

MA IN *TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING* – THE FIRST 10 YEARS

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Mesterszakos fordító- és tolmácsképzés – az első 10 év. 2019-ben éppen tíz éve annak, hogy Magyarországon elindult a *Fordító és tolmács* mesterképzés, amely a korábbi posztgraduális képzési formát váltotta fel. A tanulmány áttekintést nyújt az Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem vonatkozó mesterképzéséről. Ennek során előbb a régről megőrzött, jól bevált elemeket mutatja be, majd rátér a változásokra és a megváltozott képzési struktúra új elemeire. Végül kitekintésként felvázolja, milyen lehetséges változások előtt áll a *Fordító és tolmács* mesterképzés, elsődlegesen a folyamatos technikai fejlődés tükrében.

Kulcsszavak: fordítás, tolmácsolás, fordítóképzés, tolmácsképzés, mesterképzés

1. Introduction

2019 marks ten years since the MA courses in *Translation and Interpreting* were started after the introduction of the Bologna Process (often referred to as the “Bologna System”), not only at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), which is the oldest translator training institution in Hungary, but throughout the country. As I have several years of teaching experience connected to the old postgraduate training system transformed at this time (and was also awarded a degree at the end of this course) and have been a lecturer in the new training course since 2009, my article aims at comparing and contrasting the two programmes, together with summarising the practical knowledge collected primarily in the course of the past ten years.

First, I describe the old, well-tried elements preserved from the postgraduate training system. Then, I discuss the changes and the new elements of the revamped course structure. Finally, as an outlook, I sketch the potential changes ahead of the MA course in *Translation and Interpreting*, particularly in the light of continued technological progress.

2. The Past in the Present

As a first step, what has to be reviewed is which time-tested elements of the old programme have been preserved in the MA course. These elements include the majority of

the lectures which provide students with fundamental and indispensable theoretical knowledge. In the first semester the lectures cover Translation Studies, Interpreting Studies, Use of Hungarian and Style and European Studies. Then, in the second semester, students have to attend the forum of visiting professionals, who provide them with a wide range of practical information concerning the career of practising translators, interpreters and experts employed by translation agencies.

Even today the foundations of translation skills and the essentials of translation procedures can be acquired within the framework of seminars but they are not advertised exclusively in the first semester any more, but form a part of the curriculum of the second semester as well. Apart from the translation of texts, the exercises utilised focus on paragraph-, sentence- and word-level translation strategies, too. In the first semester the syllabus contains mainly the translation of newspaper articles (Zachar 2013, 2017a and 2017b discuss the reasons behind and the aim of this method), whereas the second semester concentrates on genres which, strictly speaking, cannot be associated with any specific areas. These texts are, for instance, brochures, extracts from catalogues (connected to tourism, arts etc.), letters of invitation, calls for conferences, simple user guides, CVs, menus, mission statements and texts published on websites.

Similarly, more time is devoted to immersion in the translation of economic and legal texts (one semester each) which continues to be the backbone of the programme because the main aim is to train technical translators specialised in social studies and economics. As a result, students have the opportunity to get to know many more genres, together with their characteristics, compared to the participants of the old postgraduate course. The third semester lays stress on economic texts, such as, documents containing financial information, reports, annual reports, certificates (related matters include: taxation, labour, wages etc.), profit and loss accounts, balance sheets and certificates of incorporation. The fourth semester revolves around a wide range of areas and genres associated with law: letters written by lawyers, documents connected to legal assistance, deeds of foundation, corporate documents, employment contracts, general terms and conditions, other business-related contracts (lease contracts, construction contracts, contracting agreements etc.), minutes of hearings, decisions, decrees and judgments.

In the first two semesters there are still classes where students acquire interpreting skills and the basics of conveying the message of oral source-language texts in the target language. Activities include sight translation, note taking and writing and delivering short speeches to be interpreted. The course element approaching the culture of the target-language and source-language countries in a contrastive way has also remained in the curriculum because intercultural mediation is an integral part of interlingual mediation, thus it is essential to familiarise students with the political and economic life, society, history and culture of the individual countries. Last but not least, it is important to say a few words about the thesis which serves as one of the requirements necessary to fulfil for graduation and which provides students with the opportunity to work

individually for a long period of time. However, some changes have been implemented in this respect as well. I am going to discuss this topic in detail in the next section.

In accordance with the old, well-tried practice, the majority of the teachers in the course are experts who translate, revise or interpret on a daily or weekly basis. The utmost importance of this lies in the fact that they can and must keep up with the changes in the market concerning new and current topics, text types, idioms, phrases, shades of meaning, technological improvements and the changing needs of clients. In addition, they can also incorporate these elements as examples almost immediately, in extreme cases even the following day after their occurrence, in the lesson.

