

INTERPRETER TRAINING IN SPAIN: PAST AND PRESENT¹

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Abstract

This paper deals with interpreter training in Spanish universities since its onset in 1979. Problems associated with the interpreting component in the recently phased out *Licenciatura* (4 year undergraduate course) in Translation and Interpreting are analysed. Such problems included the presence of compulsory subjects in the main conference interpreting techniques, without other prerequisites for beginning this training being guaranteed. At the current time a new degree is being introduced in the framework of the EHEA (Grado, also a 4 year undergraduate course) which affords much more freedom to the universities in the design of their syllabus. The results are very varied. Many universities have reduced their compulsory credits in interpreting and now offer more optional credits. Despite this trend, there are still a significant number of universities with compulsory credits in simultaneous interpreting. Master's Degrees seem to be having difficulties in becoming consolidated and new genres of interpretation (other than conference interpreting) are being included in degree programmes.

Resumen

Este artículo aborda la formación en interpretación en las universidades españolas desde que se inició en 1979. Se analizan los problemas asociados con el contenido en Interpretación de la Licenciatura en Traducción e Interpretación, vigente hasta hace poco, tales como la inclusión en el plan de estudios de asignaturas obligatorias que pretendían formar en las técnicas de interpretación utilizadas en Interpretación

1. This article is the English version of “La formación en interpretación en España: Pasado y presente” by Anne Martin. It was not published on the print version of *MonTI* for reasons of space. The online version of *MonTI* does not suffer from these limitations, and this is our way of promoting plurilingualism.

de Conferencia sin contar con la garantía de que los estudiantes cumplieran otros prerrequisitos necesarios para iniciar la formación en este género de interpretación. En la actualidad se está implantando la nueva titulación de Grado, y las universidades disfrutan de más libertad en la confección de sus planes de estudios. El panorama ahora es muy variado. Numerosas universidades han reducido sus créditos obligatorios en interpretación, al tiempo que han aumentado los créditos optativos. Aún así, sigue habiendo bastantes universidades que incluyen créditos obligatorios en interpretación simultánea. Parece que los títulos de Máster no acaban de consolidarse y otros géneros de interpretación (aparte de la interpretación de conferencia) han entrado en el plan de estudios.

Keywords: Interpreter training. *Licenciatura* in Translation and Interpreting. *Grado* in Translation and Interpreting. Simultaneous interpreting. Conference interpreting. Undergraduate training in interpreting.

Palabras clave: Formación en interpretación. *Licenciatura* en Traducción e Interpretación. *Grado* en Traducción e Interpretación. Interpretación simultánea. Interpretación de conferencia. Formación pregrado en interpretación.

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1. Introduction

This article seeks to address interpreter training in Spain, paying particular attention to the new situation created by the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). As background to the current situation, we shall first offer a brief overview of the evolution of interpreter training in general and Spain in particular. To that end, we shall offer a critical reflection on the content and effects of the interpreting component in the recently phased-out *Licenciatura en Traducción e Interpretación*, a pre-Bologna 4-year undergraduate degree. The ultimate aim is to analyse the interpreting content in the new, post-Bologna degrees with a view to identifying current and future trends.

2. Interpreter Training: background

Unlike the training of other professionals, the organisation of interpreter (and translator) training as an academic discipline is relatively recent, dating back to the mid 20th century in some European countries and the end of the 1970s in Spain. Essentially, it began during the boom experienced by conference interpreting during the 1950s, in the aftermath of the Second World War. By that time, the technology enabling simultaneous interpreting to be performed was available and had been successfully used for the first time during the Nuremberg trials in 1945. Shortly afterwards, this new interpreting technique made it possible for the recently-formed United Nations Organisation (UNO) to work with six official languages. However, simultaneous interpreting required systematic training and thus the first conference interpreter training courses began to appear at some German universities (Heidelberg, Gemersheim), the University of Geneva and the Sorbonne in Paris.

Moreover, in 1953 AIIC (*Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence*) was set up, as were the European institutions, with the corresponding increase in the demand for qualified conference interpreters. In this founding period of the profession strong links were forged between AIIC, the first interpreting schools and the European institutions. Indeed, from the outset, conference interpreter training in Europe was closely linked to the

needs of international organisations and supported by AIIC. During this initial period many aspects of the profession that are now taken for granted were consolidated.

It was in this context that the *théorie du sens* or interpretative theory of translation was born, linked to Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer, professional interpreters and pioneer interpreter trainers at ÉSIT in Paris. This theory is explained in depth in Danica Seleskovitch's emblematic publications *Les Interprètes dans les Conférences Internationales* (1968) and *Langage, Langues et Mémoire* (1975) which were followed by many other publications from the same circle. The most relevant for training is *Pédagogie Raisonnée de l'Interprétation* (Seleskovitch and Lederer, 1989, 2002) which no doubt set the trend for conference interpreter training in the Western world.

