- Future graduates could be employed by various print and electronic media, publishing houses, travel agencies, etc., possibly later starting their own business;
- Future graduates are employed in the various organizations operating in the field of cultural cooperation through utilizing the background, abilities and the their capacities as translators;

4. FUTURE ACTION

- Improving and consolidating vocation-based instructional performance of the undergraduate and graduate programmes in translation and conference interpreting.
- Providing more training opportunities for the undergraduate and graduate students of translation and conference interpreting.
- Further supporting research initiatives and projects in Translation and Interpreting Studies.
- Supporting the Ph. D. candidates of the English Department in their research initiatives and projects.
- Introducing the quality insurance and management schemes in translation and conference interpreting.
- Establishing the national and regional network of Translation and Interpretation Studies.
- Establishing the regional network of the translation and conference interpreter training higher education institutions.
- Initiating the publication of the Journal on Translation Studies.
- Further marketing the Specialized Translation and Vocation-based Master Program, eventually working jointly with the local academic and senior management staff to introduce it to the Sarande Affiliated Branch of Tirana University.

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