

Comparative Analysis of Arabic Translator and Interpreter Training Programs Employability Studies

تحليل مقارن للدراسات حول قابلية توظيف طلاب وخريجي برامج التدريب على الترجمة
التحريرية والشفهية في العالم العربي

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Abstract:

Preparing students for professional life is a major goal of any academic training program, and Translator and Interpreter (T&I) training programs are no exception. This exploratory study spanning 4 region-wide studies and 20 country-specific studies of T&I programs in over 10 Arab countries purports to give an overview of the studies conducted thus far on the employability of Arabic T&I training programs housed by academic institutions in Arab countries and provide a comparative analysis of their findings. Conclusions show that employability is recognised by most scholars as an important factor in the curriculum, and there seems to be a widespread agreement that T&I training programs offered by academic institutions in Arab countries fall short of local, regional and international markets needs as well as graduates' expectations and to that end, reforms and corrective measures are suggested.

Keywords: Employability; T&I training; Curriculum; Arab countries; Market needs.

ملخص:

يُعد إعداد الطلاب للحياة المهنية هدفاً رئيسياً لأي برنامج تدريب أكاديمي بما في ذلك برامج التدريب على الترجمة التحريرية والشفهية. يستعرض هذا المقال أربع دراسات إقليمية وعشرين دراسة محلية لبرامج التدريب على الترجمة التحريرية والشفهية في أكثر من عشر دول عربية ويسعى إلى إعطاء لمحة عامة عن الدراسات التي أجريت حتى الآن حول قابلية توظيف طلاب وخريجي برامج تدريب

تستضيفها مؤسسات أكاديمية في بلدان عربية من ثم تقديم تحليل مقارنة لنتائجها. يظهر التحليل المقارن أن قابلية توظيف الطلاب والخريجين هي عامل مهم في المناهج الدراسية ويخلص إلى وجود اتفاق واسع النطاق في الدراسات المشمولة في هذا المقال على أن برامج التدريب على الترجمة التحريرية والشفهية التي تقدمها المؤسسات الأكاديمية في الدول العربية لا تلبي احتياجات الأسواق المحلية والإقليمية والدولية فضلاً عن توقعات خريجيها. ختاماً، يقدم المقال اقتراحات من شأنها تعزيز قابلية توظيف طلاب وخريجي تلك البرامج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قابلية التوظيف؛ برامج التدريب على الترجمة التحريرية والشفهية؛ المناهج الدراسية؛ الدول العربية؛ احتياجات السوق.

1- Introduction:

Over the past few decades, employability has established itself worldwide, as Schnell and Rodríguez (2017, p. 160) put it, as “one of the key indicators in the quality framework of Higher Education (HE) in so far as universities and degrees are regularly measured against the employability rates of their graduates and employers’ satisfaction”. Traditionally neglected in the HE curricula, employability issues have entered the academic field since the 1980s (Harvey, 2000; Moore & Morton, 2017; Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017) owing to the closer engagement between the university sector and the industry. It then gained ground a decade later, mostly in Europe, with the introduction of the framework of the new European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Álvarez & Uzquiza, 2017) which largely contributed to the acknowledgement of HE as an engine for economic growth (Sin, Tavares, and Amaral 2017) and placed employability as a purpose of HE (Sin and Neave 2016). HE institutions were thus urged to meet the needs of an increasingly knowledge-driven economy by producing competent, knowledgeable, flexible and employable graduates (Schnell & Rodríguez, 2017) and were prompted to invest in and promote employability to achieve good employment figures (Tymon 2013).

Preparing students for professional life is a major goal of any academic training program, and T&I training programs are no exception. In an era characterized by rapid change, technological advancements, and

massification of HE, the market cannot be ignored as a factor in the training of translators and interpreters. In translation and interpreting studies, the closeness to the market seems to be the overarching theme for T&I training and consequently T&I curriculum.

