

## TRAINING PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS: FACING CHALLENGES

Carmen Valero-Garcés\*

### Abstract

Public service interpreting and translation (PSIT) is helping societies deal with the challenges posed by migration. Its consolidation as a professional practice is still a controversial subject. A number of advances can be identified across territories and settings, including the use of English when providing interpreting and translation services in lesser-used language contexts, the increasing availability of training courses for public service interpreters and translators, the modest development of trainer training courses, or the rising awareness among stakeholders of the importance of relying on competent professionals when communicating with individuals who are less than proficient in the contact language or languages. However, these vital improvements are only visible in some instances and institutions in certain countries. In others, conditions in PSIT practice are far from professional. Education and training are fundamental tools for raising the status of PSIT. In this paper we take stock of experience accrued by PSIT researchers, practitioners and trainers to highlight challenges and advances in the area of PSIT training in tertiary education. After identifying successful initiatives, we single out underexplored areas, including the missing focus on translation in both training programmes and research agenda.

**Keywords:** public service interpreting and translation; PSIT; PSIT training; migrant population; less translated languages; professionalisation.

## FORMAR TRADUCTORES I INTÈRPRETS DELS SERVEIS PÚBLICS: AFRONTAR REPTES

### Resum

*La traducció i la interpretació als serveis públics (TISP, o PSIT per la sigla anglesa) ajuda les societats a fer front als reptes que planteja la migració. La seva consolidació com a pràctica professional és encara un tema controvertit. En diversos territoris i entorns es poden identificar diversos avenços, com ara l'ús de l'anglès quan es proporcionen serveis de traducció i interpretació en contextos de llengües menys utilitzades, la disponibilitat creixent de cursos de formació per a traductores i intèrprets públiques, el modest desenvolupament dels cursos de formació de formadores, o la sensibilització creixent entre les parts interessades sobre la importància de confiar en professionals competents quan es comuniquen amb persones que no dominen la llengua o les llengües de contacte. Tanmateix, aquestes millores vitals només són visibles en algunes instàncies i institucions d'alguns països. En altres, les condicions de la pràctica de la TISP estan lluny de ser professionals. L'ensenyament i la formació són eines fonamentals per elevar l'estatus de la TISP. En aquest document fem balanç de l'experiència adquirida per investigadores, professionals i formadores de TISP per posar en relleu els reptes i els avenços en l'àmbit de la formació en TISP en l'educació terciària. Després d'identificar iniciatives d'èxit, assenyalarem alguns àmbits poc explorats, com ara la falta d'atenció a la traducció tant en els programes de formació com en l'agenda de recerca.*

*Paraules clau:* traducció i interpretació als serveis públics; TISP; formació en TISP; població migrant; llengües menys traduïdes; professionalització.

\* Carmen Valero-Garcés, Professor of Interpreting and Translation at the University of Alcalá (Spain) and Director of the Post Graduate Program on Public Service Interpreting and Translation. She is also Director of online peer reviewed FITISPos International Journal, chair of the association AFIPTISP and responsible of the research group FITISPos®, group dedicated to training and research in public service interpreting and translation. [carmen.valero@uah.es](mailto:carmen.valero@uah.es)

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## **Summary**

1 Migration in the European Union and PSIT

2 Challenges in PSIT

2.1 Variety of available training and diversity of students' profiles

2.2 Teachers' background and availability

2.3 Directionality and the axiom of L1 in translation and interpreting

2.4 The need to transcend traditional notions of interpreting and translation

2.5 Interpreter and translator positioning

2.6 Language resources and translation technologies in languages of lesser diffusion in PSIT

3 Answering challenges and issues related to PSIT training

3.1 Internship or work placement

3.2 Research

3.3 Development and participation in activities and projects

4 Conclusion and future thoughts

Reference list

## 1 Migration in the European Union and PSIT

Migration is an issue that the countries of the European Union (EU) and Western societies in general are finding themselves compelled to confront. Thirty-seven million EU residents, that is, 7% of the total population, were born outside the EU (Directorate-General for Communication, 2018). According to a report commissioned by the European Commission, “It is [...] imperative that effective policies for the integration of third-country immigrants are developed in the EU” (Directorate-General for Communication, 2018: 3). Such policies need to deal not only with the practical matters of migration, such as hosting and providing services for growing populations with very specific needs, but also with host population responses. Indeed, in November 2017, the Standard Eurobarometer on public opinion reported immigration and terrorism as clearly the “leading concerns at EU level” (Directorate-General for Communication, 2017: 31).

Language issues are often not recognised as an integral part of migratory movements or social integration, however. While professionals of interlinguistic communication know that language is a necessary component to achieve immigrant integration and consolidate a truly multilingual society, policy makers at local, national, or supranational levels do not always seem aware of the risks and costs of not providing interpretation and translation services.

An abundant body of literature describes situations in which family members, children, friends, or anyone who speaks or understands a language helps to break language barriers in hospitals, police stations, social work or Department of Immigration offices, to name but a few. This situation seems to be changing in some instances and countries where institutions and citizens are becoming increasingly aware of the need for communication professionals. Australia, Canada, the USA and some EU countries (UK, Austria) have taken decisions at national level to raise standards for PSIT practice (D’Hayer, 2012; Mikkelson, 1996; Mikkelson, 2014; Ozolins, 2014; Sasso & Malli, 2014). In other EU countries (Spain, Italy and France), PSIT is only just beginning to take the first steps towards professional status. And in still others (Portugal), PSIT is not even acknowledged.

