

Designing a Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to share the experiences regarding the design and implementation of a Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course (TIDC) in a public university located in central Mexico. The main point of designing and implementing the diploma course was to produce a new generation of translators and interpreters, since a number of BA in ELT graduates from local universities, as well as many other translators from the region, wish to grow professionally in both translation and interpretation areas. Moreover, the implementation of this diploma course was necessary because no institutions in this region offer a course of this kind. The TIDC was designed taking into account the demand for professional translators and interpreters derived from the industrial and commercial growth in the state of Aguascalientes, Mexico.

The curriculum for the TIDC consists of 14 modules centered on the theoretical aspects of translation and the translation practice of financial, scientific, technical and legal texts. Spanish writing, terminology, and CAT tools training are also part of the curriculum. The students are also introduced to Consecutive and Simultaneous Interpretation using the appropriate interpretation equipment. All academic staff invited to collaborate in this program hold an MA in Translation and Interpretation. They are also certified translators and currently teach translation and interpretation in various universities. Most of them belong to translators and interpreters associations.

Key words: translation theory, translation training, interpretation, syllabus, design, implementation.

The idea of designing the Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course (TIDC) emerged from the increasing demand for professional translators and interpreters derived from the industrial and commercial boom in the state of Aguascalientes that started a few decades ago. Numerous national and international companies established in Aguascalientes, mostly related to the automotive industry, demand translation and interpretation services in order to succeed in today's global economy.

In addition to the business and industry sectors, academic institutions also need professional translation and interpretation services in their diverse activities. Moreover, consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting have become a necessity for the different congresses, seminars, and meetings that continuously take place in the state of Aguascalientes.

The Current Situation of Translation and Interpretation Studies in Mexico

Translation and interpretation studies have evolved along with globalization in Mexico, the fifth-largest country in the Americas. However, this evolution does not seem sufficient to cover the demand for translation and interpretation services of a country with an estimated population of 118 million. According to a research conducted by the author, a total of nine Master's degree programs in Translation and Interpretation are offered in only six of Mexico's 32 states, while only 10 institutions in states including Mexico City offer degrees in Translation and Interpretation. Finally, only seven institutions concentrated in Mexico City offer diploma courses in translation and/or interpretation. As a consequence, mainly due to the lack of availability in their place of residence, a number of students interested in Translation and Interpretation studies find it difficult to enroll in translation and/or interpretation courses. The situation is quite similar in Aguascalientes, since no academic institutions offer programs or courses related to Translation studies.

The Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course Curriculum

In this paper, the term "curriculum" refers to the academic content taught in a specific course or program that also includes learning objectives, materials and assessment methods. It is important to mention that according to Nunan (1988), all elements contained in a given curriculum must be integrated in order to avoid conflicts when making decisions at different levels of such curriculum. In this particular case, the author attempted to interconnect the elements of the curriculum for the purpose of integrating and applying the students' technical, professional, and ethical skills acquired throughout the development of the diploma course.

On the other hand, Li (2006) claims that there is a "gap between translation training and the real world of professional translation" (p. 615). In other words, students who graduate from translation courses are not really prepared to face the challenges of professional translation as most translation-course contents do not provide students with enough translation practice by employing authentic materials. Moreover, sometimes translation teachers do not have enough professional experience in certain specialized areas of translation. In light of the above, the author considered it necessary to adopt a more suitable approach in order to meet students' expectations.

The main idea was to develop a curriculum that provided students with translation practice in the technical, scientific, financial and legal areas, as well as to include some Terminology management and CAT tool training. Furthermore, Beeby (2004) and Mackenzie (2004) suggest that since new technologies have revolutionized translation, it is of great importance to provide the students with translation-memory tools and terminology software in order to develop the future professional translators' competencies. Moreover, the correct use of such tools is essential to guarantee quality in translation work, as asserted by Esmaili (2009) and Savelová (n.d.).

