

The Empowerment of Translation and Interpreting Training in the UK in an Era of Economic Hardship

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Abstract

Globalisation and technological advancements have contributed to significant growth in the translation and interpreting (T&I) sector over the last decade. However, this expansion takes place amid economic hardship, which presents challenges for Higher Education (HE) institutions and industry stakeholders alike. Language Service Providers are rapidly evolving to meet increasing demands, requiring T&I professionals to adapt to new market realities. This evolving landscape calls for new approaches to the professional training of future practitioners in multilingual and cross-cultural communication, ensuring they can meet fast-paced industry requirements.

This paper examines the current state of Higher Education (HE) training provision on postgraduate T&I programmes in the UK. It assesses the alignment between course offerings and industry expectations, highlighting areas where training may fall short of market needs. The paper also proposes key amendments to T&I education, focusing on enhancing graduate employability, integrating emerging technologies, and strengthening industry collaboration.

Furthermore, at a time when economic challenges are impacting HE funds and reshaping institutional priorities, the paper advocates for stronger partnerships between employers, T&I professional bodies, and HE institutions. These collaborations will be crucial in implementing sustainable training reforms that enhance student learning experiences while also ensuring the long-term viability of T&I programmes in an era of financial uncertainty.

Keywords: Higher Education institutions, professional associations, skills, translation and interpreting training, work providers

Ekonomik Zorluk Döneminde Birleşik Krallık'ta
Çeviri ve Tercümanlık Eğitiminin Güçlendirilmesi

Özet

Küreselleşme ve teknolojik gelişmeler, son on yılda çeviri ve tercümanlık (T&I) sektöründe önemli bir büyümeye katkıda bulunmuştur. Ancak, bu büyüme ekonomik zorluklar eşliğinde gerçekleşmekte olup, bu durum hem yükseköğretim kurumları (HE) hem de sektör paydaşları için zorluklar yaratmaktadır. Dil hizmetleri sağlayıcıları, artan talepleri karşılamak için hızla gelişmekte ve T&I uzmanlarının yeni pazar gerçeklerine uyum sağlamasını gerektirmektedir. Bu gelişen ortam, çok dilli ve kültürlerarası iletişim alanında gelecekteki profesyonellerin mesleki eğitimine yeni

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yaklaşımlar getirilmesini ve bu kişilerin hızlı değişen sektör gereksinimlerini karşılayabilmelerini sağlamayı gerektirmektedir.

Bu makale, Birleşik Krallık'ta lisansüstü T&I programlarında yükseköğretim (HE) eğitim hizmetlerinin mevcut durumunu incelemektedir. Ders içerikleri ile sektör beklentileri arasındaki uyumu değerlendirerek, eğitimin pazar ihtiyaçlarını karşılayamadığı alanları vurgulamaktadır. Makale ayrıca, mezunların istihdam edilebilirliğini artırmaya, yeni teknolojileri entegre etmeye ve sektör işbirliğini güçlendirmeye odaklanarak, T&I eğitime yönelik önemli değişiklikler önermektedir.

Ayrıca, ekonomik zorlukların yükseköğretim fonlarını etkilediği ve kurumsal öncelikleri yeniden şekillendirdiği bir dönemde, bu makale işverenler, T&I meslek kuruluşları ve yükseköğretim kurumları arasında daha güçlü ortaklıklar kurulmasını savunmaktadır. Bu işbirlikleri, öğrencilerin öğrenme deneyimlerini geliştirirken, aynı zamanda finansal belirsizliklerin yaşandığı bir dönemde T&I programlarının uzun vadeli sürdürülebilirliğini sağlayan sürdürülebilir eğitim reformlarının uygulanmasında çok önemli olacaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yükseköğretim kurumları, meslek dernekleri, beceriler, çeviri ve tercüme eğitimi, dil hizmeti sağlayıcıları.

INTRODUCTION

The T&I sector has experienced, and continues to experience, significant growth over the last decade, driven by factors such as globalisation, increasing demand for multilingual content, ongoing technological advancements, shifts in the market, regulatory compliance and international trade, amongst other factors. In response, Language Service Providers (LSPs) are rapidly adapting to meet these emerging challenges, which, in turn, call for enhanced frameworks for the professional training of future translators and interpreters.

UK Higher Education institutions offering postgraduate T&I training programmes must ensure that their curricula not only provide intellectual rigor and essential professional skills but are also adaptable to a fast-paced and constantly evolving marketplace. However, financial pressures on HE institutions are making adaptability increasingly difficult, with economic hardship resulting in funding limitations, programme restructuring and, in some cases, the reduction or closure of language-related courses. These trends threaten the sustainability of existing programmes, including those in T&I, and may reduce opportunities for students to develop specialised expertise, which in turn could impact the T&I sector's ability to meet industry demands.

The long-term viability of these programmes depends on their ability to balance industry needs with the financial constraints of Higher Education, while also ensuring they remain relevant by addressing current and future professional demands.