In the EU in general, courses available for public service interpreters and translators are becoming increasingly available, either as continuing education programmes (e.g. courses in PSIT at Universität Graz), as part of graduate and postgraduate translation and interpreting (TI) programmes (e.g. at London Metropolitan University, Heriot-Watt University or Universität Graz), wider-ranging programmes (e.g. the MA in Refugee Integration at Dublin City University), or PSIT-specific programmes (e.g. the MA in Intercultural Communication and Public Service Interpreting and Translation, MICIT, at the Universidad de Alcalá, Madrid or the BA in PSI [Tolkning i offentlig sektor] at Stockholms Universitet).

A brief, though not exhaustive, overview of the situation of PSIT training in European countries shows the following:

- In the Nordic countries (Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) migratory population movements from one country to another typically occur for work purposes, when citizens from the EU and other territories migrate in search of work, asylum and refuge, or to reunite with family (Vatne Pettersen & Østby, 2014; Karlsdóttir, Norlén, Rispling, & Randall, 2018). In the 1970s, some training programmes for interpreters were developed in distinct areas: universities, adult education centres, or by public service providers (Ertl & Pöllabauer, 2010; Määttä, 2015: 32; Salmi & Martikainen, 2012). Stockholms Universitet is a forerunner and boasts a large number of training courses. In Denmark, Jacobsen (2012) reports a lack of training options in the most demanding languages, such as Arabic, Somali, Farsi, and Turkish. As for examples of tertiary training in Norway, Doria de Souza (2011) and Skaaden (2016) describe the offering of various courses at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences.
- In Italy, the figures of the interpreter and the intercultural mediator appear to coexist in practice, though Italian institutions appear to favour the figure of the mediator. In the absence of any significant progress towards professionalisation, however, university graduates resort to combined interpreter/ translator/ mediator/ facilitator profiles to find work (Morelli & de Luise, 2017: 47). NGOs and associations play a significant role in the training of mediators and interpreters in Italy (Favaro,

2010; Tomassini, 2012: 43). In the university environment, a number of centres offer training courses (Morelli & de Luise, 2017; Rudvin, 2014).

- In France, applied immigration policy on assimilation and monolingualism (Niska, 2002: 136; Re-tortillo, Ovejero, Cruz, Arias, & Lucas, 2006) has delayed the development of PSIT, for which responsibility falls to a large extent to NGOs and associations (Ozolins, 2010). University offerings appear to be attracting interest, and a university diploma in ISP mediation was offered for the 2018-2019 academic year at the Université Paris Diderot. Pointurier (2018) reports the launch of another university diploma in 2019 at the School of Interpreters and Translators (ESIT) of the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3. Of particular note is the activity of the NGO ISM Intérprétariat, which—according to information on its website—offers online, on-site and video courses in more than 50 languages (ISM Interprétariat, 2017).
- In Portugal, the development of PSIT is practically non-existent, literature is scarce and the talk is of *interpretação comunitária* (Tipton & Furmanek, 2016: 22). Costa (2009, cited in Mullender, 2014) indicates that, in comparison to other Western European countries, Portugal receives a lower number of immigrants, and that the most represented communities are from Brazil and Cabo Verde and already speak Portuguese (SEF, 2017: 13). Training here is rather scarce and university offerings are limited to some already existent minor programmes in Translation and Interpretation, at the Universidade do Minho and the Universidade de Porto, for example (Feijoo, 2003; Mullender, 2014: 16).

Despite these differences, PSIT has been gradually moving towards professionalisation since it became the focus of academic and research activity at the well-known 1995 Critical Link conference held in Canada. Training is necessary to achieve this professionalisation, though, as De Pedro Ricoy (2010) suggests, questions remain as to whether the training should be offered by higher education or professional training institutions, or imparted by NGOs or other entities.

Challenges faced by course designers and educators have long been identified by a number of authors, notably Hale (2007: 169), D'Hayer (2012: 235), and Taibi and Ozolins (2016), as well as previously by Valero Garcés (2003) and Niska (2005). Those challenges are still very much present, as Hale suggests, in three main areas: recruiting suitably qualified teaching staff, attracting students with adequate bilingual and bicultural competences, and deciding on the most relevant content and most efficient teaching methodology (2007: 169). In this vein, D'Hayer (2012: 238) states that, in the UK alone, more than 30 PSIT courses are offered. These vary greatly in terms of topics covered, duration and methodology, and are mostly oriented towards the Diploma in PSI (DPSI). She also points out a number of common features:

- Training on these courses is primarily skills-based.
- Courses are assessment-led with a primarily summative approach to assessment.
- A lack of awareness of pedagogical principles in the teaching of PSIT and no formal, specialised PSIT quality control (2012: 238).