It is not the intention of this paper to analyse the *théorie du sens* but it must be stated that, with its rejection of the rigid theories of linguistic equivalence and structuralism that characterised some theoretical approaches to translation at that time, this theory certainly broke new ground. Furthermore, it served to clearly distinguish between interpreter training, language teaching and translator training.

Over time, as the profession has developed, the *théorie du sens* has evolved, been adapted and become more moderate. New approaches have appeared to complement it and also to question some of its precepts. Such approaches include Gile's *effort model* (1985, 1991, 1995), the research in neuroscience mainly performed at the University of Trieste (SSLMIT) (Gran 1989; Fabbro, Gran, Basso and Bava 1990; Fabbro and Gran 1994), research in cognitive psychology (Lambert 1989; Padilla 1996) and the work done by Pöchhacker (1995) in the application of functionalist theory to interpreting.

Therefore today, unlike the seventies, the *théorie du sens* is no longer the only model that seeks to explain the process of conference interpreting and serve as a basis for teaching theory. It now coexists with other models that have evolved since that time and form part of the varied field of what is now known as *Interpreting Studies*.

However, there is no doubt that the *théorie du sens*, more than any other model, had and still has a very clear influence on interpreter training in general, both in explaining the process and as a basis for training. Such influence can be seen in many European countries through the trend to favour conference interpreter training at postgraduate level, following an aptitude test to determine which candidates possess the minimum requirements to initiate such training. In the same way, the trend to begin training with consecutive, before going on to simultaneous, in order to consolidate dissociation between

words and ideas, also has its roots in the *théorie du sens*, as does the avoidance of simultaneous into the foreign language which, according to the tenets of the *théorie du sens*, can only undermine the quality of the final product. This trend has been predominant in the European institutions until relatively recently, although it is now changing for practical reasons as a result of EU enlargement (Martin 2003).

The current validity of Seleskovitch's theories and their influence can be seen in common teaching practices, such as the use of pre-interpreting exercises (analysis, memorisation, public speaking and exercises to heighten mental agility) which promote the acquisition of discrete skills, all practices recommended by more recent authors (Nolan 2005; Gillies 2004, 2013).

There would seem to be wide consensus in Europe with regard to these basic pedagogical precepts for interpreter training which are also clearly reflected in AIIC's recommendations on best practices for interpreter training (AIIC: on-line).

In general terms, such practices reflect the most widespread and efficient way of training conference interpreters in Europe at the current time, namely, specialisation at postgraduate level for candidates who have previously proven that they fulfil the minimum requirements (Kelly and Martin 2009). The underlying rationale is that if the candidate has the required instrumental competences (excellent knowledge of the working languages, knowledge of the cultures and civilisations of the countries where those languages are spoken, and knowledge of international relations, politics and economics), competence in interpreting (and also translation) can be acquired in a relatively short period of time.

Such is the basis of the European training initiative in conference interpreter training, *European Master in Conference Interpreting* (EMCI: on line) promoted by the European institutions and offered by a consortium of universities in different EU member states, in collaboration with the European Commission and the European Parliament. Initially, this degree sought to meet the European institutions' demand for trained interpreters in the languages of the enlargement countries, languages which were not normally taught at the schools and universities of the older member states. However, it has also served to train new generations of conference interpreters in more traditional language combinations. In Spain this course was offered by the University of La Laguna in the Canary Islands from 1988 to 2013 in the form of a post-graduate programme consisting of 60 credits, of which 80% are practical

conference interpreting credits.² This structure reflects the Consortium's recommendation to devote a minimum of 400 contact hours to practical interpreting tuition in order to reach an adequate level of professional practice.

3. Interpreter Training at Spanish Universities

3.1. *Diplomatura en Traducción e Interpretación (First Cycle Diploma course in Translation and Interpreting)*

Interpreter training at Spanish universities started later than in other European countries. It began as part of a 3-year university undergraduate diploma which was originally offered at the *Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona* in 1979, at the University of Granada one year later and in 1988 at the University of Las Palmas (Canary Islands). During this period, a postgraduate qualification also began in Barcelona and in 1988 the Master's programme in La Laguna was initiated, as has been mentioned above.

This undergraduate Diploma course gave way to the *Licenciatura en Traducción e Interpretación*, a fully-fledged 4-year Bachelor's degree passed in 1991 and subsequently offered by an increasing number of universities throughout Spain, totalling over twenty public and private institutions, all of which continue to offer translator and interpreter training today (Kelly 1996).

