CURRICULUM DESIGN IN TRANSLATOR AND INTERPRETER EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE[*]

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Abstract: The increasingly vital role of professional translators and interpreters in facilitating transnational and cross-cultural communication in various aspects of life has necessitated the need for constant improvement of translator and interpreter education, which has a long-standing history. Training programmes differ across countries and continents, but nonetheless, there are some shared components that make up a good training programme, and one of which is curriculum. Given the critical role of curriculum in all this, recently, great importance has been attached to curriculum design. This paper reviews the most important aspects of curriculum design, including important definitions, fundamental foundations (consisting of philosophy, history, psychology, and sociology) and typical curriculum models as well as curriculum components. Secondary research is employed as the research method. The paper is pertinent to those who work as administrators, curriculum designers, educators, and teachers with the aim of providing a deep and relevant background knowledge and improving the quality of curriculum design.

Keywords: translator and interpreter education, curriculum, curriculum design, curriculum foundations, curriculum models, competence

1. Introduction

As the 21st century unfolds, it becomes ever more transparent that the need for transnational and cross-cultural communication in various contexts is increasingly on the rise. In that context, the service of professional language mediators is of vital importance. Given the ever more demanding requirements from service users, growing attention has been directed to formal translator and interpreter education. Gile (2009, p. 1) states that "it is increasingly recognised that formal training in Translation schools is the most practical way

to teach and test abilities to provide the market with reliable professionals, and the number of translator and interpreter training programmes has been increasing sharply over the past two or three decades in many parts of the world". Kelly and Martin (2009) shared a similar viewpoint that "the growing need for professional translators and interpreters has now led to the founding and expansion of programmes". The Intercultural Studies Group (ISG) has been keeping track of a list of existing translator training institutions under the support of the Training and Qualification Committee of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs

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(FIT). The number of programmes has increased from 250 in 1998 to 380 in 2006. This data was collected from 63 countries, however, countries that are not members of FIT are not represented in the list. Therefore, the actual number of programmes might be greater. As pointed out by Sawyer (2004), when it comes to formal education, "curriculum is the core element". However, Sawyer also claimed that the topic of curriculum is "under-researched" and "under-studied", which mainly results from "the lack of reliable sources" (Pym, 1998).

Accordingly, to contribute to the body of knowledge in this field, this paper focuses on the cornerstone of curriculum design in translator and interpreter education. Specifically, it investigates literature that addresses fundamental foundations, curriculum models, and curriculum components in translator and interpreter education. It is expected that the paper is pertinent to those who work as administrators, curriculum designers, teachers as well as students of translation and interpretation, with the aim of providing deep and relevant background knowledge and improving the quality of curriculum design.

2. Methodology

This paper employs secondary research, which is a research method using information that has already been compiled and formatted. Secondary research was chosen because it is both time-efficient and cost-efficient. Secondary research is used to review previous research into an area of interest, and its results can be used to verify and confirm research goals, as well as establishing whether it is worth continuing research into a prospective area. Document review is the data collection procedure used in this paper. Qualitative data is used and presented in words and visual forms.

3. An Overview of Translator and Interpreter Education

"Translation is one of the oldest occupations in the world… It dates back anywhere between 6000 and 10000 years, to the dawn of civilization" (Sofer, 2013, p. 7). However, formal education in translation and interpretation appeared much later. The first extensive translator training programmes can be traced back to elaborate Chinese institutions for the translation of Buddhist texts, from the fourth to the ninth centuries (Pym, 2011), whereas the history of interpreter education is said to begin in the mid sixteenth century with the purpose of training diplomatic interpreters from a young age (Sawyer & Roy, 2015). Since then, translator and interpreter education has developed across Europe and other parts of the world because of European colonialism. Then the Second World War (WWII), especially with the Nuremberg trials, paved the way for the institutionalisation of training as the role of translators and interpreters became unshakable. Higher-education institutions have offered various kinds of training programmes at bachelor and master levels since the late 1980s and early 1990s (Pym, 2011). Translator and interpreter education is traditionally contrasted with translator and interpreter training, which refers to skills-based training grounded in deliberate and reflective practice whereas "the term 'education' implies comprehensive learning through academic and professional studies in pursuit of higher-order curriculum aims and goals" (Sawyer & Roy, 2015, p. 124).