This paper concentrates mostly on training in further and higher education. It is my intention to present some of the difficulties encountered and initiatives taken when training future TI professionals to act as a bridge in communication between institutions and migrant populations. The experiences of practitioners and trainers on PSIT programmes offered in different countries are the main source (D'Hayer, 2012: 235; Hale, 2007; Iannone, 2017; Lee & Llewellyn-Jones, 2014; Orlando, 2012; Valero Garcés, 2003)<sup>1</sup>.

## 2 Challenges in PSIT

Hale (2007: 6-63) classifies the main issues related to training into four main areas:

1. Lack of recognition of the need for training.

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the general term *public service interpreting and translation* (PSIT) will be used, and is intended to include the terms *community interpreting*, *community interpreters*, *public service interpreting* (PSI), and *public service interpreters*.

2. Absence of a compulsory pre-service training requirement for practising interpreters.
3. Shortage of adequate training programmes.
4. Quality and effectiveness of the training.

These are also acknowledged by D'Hayer (2012: 240), who points out a number of problems encountered by future interpreters when deciding whether to take a training course:

- courses are not available in the desired language combination;
- students have dropped out and the course has had to close;
- as a result of poor funding, there are insufficient funds to pay all language-specific lecturers;
- insufficient resources in interpreting, language and learning support;
- lack of available teaching and interpreting expertise;
- cross-fertilisation with expertise from conference interpreting scarcely exists;
- little or no theory is taught;
- little understanding of PSIT as a profession or the professionalisation process;
- low pass rate for the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI).<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1. Issues faced by students deciding whether to enrol in a PSIT programme in the UK, as per D'Hayer (2012: 240)

In the pages that follow, we will focus our attention on the following problems found in training at tertiary level (Valero Garcés, 2003; Valero Garcés & Anastasia, 2013):

1. Variety of available training and diversity of student profiles.
2. Trainers' background and availability (recruitment).
3. Directionality and the axiom of L1 in translation and interpreting.
4. The need to transcend traditional notions of interpreting and translation.
5. Interpreter and translator positioning.
6. Language resources and translation technologies for minority languages.

## 2.1 Variety of available training and diversity of students' profiles

One of the main characteristics of PSIT programmes is their variety. Over a decade ago, Hale (2007: 167) summarised the situation as follows: since training is not a prerequisite to practising the profession, PSIT courses vary in terms of the fields they cover, their length, and their approach. Some have a generalist scope, others include translation as well as interpreting, others specialise in court or health care interpreting, and still others combine as many specialities as possible in the time available. Some receive special funding for training a relatively small group of interpreters and translators to meet very specific needs, but cease to be sustainable after the initial funding has been spent. Others are offered on a permanent basis by higher education institutions as part of a standard course curriculum.

D'Hayer points out (2012: 239) that this variety is matched by the great diversity of applicants from different countries, cultures and backgrounds. Indeed, referring to the programme at Monash University in Australia, Orlando (2017: 200) emphasises the fact that an increasing number of students from different countries show interest in the programme, and that this can mean different levels of proficiency in different languages. The fact that applicants are often unfamiliar with the language and culture of the country (e.g. administrative procedures, education systems) adds to the complexity or lack of common ground between potential students

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.ciol.org.uk/dpsi>

and lecturers. As a consequence, course and programme directors attend to a large number of phone calls, emails and face-to-face interactions, dealing with the same questions and concerns from varying perspectives and backgrounds, over and over again. At the end of the inquiries, potential PSIT students are usually either very thankful or quite angry. As D'Hayer (2012: 240) indicates, frustration in pre-enrolment inquiries prompts comments about “the lack of clear information available and the lack of a human interface with the profession”. I concur with D'Hayer (2012: 240) when she adds that “these questions show that there is a need initially for friendly, accessible and professional expertise to guide potential public service interpreters and for an accurate assessment of their language level, cultural awareness and educational skills”.

In the current digital era, this information requested by future students, also useful for directors and coordinators of the programme to ensure the success of the education, is typically found on the institution or education centre's website. That being said, information websites, though valuable, lack precious context and adaptability to the many different backgrounds of their target audiences, which are also little known. As a result, these sources are not always well understood and cause confusion and misunderstandings. Lack of clear information about course objectives and learning outcomes, duration, time schedules and price, or comments about specific requirements and registration procedures are quite common. Language-specific complexities may also be quite demanding for non-native speakers or non-specialists, in addition to the specifics of the academic culture of the given country, which are too often taken as universal to all educational contexts.

The students' languages pose a variety of challenges, foremost among which is the diversity of A languages, the A language being the language into which a student is proficient enough to translate. In the case of the aforementioned MA in Intercultural Communication and Public Service Interpreting and Translation (MICIT), for example, in the last four academic years, over 200 students have completed the master's programme in a number of language pairs, including Spanish and Arabic, Chinese, French, English, Polish, Russian and Romanian. Every year, over fifteen nationalities take part in the programme, and this variety has an impact on planning. Foreseeing access conditions, resources needed (when available), and cultural or language distance (e.g. Spanish and English cultures are closer, or their populations are more familiar with each other, than, for example, Spanish and Chinese cultures) is as essential in training as it is difficult in practice.