In view of the above, the contents of the TIDC curriculum include authentic translation tasks and simulated interpreting activities in an effort to integrate both the process-oriented approach suggested by Gile (1995) and the practice-oriented approach proposed by Wilss (1996). This combination of approaches has been suggested by Li (2006), who argued that teachers currently focus mainly on a product- and/or practice-oriented approach because such approaches provide students with many different types of translation tasks aimed at preparing them to face the real world of professional translation. In addition to practice in translation skills, one of the TIDC's main objectives is to develop translation competencies in students, taking into account the premise expressed by Mackenzie (2004) "*Learning by doing, knowing-how rather than knowing*" (p. 33), which refers to using translation skills in real or simulated situations as an essential part of translation training.

Translation and Interpretation Diploma courses in Mexico

However, it was necessary to make a comparison among other translation and interpretation diploma courses offered in Mexico with respect to their curricula structure and contents in favor of obtaining more ideas for designing a practical translation and interpretation diploma course. After having conducted an Internet search, the author gathered information from six translation diploma courses and two translation and interpretation diploma courses offered by various higher education institutions in the country (see Table 1). The main purpose was to find out the types of learning objectives established, the methodologies used, and the assessment criteria employed. It was also important to know about tuition costs, the length of the courses and the number of modules.

The results showed that the translation and interpretation diploma courses offered by private institutions were not affordable to middle-class students due to the high cost of tuition, whereas similar diploma courses offered by public universities were more affordable. It was also found that the criteria followed in the admission requirements varied a lot, but it was evident that prospective students needed to have a good command of English and also had to be proficient in their mother tongue.

Another objective of this research was to find out if CAT-tool subjects and terminology subjects formed part of the Diploma Courses' curricula (see Table 2). Contrary to what the author expected, only two private universities included CAT-tool training in their courses. This is probably due to the fact that CAT-tool training implies the purchase of licenses and, equally importantly, the availability of translation teachers with CAT-tool knowledge. By contrast, seven institutions include at least one Terminology subject in their course programs. This indicates that such institutions are aware of the importance that Terminology management plays in the translation process. In this respect, Palou (2012) supports the idea that the management of terminological databases helps the translator to render translations with language quality, accuracy, and consistency.

The Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course Subjects

It is important to point out that the TIDC consists of introductory subjects aimed at providing students with the basic skills and knowledge of different areas of Translation and Interpretation. The TIDC also aims to broaden students' perspectives and encourage them to become skilled translators and interpreters through their own continuing professional development.

Another aspect of the TIDC that needs to be highlighted is that the teachers were asked to apply translation theory to translation practice and to help the students integrate and transfer the skills and knowledge they gained in one subject into the subsequent subject in order to improve their translation and interpretation competencies.

TIDC Delivery Mode

The author chose the Face-to-Face delivery method for the TIDC subjects with the purpose of creating a positive classroom environment as a way to foster cooperative learning. According to the author's own teaching experience, Face-to-Face instruction promotes a more effective interaction between the teacher and the students, which makes learning more effective. Another advantage of having the students physically together is that they can make use of Language Department facilities such as classrooms equipped with Internet access and LCD interactive screens, the Lecture Hall for Simultaneous Interpreting practices, and the Language Lab.

Considering that most of the prospective students are translators and English teachers and in order to facilitate their attendance at the TIDC, classes will take place on weekends: Friday afternoons from 4 to 8 pm and Saturdays from 8 am to 1 pm.

TIDC Evaluation

The instruments for evaluating the TIDC are currently in the design process. The evaluation instruments will consist of questionnaires and interviews for both teachers and students. The feedback obtained will serve for further improvement of the TIDC.

Academic Staff

A number of studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between teacher quality and student achievement. For example, Buddin and Zamorro (2009) affirm that “Teacher quality is a key element of student academic success” (p. 1). Likewise, King (2003) states that “Teacher quality matters. In fact, it is the most important school-related factor influencing student achievement” (v). Taking into account the previous considerations, the author contacted qualified teachers in translation and interpretation studies and invited them to participate in the TIDC. Five of the teachers have the following profile:

- Currently working as certified translators and interpreters.
- Hold a Master’s degree in Translation and Interpretation
- Currently teaching translation and interpretation at higher academic institutions.