A further well-tried practice is that former students are given the opportunity to pass on their knowledge as members of the core staff or as associated lecturers, if required. They are of great value as they are absolutely aware of the course requirements and, thanks to their hands-on experience, they are also conscious of the usefulness and applicability of the knowledge gained in the programme. Finally, we must not forget about the role of the native speaker teachers, either, who maintain the high quality from the perspective of the foreign languages taught and give authentic feedback to the students.

3. These Days

The following paragraphs provide a detailed overview of the changes connected to the MA course and this part of my article also discusses the new elements which were not included in the old postgraduate programme. There were four major changes. The first one to be presented is the longer duration of the course. The old programme comprised two semesters, whereas the new one enables students to acquire the technical knowledge in four semesters. This is important because the first two semesters can serve the purposes of laying the foundations of the general knowledge connected to translation and interpreting in addition to improving the students' linguistic proficiency. Then, the second two semesters can concentrate on the technical knowledge.

The second crucial change I would like to touch on is that students have the opportunity to choose a track for the second two semesters of their studies because they can decide if they wish to focus on translation or interpreting after the first two semesters. Following the approval of their choice by the department they attend lessons exclusively of their track in the second two semesters and they also write their thesis and take the final exam in the last semester accordingly.

The third significant difference is that candidates can apply for the MA course only with two foreign languages. However, students in the old postgraduate course worked with one foreign language only. In the case of the B language the requirement for admission is a certificate of advanced level linguistic proficiency just like in the old system, whereas in the case of the C language a certificate of intermediate level linguistic

proficiency is necessary. In the lessons connected to the passive foreign language, students work only from this foreign language to their mother tongue. However, similarly to the old programme, their active foreign language is used in both directions. From the perspective of the languages taught, English, German and French are still at the heart of the programme, but since the launch of the MA course, students with German-Dutch, English-Dutch and English-Chinese language combinations have also been admitted on several occasions.

Finally, fundamental but indirect changes occurred due to the fact that the postgraduate structure of the programme has been replaced. In a nutshell, it means that younger students arrive by the course compared to earlier times when they started the programme at the age of 23-24 at the earliest after graduating in their major completed in five years. These students often had years of work experience as well and they were more mature. These days students tend to apply for the MA course at the age of 21-22 right after the three-year long BSc programme. It inevitably implies that they have been learning the two foreign languages chosen for fewer years and have less technical knowledge, less knowledge about the world and less hands-on experience. Consequently, it is necessary to explain more things to them and they have to learn more.

The mandatory number of lessons increased due to the two foreign languages taught is increased further by the new subjects introduced at the launch of the MA course. The essentials of technical knowledge can be acquired independently of the foreign languages chosen in the lecture courses, providing information about the international organisations and the principles of economy and law. These lessons are held in Hungarian. Furthermore, from the academic year 2018/2019, students are required to attend two further compulsory lecture courses in the third semester of their studies: *The Foundations of Terminology* and *The Foundations of Revising*. These subjects can be regarded as the department's flexible reaction to the changes in the translation market.

The terminology seminar was incorporated in the MA curriculum at the launch of the programme as a new element which did not form a part of the postgraduate course. The aim of these lessons is to provide students with a contrastive overview of the B language terms in the fields of economy and law and the work of translators connected to them. The economic and legal terminology classes are in the third and fourth semesters respectively. So, in the third semester, students learn about the basics of the economy, the economic systems, the forms of business organisation, the foundations of macro-economics, financial transactions and the terms related to the labour market in their active foreign language and their mother tongue. In the fourth semester students are familiarised with the basic terms of law, the different legal systems and the structure of the judicial system. Suddenly, they immerse in civil law, contract law, commercial law and labour law. These seminars and the respective two above mentioned lecture courses, which are held in Hungarian, are the sources of background knowledge indispensable

for the relevant technical translation classes and for the students' future career as technical translators.

Nevertheless, in my experience as a teacher and translator, these lessons can only serve the purposes of teaching the bare essentials. Given the fact that students typically do not have any experience related to economy or law and they had never dealt with these topics at all before entering the programme, they need to invest a lot of energy in accumulating knowledge outside of the classroom as well. In addition, as was the case with me too, later on they will have to broaden their knowledge of these fields by getting to know further details, similarities and differences as well as by keeping up with the changes occurring all the time. Although the fields of economy and law change slower and less frequently compared to some others, for instance, technology, new elements, concepts, terms and phrases unavoidably emerge at regular intervals in their cases, too, and the translator has to absorb these novelties.