One way to achieve this is through stronger collaboration between HE institutions, professional associations, language service providers, and work providers. This cooperative strategy helps close the divide between academic preparation and professional practice, enabling graduates to gain the essential competencies to succeed in a constantly evolving sector while also contributing to the sustained viability and flexibility of these programmes.

This paper will critically examine the state of T&I postgraduate training in the UK, assessing its compatibility with industry expectations. It will suggest ways of strengthening and empowering these programmes to ensure they remain sustainable and responsive to ongoing changes. It will also advocate for stronger partnerships between HE institutions, employers, and professional bodies to implement meaningful and lasting improvements in training provision, especially considering the financial pressures influencing the future of T&I education.

THE CURRENT STATE OF T&I TRAINING IN THE UK

If one examines the landscape of Translation and Interpreting (T&I) education around forty years ago, there were no formal academic courses offered by Higher Education Institutions in the UK dedicated to training translators and interpreters. At that time, professional training in these fields was largely absent from university curricula. However, it should be noted that ‘the British Civil Service Commission has been engaged for many years in conducting Navy, Army and Air Force Interpretership examinations, preparation for which has been the job of various service establishments in the United Kingdom with occasional help from university extramural departments.’ (Coveney, J. 1982, p.42). Additionally, mention should also be made to the oldest conference interpreter’s training centre in Europe, the *Linguists’ Club Working Party*, founded in London in 1938 by Mr A. T. Pilley, a practising conference interpreter.

The formalisation of translator and interpreter training at university level began primarily in the 1960s, with several institutions contributing to this development. Among them it was the Holborn College of Law, Languages and Commerce - later known as the Polytechnic of Central London and now as the University of Westminster – which introduced an intensive course in conference interpreting in 1963. This course aimed at producing high quality conference interpreters. In the same decade, the Polytechnic also launched a Diploma in Technical and Specialised Translation aimed at addressing the growing demand for skilled technical and specialised translators, both in the UK and internationally. In 1966, the University of Bath founded the first postgraduate university course in Translation and Interpreting, specifically designed to train students for roles in international organisations. Later, in 1980, the University created a postgraduate programme for native Arabic speakers. In 1973, the Institute of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Kent started a postgraduate course in vocational techniques for career linguists. This course was aimed at modern languages graduates who wanted to acquire ‘a professional training in specialised translation, translation techniques, and other applications of foreign language skills, with a view to using languages in a future career, either as a translator in the industry or in an international organisation, or as an executive operating in the European context.’ (Coveney, J. 1982, p.44). In 1975, the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Bradford launched a postgraduate programme in Translation and Interpreting. This programme aims to provide modern language graduates with the expertise required to pursue careers as interpreters in general, industrial, and conference settings, and as translators in technical and commercial fields. Similarly, in 1979, the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Salford initiated a postgraduate programme in Advanced Language Studies, primarily focused on high-level translation and

interpreting. The programme aimed at enhancing students' written and spoken fluency in two languages while also addressing practical and theoretical challenges in areas such as translation, interpreting, and stylistics. Finally, it is important to note that Heriot-Watt University became the first educational institution in the UK to establish an undergraduate degree course in Interpreting and Translating, which was introduced in 1969.

The institutionalisation of T&I education in the UK during the second half of the 20th century laid a strong foundation for the professional training of translators and interpreters. Since that time, the availability of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in T&I has expanded considerably across academic institutions. Currently, approximately 40 academic institutions across the country offer these training programmes, particularly at postgraduate level, which remains the primary focus for training professional translators and interpreters. These programmes are designed to provide students with a solid grounding in both the theoretical and practical dimensions of translation and interpreting and are aimed at those who already have an advanced/proficiency level in one or more modern languages. These programmes are available on both full-time and part-time basis. While many of these programmes are traditionally delivered on-campus, a growing number of institutions are beginning to offer online options, particularly in translation. This progression highlights the shifting needs of the industry and the impact of fast-paced technological innovations. Online translation programmes are especially beneficial for students and professionals balancing their studies with work or other commitments, as they provide access to specialised training without the need for physical attendance.

The range of specialisation offered by these programmes extends from *general/broad Translation and Interpreting (T&I) courses* to *highly specialised fields*, including *audio-visual translation and localisation*, *conference interpreting*, *British Sign Language (translating and interpreting)*, and *applied language*. This progression reflects the industry's shifting expectations and the growing role of technological innovation.

The subsequent section will examine the content of 20 selected postgraduate programmes, including both *broad and specialised ones*, and evaluate their alignment with the contemporary requirements of the profession.