These differences often result in a series of restrictions that limit the access of future interpreters to training. As a consequence, an insufficient number of students, coupled with economic limitations and the fact that specific courses dedicated to lesser-used languages are generally more expensive, become some of the main reasons for discontinuing some courses or ceasing to offer certain linguistic combinations. Another reason why some courses are no longer offered or are not offered in minority language combinations can be found in the interest of students wishing to receive training in English or French, even if neither of these is their first mother tongue. So, in some cases, the working languages of these students are L2 or L3 languages. In other cases, however, these students may be bilingual—increasingly a reality in the EU—and it is hard to determine their mother tongue when they have been living in the EU for a long time or have been raised in a bilingual family.

The level of language proficiency in students' working languages is also a challenge. Even if the first admission requirement is a C1 to C2 level of the Common European Framework (CEFR) in the languages of study, as is the case with the MICIT, the real level of language proficiency can be far from this. And an entrance exam is not always required. When it is, it usually includes an interview, either on site or remote, with questions in both languages and a sight translation or short written exercise. Other specific admission criteria considered in some programmes include experience in mediation, translation, or interpretation; time spent in countries related to the chosen language pairs; and, sometimes, experience in other areas related to the MA's fields of study, such as nursing, law or education (Iannone, 2017: 110).

In the case of the MICIT, subsequent to admission—but within a voluntary withdrawal period—students' language proficiencies are checked once again. In a multimedia lab, the students sit an oral aptitude test consisting of a series of exercises designed to measure their verbal comprehension, knowledge of specific terminology, reasoning skills, and fluency in both languages. At the end of the on-site lessons and after four months of intensive training in the specific language combination, the students take another oral aptitude test in

the multimedia lab, this time focused on both health care and legal and administrative settings (Socarrás Estrada & Valero Garcés, 2010; Socarrás Estrada & Valero Garcés, 2012; Valero Garcés & Socarrás Estrada, 2011).

## 2.2 Teachers' background and availability

When developing a course, as already mentioned, difficulties fall into three categories: deciding on the most important course contents and the most efficient teaching methodologies, attracting students with linguistic and cultural competence in both languages, and recruiting qualified instructors (Hale, 2007: 169). Finding instructors with the necessary work and research experience in a discipline that is not yet well-established is certainly no easy task. Recruiting trainers specialised in translation or interpreting in a variety of languages or even dialects is a great challenge. Some of the languages needed are practically unknown or are not included in any formal learning programmes. Even when a group of qualified teachers can be found, ever-changing migration flows make it challenging to find instructors with the necessary expertise in the newly-demanded languages.

One way to deal with this very complex, challenging situation would be to implement a curriculum focused on language-independent courses. This solution is already being implemented in some institutions (such as the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, in its Summer Intensive Interpreter Training programme), but there are still many public service contexts where the task of translating and interpreting has been—and still is—performed by untrained bilingual individuals. It has often been associated with people offering their services voluntarily and with little or no training.

This may be one of the reasons why the profession has found it difficult to take hold and gain professional recognition and prestige, as Toledano & Aguilera (2017: 51), among others, emphasise. This condition also affects quality control. Quite often the bilinguals who work as translators and interpreters in lesser-used languages are also untrained trainers who know little of the numerous tasks beyond language transfer that practitioners must complete, or the methodological requirements that enable translators and interpreters to understand the translation process and identify their own strengths and weaknesses.

The best solution seems to be to combine different categories of teaching staff with the flexibility to incorporate changes and adapt to a growing and changing society. The MICIT, for example, combines university lecturers, experienced practitioners and stakeholders, and this is undoubtedly one of the programme's most obvious strengths. Four major categories can be identified:

1. Academics, including professors, senior and part-time lecturers, as well as visiting lecturers from other universities and international higher education translator and interpreter training centres.
2. Professional translators and interpreters working for institutions, such as government agencies or refugee and asylum offices.
3. Freelance translators and interpreters with extensive professional experience in a wide variety of settings related to public services or the business market.
4. Professionals with expertise in other fields or stakeholders whose profession relates to the aims of the programme (e.g. doctors, nurses, lawyers).

This marriage of highly-qualified academic staff on the one hand, and practitioners on the other, both national and international, provides students with a connection between theoretical and practical lessons taught in the classroom and the workplace; and it also allows for an exchange of views among in-house staff and external trainers. The training programme at the University of Monash in Australia is an example of this pattern (Orlando, 2012: 200).

The combined approach helps to ensure the success of the main objective of the programmes, whether academic and research-based or practical and vocational: to train PSIT students to provide quality services and prevent the possible negative consequences of using unskilled interpreters (Hale, 2007: 199) and, I would add, translators. As D'Hayer (2012: 243) emphasises, trainer training courses are essential to the standardisation of this model.

### 2.3 Directionality and the axiom of L1 in translation and interpreting

The tacit assumption that translation into L1 is either easier or superior than translation into L2 has been challenged by academics as unrealistic, outdated and lacking in empirical evidence (Schwieter & Ferreira, 2017; Whyatt & Kosciuczuk, 2013). The same assumption is constantly being called into question in PSIT. In the case of public service interpreting (in hospitals, police stations or refugee offices), the same interpreter could be required to provide both consecutive (in-dialogue) interpreting with note-taking and simultaneous or chuchotage (whispered simultaneous) interpreting, into L1 and L2, in the very same context and all in the same working day.