The old programme did not include the subject *Supervised Translation Project Work* which has become an integral part of the curricula of translator training courses in the past ten years in Hungary as well. This new element follows practices applied abroad, especially in France. This subject is taught in the third and fourth semesters and it aims at simulating real translation situations and processes by carrying out bigger projects. Students can try the roles of the translator, reviser, master reviser, terminologist and project manager within the framework of the projects in these two semesters. In general it is the teacher who plays the role of the client who is in contact with the project manager. The PM is also responsible for coordinating the work of the translators, revisers and master revisers. The translations are, of course, proofread by the teacher as well, so in many cases they are the third reviser dealing with the text after the revisers correcting the individual parts of the translation and the master reviser checking the whole text. In this case, the feedback provided by the teacher covers the whole translation process, from receiving the assignment to the imaginary invoicing (for further detail see Kovács 2016).

Students almost always use CAT tools in the course of the work during the projects. In the second semester they learn the relevant software in the language technology seminar which lays the foundations of the project work classes. Of course, this is also a novelty in the curriculum which can be put down to technological development. The objectives of these lessons are “that students get to know the basics of the use of software, benefit from its advantages (e.g. reusing previous translations, creating terminology databases) and are aware of certain disadvantages (e.g. ensuring coherence despite segmentation)” (Kovács 2016: 211).

It is also important to note that students have already worked on real translation assignments within the framework of these lessons on several occasions. In such cases, the department or a teacher received a bigger assignment which was completed mainly by the students working in the project team as described above. In this case, these students' names also appeared on the publication. As an example, the publication *Karták*

könyve (Fejérdy 2011) can be mentioned. The students helped with the translation of the extended edition of this book originally written in Hungarian. Furthermore, it must also be mentioned that students could test their skills in numerous real interpreting assignments as well, thanks to which they could gain valuable references right at the beginning of their career.

Another new course element is the internship organised by the department. Similarly to the project work classes, it helps the university maintain close ties with the translation market. The students enrolled in the old postgraduate programme could hardly gain insights into the life of a translation agency, a publisher or an editorial staff or into the arrangement of an international conference. However, the new curriculum requires students to work at least sixty hours as interns at institutions of their choice. Students profit a lot from the internship: they have to get in touch with the institution they choose, they are tasked with arranging the individual phases of their internship, they can gain insights into the organisational structure, work processes, strengths and weaknesses of the institution and they can also place and evaluate their own work and role in the translation process. It occurred several times that the host institution offered a full-time or part-time job to the student right after the internship or after the student graduated from the MA programme. In the fourth semester students present the experience they gained during their internship in the form of a portfolio and a short presentation given to the teachers and the first-year students, who receive useful advice in connection with their own future internship in this way.

At this point it is crucial to point out that there are some institutions which employ students as interns on a regular or periodical basis or which have been an internship place from the beginning. One of these is the Hungarian Office for Translation and Attestation (OFFI), the biggest translation agency in Hungary, which has been offering internships for students throughout the country since 2010 when the first MA students worked as interns to fulfil the course requirements. The experts at OFFI play the role of mentors, helping students get to know a wide range of processes adopted by translation agencies (these include: receiving an assignment, allocating tasks, translation, revising, terminology work, proofreading, attestation etc.). Some of these processes are carried out only at OFFI. I am pleased that I also played a minor role in fostering the fruitful cooperation between OFFI and our department. I was an invited speaker at the German translators' meeting organised by OFFI in April 2011 where I also talked about this cooperation opportunity, its necessity and support, pointing to the experience of the first internship programme in 2010.

Another important aspect of the internship course component is that primarily in the past two or three years, institutions outside Hungary also came into the limelight as internship places. Some of the institutions and translation agencies abroad provide an excellent opportunity for students to familiarise themselves with the translation process in a foreign language environment. The Erasmus Programme, focusing on internship,

proves to be of indispensable help, thanks to which the successful applicants can receive a subsidy as a contribution to their costs of accommodation and living abroad.

The past few years brought some changes regarding the thesis, too, which I have already mentioned above: beside the customary technical translation task, including the translation of a 30,000 character long technical text into Hungarian, writing a list of notes about the translation process and the compilation of a term base, now, similarly to other academic programmes, students can also opt for writing a theoretical essay, discussing a topic related to Translation Studies. The students of the interpreting track were first given this opportunity some years ago but the students specialised in translation have this choice for the first time in the academic year 2018/2019. The essay type of thesis can be a good alternative for students who are interested in research and intend to pursue studies later, for instance, in the PhD programme in Translation Studies.