General/Broad Programmes

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Programme Name and Link</i>	<i>Core Courses (Examples)</i>	<i>Optional Courses (Examples)</i>
Aberdeen University	MSc in Translation Studies https://www.abdn.ac.uk/study/postgraduate-taught/degree-programmes/329/translation-studies/	-Key Concepts and Methods in Translation Studies -Language-Specific Translation Portfolio	-Translation Technology -Literary Translation -Professional Skills
Cardiff University	Translation Studies (MA) https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/taught/courses/course/translation-studies-ma	-Translation Methods and Skills	-Specialised Translation: Subtitling

		-Translation Theory	-Specialised Translation: Scientific and Technical
Edinburgh University	Translation Studies (MSc) https://llc.ed.ac.uk/translation-studies/msc-translation-studies	-Translation Studies 1 -Research in Translation Studies	-Translation and Creativity -Gender and Translation
Exeter University	MA Translation Studies https://www.exeter.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/courses/languages/translation/	-Translation Theory -Practice of Translation	-The Translation Profession -Translation as cultural and intermedia practice
Heriott Watt University	MSc Interpreting and Translating https://www.hw.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/interpreting-translating	-Translation and Interpreting Studies -Translation Practice I & II -Skills for Interpreting -Conference Interpreting -Introduction to the Translation and Interpreting Professions	-Business Communication 1: Communication in the workplace -Inter-cultural Communication in the workplace
Leicester University	Translation MA https://le.ac.uk/courses/translation-studies-ma/2025	-The Development of Translation Studies -Research Skills and Methods in Translation Studies 1 & 2	-Audio-visual Translation -Con-secutive interpreting -Translation Strategies -Simul-taneous Interpreting
Manchester University	MA Translation and Interpreting Studies https://www.manchester.ac.uk/study/masters/courses/list/07006/ma-translation-and-interpreting-studies/	-Introduction to Translation and Interpreting Studies	-Translating for Business Institutions -Inter-pretng, Society and Skills -Aspects of Professional Communications
Portsmouth University	Translation Studies, MA https://www.port.ac.uk/study/courses/postgraduate-taught/ma-translation-studies	-Critical Approaches to Specialised Translation	-Professional Aspects of Translation

			-Project Management
Queen's Belfast University	MA Translation https://www.qub.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-taught/translation-ma/	-Theory and Practice of Translation -The Business of Translation	-Translating for Performance -Meaning, Sense, Translation -Principles of Community Interpreting
Swansea University	Translation and Interpreting, MA https://www.swansea.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/culture-communication/modern-language-translation-interpretation/#:~:text=The%20MA%20in%20Translation%20and,into%20a%20successful%20professional%20linguist	-Translation Tools -Foundations of Translation and Interpreting -Advanced Translation (language specific)	-Conference Interpreting -Healthcare Interpreting -Language, Translation and Interpreting Research Skills -Terminology Management - Simulated Translation Bureau

The *broad postgraduate T&I programmes* listed above provide students with a good grounding in both the theory and practice of translation and interpreting. Core courses across these programmes focus mainly on translation theory, research methodologies, and translation practice, helping students develop critical analytical skills and an understanding of the way in which the T&I professions are evolving.

Broad programmes that include interpreting also feature mandatory training in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, integrating practical exercises, booth simulations, and real-world interpreting scenarios.

In addition to core components, *broad programmes* offer a diverse selection of optional courses, allowing students to tailor their studies according to industry trends and their personal interests and career aspirations. Many of these courses focus on specialised translation fields such as medical, legal, audiovisual translation, technological advancements, including CAT tools, and machine translation post-editing, and professional development skills such as project management and business communication. The availability of these options reflects the industry's growing emphasis on versatility and interdisciplinary expertise, ensuring that graduates are prepared to navigate an increasingly specialised and technology-driven market.

Broad programmes offer students a solid grounding in translation and interpreting; however, the growing demand for specialised expertise has led to the development of postgraduate programmes tailored to specific professional sectors. These *specialised programmes* concentrate on fields such as legal translation, audiovisual translation, localisation, conference interpreting, and translation & technology (covering scientific, medical, and technical domains), providing students

with the in-depth expertise and practical skills required to succeed in the diverse and evolving landscape of the T&I professions.

Specialised Programmes

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Programme Name and Link</i>	<i>Core Courses (Examples)</i>	<i>Optional Courses (Examples)</i>
Bath University	Translation and Professional Language Skills, MA https://www.bath.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-2025/taught-postgraduate-courses/ma-translation-and-professional-language-skills-full-time-french-and-spanish/	-Editing and Revision -French to English Translation -Spanish to English Translation -Translation Theory and Practice -Translation Technology	-Enterprise Skills for Linguists -Introduction to Proofreading -Public Speaking -Précis-writing for the United Nations -Spanish/French & English public service and commercial interpreting
Essex University	MA Audiovisual and Literary Translation https://www.essex.ac.uk/courses/PG00835/1/MA-Audiovisual-and-Literary-Translation	-Translation Portfolio I & II -Audiovisual Translation -Subtitling: Principles and Practice -Professional Skills for Translators and Interpreters	Literature options from list (some examples): -Dramatic Structure -Critical Moments in the Theory and History of Film -Women Filmmakers -African American Literature -Crossing the Boundaries: Literature and Translation in a Global Context