The “training paradigm” outlined by Mackintosh (1995) is centred around training being close to the reality of professional practice. She also underscores the importance of teacher training and continuously updating its content to keep up with the latest research in the field. Gile (1995) calls for adapting teaching methods to the times and drawing more closely on the realities of the market. Similarly, Kiraly (2005) holds that the market constitutes one of the main sources of information if we were to investigate the efficacy of translator training programs. Olohan (2007) contends that the analysis of the market, employment trends, translators’ profiles, and developments in translation services standards can provide extremely valuable input for the translator training curricula and syllabi, given that the market is the end-product of training. For their part, Setton and Dawrant (2016) advocate the principle of “incremental realism” which consists of introducing tasks in various stages of interpreter training, with each stage building on the last, leading to “expert interpreting in complex, real-life conditions, with realism introduced in increasing doses [...] until the tasks resemble what we face in day-to-day professional practice” (p. 10).

Nevertheless, there seems to be arguably a mismatch between the training offered by T&I training institutions and the market demands. T&I schools are very often criticised for not taking into account the market needs or the clients’ requirements when training translators and interpreters (Forstner and Alaoui 2004). This, according to the authors, is perceived as arbitrary and irresponsible by some experts who see an urgent need to direct programs and curricula towards the market needs and establish quality control measures to achieve sustainable competitiveness and call for the development of reform mechanisms for universities and HE institutions to match the professional practice and market needs. For her part, Olohan (2007) argues that the typical translators produced by university translation training programs are perceived by employers as lacking practical

experience and not fully equipped for the professional life as their employers would want them to be.

Against this backdrop, an increasingly significant number of studies have attempted to examine the extent to which Arabic T&I training programs offered by Arab academic institutions meet market requirements and produce employable graduates. This paper is an exploratory study and purports to give an overview of the studies conducted thus far on the employability of Arabic T&I training programs housed by academic institutions in Arab countries. We will first explore papers covering 4 region-wide studies and 20 country-specific programs then provide a comparative analysis of their findings before rounding up with concluding remarks.

2- Arabic T&I Training Programs Employability Studies

Our literature review of studies conducted about employability of Arabic T&I training programs in Arab countries yielded region-wide studies and country-specific studies. It is worthwhile noting that the boundaries between translation and interpretation in the vast majority of these studies are blurry. Translation is understood as encompassing both oral and written forms and studies about translation programs may ipso facto include interpreting, as the Arabic word for translation (*tarjamah*) is used as an umbrella term for T&I. Furthermore, despite the countless calls to differentiate between foreign language study and translation study and to consider foreign language training at best as a discipline that would feed into translation study (Forstner & Alaoui, 2004), T&I teaching in the Arab world is still associated to a large extent with foreign language teaching, and is still taught to assist in second language acquisition, which is why some of the studies on Translation training programs survey Translation teaching within foreign language degree programs.

2.1 Region-wide T&I training programs employability studies

The status quo of translator training programs in the Arab world was examined by Farghal (2009) who qualifies the emergence of translation programs in Arab academic institutions as a recent development that is due

to the increasing demand for translators on the job market. He further adds that most of the translator training institutions assign the task of teaching translation to bilingual academics specialized in literature and/or linguistics, due to the “serious lack of competent translation trainers.” (p. 12) The author argues that translator training programs offered by Arab universities still consider translation studies as a derivative of the linguistics and/or literature disciplines rather than a discipline in its own right. He believes that students admitted to translation programs lack adequate foreign language competence (predominantly English) and also competence in their mother tongue (Arabic), which is why translation courses, in his opinion, turn into language courses.

In another study also mostly focused on translation, Al-Batineh & Bilali (2017) surveyed translator training programs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by examining the curricula and the markets they serve. They first identify the profile(s) of the translator that those programs aim to produce and compare the same to the regional translation markets expectations. The study reveals that the translation market seeks translators with professional and instrumental competence which is not strongly emphasised in academic programs. As for subject area competence, there seems to be an agreement between institutions and the market on the importance of financial and legal subjects whereas a noticeable gap exists when it comes to the medical and technical fields. Finally, they identify localisation as an in-demand subject area that is not covered by the training.