4. Definition of Curriculum

Defining curriculum is never an easy task since there are plethora of definitions and approaches. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) claim that "the field of curriculum is intended not to provide precise answers, but

to increase our understanding of its complexities" (p. 19). Thus, this paper only presents some of the most popular and accessible definitions of curriculum.

Cambridge dictionary defines curriculum as "the subjects studied in a school, college, etc. and what each subject includes. This definition is simple yet clear enough as it explains what curriculum entails. Greeno, Collins and Resnick (1996) propose a more academic definition that curriculum is considered "a set of educational goals and a sequence of learning activities that are intended to promote development toward those goals" (1996, p. 33). This definition indicates that learners follow a progression to achieve established goals. Sawyer (2004) studied a wide variety of definitions and decided to view curriculum in two aspects. Firstly, curriculum is a plan of action with clear learning objectives and sequence of learning activities. Secondly, curriculum deals with the interaction between students and instructors (pp. 42-43). Clearly, Sawyer's way of defining curriculum is comprehensive and extensive, and it covers various viewpoints.

All in all, curriculum can be understood as the formal statement of educational goals and objectives as well as activities and interaction involved in the process of working towards the achievement of the goals.

5. Curriculum Design

According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1998), curriculum design refers to the way we conceptualize the curriculum and arrange its major components, including content, instructional methods, materials, activities, etc. The way curriculum is designed is highly dependent on how curriculum

designers or specialists view curriculum; in other words, what theories they want to follow and what approaches they want to take when they design curriculum. Consequently, identifying what aspects influencing the process of curriculum design is of the utmost importance.

5.1. Foundations of Curriculum

For years, debates on various aspects of curriculum have captured the attention of many researchers. Nevertheless, the first aspects need to be discussed are curriculum foundations as "the foundations of curriculum set the external boundaries of the knowledge of curriculum and define what constitutes valid sources from which to derive the field's theories, principles, and ideas" (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 29). Following are the four foundations of curriculum proposed by Ornstein and Hunkins (2018).

5.1.1. Philosophy

The first foundation of curriculum is philosophy. In Ornstein and Hunkins' viewpoint, "almost all elements of curriculum are based on philosophy" (p. 47) as philosophy provides educators and curriculum designers with essential information concerning educational goals, content, teaching and learning processes, assessment, etc. This idea is also reflected in Goodlad et al. (1979)'s work as they point out that philosophy is the starting point in curriculum design and the basis for all subsequent decisions. Philosophy determines the aims, means, and ends of curriculum. In short, philosophy lays the foundation for the design of curriculum.

One of the most influential educational philosophers known to date is John Dewey. His works have made

significant contribution to the prominent educational philosophy of constructivism. This philosophy was also adopted by the curriculum designers of the Fast-track BA programme in English Language Teacher Education and Fast-track BA programme in English Language - Translation and Interpreting and proved to be remarkably fruitful. The two programmes were accredited and received good reviews by ASEAN University Network in 2012 and 2018 respectively. The fundamental idea of constructivist theory is that learners actively construct or make their own knowledge, in

which previous knowledge is used as a foundation to learn new things. Thus, in the learning process, the emphasis should be the learners, not the educators.

Besides, there are four other major educational philosophies that have become influential throughout the history of curriculum development, namely: perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. The following Figure 1 is Ornstein and Hunkins' summary of the core ideas of each philosophy of education.