Leeds University	Audiovisual Translation and Localisation, MA https://courses.leeds.ac.uk/j548/audiovisual-translation-and-localisation-ma	-Methods and Approaches in Translation Studies -Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing and Audio Description -Localisation and Project Management	-Writing for Professional Services --International Organisations: Context, Theory and Practice -Introducing to Dubbing and Voice-Over -Literary Translation
London Metropolitan University	Conference Interpreting, MA https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/conference-interpreting--ma/	-Conference Interpreting (EU/UN Context) -Consecutive interpreting (A into English or C2 into English) -Consecutive interpreting (English into A, or C1 into English) -Interpreting Theory and Interpreting Assignment Preparation Strategies -Simultaneous interpreting (A <> English, or C1 and C2 into English) -The Interpreter's	

		Professional Environment -MA Research Project	
Newcastle University	Conference Interpreting, MA https://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/degrees/4180f/	-Consecutive Interpreting II -Simultaneous Interpreting II -Public Service Interpreting -The Language Industry: Professions, Processes and Society	-Translation and Interpreting Studies -Drama Translation for Interpreters and Translators -Fundamentals of Legal Translation -Translator Entrepreneur
Nottingham University	Translation and Localisation Studies, MA https://www.prospects.ac.uk/universities/university-of-nottingham-3928/school-of-modern-languages-and-cultures-12363/courses/translation-and-localisation-studies-ma-139202#section-course-content	-Introduction to Localisation -Localisation Practice -Translator's Toolbox	-Audio-description -English for Language Professionals A & B -Subtitling for Deaf Audiences
Queen Mary University	Translation and Adaptation Studies, MA https://www.qmul.ac.uk/postgraduate/taught/coursefinder/courses/translation-and-adaptation-studies-ma/	-Translation Studies I: Problems, Theory, Terms -Adaptation in Theory and Practice	-Screenwriting -Practical Translation Skills -Translation Theory II: Translation, Empire, and Law
Southampton University	Translation and Professional Communication Skills, MA https://www.southampton.ac.uk/courses/translation-professional-communication-skills-masters-ma	-Translation: Theory and Practice -Translation Technology	-Audiovisual Translation -Introduction to Interpreting

		-Practical Translation -Research Skills	-Language and Intercultural Communication -Practical Translation (2): Specialist Translation -Public Service Interpreting
University College London (UCL)	Translation and Technology (Scientific, Medical and Technical), MSc https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/graduate/taught-degrees/translation-and-technology-scientific-technical-and-medical-msc	-Scientific and Technical Translation -Medical Translation -Language automation -Translation Technology 1 & 2	-Localisation -Professional Skills for Translators -Topics in Audiovisual Translation -Translation for Voiceover and Dubbing -Audio description for people with limited access to visual information
Westminster University	Specialised Translation, MA https://www.westminster.ac.uk/languages-courses/2025-26/september/full-time/specialised-translation-ma#:~:text=Our%20Specialised%20Translation%20MA%20offers,German%2C%20Italian	-Specialised Translation -Translation Skills Lab -Audiovisual Translation and Localisation -Computer-assisted Translation, Machine Translation and Post-editing -Professional Development	-International Organisations and Institutional Discourse -Translation as Cultural Practice

The *postgraduate specialised T&I programmes* listed above provide students with in-depth training tailored to distinct professional sectors. Core courses across these programmes focus on areas such as audiovisual translation, localisation, legal and medical translation, and conference interpreting, ensuring graduates acquire the specialised knowledge and practical skills required for industry-specific roles. In addition to translation and interpreting proficiency, many of these programmes integrate technological components, such as CAT tools, machine translation post-editing, and accessibility services like subtitling for the deaf and audio description.

Beyond core components, *specialised programmes* offer a range of optional courses that further refine students' expertise and adaptability. These include advanced translation techniques, enterprise and business skills, public speaking, and interdisciplinary courses linking translation with performance, legal discourse, and international organisations. By combining field-specific training with broader professional competencies, these programmes enable graduates to navigate highly specialised and technology-driven markets effectively.

Postgraduate T&I programmes in the UK are evidently working to align with the industry's evolving requirements. With continuous advancements in technology, globalisation, and increasing specialisation, T&I programmes are responding by offering more targeted courses that reflect evolving market realities, while also maintaining broader training pathways that equip students with foundational and versatile professional skills - both of which are essential for navigating the diverse professional roles within the sector.

However, narrowing the divide between academic training and industry requirements remains essential to adequately preparing graduates for professional roles. To stay relevant and sustainable, these programmes must adapt to industry advancements, cultivating both specialised expertise and the transferable skills sought by employers.

The following section will examine how well academic training aligns with industry needs, identifying potential gaps and proposing adjustments to strengthen T&I education for future professionals.

