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Peculiarities of Translator Training Curriculum Design in the Frameworks of Higher Education

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Abstract. The article presents an overview of the Translation Studies literature on translators' training curriculum at the universities. The purpose of this paper is to review the existing models of translator training curriculum in higher education, to compare them and to find out the best approach to higher education curricula design. The definitions, foundations and guidelines and approaches to curriculum formation have been explored. A curriculum model is outlined as a practical example of synthesis, flexibility, and streamlining. The analysis made by the author has allowed identifying some key methodology provisions in regard to the university-based translator training curriculum design theory.

Keywords: curriculum, translators' training curriculum, curriculum model, competence-based approach, skills-based approach, theory-based curricula

Introduction. Translators play an important role in global society. They enhance communication by conveying information accurately from one language to another in different countries across the world. Today, translator training faces several current challenges that concern pedagogical practice, curriculum design and the possible contributions of research. Indeed, the efficient understanding of curriculum processes and the application of translation skills maps may result in training programmes that, they may be effective in a given context and for a specific purpose. Thus, the curriculum design is one of the key and crucial elements to organize sustainable educational process.

The analysis of recent research and publications. While an increasing number of works are beginning to appear in the field of Translation and Interpreting Studies regarding curriculum issues, authors of the vast majority of this recent output seem to make little effort to ground their studies in state-of-the-art curriculum research (as cited by Sawyer (2004); Kelly (2005); Kearns (2006) and Calvo (2009). Despite this, a limited number of translation and interpreting theorists – e.g., Sawyer (2004) in the field of interpreting, and Kelly (2005) and Kearns (2006) in the field of translation – have taken account of the importance of scaffolding training plans and implementation of solid curriculum design and development theories (Calvo, 2009). Among the Ukrainian scholars the curriculum research has been undermined by O. Hirnyi, S. Klepko, T. Koshmanova, J. Lokshyna, N. Nychkalo, O. Savchenko and others. But there is still no one state occupational standard that would define the translator training curriculum in Ukraine.

The aim. The paper analyses the current state of affairs as far as university-based translator and interpreter training curricula are concerned.

Theoretical framework and research methods. Most university-based translator training programs are designed as rational, theory-based curricula that include practical knowledge contents, but do not reveal how some particular program responds to different situational contexts, different stakeholders' needs (Calvo, 2009).

Analyzing translation and interpretation curricula in Ukraine we found out that some decision-making processes behind certain curriculum proposals were based on the following:

- copycatting programmes which proved successful in other different institutions and contexts;
- following individualistic visions of developers about what translation should be;

- following pedagogical trends from a formal and rhetorical but not practical perspective;
- lack of curriculum diversification, innovation and evolution. Such a situation stipulates further research in the determined field.

So, as it was mentioned before, traditionally, training programmes have been designed according to what is known as 'rational planning' or 'theory-based planning' methods. A rational, theory-based curriculum planning process, as states Calvo (Calvo, 2009), can of course include practical knowledge contents in the form of skills, competences, or task performance outcomes, for example. On the other hand, the way a specific training programme is developed in practice and how it responds to its situational needs and stakeholders, regardless of the nature of the selected type of learning content, is what really determines whether it better matches a practice-based or a theory-based curriculum paradigm.

The main objection to the rational curriculum tradition is that training programmes tend not to be very flexible over time and, therefore, have a limited capacity to adapt to possible changes in the training context. Theory-based curricula are often focused on attaining durability, homogeneity and standardisation (i.e., the same programme is applied in different settings including different groups of students, different schools or even different countries), measurability (for formal quality and efficiency assessment purposes) and manageability (for organisational and financial purposes). Special emphasis is made on appropriate wording and other formal issues affecting the quality of the final product or design, while practical implementation may be ignored. (Calvo, 2009).

In theory-based curricula, programmes function as a menu for learning, taking the form of an organised body of subject matters or modules. These subject matters or modules are then further broken down into a set of hierarchical objectives which, in certain cases, are sequenced in successive steps from small, specific objectives up to large, terminal objectives (Jonnaert *et al.* 2006: 6). Given that the curriculum appears in the form of a list of subjects and modules to be learnt, links between the different curricular elements are usually not particularly well defined (lack of integration), leading one to easily lose the overall picture of the course. Indeed, knowledge fragmentation and dissociation is common, leaving little room for real interdisciplinary, integrated, comprehensive curriculum approaches.