3.2. *Licenciatura en Traducción e Interpretación (First Cycle pre-Bologna Bachelor's Degree in Translation and Interpreting)*

In the General Guidelines for the *Licenciatura* published by the government, a total of 18 compulsory credits in interpreting were included, divided into two subjects: *Consecutive Interpreting Techniques* and *Simultaneous Interpreting Techniques*. These subjects were present in all the universities where the *Licenciatura* was offered (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 1991). The names of these two compulsory subjects coincided with the two most widely used interpreting techniques in conference interpreting. Thus, from the outset, interpreter training in the *Licenciatura* was clearly and inextricably linked with conference interpreting. The fact that these subjects were called *Consecutive Interpreting Techniques* and *Simultaneous Interpreting Techniques* clearly implied that the aim of the degree course was to train conference interpreters, although this aim was not explicitly stated

2. The University of La Laguna continues to offer the Master's programme in Conference Interpreting (MIC) although formally it no longer forms part of the EMCI consortium, which has undergone in depth restructuring over recent years.

in the official description of the degree. It has already been mentioned that there is a certain consensus in the rest of Europe about the desirability of interpreter training being offered at postgraduate level, or as an additional specialisation at the end of an undergraduate degree, once the necessary instrumental competences have been acquired, and this model is favoured by the main employers of interpreters, namely the European institutions and other international organisations. EMCI, the European consortium (on-line), recommends that interpreter training involve no less than 400 contact hours of practice-based classes given by tutors who are also professional interpreters.

It is therefore clear that Spain began interpreter training paying no heed to the experience gained by other countries. For that reason, the *Licenciatura* was fundamentally flawed right from the outset due to this compulsory conference interpreting component. Perhaps one of the main errors in the *Licenciatura* curriculum was to consider conference interpreting as the only possible genre of interpreting, which led to conference interpreting techniques alone being included in that curriculum. However, there are other interpreting genres such as escort interpreting, community interpreting, interpreting for commerce and tourism, in which liaison interpreting is the preferred technique, rather than consecutive and simultaneous modes. Liaison technique is easier for students to acquire, especially taking into account the limited number of class hours and the lack of instrumental competences of many undergraduate students. Despite these conditioning factors these alternative interpreting genres were largely ignored (Mayoral Asensio 2007; Calvo Encinas 2009).

It must be said that the subjects of *Consecutive Interpreting Techniques* and *Simultaneous Interpreting Techniques* were not taught in the same way in all the universities where the *Licenciatura* was offered. Some universities adhered blindly to the names of the subjects, attempting to impose fully-fledged simultaneous interpreting training. However, in other universities the students were offered a general introduction, avoiding those techniques which are difficult to acquire with such a limited number of credits and focusing on the development of the skills needed to initiate simultaneous at some point in the future, such as developing quick reactions and reflexes and divided attention, but without actually attempting simultaneous as such.

Some universities offered additional elective subjects to promote specialisation in Conference Interpreting. The University of Granada, for example, offered a final year option of 400 hours specialising in Conference Interpreting.

3.3. *Grado en Traducción e Interpretación (First Cycle Post-Bologna Bachelor's Degree in Translation and Interpreting)*

At the current time we are witnessing the implementation of the new *Grado*, a 4-year undergraduate degree in Translation and Interpreting adapted to the European Higher Education Area. In accordance with the philosophy reflected in the Dublin Descriptors (on-line), the competences that students are expected to have acquired on completion of the *Grado* are general and non-specialised. Specialised competences are reserved for postgraduate level (Calvo Encinas 2009).

In this new climate, there are no compulsory stipulations regarding the number of credits, the names of the subjects, curriculum content or even the name of the degree itself. Each university is at liberty to design its own curriculum which means that the situation is considerably less uniform than in the case of the *Licenciatura*. There is one exception to this, namely in Andalusia where the regional government obliges universities to coincide in at least 75% of the subjects offered in degrees with the same name. This means that in the Andalusian universities 75% of the course content in Translation and Interpreting degrees is the same, and the curriculums only differ in the remaining 25%.

What follows are the results of a survey regarding the number of credits in interpreting at the different universities offering the *Grado* in Translation and Interpreting. This survey covers the content of such credits, the way in which they are distributed and their place in the curriculum³. The aim is to reveal possible new trends in interpreter training now that all Spanish universities, with the exception of those in Andalusia, are free to design their own curriculum. The data that appear below refer to a total of twenty two universities and have been obtained from three main sources: a report drafted by the Comunica Group (on line) in preparation for the White Paper on Institutional Translation and Interpreting in Spain (RITAP and APTIJ 2011), the websites of the universities concerned at the time this paper was drafted, and personal contacts in the universities surveyed. Many of these degrees are still in the

3. In this new panorama, the names of the undergraduate degree courses with translation and interpreting content differ from university to university. Although the majority are called *Grado en Traducción e Interpretación* (Bachelor's Degree in Translation and Interpreting), there are exceptions: the *Universidad Europea de Madrid* calls its degree *Grado en Traducción y Comunicación Intercultural* (Translation and Intercultural Communication) whilst the University of Alcalá (Madrid) offers a *Grado en Lenguas Modernas y Traducción* (Modern Languages and Translation). The latter contains no credits in interpreting.

implementation phase and some of the subjects have not yet been offered in practice, so the statistics may vary slightly as the degree becomes consolidated. We have classified an “interpreting subject” as being any subject whose content includes interpreting exercises (consecutive, simultaneous, liaison, sight translation) or pre-interpreting techniques (oral skills, analysis, memory exercises, note taking, clozing, anticipation exercises, etc.).