ALIGNING INDUSTRY EXPECTATIONS WITH ACADEMIC TRAINING

Today, the demands of the translation and interpreting professions require practitioners to possess a multifaceted skill set, including proficiency in editing, localisation, and specialised knowledge. Specialisation (or thematic proficiency) has become, in particular, increasingly important, with expertise in more than two fields now regarded as essential rather than optional. This depth and breadth of expertise enable professionals to address a diverse array of content in translation and interpreting. In translation, this might include working with technical documents, such as engineering manuals and IT specifications; legal texts, like contracts and court rulings; marketing materials, such as product advertisements and branding campaigns; and audio-visual projects, including subtitling and dubbing for films or TV programmes, amongst others. Similarly, in interpreting, professionals might facilitate international conferences on, for example, climate change, assist in legal negotiations, or provide remote interpreting services for virtual corporate meetings. This comprehensive skill set ensures that translators and interpreters can meet the diverse

and evolving demands of their clients. With industries becoming increasingly specialised, the ability to work across different subject areas in both translation and interpreting not only enhances a professional's versatility but also improves their marketability and competitiveness in a globalised market.

This is supported by the specific competences and skills that translators and interpreters are required to develop to meet the rigorous professional standards of the field. The Framework for Translator and Translation Competence, developed by the European Master's in Translation (EMT) network, is widely recognised as a key reference for translator education both within the European Union and internationally, shaping training standards in both academic and professional settings. 'The EMT expert group proposed the framework of the competences applicable to language professions or translation including a widespread professional range' (Esfandiari, Rahimi and Vaezian, 2017, p. 80). This framework identifies five main areas of competence deemed essential for translation as a professional practice. For interpreting, comparable frameworks, such as those established by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), or institutional bodies like DG Interpretation (SCIC), outline the distinct competences interpreters must acquire, including proficiency in the various interpreting modes, cultural adaptability, and ethical decision-making.

The EMT framework defines 'competence' as 'the combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and know-how necessary to carry out a given task under given conditions' (Gambier 2009, p.3). This conceptualisation is equally applicable to interpreting frameworks, which similarly emphasize the integration of technical, linguistic, and cognitive skills with professional ethics. These competency frameworks respond to the distinct yet interconnected requirements of translation and interpreting, with an emphasis on improving graduates' employability and providing them with the necessary skills to adapt to the shifting demands of the global professional environment.

As outlined above, the *EMT Framework for Translator and Translation Competence* (European Commission, 2022) highlights five key areas of competence deemed essential for professional practice: *language and culture*, *translation*, *technology*, *personal and interpersonal skills*, and *service provision*. Each of these areas serves as a robust foundation, equipping translators with the tools required to excel in modern professional contexts:

1. *Language and culture competence* focuses on a deep understanding of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and trans-cultural concepts, which equips translators to engage effectively with a variety of texts and audiences. This competence is further supported by essential skills such as recognising cultural references, adapting language to suit specific audiences, and ensuring stylistic coherence throughout translations.

2. *Translation competence* involves the strategic, methodological, and thematic expertise necessary to oversee the full translation process, from analysing source documents and transferring meaning to ensuring that quality standards are met. Additionally, the industry places significant value on skills such as creativity, precision, and problem-solving, particularly when working with intricate or highly complex texts.

3. *Technology competence* focuses on the effective use of translation tools, enabling professionals to enhance workflow efficiency, refine accuracy, and seamlessly incorporate digital solutions into their translation processes.

4. *Personal and interpersonal competence* promotes flexibility and the ability to work collaboratively. These are essential for successfully contributing to multilingual projects.

5. *Service provision competence* emphasizes managing client relationships, overseeing projects, and ensuring quality standards, relying on key skills such as negotiation, effective time management, and meeting strict deadlines.

For interpreting, comparable frameworks established by the *International Association of Conference Interpreters* (AIIC, 2024) and *DG Interpretation* (Directorate General for Interpretation of the European Commission, 2024) define the core competences interpreters must acquire to meet the profession's rigorous demands. These include *linguistic and cultural competences*, *cognitive and analytical competences*, *interpreting techniques competence*, *technological competence*, and *professional and ethical competences*. These competences provide interpreters with the tools necessary to perform effectively in high-pressure and diverse professional environments:

1. *Linguistic and cultural competences* encompass the ability to work proficiently with various language pairs and to navigate cultural nuances, enabling effective communication in settings that involve multiple languages and diverse cultural contexts.

2. Interpreters are required to have well-developed *cognitive and analytical competences*. These include abilities such as attentive listening, rapid decision-making, and managing stress effectively in high-pressure situations.

3. *Interpreting techniques competence* is essential, including expertise in both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting modes, along with strong note-taking abilities specifically for the consecutive mode.

4. *Technological competence* is a vital skill for interpreters, especially with the growing prevalence of remote interpreting following the COVID-19 pandemic. It encompasses the capability to efficiently use virtual platforms, resolve technical issues during live sessions, and adjust to the requirements of hybrid and online environments.

5. *Professional and ethical competences* involve upholding key principles which are fundamental for an interpreter, including maintaining confidentiality, demonstrating impartiality, and exhibiting professionalism.