Atari (2012) pinpoints “mismatches between workplace expectation and translator training in academia” (p.104) as one of the impediments to translator training in Arab universities English departments, along with “misconceptions about the true nature of translation, the absence of a common ideology for translator training among translation teachers, presumptuous assumptions about trainees' bilingual competence” (p. 104). The challenges of teaching translation and interpretation in English departments to undergraduate students have also been examined by Abdulhafidh (2014). One of the main challenges, in her opinion, is that Translation (with a capital T to indicate both translation and interpreting) is

taught as part of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at an undergraduate level and by “unqualified and inexperienced instructors”. Furthermore, she states that “teaching interpretation is the one of the most neglected parts in translation class” (p. 1) and that little attention is devoted to the design of efficient interpretation methods, strategies and skills. She also points out to the difference between translation and interpretation, reiterating the fact that they are two independent but complementary aspects of the Translation discipline. Another challenge listed by the author is the academic rather than professional goal of the programs in the sense that they fail to train their students to meet the demands of the workplace and keep up with the rapid developments in global communication.

2.2 Country-specific T&I training programs employability studies

In addition to the above region-wide studies, a number of country-specific studies can be found. These studies focus on Iraq, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Algeria and Libya.

Hussein (2007) examined the impact of the translation market on translator training at the Translation Department of Al-Mustansiriya University, Iraq. With the world making qualitative leaps on all levels, Iraq translation community is, according to him, at a crossroad, having to either “cope or lag behind this world”. For him, the translation market in Iraq is “shapeless and drastically lagging behind” (p. 8) compared to the global profile of the translation market and the Translation Department grapples with a number of weaknesses. Amongst the weaknesses listed are obsolete courses, unidirectional translation teaching, low proficiency in the mother tongue and in the second language, weak admission procedures, unqualified instructors, and class size. He further suggests to foster specialization in the curriculum and giving the students the option to decide between translation and interpreting by offering two distinct programs for translation and interpreting.

As far as Egypt is concerned, Gabr (2002) conducted a case study on how the undergraduate translation program curriculum of the Department of

English, Faculty of Arts, at Ain Shams University was designed and implemented. The study sought the opinion of both translation instructors and fourth year students. He concluded that students were dissatisfied with the content of the course, the teaching methods used, the efficiency of teachers as well as with the overall translation program. As for the teachers of translation, they lacked professional experience in translation work, have not received any formal training in translation, and their objective setting for the courses was done randomly, which had a severe impact on the coordination and success of the program as a whole. The findings of Gabr are consistent with the findings of an OECD and World Bank (2010) report on HE in Egypt which describes the curricula as being narrow, rigid and often outdated bound by the single perspective of the lecturer whose texts form the assessable content of a course. The report also pinpoints the emphasis in HE in Egypt on the memorisation of content that predominates over the development of critical reasoning and analytical skills (OECD and The World Bank 2010).

A study by Izwaini (2014) on translation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has shown a growing need for interpreters given that the country has developed in full tact in all fields and has become one of the emerging hubs of international business and trade as well as business and cultural centres in the region. The influx of wealth and thriving businesses has led to the creation of job opportunities attracting people from around the globe. With Arabic being the official language and English the language of business, the need for interpreters is all the more important in talks and negotiations. The status quo of undergraduate translation programs offered by UAE universities was investigated by Al-Hadithy (2014). Yet again, translation courses in the UAE are mostly offered within the framework of foreign language and/or literature training programs as a language learning aid/activity. Meeting the market needs of today's global UAE is, according to her, hindered by a number of stumbling blocks, chief of which is the teacher-centred translation approach. Quality check and evaluation are also crucial for training courses to be successful. She hence calls for a "whole person education" approach that falls within the UAE Qualification

Framework that comprises three strands: autonomy and responsibility, role in context and self-development. She argues that linguistically competent translators may not be “ready and steady to practice translation professionally in a way that meets the demands of today’s market needs”. They still need to develop life-long learning skills and acknowledge their weaknesses and their strengths. Teaching translation, according to her, should be “process-oriented rather than product-oriented”. She concludes that the first step towards meeting the market needs in terms of skilled translation graduates is to look at the teaching methodology adopted in the classroom.