The countries of Europe are becoming multilingual and an increasing number of PSIT students are competent in more than two or three languages. Some are completely bilingual, to the extent it is impossible to identify their mother tongue (L1). Others are receiving instruction in languages other than their first language or languages, which may mean different proficiencies in different fields. These differences in proficiency are not taken into consideration by institutions, however. In the course of their work (or during their internship period), PSIT translators or interpreters are often asked to translate or interpret using any languages or dialects they may know (Valero Garcés & Monzón, 2018).

The relevance of identifying a translator or interpreter's L1 is further challenged by English being the lingua franca for a wide range of populations in the EU. Other communities also have French, Mandarin, or Arabic as their lingua franca, with their own language variations and dialects. This diversity affects the resources of current and prospective students raised with a wealth of linguistic varieties, but it also has an impact on the needs of institutions. The increasing variety of linguistic backgrounds must be valued as a benefit, as instruction received in one language allows the student to use their translation and interpreting skills in other language combinations in the variety of settings they will encounter in their professional lives, thereby offering a much needed flexibility in line with current and future market needs.

### 2.4 The need to transcend traditional notions of interpreting and translation

The traditional notion of *translation proper* and the stability of the source and target text also pose challenges. Our understanding of *translation*, and the differences we distinguish between translations and *adaptations*, *versions*, *transcreation* and *localisation* require reconsideration, as the current tendency is to accept and train students in multimodality and the production of a translated text for the community (Taibi & Ozolins, 2016). The world's communication needs are continually evolving and the profession, like any other, needs to be able to adapt to new demands. Believing that established definitions should be used to limit our possibilities seems ill-advised.

The growing volume of literature on PSIT translation is an underexplored area vis-à-vis the interest attracted by interpreting, as shown in the number of publications, seminars, workshops and specific conferences (Valero Garcés, 2014: 1). PSIT training programmes also support the trend, with only a few combining translation and interpreting from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1. This approach remains relatively unexplored and is still somewhat controversial (see P. Gentile, 2014). However, as a number of experienced trainers and practitioners show (Orlando, 2012: 200; Viezzi, 2016), the methodology is in fact successful, and reflects actual practice in PSIT, in both professional and training situations. In the words of a former student of the MICIT, who completed an internship at an embassy in Madrid:

“In general, all the translation classes have helped me to improve my skills when translating into Arabic and, of course, the legal-administrative module is the one that comes closest to the kind of translations that are done at the embassy.

I am very happy with the month I have spent as an intern, I don't think I could have had a more rewarding internship. I have managed to acquire skills and confidence when translating into Arabic, to be faster and more efficient and gain an introduction to the field of translation in institutions. It has been a really enriching experience in all areas and I have learned a lot”. (MICIT student 1, internship report)

Comments from students gaining insights into professional practice and comparing the requirements of real situations with their training are useful for developing programmes or identifying inadequacies. The above

testimony emphasised the frequency of translation tasks, the variety of genres and the different tasks (back translations, revisions, editing, and sight translations) that were included under the workplace definition of translation.

## 2.5 Interpreter and translator positioning

Research and practice indicate the need for a shift from a static concept towards a more dynamic notion of the roles of translators and interpreters in PSIT. To date, the interpreter's role has been analysed from a dialogic perspective (Wadensjö, 1998), and discussion has also been brought to the fore about the connections between role and professional status. Several authors (Angelelli, 2004; Niska, 2005; Pöllabauer, 2004), referring to different contexts (legal, health, asylum seekers), point out that most interpreters experience role conflict due to their pivotal position in interactions.

From a sociological perspective, P. Gentile (2014) shows that there is a strong connection between vague perceptions of the professional status of semi-professional groups and the role conflict experienced by persons belonging to these groups. In practice, in both interpreting and translation, this shift from a static concept towards a more dynamic notion of the roles of translators and interpreters offers a better account of the actual encounter and takes into consideration the para-verbal and non-verbal aspects of institutional talk or public service encounters.

In the case of interpreting, it also facilitates the mutual recognition of interpreters as interlocutors. Gestures, visual effects, modes of dress, accessories and jewellery (necklaces, tattoos, bracelets, hairstyles, make-up, etc.) carry non-linguistic meanings and need to be translated, adapted, or explained depending on the translation or interpreting situation, the skopos, and the target audience, to avoid altering the social meanings of these markers, and—as often happens—harming the recipient. Effective mediation of para-verbal and non-verbal signifiers causes a shift to a more dynamic conception of role, in which the interpreter positions him or herself and acts or interacts according to the context, causing the alignment of the participants with each other to change, and facilitating mutual recognition of the interpreter's changing role as interlocutor or simple spectator according to the situation.

In the case of translation, non-linguistic elements such as pictograms, images in texts, typography, colours, icons and signs are also relevant elements to be taken into account, as corollaries of the written text, which is merely another semiotic system. The consequence of this approach is the production of multimodal texts, syncretic texts which draw on several systems of semiotic resources, including but not limited to language, image, music, colour and perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001: 67).

Positioning of the interpreter and evolution towards multimodality in translation challenge traditional translation and interpreting training methodologies. They also facilitate the emergence of programmes that incorporate strategies to teach and practise participants' conversational moves (e.g. role play) as well as practising the different modes of interpreting into L1 and L2. Role plays also allow students to practise a number of translating and stress management skills in a diversity of contexts (D'Hayer, 2012: 246).