3.3.1 Compulsory Interpreting Credits

Seven of the universities offering the new undergraduate degree (*Grado en Traducción e Interpretación*) have 18 or more compulsory credits in interpreting, as can be seen in Table 1. There were 18 compulsory interpreting credits in the previous degree (*Licenciatura*).

TABLE 1. UNIVERSITIES WITH 18 OR MORE COMPULSORY CREDITS IN INTERPRETING

UNIVERSITY	TOTAL CREDITS	CREDITS IN SIMULTANEOUS (INCLUDED IN TOTAL)
ALFONSO X EL SABIO	25	6
ALICANTE	18	6
CÓRDOBA	18	0
LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA	30	12
MURCIA	18	6
PONTIFICIA DE COMILLAS (MADRID)	24	0
VIGO	18	6

Universities such as the Alfonso X in Madrid, the University of Las Palmas (Canary Islands) and the University of Comillas (Madrid) offer a high number of compulsory credits in interpreting within their *Grado*, in some cases involving training in simultaneous. Such is the case of the Alfonso X University in Madrid, which devotes 6 of its 25 compulsory interpreting credits to teaching simultaneous. At the University of Las Palmas 12 of the 30 compulsory interpreting credits are devoted to simultaneous and at the universities of Alicante, Vigo and Murcia 6 of the 18 compulsory interpreting credits involve simultaneous.

On the contrary, the University of Comillas (Madrid) offers a high number of compulsory credits in interpreting, but such credits involve no simultaneous training. The situation is similar at the University of Cordoba. In the

majority of cases these compulsory interpreting credits are only offered in the student's B language, although the Alfonso X, Cordoba and Las Palmas also have compulsory interpreting credits in the C language.

At the other extreme (see Table 2) some universities offer a minimum number of compulsory credits in interpreting and none in simultaneous interpreting. These include the *Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona*, the *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, the *Universidad del País Vasco* (University of the Basque Country), San Jorge University (Zaragoza), the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, which each have 6 compulsory 'introduction to interpreting' credits, and the *Universitat Jaume I* (Castellón) and the *Universitat Pompeu Fabra* (Barcelona) each with 8. None of these compulsory interpreting credits involve training in simultaneous. In all these cases, with the sole exception of San Jorge University, there is an alternative optional itinerary in interpreting. These itineraries are not limited to conference interpreting, although this is the main option, and in some cases the itineraries are considerably thorough, such as the 60 credits offered by the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*. Therefore, the possibility of specialising in interpreting is offered at these universities but as an option, to be followed only if the student so desires.

TABLE 2. UNIVERSITIES WITH FEWEST COMPULSORY INTERPRETING CREDITS

UNIVERSITY	CREDITS
AUTÓNOMA DE BARCELONA	6
AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID	6
COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID (FELIPE II)	6
JAUME I DE CASTELLÓN	8
PAÍS VASCO (BASQUE COUNTRY)	6
POMPEU FABRA (BARCELONA)	8
SAN JORGE (ZARAGOZA)	6

Universities falling between the two extremes described above are reflected in Table 3. Here we find a series of universities such as Granada, Salamanca, Valencia, Malaga, the *Universidad Europea de Madrid*, *Universidad Pablo de Olavide* (Seville), Valladolid, and Vic, all of which offer 12 compulsory credits each in interpreting subjects. At the universities of Salamanca, Valladolid, Vic and the *Universidad Europea de Madrid* compulsory simultaneous training forms part of these credits. In the case of Salamanca the subject in question is called "Introduction to Simultaneous" whereas in the remaining three the subject is called "Simultaneous Interpreting".

TABLE 3. UNIVERSITIES WITH AN INTERMEDIATE NUMBER OF COMPULSORY CREDITS IN INTERPRETING

UNIVERSITY	TOTAL CREDITS	CREDITS IN SIMULTANEOUS (INCLUDED IN TOTAL)
EUROPEA DE MADRID	12	6
GRANADA	12	0
MÁLAGA	12	0
PABLO DE OLAVIDE (SEVILLE)	12	0
SALAMANCA	12	6
VALENCIA	12	0
VALLADOLID	12	6
VIC	12	6

Of the twenty two universities studied, there are nine with compulsory credits in simultaneous interpreting, reflected in Table 4. The number of credits in all cases is 6, except for Las Palmas where it is 12. At the University of Murcia, according to information published on the university's website, the compulsory interpreting credits include interpreting into the students' B language, as also occurs at the University of Alicante.

TABLE 4. UNIVERSITIES WITH COMPULSORY CREDITS IN SIMULTANEOUS INTEPRETING

UNIVERSITY	COMPULSORY CREDITS IN SIMULT INTERPRETING
ALFONSO X	6
ALICANTE	6
EUROPEA DE MADRID	6
LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA (ULPGC)	12
MURCIA	6
SALAMANCA	6
VALLADOLID	6
VIC	6
VIGO	6

3.3.2. Names of compulsory subjects

As we have seen, the compulsory interpreting component in the *Licenciatura* was very much conditioned by the names of the two subjects involved (*Consecutive Interpreting Techniques* and *Simultaneous Interpreting Techniques*).