Furthermore, due to this insufficient contextualisation and deliberative background, identifying the groundwork

underlying certain content selection and curriculum decision-making can, at times, prove to be a complicated venture (Calvo, 2009).

Results. Therefore, the recent years have witnessed some shifts that are aimed at adapting curriculum theory to modern higher education challenges. According to Jonnaert *et al.* (2006: 7), three main factors have shaped the new approaches to curriculum development: (1) the emergence and influence of the knowledge society with its new methods to access information through the interaction with new types of artificial intelligence artefacts (e.g., computers, the internet, and new cognitive activities and processes resulting from the use of these new technologies); (2) new socially and market-driven forces which are no longer focused on micro-tasks and *super-specialisation*, but rather on knowledge transferability and integration; and (3) the unordered nature of the digital revolution and the fact that the greater availability of information does not necessarily imply equal information processing and accessing skills.

In view of these societal changes, newer curriculum paradigms have been defined in terms of – adaptable and context-reactive – curriculum practice, where curriculum development has been given priority over curriculum de-

sign. A curriculum is then considered as a permanent process in practice, not only an abstract product or programme on the paper. Training courses tend to appear more integrated and comprehensive and the resulting programme of studies is not as much prescriptive as orientative: the curriculum development cycle is self-corrective. Teachers are expected to have sound training in teaching and learning strategies and to demonstrate interest in improving their practices, while students are expected to play an active role in the learning process. Curriculum practice and implementation does not focus directly on covering the syllabus or course content, but rather on achieving actual, durable, transferable and significant learning on the students' part (Calvo, 2009).

In order to better respond to student needs, the recent educational reforms invite the use of a more practice-oriented and flexible lens when examining and designing curricula. Along these lines, one of the main aims to be achieved is the acquisition of competences and skills representing transferable and significant knowledge with respect to social needs and real-world applications. The existing model of curriculum development is brightly described by Calvo (Calvo, 2009), see Figure 1.

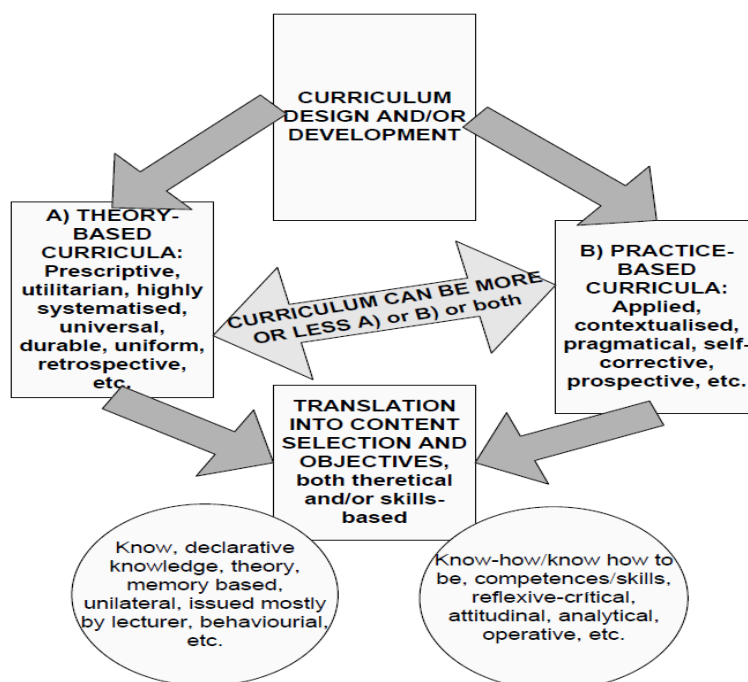


Figure 1. Curriculum as product (theory) and curriculum as process (practice) (Calvo, 2009: 69)

Further consideration of new approaches to curriculum design reveals that the curriculum should be oriented on an existing competence model. For example, in this case would be valuable to refer to International Translators/Interpreters organizations. Hence, a well-known organisation CIUTI (Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes) and its members ensure a high quality in the training of translators and interpreters. The aim of a degree course offered at a CIUTI member institute is to acquire a translation competence, which implies at least the following competences: competence in the foreign language(s), intercultural competence, translator's competence.