## 2.6 Language resources and translation technologies in languages of lesser diffusion in PSIT

New tools and devices offering linguistic assistance are being launched continually, and the word 'technology' is included in almost any call for papers or publications related to PSIT. Virtual learning environments are also a reality in facilitating PSIT training and new technology in this field has been embraced. The rapid development of Machine Translation (MT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is opening new doors and yet-to-be explored areas in all spheres: professional, social and personal. Computer-assisted translation tools and automatic translation are leading to new resources, new professions and new profiles for translators and interpreters in areas such as post-editing, localisation, terminology, and corpus and database building.

In interpreting, there is a growing interest in telephone interpreting, video conferencing, and remote interpreting. These advances have been included in a number of training programmes and in some public service settings such as police stations and hospitals. Videoconference interpreting and web streaming facilities are also gaining popularity in the legal context (Braun, Davitti, & Dicerto, 2018).

Technology also comes up against language barriers, however. In some language combinations (e.g. Russian-Spanish or Chinese-Spanish), technological developments and resources are virtually non-existent. Furthermore, institutions rarely have linguistic resources and they may not allow translators and interpreters or students to use their own by excluding the use of devices such as mobiles, computers or tablets and insisting that no material can be taken home because of confidentiality or authorship issues, or simply because of a lack of trust (e.g. in police settings or prisons). In other words, students need to learn to use technologies and yet be aware that they might not be permitted to use them.

### 3 Answering challenges and issues related to PSIT training

A review of the literature on PSIT training (Corsellis, 2009; A. Gentile, 1997; Hale, 2007: 169; Mikkelsen, 1996; Ozolins, 2000; Pöchhacker, 2004; Roberts, 2002) shows that the professionalisation of translators and interpreters is dependent upon the existence of competent professionals, and that education and training are necessary to “create” these professionals. These statements imply, on the one hand, a correlation between training, duties and good professional practices and, on the other, the need for cooperation among all individuals directly or indirectly involved in TI in public services.

For years, programmes have included three interconnected pillars: training, research and work placement (Hale, 2007: 169; Orlando, 2017).

#### 3.1 Internship or work placement

Internships or work placements, also known as practicums, are considered to be introductions to the workplace. Their implementation has been both criticised and applauded, but they do seem to fulfil one of the main goals of effective training: to provide comprehensive training for future TI professionals by exposing them to real-world situations. As Orlando (2017: 201) adds, employers participating in the *practicum* may also become a useful recruitment resource for graduates of the programme.

As an example, the MICIT at the University of Alcalá includes mandatory internships<sup>3</sup> of 125-150 hours (5 ECTS) for all students. Over 100 agreements have been signed with institutions, NGOs, hospitals, education centres, translation agencies or language service providers, enterprises, and even universities and businesses. Students work on translations commissioned by real clients and are supervised by accredited professional translators, or work in-house and are supervised by professional practitioners and project managers. Tasks assigned may include both translation and interpreting as well as drafting a variety of texts in different modes (back translations, revisions, editing, and sight translations) and other activities related to oral communication.

Internships are generally highly appreciated by the students, whose main complaints are their short duration and the fact that they may not always be placed in the centre or institution of their choice. Despite these shortcomings, internships allow students to put what they have been taught into perspective. The following excerpt is taken from a report submitted by a MICIT student who completed an internship at a refugee office:

“The element of this internship that has helped me the most has been the interpreting course, in both the medical and legal fields. Acting as an interpreter for refugees requires insight into different laws. In other words, it is imperative to have an overview of the legal framework concerning asylum, statelessness, and how to seek international protection in Spain”.

#### 3.2 Research

Introducing students to the scientific analysis of the socio-cultural reality that surrounds them and giving them the opportunity to add to what they have already learned in the classroom or the institution during their internship is another important pillar of success in PSIT training. However, a number of issues have been raised in this respect (Hale, 2007: 200; Hale & Napier, 2013: 10-12):

- Lack of scientific rigour. The dominance of practice-based courses in PSIT training programmes means that students lack the research-specific training and adequate methodological and theoretical backgrounds

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<sup>3</sup> Further information on internships is provided in Valero Garcés (2010).

necessary to conduct successful research. Under unfavourable circumstances and with insufficient time, students find it difficult to follow a scientific method; some resort to plagiarism, while others introduce a high level of subjectivity into conceptual bases, methods, results and conclusions.

- Lack of guidance. The need for practice-based programmes to meet market demands requires centres to recruit experienced practitioners who may not have any scientific background. The lack of trainers who can guide students through the complexities and requirements of research hinders the possibilities of advancing research through student projects.

- Lack of access to empirical data and materials. Some institutions are unwilling to allow students access to the data they would require to conduct meaningful research. This is often reflected in an absence of rigorous data analysis, hasty conclusions or limited data.