It would therefore seem interesting to see whether universities have taken advantage of the new degree to change those names or whether they have preferred to continue with the same subjects, involving techniques that are specific to conference interpreting.

In nine of the universities studied, the new *Grado* includes compulsory subjects with the terms “consecutive interpreting” and “simultaneous interpreting” included in the name of the subject, similar to the *Licenciatura*. These universities are Alfonso X (Madrid), Las Palmas, *Universidad Europea de Madrid*, Valladolid, Malaga, Murcia, Salamanca, Vic, and Vigo. This list more or less coincides with the universities that appear in Table 4.⁴

In the remaining universities, the compulsory interpreting subjects have very general names that include terms such as “Initiation” (*Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona*, *Universidad Jaume I Castellon*), “Introduction” (*Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*) or “Fundamentos” (basic aspects) (Salamanca). The *Universitat Pompeu Fabra* (Barcelona) stresses the non-specific nature of its compulsory subjects by calling them *Técnicas de expresión oral* (oral skills). The University of Cordoba is the only one to offer an apparently specialised subject, “Legal and Economic Interpreting”, amongst its compulsory subjects.

Therefore, in the current situation, amongst the universities which offer the new undergraduate degree in Translation and Interpreting or *Grado*, some have a minimum number of credits in interpreting, and they are of a very general and introductory nature. Such is the case of Castellon and Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona), which each offer 8 credits, the *Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona*, the *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, the University of the Basque Country and San Jorge (Zaragoza) with 6. At the other extreme, there are universities such as the Alfonso X (Madrid) and Las Palmas (Canary Islands) at which students are obliged to study a significant number of compulsory credits in interpreting, including compulsory simultaneous.

3.3.3. Elective interpreting subjects

In addition to the compulsory interpreting subjects, which must obviously be included in some form to justify the title of the Degree, which refers not

4. This list does not coincide exactly with the list of universities with compulsory simultaneous, since in the University of Alicante the name of the subject is very general and therefore Alicante does not appear in this list. In the University of Murcia the subject in question is Consecutive Interpreting (but not simultaneous) so Murcia does appear in this list but not in the list of universities with compulsory simultaneous.

only to translation but also to interpreting, most of the universities surveyed also offer a wide range of optional interpreting subjects. These cover different genres of interpreting and are not limited to conference interpreting. The exceptions are Cordoba, Valladolid, Alicante and San Jorge (Zaragoza), in which there are fewer than 6 optional credits in interpreting in the *Grado* curriculum.

3.3.4. Specific itineraries in interpreting

There are specific itineraries in interpreting, offered as options, in seven of the universities surveyed. These are precisely those that have the fewest compulsory interpreting credits (cf. Table 5). The *Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona* for example, with 6 compulsory interpreting credits, offers an optional 30 credit itinerary in interpreting. Similarly, at the *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*, which also has 6 compulsory interpreting credits, there is also a specific optional interpreting itinerary with 30 credits for each language. At Vic, with 12 compulsory interpreting credits, there is an optional itinerary of 24 credits and at the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* the 6 compulsory interpreting credits are complemented by a 60-credit optional itinerary in interpreting, which includes subjects such as community interpreting. In the other three universities which offer a specific itinerary in interpreting (Malaga, Salamanca and Castellon) there is a similar number of elective and compulsory credits, although in all cases there are slightly more optional subjects. At the University of Malaga there are 12 compulsory credits and 18 optional credits, in Salamanca 12 compulsory credits and 15 optional, and in Castellon 8 compulsory and 13,5 optional credits.

TABLE 5. OPTIONAL ITINERARIES IN INTERPRETING

UNIVERSITY	COMPULSORY CREDITS	CREDITS IN OPTIONAL ITINERARY
AUTÓNOMA DE BARCELONA	6	30
AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID	6	30
COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID (FELIPE II)	6	60
JAUME I DE CASTELLÓN	8	13,5
MÁLAGA	12	18
PAÍS VASCO (BASQUE COUNTRY)	6	24
POMPEU FABRA (BARCELONA)	8	16
SALAMANCA	12	15
VIC	12	24

There are other universities which do not use the term 'itinerary' as such, but in practice have few compulsory credits and many optional subjects in interpreting. The University of the Basque Country is a case in point, with 6 compulsory credits and 24 optional credits per language combination. Another example is the Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona which does not mention the term itinerary but does use the term 'profile', offering 8 compulsory interpreting credits and 16 elective credits. Neither does Valladolid mention the term 'itinerary', but nevertheless, offers a clearly distinguishable block of subjects focused, in this case, on community interpreting.