Both translation and interpreting frameworks emphasise not only field-specific competences but also transferable competences that enable professionals to operate in diversified settings. Core transferable competences such as time management, problem solving, research, and communication skills are essential to meet industry expectations. While translators benefit from *creativity*, *precision*, *technological literacy*, interpreters must develop *quick decision-making*, *strong note-taking technique*, *active listening skills*. All of these are essential to the scenarios that they will both be exposed to. These frameworks provide a structured approach for academic programmes to align with professional standards and to prepare graduates for successful careers. This alignment guarantees that training

programmes remain attuned to the evolving needs of the global industry while also laying a strong foundation for practitioners to make meaningful contributions in their respective fields.

The UK industry, as well as the industry on a global scale, expects T&I graduates to possess not only linguistic and subject-specific expertise but also transferable skills that allow them to navigate a rapidly changing professional landscape (European Commission, 2022; AIIC, 2024). These skills include *communication, time management, problem-solving, research, attention to detail, adaptability, cultural awareness, collaboration, critical thinking, and project management* amongst others (British Academy, 2017). As Olohan (2021) highlights in *Translation and Practice Theory*, modern translation professionals must navigate evolving industry demands by integrating business expertise, engaging effectively with clients, and mastering technological tools. Developing a diverse set of skills will enable T&I professionals to stay competitive and respond effectively to the demands of a dynamic market.

In their training, graduates should be taught that continuous professional development and lifelong learning are essential for staying current with the latest advancements in the T&I fields. The design of translation and interpreting programmes should reflect this imperative by incorporating skills and competences that address the constantly evolving needs of the professional environment.

The analysis carried out in the previous section reveals that *some alignment exists* between *broad and specialised T&I programmes* in the UK and *industry expectations*. Many *specialised programmes* maintain a strong focus on their areas of expertise, integrating competences such as technology proficiency, cultural awareness, and advanced language skills into their course offerings. For example, optional courses in public speaking, précis writing (tailored for specific organisations such as the United Nations), and English for language professionals not only develop core competences but also enhance working and native language proficiency. These elements align well with the EMT Competence Framework, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), and DG Interpretation (Directorate-General for Interpretation of the European Commission), each advocating for a well-rounded approach to professional training.

However, inconsistencies remain. Some programme titles suggest a focus on specific competences or skills that are not adequately reflected in the curriculum. For instance, a programme featuring *Adaptation* in its title offers only *a single core course on adaptation theory and practice*, without addressing its broader applications. Similarly, a programme titled *Literary Translation* offers literary courses only as optional components and does not include a dedicated course in *Literary Translation*. Such gaps highlight a discrepancy between programme design and industry expectations, potentially leaving graduates underprepared for specialised roles.

An emerging trend in UK institutions is the inclusion of *interdisciplinary optional courses* designed to prepare students for roles that extend beyond the traditional scope of translation and interpreting. 'Interdisciplinary skills will be pivotal in enabling future graduates to respond to global and multifaceted challenges. This includes the ability for individuals to interpret and understand concepts across several disciplines and in different cultural contexts as well as being able to work alongside those from other disciplines to combine and integrate knowledge and skills together to solve complex problems'. (British Academy 2017, p.57).

Courses that integrate T&I with fields such as business, law, or international relations equip graduates with diverse skill sets increasingly valued in the modern job market. These combined courses enhance graduates' adaptability, enabling them to collaborate effectively in multidisciplinary teams, manage complex projects requiring expertise across multiple domains, and address the growing demand for professionals who can integrate linguistic proficiency with domain-specific knowledge. Despite their potential, interdisciplinary courses remain limited across UK T&I programmes, and this highlights an area for further development.

To address these gaps and ensure that T&I programmes in the UK continue to respond effectively to industry demands, the following section will propose targeted amendments aimed at empowering graduates and securing the long-term sustainability of these vital training pathways.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH AMENDMENTS

'The world in which translators and interpreters operate today is immensely different from that of the 1980s or 1990s. Economic, societal, and technological changes have significantly transformed both practice and training in recent decades.' (Orlando, 2016, p.17). However, despite these shifts, disciplines within the Arts and Humanities, including Translation and Interpreting, are frequently undervalued and underfunded in higher education. The UK, like many other nations, faces economic challenges that are reshaping education priorities, with fields like business, IT, and pharmacology often perceived as more worthy of investment. In contrast, Translation and Interpreting are uniquely positioned to address the complexities of a globalised world, acting as a vital bridge across languages, cultures, and industries. T&I professionals are not only enablers of international communication, but also key players in global trade, diplomacy, and social inclusion.