For Saudi Arabia, interpreters are needed to establish and maintain ties with industrialised countries “so as to exchange with them knowledge and experience, and to keep up with the latest developments in the different fields” (Elamin, 2004, p. 2). Fatani (2009), ElShafei (2014) and Abughararah (2017) examined the translation industry and its links to university curricula in Saudi Arabia. Fatani (2009) conducted a research analysis of the translation industry in Saudi Arabia. She lists the factors that led to the rapid expansion of translation and interpreting services in the Kingdom, namely the accession of Saudi Arabia to the World Trade Organization in 2005, the emergence of economic centers in the Kingdom and the diversified sectors that entered into strategic partnership with Microsoft. According to her, this offered excellent employment opportunities for trained professionals. Her analysis reveals an increasing move by Saudi Arabia towards globalization, outsourcing, bilingualism and computerization, with the Saudi scene that cannot be separated from the global translation industry. Saudi Arabia presents, according to her, a huge potential and a large marketplace for Translation, especially for translation technology and interpreting, namely in large institutions and organizations, banks, and hospitals. Her conclusion underlines a shortage of key talents resulting from the fact that translation is not recognized as a knowledge-based industry.

The translation industry in Saudi Arabia was also evaluated by Abughararah, (2017) with a view to identifying the professional environments for which HE institutions should be preparing their students. Her findings

reveal a huge gap between academic training and the Saudi translation market requirements. She holds that improving the teaching of translation is necessary “to mold translators for current market needs” (p.108) and deems it useful that the development of translation pedagogy is guided by market demand. Saudi Arabia, according to the author, lacks regulation of translation activity as well as a centralised register for approved translation professionals. In her conclusion figures a recommendation to improve translator training in Saudi Arabia, namely the “ability to translate simultaneously”, proving yet again that translation is perceived as including both the oral and written component. This recommendation also figures in the conclusion of another study conducted by Alshafei (2014) on English students at Taif University, Saudi Arabia which identified the “lack of practicing simultaneous translation” and “lack of practicing oral translation” amongst the listed reasons behind difficulties graduates faced at work.

For the state of Qatar, two studies conducted by Cifuentes-Goodbody and Harding (2016) and El Karnichi (2017) explored the existing translation programs in so far as they relate to their local context. Cifuentes-Goodbody and Harding (2016) detail the institution of an integrated curriculum for students entering the two MA programs* of Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Qatar. They describe in their study the larger context† that informed the instructors’ decision to take the integrated curricular approach, and later align their syllabi in light of the unique student profile and the recommendations of the program accrediting body. The curriculum is later described and sites of integration between the individual modules explained paying special attention to the oral history project‡. Their conclusion underscores how an integrated approach can be

* Master in Translation Studies and Master in Audio-visual Translation

† Namely the multicultural character of the population and various students’ cultural and educational backgrounds

‡ Oral history is relevant to the Arabian Gulf countries in general, and to Qatar, in particular. In Qatar, several oral histories projects are underway but require skilled translators to transcribe, translate and advise on the curation of this material (Cifuentes-Goodbody and Harding 2016)

effective in postgraduate programs operating in increasingly internationalised and globalised institutions of higher education. For his part, El Karnichi (2017) carried out for his doctoral thesis a study of two existing translation programs[§] in Qatar to identify the pedagogical and curricular practices therein and align them with the findings from the T&I professions practices and professionals' perceptions in the state of Qatar. The findings from his study suggest that there is a need to update the pedagogical and curriculum practices within a university context in Qatar to further integrate professionally oriented types of content, and adopt innovative pedagogies to educate multilingual service providers in the country.