CIUTI defines that at the heart of the curriculum lies more than mere language training. Competence in the native language and one or two foreign languages is, in the best case, a precondition. The core of the translation and interpretation curriculum consists of translation training. The curriculum will introduce the various models and methods of translation studies, focusing on the processes of translating and interpreting, because the ultimate goal is the acquisition of procedural competence.

As the translation studies investigate both the process and the product of translation, to the mind of members of CIUTI, the academically-schooled translators should also be equipped to approach their task from a scholarly angle.

This requires knowledge of the theoretical basis of the discipline, and of ongoing research and developments.

Finally, the curriculum should also pay attention to social and communicative skills, including more general skills that allow students to apply their acquired competence in the ever-changing professional context, such as teamwork skills, communication skills, problem solving skills and the ability to work in interdisciplinary teams.

One more important thing should be taken into consideration while designing the curriculum, that in accordance with the principle of an academic education, the curriculum should be based on the theoretical and applied research of the teaching staff, who should have relevant academic qualifications. At the same time, the teaching staff should be able to introduce professional experience and provide training that is relevant for the profession.

In sum, the link between professional training and academic qualification required from CIUTI member institutes is reached when all the above-mentioned components are well and truly integrated as translation competence in the curriculum.

The most interesting recent proposals to Translation curriculum design is the European Masters in Translation (EMT), a partnership between the European Commission and higher-education institutions offering a master's level translation training scheme. Its goal is to establish a quality label for university translation programmes that meet agreed standards in education. The EMT ensures that a number of its programmes are based on a valid, skills-oriented framework of competences drawn up with a group of prominent European experts which details the competences translators need to work successfully in today's market. The above programs revealed possible ways to combine rational and skills-focused approaches to translator and interpreter training curriculum design by implementing a smooth shift from a content-driven to a skills-based approach.

Actually, within the field of Translation Studies, only a very few authors actually pay attention to curricular contextualisation and deliberation before proceeding to the application of competence models. Kelly's *Handbook for Translator Trainers* (2005), for instance, emphasises the importance of the reflection upon and analysis of the context in which trainers work prior to addressing curriculum design proposals. Kelly (2005: 22) identified different information sources for designing context-dependent curricula by means of transparent and explicit decision-making processes:

- Social needs
- Professional standards
- Industry's needs and views
- Institutional policy
- Institutional constraints
- Disciplinary considerations
- Student/trainee profiles.

When proceeding this way, we first design training programs from a perspective that starts with a thorough picture of the curriculum setting and then, when it comes to deciding on criteria such as disciplinary traditions or models, it moves on to choosing the actual guidelines and principles to orientate and inform the curriculum – which could possibly and successfully include a competence-based approach.

Conclusions. To sum up, the above analysis allowed to identify some key methodology provisions in regard to the curriculum design theory, including skills-based focus and a competence-based approach, interdisciplinary background of curriculum development, viewing curriculum as a permanent process and not a theory product, teachers' solid training in teaching strategies, knowledge, skills and abilities transfer with respect to social needs and real-world challenges.

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Скиба Е. Н. Особенности разработки учебных программ подготовки переводчиков в рамках высшего образования

Аннотация. Статья представляет собой обзор переводоведческой литературы относительно учебной программы обучения переводчиков в университетах. Целью данной работы является рассмотрение существующих моделей учебных программ переводчиков в рамках высшего образования, их сравнение и поиск лучшего подхода к разработке таких учебных программ в системе высшего образования. Были изучены определения, основы, руководящие принципы и подходы к формированию учебных планов. Типовой учебный план рассматривается как практическая модель синтеза, гибкость и рационализации. Анализ, проведенный автором, позволил идентифицировать некоторые ключевые положения методологии в отношении теории построения учебных программ переводчиков в рамках университетского образования.

Ключевые слова: учебная программа, учебная программа переводчиков, модели учебной программы, компетентностный подход, подход на основе навыков, программа, основанная на теории