Figure 1

Overview of Educational Philosophies (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 68)

Educational philosophy	Education goals	Knowledge	Curriculum focus
Perennialism	To educate the rational person, to cultivate the intellect	Focus on past and permanent studies, mastery of facts and timeless knowledge	Classical subjects; literary analysis; constant curriculum
Essentialism	To promote the intellectual growth of the individual; to educate the competent person	Essential skills and academic subjects; mastery of concepts and principles of subject matter	Essential skills (three *R's*) and essential subjects (English, science, history, math, and foreign language)
Progressivism	To promote democratic, social living	Knowledge leading to growth and development; a living-learning process; focus on active and relevant learning	Based on students' interests; addresses human problems and affairs; interdisciplinary subject matter; activities and projects
Reconstructionism	To improve and reconstruct society; to educate for change and social reform	Skills and subjects needed to identify and ameliorate society's problems; active learning concerned with contemporary and future society	Emphasis on social sciences and social research methods; examination of social, economic, and political problems; focus on present and future trends as well as on national and international issues

5.1.2. History

Orsntein and Hunkins (1998, p. 81) stresses the essence of the need for historical

perspective in curriculum design, stating that "history illuminates current pedagogical practices". The historical foundation of curriculum focuses on the understanding of

the historical development of educational programs as well as changes in educational philosophies.

As pointed out by Sawyer (2004, p. 43), like other fields and disciplines, curricula in translator and interpreter education have the tendency to become dated and fossilised over time. Thus, an understanding of historical foundations enables educators to be aware of constant changes in knowledge, values, and technology, as well as social and political life to "avoid making the mistakes of the past and also to better prepare for the future" (Orsntein & Hunkins, 1998, p. 43).

5.1.3. Psychology

The third curriculum foundation is psychology, which in general provides answer to the question of how people learn. Accordingly, the understanding of psychology is essential to the comprehension of the teaching and learning processes, which form the basis for curriculum design and implementation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 112).

In general, learning can be examined in terms of three major theories: behaviorism, cognitive development, and phenomenology. Behaviorism, which started in the 1900s, has the longest history and centers on the idea that all behaviours are learned through interaction with the environment, and inherited factors have little influence on behaviour. The second theory of learning is cognitive development, which explains the role of cognitive abilities reflected in cognitive processes such as observing, classifying, categorising, reasoning, etc. in understanding new and complex concepts. Phenomenology, or

humanistic psychology is the third and most recent theory, which emphasises attitudes and feelings, self-actualisation, motivation, and freedom to learn (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

5.1.4. Sociology

Since any curriculum must be implemented in a particular social setting, consideration of societal factors, including the relationship between schools and society should be taken into consideration by curriculum designers or specialists. According to Sawyer and Roy (2015, p. 49), in translator and interpreter education, societal factors affect the role that cultural studies, literature, and history play in the curriculum as well as the amount of industry practices, ethics and professional conduct incorporated in the training programme. These are aspects that need to be carefully considered when deciding on the content of the curriculum.

5.2. Curriculum Models

After identifying the critical foundations, curriculum designers are faced with the task of putting theories into practice. Specifically, they have to answer questions like: what are the content, methods, activities, and resources of each course? how many courses are there? how are courses sequenced? Various models of curriculum have been studied over the years with the hope of figuring out the best models and offering suggestion to curriculum designers. Among them, Arjona's models are considered to be influential though they have been published quite a long time ago. Following is the figure showing five models proposed by Arjona (1984).