It has been mentioned above that the compulsory interpreting subjects in the *Licenciatura* focused on conference interpreting to the detriment of other forms of interpreting which may have been of more use to the students. Some universities would seem to have seized the opportunity offered by the change to the *Grado* to solve that situation. The fields covered are interpreting for business (Alfonso X in Madrid and the University of Murcia), interpreting for commerce and tourism (Granada), and community interpreting (Granada, Castellon, Murcia, Basque Country, *Universidad Europea de Madrid*, Alfonso X Madrid, *Universidad Complutense de Madrid* and San Jorge). It is interesting to note that the *Universidad Pablo Olavide* in Seville, the University of Valladolid and the Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona all offer the possibility of studying sign language interpreting, which opens the doors to other professional opportunities related to interpreting in the community.

It is clear that after conference interpreting, the most widely covered field is community or public service interpreting. This is not really surprising bearing in mind that this genre of interpreting is presently undergoing a boom in Spain. All the same, it is curious to find so many community interpreter training courses at Spanish universities but, as yet, no clear professional profile for community interpreters in Spain, where this field is clearly in a pre-professional phase and is not yet a fully recognised fee-paying professional activity (Ortega Herraéz, Abril Martí and Martin 2009)⁵.

In short, this brief overview reveals quite a varied landscape with regard to the interpreting component in the new *Grado* courses at Spanish universities. There are a series of universities where compulsory interpreting content is kept to a minimum and considered to be introductory, and which offer a substantial number of optional credits organised in specific itineraries to allow those who wish to specialise in interpreting to do so. However, there are

5. In Spain this kind of interpreting is frequently performed by volunteers and members of the users' family or close circle.

also a significant number of universities with a high number of compulsory interpreting credits, some of which include simultaneous training.

3.4. Postgraduate studies in conference interpreting

Let us now move on to interpreter training at postgraduate level. As mentioned above, this is considered the optimum way to train interpreters in the rest of Europe. Moreover, the general philosophy of the European Higher Education Area is that specialisation in all fields should be acquired at postgraduate level.

The postgraduate degree with the longest tradition in Spain is the Master in Conference Interpreting offered by the University of La Laguna (Canary Islands), set up with EU backing and in existence since 1988 as a member of the EMCI Consortium.⁶ This is not an official degree but a university-specific qualification,⁷ with course content adapted to the needs of the European institutions.

In addition to the degree at La Laguna, the University of Granada began an official Master's programme in Conference Interpreting in 2013. This degree follows the EMCI Consortium guidelines and seeks to train students for both the institutional and the freelance markets.

There are also other universities which offer or have offered Master's Degrees in Conference Interpreting, subject to demand, such as the University of Vic (Barcelona) or the University of Comillas (Madrid), or whose application to offer the degree has been approved although not yet implemented (Vigo).

There are also other postgraduate degrees which are not totally devoted to conference interpreter training but do include a substantial conference interpreting component, such as the Master's Programme in Translation, Interpreting and Intercultural Studies offered by the *Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona*, with a specialist itinerary in "Professional Interpreting" which, in practice, is conference interpreting, with 20 credits devoted to consecutive interpreting and 15 to simultaneous.

6. This postgraduate degree no longer forms part of the Consortium.

7. Postgraduate degrees in Spain are divided into courses that have been passed by the national agency responsible for quality assurance in higher education (ANECA) (*Máster oficial*) and those that are university-specific and have not been subjected to the ANECA's verification programme (*Máster propio*).

3.5. Other postgraduate courses with interpreting components

There are a series of universities which offer more general postgraduate qualifications that include some interpreting, although the aim of such courses is not to offer specialised professional training. Such is the case of the *Universidad Pablo Olavide* in Seville, with a Master's in International Communication, Translation and Interpreting which includes 6 credits devoted to consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. Another example is the *Universidad Pompeu Fabra* in Barcelona, with a Master's in Translation Studies which offers a major in Specialised Translation and Interpreting. This programme devotes 15 credits to interpreting subjects, the names of which are fairly general. Similarly, the University of Alicante offers an official Master's programme in Institutional Translation with 5 credits per language combination devoted to interpreting.⁸

It is interesting to note the widespread presence of optional community interpreting subjects in the new Master's programmes implemented in the framework of the EHEA. As occurs in the new undergraduate degree programmes, there would seem to be growing awareness about interpreting in community settings and the need for specific training for practitioners.

The most widely known programme in community interpreter training is that offered by the University of Alcalá de Henares (Madrid), where university-specific postgraduate courses in a wide variety of language combinations have been offered for several years. These courses now co-exist with an official Master's programme which devotes 13 of its 60 credits to training interpreters for public service settings.

University-specific courses (*títulos propios*) (cf. footnote 6) have proven to be very efficient in community interpreter training, doubtless because of the flexibility offered by such a format. This system enabled the *Universitat Jaume I* in Castellon to offer a course in Intercultural Mediation and Interpreting in Healthcare Settings for several consecutive years. Likewise such a format was adopted by the *Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona* to offer its 1st Public Service Interpreting course, which now forms part of a postgraduate degree in legal translation. The University of La Laguna (Canary Islands) also offered a university-specific course in community interpreting and translation for many years. Unfortunately, these initiatives have been discontinued at present due to lack of demand.