To empower T&I programmes in the UK and reaffirm their critical role in society, it is essential to foster stronger collaboration between academia and industry stakeholders. Higher education institutions, professional bodies such as APTIS (Association of Translation and Interpreting Programmes in the UK and Ireland), ATC (Association of Translation Companies), CIOL (Chartered Institute of Linguists), ITI (Institute of Translation and Interpreting), language service providers and service users must work together to strengthen the relevance and sustainability of T&I training. '[...] there has been a consensus among translation scholars (Durban, Martin, Mossop, Ros, & Searles-Ridge, 2003; Gabr, 2007; Li, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2002, 2007; Pym, 1993; Ulrych, 1996; Vienne, 1994) on the necessity of providing the bond between training and the actual translation world which includes the translation market.' (Esfandiari, Rahimi and Vaezian, 2017, p. 79-80). This shared vision can address gaps in current programmes, support the development of new programmes tailored to emerging demands, align training with market needs, and showcase the indispensable contributions of T&I professionals to society and the economy.

The amendments proposed aim at empowering graduates and securing the future of T&I programmes in the UK, ensuring that they remain responsive to evolving industry demands and global challenges. These amendments focus on aligning curricula with industry needs, embracing technological advancements, fostering interdisciplinary, employability, transferable skills and the

promotion of sustainability and lifelong learning, promoting good practice. The following recommendations are proposed to achieve this:

1. Refining Programme Focus and Alignment: It is essential that course content aligns with the skills and specialisations indicated by programme titles. Programmes that highlight a focus on niche areas should prioritise these subjects as core components rather than optional ones. Aligning programme content more closely with industry-specific specialisations will not only enhance the credibility of these offerings among students and employers, but it will also equip graduates with the specialised skills needed to thrive in their professional endeavours and contribute meaningfully to the fields of T&I.

However, programme analysis reveals inconsistencies where course structures do not fully reflect their stated focus. For instance, some *Audiovisual Translation* programmes list literary translation only as an elective, rather than a core component, despite its relevance to the discipline. Similarly, programmes featuring *Professional Communication* in their titles often focus solely on professional writing, without incorporating essential skills like client interaction which is increasingly valuable in industry settings. Likewise, programmes referencing *Adaptation* in their titles, such as Queen Mary University, include only one core course on *Adaptation in Theory and Practice*. This course primarily focuses on theoretical aspects with limited practical training, an element that would be particularly beneficial for those pursuing careers in audiovisual or literary translation.

Professional guidelines and competence frameworks, including the EMT Competence Framework (European Commission, 2022), along with recommendations from industry bodies such as the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) and the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), emphasise the growing need for translators and interpreters with expertise in specialised areas particularly in legal, financial, medical, and audiovisual sectors. Additionally, employer-driven surveys and reports from Language Service Providers (LSPs) suggest that professionals with expertise in these areas are highly sought after.

To enhance graduate employability and programme credibility, universities should ensure that their course structures reflect their stated specialisations, integrate practical training alongside theoretical components, and undergo regular curriculum updates to align with evolving market trends and employer expectations. Addressing these gaps will better prepare graduates for specialised roles and support the long-term sustainability of T&I programmes in the UK.

2. Integrating Emerging Technologies: Technology is essential not only in education but also in the rapidly evolving T&I industry. The advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the expansion of remote interpreting platforms, and the increasing use of machine translation (MT) and post-editing workflows are continuously reshaping T&I industry workflows. These developments are transforming T&I practices while also redefining the responsibilities of training institutions, which must prepare future graduates to adapt effectively to an evolving professional environment.

As AI continues to influence language services, both current and future professionals must develop not only the technical expertise needed to use these technologies effectively, but also the critical awareness required to assess their capabilities and limitations in professional settings. Since

many service users lack a comprehensive understanding of these technologies and their constraints, T&I training programmes must ensure that students develop both technical proficiency and the ability to critically evaluate, manage, and explain these tools in their professional practice. To achieve this, translation-focused and interpreting-focused programmes should incorporate specific AI-related training components.

For translation-focused programmes, students should gain practical experience with post-editing workflows, neural machine translation (NMT) systems, and AI-supported terminology management, as these tools have become integral to the industry. Training should equip students with the skills to post-edit AI-generated translations, critically evaluate machine outputs, and understand AI's limitations in handling complex texts, such as literary works or legal documentation. Ethical considerations, including copyright issues and systematic errors in AI systems that may lead to inaccurate translations, should also be addressed. This will help students work effectively in technology-enhanced translation environments, while maintaining the required quality standards.

For interpreting-focused programmes, it is essential that students become familiar with AI-driven tools, which are increasingly shaping T&I industry workflows. Training should include hands-on experience with automated speech recognition (ASR) tools, AI-assisted interpreting platforms, and real-time AI-generated subtitles.

Programmes should also help students develop strategies for working alongside AI, such as human-in-the-loop (HITL) models, where interpreters refine AI-generated outputs. Given AI's growing role in accessibility, particularly in multilingual communication and subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing, training should also focus on how AI can be effectively integrated into these contexts.

Integrating these components into training programmes allows T&I education to prepare future translators and interpreters with the essential skills needed to operate effectively in hybrid and AI-supported professional settings.