The rest of the academic staff consists of a PhD in Law teacher, an MA in Education teacher, an MA in Philosophy teacher, an MA in Translation and CAT tools teacher, and a BA in Hispanic Letters teacher.

The author considered that the quality of teaching offered in the TIDC was a more effective way of attracting prospective students since quality in teaching may improve the quality-of-learning outcome.

The Approval of the Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course

The proposal for the TIDC was submitted, in accordance with the regulations of the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes, to the *University Executive Board* and was approved on November 13, 2013.

Implementation

After its approval, it was really important to develop a plan of action to promote the TIDC with the purpose of attracting prospective students. The staff from the

Continuous Education Department at the university designed a flyer announcing the TIDC and a number of copies were distributed in the main commercial areas of the city. Additionally, the Communication Department also designed a poster announcing the TIDC and copies were posted throughout the Central Campus. In addition, the Communication Department also invited the author to participate in a university radio program to give general information about the TIDC. The TIDC was also promoted at a Language Department meeting attended by approximately 100 teachers in December 2013. The poster announcing the TIDC appeared on the Language Department's Facebook page. Finally, the author sent e-mail messages to local certified translators.

Before the end of the second semester of 2013, the Department of Continuous Education set the dates for the Registration period. A total of 20 students, mostly English teachers and translators, signed up for the TIDC.

The staff from the Continuous Education Department was in charge of arranging travel expenses, accommodation, and transportation for the external teachers. The Language Department also organized the assignment of classrooms and labs for the TIDC classes.

Finally, the TIDC was inaugurated by the Humanities and Social Sciences authorities. The ceremony was held at the Lecture Hall of the Language Department on February 7, 2014.

Conclusion

The author is aware that the TIDC will not fully satisfy the increasing demand for translation and interpretation services in the state of Aguascalientes since it differs from a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Translation and Interpretation. However, it will probably mark the beginning of a new generation of translators and interpreters in this region. Furthermore, the authorities of the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes are considering using the TIDC as a starting point for a Master's Degree program in Translation and Interpretation.

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Appendix A

Table 1. Translation and Interpretation Diploma Courses in Mexico

Name	Institution	Modules	Hours/ Credits	Tuition	Admission Requirements	Duration (months)
Diplomado en Traducción	Berlitz Mexico City	4	576	\$58,500.00 MX (4,300.00 USD)	High School 80% English	12
Diplomado Traducción e Interpretación	Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez Chihuahua, Mexico	7	280	\$11,550.00 MX (850.00 USD)	500 pts. TOEFL ITP	16
Diplomado en Traducción Inglés-español	Organización Mexicana de Traductores Jalisco, Mexico	10	160	30,000.00 MX (2,200.00 USD)	Entrance Examination	12
Diplomado en Traducción de Textos Especializados	Universidad Autónoma de México CELE Mexico City	11	544/68	-	BA or BS degree (4 semesters minimum) Advanced English Level	12
Diplomado Traducción Textos Especializados	Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México Mexico City	6	180	\$56,750.00 MX (4,200.00 USD)	Good command of English and Spanish	10
Diplomado en Traducción e Interpretación	Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, Mexico	14	300/30	\$16,000.00 MX (1,185.00 USD)	79 pts. TOEFL iBT or 550 pts. TOEFL ITP	10
Diplomado en Traducción Inglés-español	Universidad Intercontinental Mexico City	8	60	\$27,680.00 MX (2,050.00 USD)	-	8
Diplomado en Traducción	Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco, Mexico	2	120	\$6,000.00 MX (440.00 USD)	Intermediate English Level	5
Diplomado Traducción (Inglés-Español)	Universidad Iberoamericana Mexico City	10	300	\$51,100.00 MX (3,785.00 USD)	Advanced English Level/Advanced Reading and Writing Skills in Spanish	5

Note. Data contained in this table was collected in 2014 and may change due to updates.