8. In the English/Spanish combination these credits are devoted to legal/sworn/police interpreting, whereas in French/Spanish and German/Spanish the focus is on interpreting in international organizations.

3.6. *Interpreting in legal settings*

Interpreting in legal settings will undoubtedly acquire increasing importance over the coming years due to the implementation of EU Directive 2010/64 on the right to translation and interpreting in criminal proceedings, the aim of which is to safeguard the right to a fair trial through the proper training and accreditation of translators and interpreters.

The transposition of this Directive into Spanish legislation requires the setting up of a system for such accreditation and training.⁹

At the current time, few universities devote credits in their postgraduate programmes to the training of legal interpreters. Amongst those that do, we find the University of Alicante, the University of Alcalá (Madrid), the *Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona*, University of La Laguna, and the University of Comillas (Madrid). The scant attention afforded by Spanish universities to legal interpreting is hardly surprising, given the regrettable situation in Spain with regard to interpreting and translation service provision for the legal system. However, the Directive is expected to promote professionalization in this field in the not-too-distant future and this will require new proposals for training from the universities (Ortega Herráez 2011).

4. Discussion

We have attempted to offer an overview of interpreter training in Spain since its onset during the 1970s until the present day.

The regulations governing the interpreting component in the pre-Bologna undergraduate degree in Translation and Interpreting, the *Licenciatura*, were contradictory as they included compulsory training in consecutive and simultaneous interpreting for students who did not necessarily have the level of language competence or general knowledge necessary for such training, in any case insufficient as it only consisted of 180 hours. Furthermore, in some cases the technical infrastructure was inadequate and class sizes excessive.

One may wonder whether this compulsory interpreter training was indeed in line with the professional prospects and motivation of the majority of *Licenciatura* students. The data available show that the career paths of *Licenciatura* graduates were by no means limited to the professional practice of translation and interpreting, but rather included a wide range of fields such

9. Part of the transposition has been included in the reform of the Law of Criminal Procedure (*Ley de Enjuiciamiento Criminal*). It is expected that the regulations regarding the setting up of a register of accredited translators and interpreters will be included in a specific law for this purpose, which has not yet been passed.

as international business settings, tourism, banking and the import-export sector (Kelly 2005, Calvo Encinas, Kelly & Vigier 2008).

Moreover, the data also show that, until very recently, no Spanish *Licenciatura* graduate had managed to pass the European institutions' interpreting accreditation test after having only studied the compulsory *Técnicas de Interpretación Consecutiva* and *Técnicas de Interpretación Simultánea* (Ribot 2010). The vast majority of Spanish *Licenciatura* graduates who passed the EU accreditation test did so after obtaining a subsequent Master's Degree in conference interpreting. There was one exception to this general rule, namely those graduates of the University of Granada who had studied the 400 hour optional specialisation in conference interpreting offered by that university in the framework of the *Licenciatura*.

With regard to the aims of the students, it is probably the case that not all the students registered in the *Licenciatura* (and, indeed, the same is no doubt true for the *Grado*) were actually seeking specialisation in translation or interpreting but, rather, wanted to study an updated and practical degree in modern languages as opposed to the traditional literature and linguistics-based philology degrees, which were the only alternative for those wishing to study languages in Spain.

Bearing this in mind, it would seem that, at least in theory, the *Licenciatura* missed the opportunity to offer students an introduction to cross-language oral communication skills and general interpreting skills (but not conference interpreting). Such a path would have helped students to decide whether they wished to move on to a more specialised course in interpreting or not and secondly, it would have equipped them with the appropriate skills to deal with situations in which they may have to do some *ad hoc* liaison interpreting in their future career. The acquisition of liaison interpreting skills would not only have been a more easily attainable goal for the students concerned, bearing in mind the limited number of class hours and the other conditioning factors that have already been mentioned. It would also have been more realistic with a view to their possible career prospects, as well as being more adapted to their own desires and motivations.

Leaving aside other questions related to pre-requisites for interpreter training (instrumental competences, number of class hours, size of student groups, teaching methodology) it is doubtful that training in conference interpreting, and particularly in the simultaneous mode, can be efficient if it is compulsory. Considerable demands are placed on students during conference interpreter training and even in the best possible conditions students

must be fully motivated if they are to invest the tremendous amount of time and energy necessary to fulfil teaching and learning goals.

Even if the situation had been optimum, with the correct technical infrastructure, small student groups and students who have mastered the initial competences necessary to begin interpreter training, the *Licenciatura's Técnicas de Interpretación Simultánea* subject only had 9 credits, which is certainly only enough for an introduction to simultaneous. One may wonder what purpose was served by only offering an introduction to simultaneous, without the possibility of progressing further. What teaching objectives can realistically be covered by only offering an initial taste of simultaneous training? And seeing as the training is necessarily incomplete, what competences are selected to be taught? How is the acquisition of such competences to be assessed? Simultaneous interpreting is a complex cognitive activity which requires a systematic, rigorous and relatively long period of training, with very demanding pre-requisites regarding language competence, amongst others. To imply that this is not the case is to mislead the students, as it leads them to wrongly believe that they are trained to a professional level. Such a situation can produce great frustration, which may actually have a damaging effect for them personally and for the reputation of Spanish universities and the profession in general.