Figure 2

Curriculum Models According to Arjona (1984, p. 10)
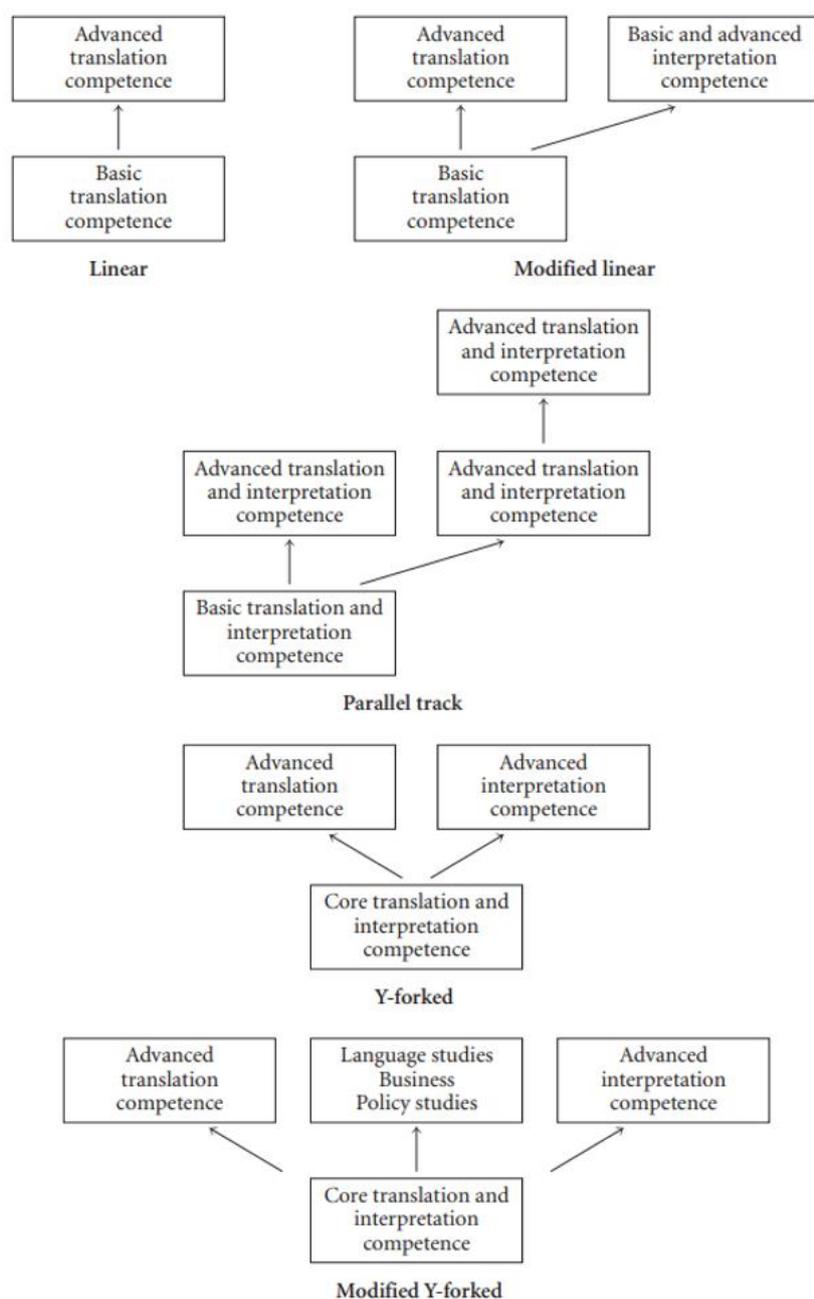
These five models are said to cover the vast majority of training programmes in translation and interpreting (Sawyer, 2004). First, for *the linear model,* translation courses precede interpretation courses, i.e. learners are required to achieve a high level of translation competence before they start studying interpretation. *The modified linear model* starts with a core translation curriculum, then learners can choose either to continue with advanced translation track or move to basic and advanced interpretation track. The linear and modified linear models are sequential, meaning learners must hone

their translation skills to a certain level before they are introduced to interpreting. These two models are based on the belief that knowledge and experience in translation skills form the solid background for subsequent interpreter training (Arjona, 1984). In *the parallel track model*, learners can choose to specialise in either translation or interpretation at any level. This model offers a wide range of courses at different levels. *The Y-forked model* consists of a core translation and interpretation curriculum for all learners, then learners choose to specialise in either translation or interpretation. *The modified Y-forked model* is similar to the Y-forked model in that it also includes a core translation and interpretation curriculum for all, and the difference lies in the choices of learners after they complete the core curriculum.

Renfer (1991) proposed four basic training models as follows:

- Two-tier system where translation and interpreting courses are offered in consecutive stages.
- Translator and interpreter courses run in parallel, followed by two separate final examinations.
- The "Y-model" where the curriculum for translators and interpreters separates after a common curricular trunk for all students.
- Postgraduate interpreter training or intensive on-the-job training in international organizations.