Table 2. Characteristics of Translation and Interpretation Diploma Courses in Mexico

Name	Institution	Modules/Subjects	Theoretical Subjects	Practical Subjects	Terminology Subjects	CAT Tools Subjects	Total of Subjects
Diplomado Intérprete-Traductor	Berlitz Mexico City	4	5	11	-	-	16
Diplomado Traducción e Interpretación	Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez Chihuahua, Mexico	7	3	4	-	-	7
Diplomado en Traducción Inglés-español	Organización Mexicana de Traductores Jalisco, Mexico	10	-	-	1	-	-
Diplomado en Traducción de Textos Especializados	Universidad Autónoma de México CELE Mexico City	11	9	2	1	-	11
Diplomado Traducción Textos Especializados	Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México Mexico City	6	3	3	3	-	6
Diplomado en Traducción e Interpretación	Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes Aguascalientes, Mexico	14	5	9	1	1	14
Diplomado en Traducción Inglés-Español	Universidad Intercontinental Campus Sur Mexico City	8	3	5	1	1	8
Diplomado en Traducción	Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco Tabasco, Mexico	2	-	-	2	-	2 (T/P)
Diplomado Traducción	Universidad Iberoamericana	10	2	8	1	1	10

(Inglés- Español)	Mexico City						
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Note. Although recently created, the Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course of the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes is included in this table for comparison purposes.

Table 3. Translation and Interpretation Diploma Course Schedule 2014

	Professors	Hours	Credits	Teaching Dates
1. INTRODUCTION TO CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATION THEORIES	M. en T. I. Michelle Cecilia Arriola de la Mora	20	2	February 7, 8, 14 y 15
2. INTRODUCCIÓN TO TRANSLATION TECHNIQUES	M. en C. E. Karla Valdez	20	2	February 21, 22 y 28 de ; March 1
3. INTRODUCCIÓN TO CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETATION	M. en T. I. Michelle Cecilia Arriola de la Mora	30	3	March 7, 8, 14, 15, 21 and 22
4. INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH-SPANISH CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS	M. en T. I. Annie Smyrna Hernández Zárate	20	2	March 28 and ; April 4 and 5
5. SPANISH WRITING WORKSHOP	L. en L.H. José Alberto García Ventura	20	2	April 11 and ;May 9 and 16
6. INTRODUCTION TO TERMINOLOGY	M. en T. I. Annie Smyrna Hernández Zárate	20	2	May 17, 24, 30 and 31
7. INTRODUCTION TO CAT TOOLS	M. en C. E. Laurent Slowack R.	20	2	June 6, 7, 13 and 14
8. INTRODUCTION TO TECHNICAL TRANSLATION	M. en C. E. Laurent Slowack R.	20	2	June 20, 21, 27 and 28
9. INTRODUCTION TO FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSLATION	M. en T. I. Beatriz Elena MezaCuervo	20	2	July 4, 5, 25 and 26
10. INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL TRANSLATION	M. en T. I. Karen Bibiana Camarena Gutiérrez	20	2	August 1, 2, 8 and 9
11. INTRODUCTION TO SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION	M. en T. I. Michelle Cecilia Arriola de la Mora	30	3	August 16, 22, 23, 29 and 30; September 5
12. INTRODUCCIÓN TO SCIENTIFIC TRANSLATION	M. en T. I. Katina Fernández Cedi	20	2	September 6, 12, 13 and 19
13. INTRODUCTION TO TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION COPYRIGHT	Dr. en D. Miguel A. Marmolejo Cervantes	20	2	September 20, 26, 27; October 3
14. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS	Mtra. Ma. Teresa De Lira Bautista	20	2	October 4, 10, 11 and 17

Note. Some teaching dates are not consecutive due to holiday dates and holiday periods.