With regard to the new first cycle degree, the *Grado*, judging by the data collated for this study, it would seem that there is a clear trend towards the general, non-specialised degree alluded to in the Dublin Descriptors. Certainly, the increased flexibility permitted in curriculum design has led to a varied panorama in which the majority of Spanish universities seem to have moved away from the model imposed by the more rigid curriculum requirements of the *Licenciatura*. Nevertheless, in some cases this model has been reinforced.

Indeed, if we take into account the universities offering optional specialisation in conference interpreting and those offering compulsory subjects which include the conference interpreting modes of consecutive and simultaneous, and mindful of the difficulties involved in setting up Master's degrees, it would seem that the majority of universities have decided to offer conference interpreter training in the framework of the new *Grado*. The success of these attempts will be variable, bearing in mind that, in most cases, they fall short of the 400 contact hours recommended by the EMCI consortium. This would not be a problem in itself and is probably a logical reaction to the administrative obstacles and the cost associated with setting up a Master's degree. The problem in the past, which can hopefully be avoided in the present and the future, has been to impose a substandard compulsory specialisation in

conference interpreting, in a totally unrealistic way, without the necessary pre-requisites, as if future surgeons were to be taught to operate before they had studied anatomy (Mayora Asensio 1998, Kelly 1996).

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can state that interpreter training offered in the framework of Spanish higher education at the present time differs significantly from one university to another. It is still mainly delivered through the first cycle *Grado* degree and the number of compulsory credits devoted to interpreting varies from 6 to 30, depending on the university. On the one hand, there are universities which offer a minimum number of compulsory credits and consider them an introduction, with the opportunity for subsequent specialisation through optional itineraries. On the other hand, other universities seem to be reproducing the former *Licenciatura* model and even strengthening it, by including a substantial number of compulsory interpreting credits in their curriculum. Whilst it is true that only 7 universities include the same or a greater number of compulsory interpreting credits than in the *Licenciatura*, at the same time it is also true that almost half of the universities studied have compulsory credits in simultaneous interpreting when it is clear that this is not sufficient to successfully train students to a level of professional competence in that mode. Many universities have given general names to their compulsory interpreting subjects which allude to their introductory nature. However, in nine universities the names of these compulsory interpreting subjects still refer specifically to “consecutive” and/or “simultaneous” modes.

To a certain extent, this somewhat diverse panorama reflects the lack of a clear vision with regard to interpreting during the design phase of the *Grado*. Some voices called for interpreting to be totally eliminated from the new degree, but the committee in charge of evaluating the proposed curriculum decided to recommend that interpreting be maintained and not be limited to liaison interpreting. However, their recommendation was based on a rationale that would seem rather contradictory:

“Puesto que la intención es, siguiendo las directrices de Bolonia, proponer un título generalista, la mesa opina que debería mantenerse la interpretación (no solo de enlace) de manera introductoria en el grado” (Aneca 2004:8)¹⁰

10. Since the intention is to propose a general degree, following the Bologna guidelines, this committee believes that interpreting (and not only liaison interpreting) should be maintained in an introductory capacity in the *grado*.

As professional interpreting is, in itself, a specialisation, it is difficult to understand the reasoning behind such a recommendation, particularly bearing in mind that liaison interpreting technique is considered by most to be an introduction. The resulting confusion is reflected in the curriculums we have today.

It would seem that most of the universities that have tried to offer conference interpreting courses at postgraduate level are coming up against obstacles which have prevented such courses from being set up or have jeopardized their continuity. Thus, as yet, the postgraduate option has not become consolidated. Clearly, higher education in Spain is not at its best at the moment, in the current adverse economic climate with drastic budget cuts and the subsequent lack of resources amongst potential candidates. Although it is true that official postgraduate degrees are less costly than university-specific courses, everything is relative and the effect of such a difference would not seem to be very noticeable in these times of serious economic crisis. The process for the official assessment and approval of official Master's programmes by the National Quality Assurance Agency (ANECA) is a complex and bureaucratic process with little flexibility. It requires a considerable investment of time and effort on the part of the promoters of the Master's programme, all of which deters universities from undertaking this option. In any case, we are at an initial stage in the implementation of the EHEA and the situation may evolve and change.

One of the most interesting novelties in the *Grado* is the inclusion of optional subjects in other genres of interpreting apart from conference interpreting, particularly community interpreting. However, specialist training in legal interpreting, which will be most necessary over the coming years, is not covered at the moment.

It remains to be seen how the new *Grado* degrees will develop in practice. It would be most positive for them to offer training in all genres of interpreting, in a balanced way, making rational use of resources, offering students the opportunity to acquire the necessary pre-competences before beginning specialised training, if they wish to do so. Ideally, training at whatever level should take into account the lessons of the past and the experience acquired both in Spain and abroad, experience that can be of much use in the pursuit of our objectives.

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