T&I programs in Jordan were also covered by various authors:

Yousef (2004, as cited in Mahasneh, 2015) conducted the first study^{**} about translator training programs, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in Jordan in 2003 and published the results in 2004. The paper studied the relationship between translation programs, market needs and job opportunities in Jordan. Yousef lists the sectors on the rise in the Jordan translation market, namely trade, tourism, science and technology, communication, and tertiary education and believes that translation programs should adapt their curricula to meet the needs of such fields to enhance their graduates' employability. For him, the teaching of translation especially at an undergraduate level is not adequate, due to the absence of entry tests, the small number of translation courses, the lack of computer-related courses and proper training for the work environment, as well as the teaching of translation in both directions. Other factors identified by Yousef include lack of translation market regulation as well as market needs prediction tools and limited role of the Jordan Translation Association (JTA), the local translator association, Yousef suggests remedies to rectify the situation, namely diversification of fields covered by translation training,

[§] The postgraduate program at the Translation and Interpreting Institute at Hamad Bin Khalifa University and the undergraduate program at Qatar University

^{**} Tawfiq Yousef's paper is not published online. A printed copy was provided to Mahasneh (2015) by the author himself.

applying text-based and culture-based approaches to teaching translation, evaluating the current curricula and empowering the JTA. For his part, Mahasneh (2015) evaluated three postgraduate translation programs^{††} in Jordan in an effort to draw a clear picture of translator training in the country. He then proposed a curriculum evaluation model to be used in any translation program across the world based on the framework of the CIPP Model and a framework for an ideal curriculum design for Arabic-English postgraduate translation program. His study shows that there is a need to reform the current curricula, update the existing teaching methods, recruit specialised faculty and examine the translation market. Also in Jordan, Sayaheen (2019) explored whether the curriculum of the undergraduate translation program at Yarmouk University prepares students for the market needs. For his study, Sayaheen examined the regional market of Arab Gulf countries, namely Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait, given that Jordan is a “migrant-sending country” with the three identified countries as hosting the most Jordanian graduates. Sayaheen notes that the program covered by the study purports to prepare students to carry out successfully interpreting as well as translation jobs. After conducting a needs analysis aiming at evaluating the current market trends using translation advertisements, he focuses on three main areas in his analysis, namely job requirements, types of jobs and translation direction. The regional market covered by this study tends to be geared towards specific areas of specialisations rather than general areas of translation and interpreting and that employers do not only look for translators in their advertisements but also for interpreters and editors though to a lesser extent and that the majority of the advertisements do not look for native speakers. His findings reveal some discrepancies between the curricula of the undergraduate training program at Yarmouk University and the real market needs. Such discrepancies include 1) lack of student competency due to the absence of language proficiency tests, internships, etc. and courses on technology and editing; 2) specialized areas of translation not catered for by the curricula; 3) the curriculum does not

^{††} Jordan, Petra and Yarmouk universities

cater for editing despite it being in demand; 4) non-native Arab speakers should be admitted and more courses to train bidirectional translators. 5) lack of training on research skills and information literacy using information technology. These discrepancies, according to him, shall be taken into account when trying to bridge the gap between academia and the industry.

Moving on to Palestine, Thawabteh and Shehab (2017) conducted a study on translation curriculum and employability using two postgraduate Palestinian universities^{††} as a case study. Their findings reveal that the curricula of the programs covered by the study do not match the employability in the growing market place as some courses are not related to the job market. In addition, students and graduates had reservations regarding the name of the program^{§§} which does not seem to be favoured by employers, lack of coordination between program developers and the market and lack of translation technology, and thus requested more interpreting and translation technology courses. They conclude that the curriculum needs to be permanently planned and designed in light of the job market, that curriculum development should respond to local, regional and international translation industry demands, and that courses on information technology should receive more attention to allow locally based translators to compete globally with their peers. One more observation shared by Thawabteh and Shehab (2017) is that pronged programs^{***}, namely Applied Linguistics and Translation, may not serve Arab graduates in the Arab business world and thus should be discouraged, except for related programs such as translation and interpreting that would be more useful than hybrid names. For his part, Amer (2013) discusses the learning/teaching outcomes of teaching translation in the English departments at Gaza local universities. Translation courses are taught as part of the English BA curriculum and consequently, do not train students to pursue a professional career in