Renfer's models seem to be more comprehensive and also can cover more models in reality. Among those models, he concluded that the two-tier system is the ideal model in training professionals based on the same belief mentioned by Arjona above.

Clearly, the choice of models differs substantially from one another due to differences in socio-economic conditions, culture, policy-makers, education institutions, teachers, students, etc. However, the above mentioned models can serve as good examples of how a curriculum should be, and act as a reliable source of reference for curriculum designers.

5.3. Curriculum Components

Curriculum models provide essential guidelines to an appropriate and scientific system of components that are fundamental to a training programme. Components here refer primarily to modules that make up the content of the curriculum. The module content usually varies greatly across institutions and countries; however, an indispensable part of it is the competence that learners are expected to acquire after completing a module. Even though translation competence is often defined and viewed differently by translation researchers, most agree that it comprises sets of skills including linguistic, technological, cultural, etc., skills. Translation competence has become a hotly debated topic over the last few decades, with a plethora of competences discussed by researchers and educators. Accordingly, curriculum designers may be confused when making decision on which skills should be included in the curriculum and how they should be sequenced to help learners achieve the desired outcomes. That is when curriculum models come to play. Based on the adopted models, curriculum designers, administrators or teachers can develop an appropriate set of structured competences.

Following is an example of competences in a Y-track model proposed by Honig (1995).

Figure 3

Competence Area in a Y-track Curriculum Model (Honig, 1995, pp. 160-165)
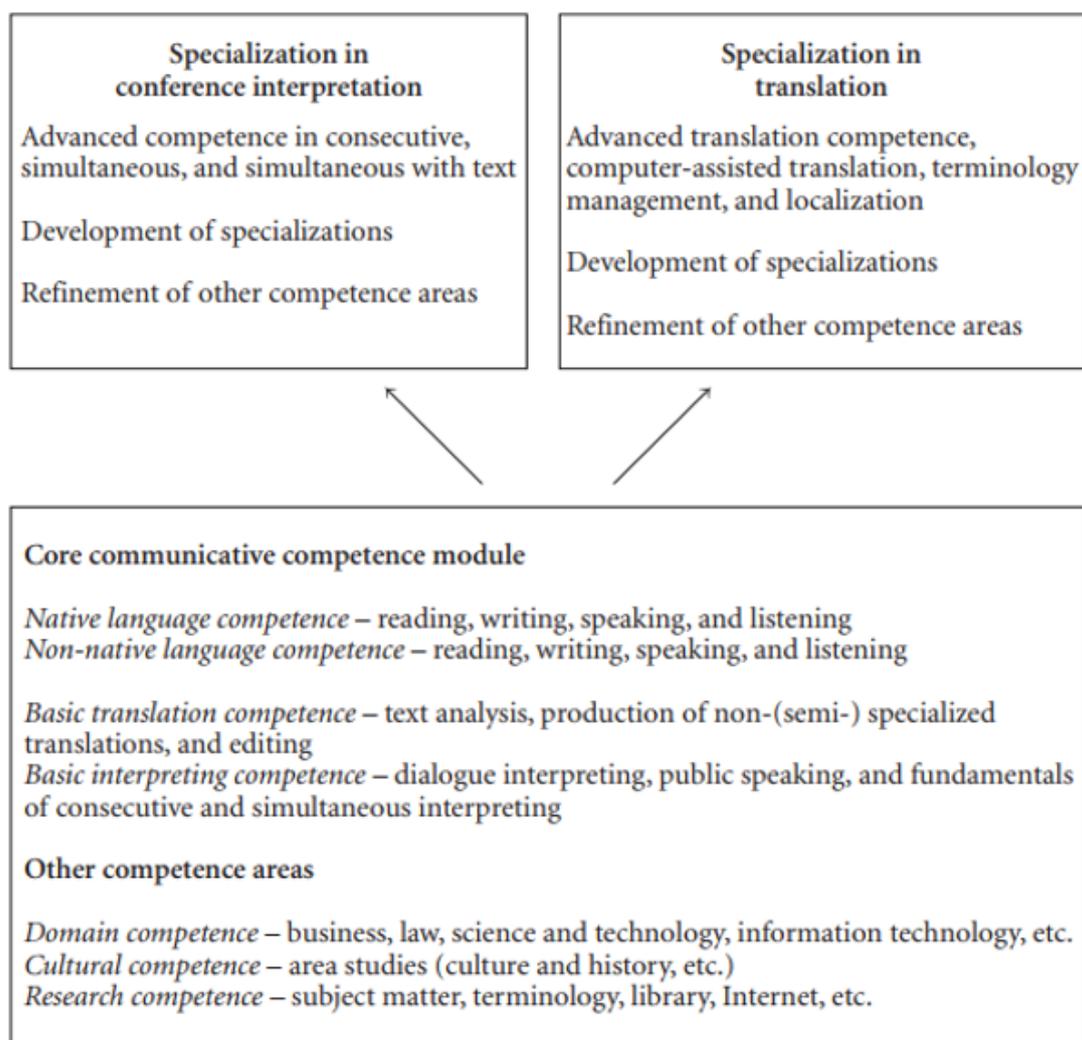
It can be seen from the above figure that when a decision is made on which model to follow, the program administrators or curriculum designers have a clearer idea of which competence should be included in which stage. This way of structuring competence is also very tentative, being able to cater for various levels of learners' needs or educational goals.