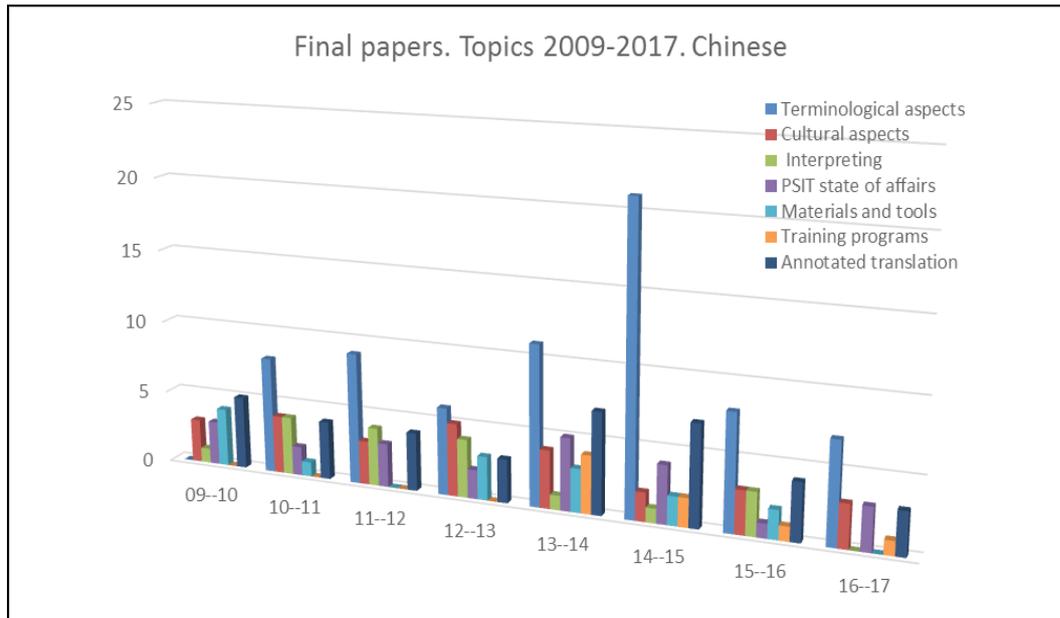
However, the value of and need for research conducted by trainees or future translators and interpreters in PSIT is underlined by the fact that sometimes this is the only direct, effective way to acquire more in-depth knowledge of ethnic minorities and their cultures, and gain first-hand understanding of their specific problems and degree of adaptation. Students are often members of these communities and it is therefore easier for them to gain access to the minority group (Valero Garcés, 2015: 414).

Knowledge of this nature is an important component of a multicultural society. The underlying assumption is that the information obtained could lead, not only students, but also experts, institutional representatives, or members of the public to envision solutions to problems or pose questions unfamiliar to the dominant majority. In fact, a number of actions related to PSIT, already underway or about to commence, were designed and implemented on the basis of research initiated by graduate students, as will be explained later in this paper.

There are a number of benefits of research conducted by students as part of their curriculum:

- Students are introduced to interdisciplinary research, offered guided instruction throughout the developmental and creative process, and prepared to respond to societal and job market expectations.
- Access to and relationships with institutions, ethnic communities and businesses are facilitated by students researching issues relevant to the former.
- Students are able to launch innovative studies and take advantage of technological developments that can be used in practice-based training. Examples include remote translation and interpreting, videoconferencing, etc.
- Student research has the potential to influence policy or training programmes, provided the appropriate precautions are observed with respect to novice research.

These benefits will be illustrated with reference to the MA theses produced between 2009 and 2017 by students in the Chinese-Spanish combination on the MICIT at the Universidad de Alcalá. These theses have been broadly classified into six content-based areas: the current state of PSIT, intercultural communication (referred to as “cultural aspects” in graph 1), PSIT training programmes, terminology and resources—further divided into materials and tools, and terminological aspects—and annotated translations. Distribution percentages are shown in Graph 1 below



Graph 1. Percentage of master's theses presented by students enrolled in the Chinese-Spanish programme organised under topic-specific headings.

The prevalence of topics,<sup>4</sup> from annotated translations being dominant in 2009-2010 to the continued interest for developing materials and tools in the rest of the years covered, is a clear symptom of the state of affairs in this particular combination. There was little contact between the two cultures until the 21st century, when the situation changed drastically and an urgent need arose for translators and interpreters as migration became a growing trend demanding the attention of institutions and public services and the rapid evolution of PSIT. Through their own research, students have contributed to increasing these resources:

1. Terminology (35.35% of the total theses): Students developed specific glossaries, dictionaries and databases that were otherwise lacking in the Chinese-Spanish combination. The resources created were related to the different contexts included in the programme, that is, health, law, education, and administration.
2. Annotated translation (18.68%): Students translated articles, book chapters and reports that tutors or students considered valuable for their own and their colleagues' future practice in different domains of specialisation.
3. Cultural aspects (13.63%): Students contributed to written testimonies of differences in traditions, body languages, educational systems, etc.
4. Descriptions or comparisons of the development of TI or PSIT in China, Spain and other countries (11.61%): Reports of scattered documentation, case studies and critical incidents are now available thanks to research conducted by students.
5. Aspects related to interpreting in PSIT (8.09%): Topics include the TI strategies used by professional and amateur translators and interpreters, resources to optimise memory in TI training, issues related to note taking and interpreting, and studies on the psychological and emotional impact of PSIT on practitioners.
6. Materials and tools (7.57%): Studies related to the use, availability, and development of useful tools for translators and interpreters include a guide to practical materials in the healthcare setting, and an online glossary on legal issues.