The last new elements in the curriculum about which the present article gives a brief description are the language practice classes, which are advertised as elective seminars and which proved to be useful concerning both the B and C languages down the years. I have already touched on the new trends; students have been learning the foreign languages in question for a shorter period of time, they enter the MA course at an earlier age and, compared to the students enrolled in the old postgraduate course, fewer of them lived in the B- and C-language countries before they start their studies in the programme. Therefore, it is essential to enrich and to develop their linguistic skills further, as well as to make their knowledge explicit. It is also indispensable because of the fact that the majority of the students study mainly literature and linguistics during their three years in the BA course. In other words, language learning is not a central part of the BA programmes. The language practice classes are always held by native speakers and their syllabus consists of grammar tasks, vocabulary work, strategies associated with constructing texts and rhetoric skills (Zachar 2013).

4. New Challenges set by the Future

What will the future bring to translator and interpreter training, and most of all, to the MA course? Nobody can tell but some trends can already be seen which can point us to directions of potential development. In itself “the development of software and the appearance of new versions, extended functions and brand new programmes require constant inquiry and self-study on the part of both teachers and students” (Kovács 2016: 215). Furthermore, at least in the case of some specific language pairs and genres, the spread of neural machine translation will lead to a rise in the number of translations prepared by such programmes and the number of post-editing and revising assignments which are at present definitely necessitated by these texts. This trend obviously assigns other tasks to the interlingual mediators and it requires the acquisition of other competences. Instead of translating a complete text, in some cases, the translator’s

assignment will only include the correction of mistakes related to grammar and language usage, the preservation or restoration of text cohesion and coherence and the elimination of mistranslations. Mistranslations can be rooted in, for example, polysemy or the lack of cultural and technical knowledge. Because of the reflection of the translation process and the translation market, students will soon have to be taught about and made aware of all these new problems and challenges. From the academic year 2018/2019 the MA programme is enriched by a lecture course dealing with the theory of revising which shows that the department is ready to tailor the curriculum to the needs of the future. However, it remains an open question as to what extent the changes presented above will affect the economic and legal texts serving as the cornerstone of the MA course.

Similar factors have to be considered in connection with interpreting and its teaching as well. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into account that machine interpreting lags behind machine translation at present. However, the technological development already impacts on interpreter training, too: even if it has not triggered the introduction of a new element in the curriculum yet, the virtual lessons obviously represent a change compared to the practices of earlier times. These lessons provide the setting for the simulation of videoconferences, where students “can follow along on a screen, with native language speeches being delivered by interpreters working in Brussels, then they can interpret that speech simultaneously or consecutively, depending on class conditions” (Seresi 2016: 227). For the time being, this teaching method is applied almost exclusively in the conference interpreter training course, which is still advertised as a postgraduate programme, but it is expected that videoconferences will also be introduced into the MA curriculum in the near future.

At the same time, specialisation within the field of interlingual mediation may also become important in the future. It can be explained by the fact that machine translation and machine interpreting will probably spread first in the case of fields (and language pairs) where there is a great stock of standardisable texts and text parts with similar characteristics. As a result, it will also be important in the future to design and launch postgraduate programmes such as the course focusing on interpreting for court and public authorities, the audiovisual translation and the technical translation and terminology courses advertised at ELTE or the literary translator programmes of other universities.

In connection with the postgraduate programmes listed above, it is necessary to say a few words about the option and role of e-learning which was introduced in the academic year 2016/2017. The Department of Translation and Interpreting can be rightfully proud of the fact that it is the first department at ELTE which initiated this new course form. Moreover, it proved to be very successful, based on both the number of applicants and the feedback given by the students. The class of the academic year 2018/2019 is the third one studying in this revolutionary course structure. This new course form is practical for teaching translation, terminology and revising, and it is

expected that e-learning will be of even greater importance in the next few years due to the wave of digitalisation and globalisation.

As a final point in the discussion about the potential trends, it is necessary to touch on the scientific analysis of the changes described above. At ELTE, the research of this field is embodied by the PhD programme in Translation Studies and the relentless scientific work (presentations and publications) of the teachers. It is, of course, on a higher level compared to the MA and the postgraduate courses, but it does not necessarily mean that research is entirely separated from them. There are a lot of aspects which show that they are closely related. Let me elaborate on three of these. First, the number of recent MA graduates applying to the PhD programme is constantly on the rise. Their goal is to gain in-depth knowledge in Translation Studies, to carry out research on their profession and to be part of the teaching staff at the department during or after the PhD course. Second, there are more and more students who decide to translate an article on Translation or Interpreting Studies as their thesis project. However, this upward trend in the number of essay type theses has not manifested itself yet because it has just been introduced as an option and only students on the interpreting track had the opportunity to write an essay up until this academic year. Finally, students enrich the Hungarian Translation Studies literature because their thesis translations make it possible to publish papers which were not accessible in Hungarian earlier (cf. Robin and Varga 2018).

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