6. Conclusion

The reviewed literature suggests that curriculum design is quite a controversial and complex matter that continues to promote intense debate. Nonetheless, the role of curriculum in translator and interpreter education is undoubtedly vital. During the process of designing curriculum, there are various aspects that need to be considered, particularly curriculum foundations, which consists of philosophy, history, psychology, and sociology. Any decision made on endorsing any approach when designing curriculum would certainly exert profound impact on all stakeholders of the training programmes. Similarly, any decision on which model to be implemented also wields influence on the quality of

education. Thus, curriculum designers need to take these issues into serious consideration before designing and implementing any curriculum in translator and interpreter education. Early and clear decisions on curriculum model also provide guidance on which competences should be included and how they should be sequenced.

The paper is expected to contribute to the understanding of issues concerning curriculum design in translator and interpreter education, especially in the context of higher education.

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XÂY DỰNG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH ĐÀO TẠO TRONG GIÁO DỤC BIÊN – PHIÊN DỊCH: TỔNG QUAN NGHIÊN CỨU

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Tóm tắt: Biên dịch viên và phiên dịch viên chuyên nghiệp đang đóng vai trò ngày càng thiết yếu trong quá trình giao tiếp xuyên quốc gia và liên văn hóa trong nhiều khía cạnh khác nhau của cuộc sống. Việc này đã đặt ra nhu cầu không ngừng cải tiến chất lượng chương trình giáo dục biên phiên dịch để có thể đào tạo được biên dịch viên, phiên dịch viên có chất lượng tốt. Mặc dù các chương trình đào tạo của các quốc gia có nhiều khác biệt, tuy nhiên đều bao gồm một số yếu tố giống nhau, và một trong số đó là chương trình giảng dạy. Do tầm quan trọng của chương trình giảng dạy nên việc xây dựng chương trình đào tạo đã được quan tâm đáng kể trong thời gian gần đây. Nghiên cứu này trình bày tổng quan lý thuyết về các khía cạnh quan trọng nhất của việc xây dựng chương trình đào tạo, bao gồm các khái niệm cơ bản, các nền tảng quan trọng (trong đó có triết học, lịch sử, tâm lý học và xã hội học) và các mô hình của chương trình đào tạo. Nghiên cứu này phù hợp với những người làm quản lý, người xây dựng chương trình đào tạo, nhà giáo dục và giáo viên với mục đích cung cấp kiến thức nền tảng sâu và phù hợp và nâng cao chất lượng chương trình đào tạo.

Từ khóa: giáo dục biên phiên dịch, chương trình đào tạo, xây dựng chương trình đào tạo, nền tảng chương trình đào tạo, mô hình chương trình đào tạo, năng lực