<sup>4</sup> Topic variations between the different language combinations taught in the MICIT are further developed in Valero Garcés (2015: 400).

7. Training programmes (4.04%): Didactic proposals for interpreting in healthcare centres or schools, online seminars on specific topics, and videos explaining how to work with interpreters were developed. Interest in this issue rose steadily.

Student research shows examples of the new tendencies to manage multiculturalism in cross-cultural contexts and combine areas of research and practice in Translation and Interpreting Studies. This testifies to a much-needed union between research, training and practice, which may represent another step towards full recognition of PSIT as an academic discipline and its professionalisation. As project advisers and tutors, and in line with other researchers and trainers (Hale & Napier, 2013; Swabey & Nicodemus, 2011), our experience shows that the research results contribute, firstly, to improving teaching quality and, secondly, to establishing partnerships with institutions. Furthermore, the contribution of these projects to the development of 21st century society must be acknowledged.

### 3.3 Development and participation in activities and projects

Enhancing student performance and independent learning with activities outside the classroom is a significant complement to their academic training as well as their integration into the labour market. These activities might include attendance at seminars or workshops dedicated to specific topics not sufficiently dealt with in the curriculum such as, for example, ethical issues and practice with CAT tools, case studies of gender violence, how to survive a job interview, or how to improve teamwork strategies.

Combined with face-to-face workshops and informal meetings, participating in collaborative activities such as the *Global E-Party in PSIT* (Cedillo & Valero Garcés, 2018) allows PSIT students to share ideas, opinions, projects, materials, experiences, etc., and also helps to increase the social media prominence and visibility of PSIT through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, or YouTube.

The expansion of virtual learning environments in teaching institutions incorporating platforms such as Blackboard or Moodle has opened up new ways of learning, allowing students to access online teaching materials, upload and share resources, and contribute to forums and chats. In completing tasks, students actually cooperate in the development of new and needed resources. The free online MOOC courses developed at the Universidad de Alcalá for different language combinations is an example of such cooperative development.

Finally, students may also participate in teamwork research projects, acquiring research skills and contributing to developing materials. One example is the project “Efficient Communication with Foreign Population in Spanish Penitentiaries” (Ref. FFI2015-69997-R) (2016-2019), as part of which the research group FITISPos at the Universidad de Alcalá and the Spanish Directorate General for Penitentiaries are developing and delivering a pilot training programme for bilingual foreign inmates. Students have contributed by providing bibliographic research, translating or including pictograms in informative texts, or recording short sketches to be included in the training manual *Introduction to Translation and Interpretation in Penitentiaries. Basic Course* (in Spanish, *Introducción a la Traducción e Interpretación en los Centros Penitenciarios. Curso Básico*), a course which has already been successfully delivered in a prison centre.

## 4 Conclusion and future thoughts

Taking the literature and experience related to PSIT as a point of departure, a number of challenges and issues related to training have been identified: variety of training and differences in students’ backgrounds; difficulties in recruiting qualified trainers; challenging the question of directionality and the axiom of translation into L1; going beyond current notions of interpreting and translation and examining public service translation more closely; interpreter and translator positioning; and language resources and translation technologies for languages of lesser diffusion.

Initiatives incorporated along the way include building a strong network of agreements with institutions, NGOs, hospitals, education centres, translation agencies and language service provider enterprises, even universities or businesses, to facilitate student internships or work placements where they can be exposed to real-world situations; involving students and institutions, stakeholders and users in research and projects; supporting initiatives and helping in the development of activities to assure continuing professional

development; promoting collaboration in the development of materials and resources; and contributing to the creation of a virtual learning environment.

Over the last 20 years, PSIT has been developing with uncertain force in the TI professions, facing new challenges and demands, but also generating new solutions. D'Hayer (2012: 242) points out that, "as a result, not only has the interpreting profession been forced to look at its status and its future, but also its professionalisation". I agree with her, but I would like to add that translation must be included in the professionalisation of PSIT. This professionalisation is still far from advanced in some countries and areas, and there is an urgent need to intensify cooperation and strengthen alliances. I agree with D'Hayer's suggestions to accomplish this (2012: 242):

- universities and training centres need to share resources and operate on a flexible basis;
- PSIT stakeholders need to contribute to the professionalisation of PSIT;
- the creation of virtual learning environments would facilitate practice in lesser-used languages;
- using technology and innovation beyond the boundaries usually set by academic or government institutions or countries would benefit the profession and PSIT users.

Some solutions to the challenges experienced during these years of PSIT evolution are already on the way. It is encouraging to see an increasing number of publications, courses and actions in the international arena that are catalysing the efforts of the PSIT profession. Lessons can be learnt by sharing experiences and common projects encompassing different countries, and may enable those further along the path towards professionalisation (e.g. Australia, Canada or the USA) to show the way to those who are just beginning to walk. A number of productive transnational initiatives such as ENPSIT (European Network for PSIT), the EU Commission's IKC (Interpreting Knowledge Centre), or the European Language Council's SIGLaR (Special Interest Group on Language and Rights) offer some avenues of inspiration. Working together will make us stronger.

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