^{††} The studied programs are the Master's degree in Applied Linguistics and Translation (ALT) offered by An-Najah National University and the Master's program in Translation and Interpreting (TI) offered by Al-Quds University

^{§§} "Applied Linguistics and Translation"

^{***} Programs combining two fields of study

translation. Amer then attempts to put forward a roadmap for improving translation teaching at university level. A similar study was conducted four years later by Al Aqad (2017) who also looked into the problems that translation students of universities in Gaza strip face in relation to the teaching of translation. His results show that teachers claim they base their teaching on theory but students are unsure as to the importance of theory and lack professional practice. El Haj Ahmed (2019) also evaluated the status quo of teaching translation at Gaza universities. He examined the current teaching practices and suggested a “remedial plan” that strikes a balance between linguistic-oriented approach and cultural-oriented descriptive approaches to improve translation training programs and meet the Palestinian market demands.

For Yemen, Mohammed Ahmed Barakat (2015) conducted for her PhD thesis a case study of interpreter education and training in Yemen. The absence in Yemen of programs specifically designed to train interpreters was noted. Rather, interpreting is offered as part of translation programs in the form of two or three courses. Mohammed Ahmed Barakat identifies curriculum components, teaching and learning practices and assessment procedures as the major educational issues in interpreter training and education in Yemen, and further adds that the components of interpreter training lack in constructive alignment. Furthermore, the teaching practices and assessment procedures do not serve to achieve the curriculum intended outcomes. She further pinpoints the lack in the pool of candidates, lack of trained and experienced instructors, and absence of training facilities and highlights the lack of authenticity in the sense that training does not reflect the professional conditions of the real world in terms of interpreting modality and direction, type of practice materials and method of input delivery and interpreting equipment. As a result, graduates are unqualified to work as interpreters in the market. Mohammed Ahmed Barakat concludes by calling for the re-evaluation of the curriculum components and learning outcomes to improve interpreter education in Yemen and for the establishment of a selective separate program for the training of interpreters that would take into account the state and needs of the interpreting market.

As for Morocco, El Karnichi (2012) examined the situation of the teaching of translation at Moroccan universities. He presented the syllabus, teaching methods and models vis-à-vis the fast-growing innovations as well as the approaches in the discipline and highlighted a key challenging issue with the new translator pedagogy, that is theory and practice within a university level translation training program. For his part, Alaoui (n.d) argues that the teaching of translation in Moroccan universities, as it stands, can only have academic rather than professional goals and suggests reviewing the objectives of teaching translation at Moroccan universities in order to achieve realistic learning outcomes.

For Algeria, Aïssani (2000) chronicles the historical development of translation programs while highlighting the French colonial influence on the country and education system and briefly discusses the teaching of translation in Algeria. Goui (n.d.) describes the expansion of translation departments in Algeria as being chaotic and lacking specialised instructors. He further adds that their curricula are copied from different and, at times, outdated curricula and lack proper syllabi. For this reason, the Ministry of Education “decided to put an end to all graduate translation courses in the age of the newly implemented LMD system”. According to the author, the teaching of T&I courses in Algeria was and still is performed in a very traditional manner. Hence, updating the Translation curricula proves necessary to meet local expectations and needs. Amongst the challenges faced by such programs, he lists lack of language mastery, lack of prioritization for the Arabic language, anarchic practical courses, lack of specialisation, lack of theory components, as well as lack of methodology module. The required update, he concludes, should focus on the curriculum, syllabus design and teaching strategies. The observation put forward by Goui (n.d) as regards the curricula of translation departments in Algeria being copied from different and, at times, outdated curricula is shared by other researchers too. According to Gabr (2001), academic programs in Arab universities do not take into account their country’s needs and local market requirements but rather imitate prestigious programs in the world. Karnichi (2017) also notes that many university programs in the Gulf region

in particular do not invest in creating localised programs but rather import foreign curricula in what is referred to by Cifuentes-Goodbody and Harding (2016) as “imported internationalisation”. Cronin (2003, p.128) sees in such imitation what can be described as the “colonialism of the twenty-first century”, and “the latest incarnation of Western cultural imperialism” (Cifuentes-Goodbody & Harding, 2016, p. 18). Notwithstanding, regional and local factors also contribute to shaping an institution even when their curricula is a replica of prestigious programs (Miller-Idriss and Hanauer 2011), and for learning to take place, it needs to be connected to the students’ context. (Cifuentes-Goodbody & Harding, 2016).