3. *Developing Interdisciplinary Competence*: Integrating interdisciplinary courses into T&I programmes provides a significant opportunity to equip students for the ever-expanding range of professional roles within the sector. By fostering a diverse skill-set that extends beyond language proficiency, interdisciplinary programmes can better prepare graduates to meet the industry's growing demand for professionals adept at managing complex and cross-disciplinary challenges. Graduates of these programmes are then well-prepared to contribute effectively across various sectors.

4. *Empowering Employability Through Industry Partnership*: Promoting employability needs to be a fundamental objective of T&I programmes, as it directly impacts graduates' ability to transition effectively into professional roles and meet industry expectations. Building robust partnerships with industry stakeholders ensures that the training offered aligns closely with the evolving demands of the T&I sector. One effective strategy for enhancing employability involves integrating work-based learning opportunities — such as internships, industry-led projects, live simulations, namely localisation tasks or interpreting exercises — into the curriculum. Whether embedded within core

courses or offered as optional courses, these work-based learning experiences provide students with valuable exposure to real-world challenges, enabling them to engage with authentic industry scenarios.

Working alongside industry professionals enables students to translate theoretical knowledge into real-world tasks that reflect industry standards and expectations, effectively connecting academic learning with professional practice. Such opportunities can be established through partnerships with LSP, NGOs, and other organisations, granting students hands-on experience while fostering the development of professional networks which is essential for their future professional development.

Additional initiatives focused on employability might include workshops delivered by industry practitioners or mentoring schemes, such as those offered by major Language Service Providers like RWS Group (a major global provider of translation, localisation, intellectual property support, and content management solutions) and TransPerfect (a leading global language service provider specialising in translation, localisation, interpreting, and business services). These initiatives not only strengthen students' technical skills but also broaden their comprehension of the wider professional environment, encompassing evolving market trends and areas of expansion.

By fostering close collaboration with industry stakeholders, T&I programmes not only prepare graduates with the skills and flexibility needed to excel in a fast-evolving sector but also deliver tangible advantages to the T&I industry itself. These partnerships allow employers to engage with students during their training, tailoring their skill sets to meet specific organisational or market demands. Such collaboration helps organisations develop a pipeline of well-trained professionals who are ready to address industry-specific challenges, ensuring a workforce that is both capable and aligned with the strategic objectives of the sector.

5. *Emphasizing Transferable Skills and Lifelong Learning*: While academic training provides the foundation for entering the T&I profession, the dynamic nature of the translation and interpreting industries requires professionals to commit to continuous professional development (CPD) and skills enhancement throughout their careers. Lifelong learning, therefore, should be emphasised as a fundamental principle of professional growth and actively supported beyond graduation. Universities and industry stakeholders alike can contribute by offering refresher courses and training programmes that address the latest market trends and technological advancements.

Transferable skills—such as project management, problem-solving, critical thinking, research, and communication—should also be integral to T&I curricula. In some of the programmes reviewed, *Project Management* is either embedded within broader *Professional Skills* courses or offered as an *optional* course. However, given its significance, *Project Management* should be made a *core* component as it equips students with the ability to manage medium-to-large-scale projects (in both translation and interpreting), meet strict deadlines, and collaborate effectively with clients. By integrating Project Management with problem-solving and cultural awareness, T&I programmes can better prepare graduates to handle the demands and intricacies of the current professional landscape. This well-rounded approach enables graduates to develop the essential competencies required to thrive in diverse professional environments.

6. *Promoting Knowledge Exchange and Best Practices*: Encouraging collaboration, the exchange of expertise, and the sharing of good practices between T&I training institutions, service providers, service users, and related T&I bodies is vital for addressing challenges encountered within the profession. This involves reflecting on experiences, learning from each other, and collaboratively developing effective solutions to emerging issues in the T&I fields.

CONCLUSION

In an era of economic hardship, the UK's T&I training sector faces considerable challenges, yet it also presents opportunities for growth, adaptation, and long-term sustainability. Globalisation, shifting industry demands, and rapid technological advancements continue to reshape the profession. However, these developments unfold alongside financial pressures on HE institutions, leading to funding constraints, programme restructuring, and, in some cases, course closures. These financial challenges further underscore the necessity of keeping T&I training sustainable, pertinent, and aligned with industry demands.

By implementing the proposed amendments, UK HE Institutions can strengthen the sustainability and adaptability of their T&I programmes. Key to this is fostering strong partnerships with industry stakeholders, service providers, and professional bodies to ensure that training remains practical, future-oriented, and aligned with the realities of the profession. Integrating work-based learning opportunities, strengthening transferable skills, and promoting lifelong learning will better equip graduates to succeed in an increasingly competitive job market while enhancing the resilience of the sector.

Addressing current gap such as inconsistencies in programme design, the need for greater interdisciplinary expertise, and the integration of emerging technologies will position UK T&I institutions at the forefront of excellence in professional training. While financial constraints pose undeniable challenges, they also offer a catalyst for innovation and collaboration. By adapting proactively to these pressures, HE institutions can reaffirm the vital role of translation and interpreting, ensuring that these professions continue to thrive in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

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