Juma Zagood (2020) addresses the perspective of interpreting students at the Department of Translation and Interpreting Studies at the Libyan Academy in Tripoli, the only postgraduate academic training of translation and interpreting in Libya, on the teaching of interpreting and the challenges they encounter. Despite the existence of good aspects such as the satisfaction of students with the course structure and teaching materials, his findings reveal an array of challenges, namely the way the courses are divided between theory, methodology and practice, speeches selected for consecutive interpreting practice, recordings selected for simultaneous practice, shortage of time slots allotted to students for practice, outdated lab equipment, and lack of real-life situations where students can practice liaison interpreting. Some recommendations to overcome these challenges are suggested for trainers/teachers to improve the teaching of interpreting at said institution. These recommendations include adding an interpreting theory course devoted to theory and deontology, decreasing the number of students enrolled to give longer practice slots to enrolled students, providing a more modern interpreting lab, updating the course materials as to have more authentic speeches and audios for practice and providing internship opportunities. Such recommendations clearly reflect the students’ wish to bring their training program and the world of employment closer.

3. Analysis

There seems to be a widespread agreement that T&I training programs offered by Arab academic institutions in Arab countries fall short of local, regional and international markets needs as well as graduates' expectations. The fact that T&I are still considered as a derivative of the Linguistics and/or literature disciplines rather than a discipline in its own right is proving to be inadequate for graduates who lack in T&I practice. In addition, graduating from a hybrid program that combines literature and Translation might not serve them well in the business world. When collating the information gathered from the studies above, it becomes clear that HE institutions need to implement reforms and corrective measures if they wish to achieve a better closeness to the market and further their graduates' employability. The concerns expressed in the studies above can be summarised as follows:

- Lack of competent, qualified and experienced trainers who had formal training;
- Weak admission criteria, absence of entry tests and proficiency tests leading to the admission of students with low proficiency in foreign language and mother language competence;
- Weak teaching methods, weak syllabus design and obsolete course content;
- Inadequate type of practice materials and methods of input delivery;
- Lack of training in interpreting modalities and lack of interpreting equipment;
- Lack of training on research skills and information literacy;
- Lack of market prediction tools;
- Lack of practice or theory components;
- Weak assessment procedures;
- And in the case of combined T&I programs, little attention devoted to interpreting.

There seems to be a wide dissatisfaction with the teachers and teaching methods that are reportedly teacher-centred. Admission and assessment procedures, in addition to syllabus and course content were also reported as sources for concern. This ties in with the list of the most salient weaknesses that contribute to the inadequacy to meet market needs as encapsulated by Setton and Dawrant (2016, p. 98) which includes: 1) Under-qualification of instructors who have little or no teacher training; 2) Loose testing procedures; 3) Inadequate control and care in the choice of materials; 4) Delays in updating training to contemporary market needs; and 5) Reluctance to provide enough targeted language enhancement. In combined translation and interpreting degrees, little attention is devoted to interpreting components. In this regard, Álvarez and Uzquiza (2017) made a very important statement about T&I training programs in Spain that is also applicable to Arabic T&I training programs. Although the studies are normally referred to as ‘Degree in Translation and Interpreting’, they explain, translation and interpreting are not considered alike in the Spanish context. More weightage is attributed to translation compared to interpretation, and some universities only include interpreting as optional subjects in their curricula. The same holds true for combined T&I degrees in Arab countries. A case in point is the postgraduate two-year Master’s degree in Translation and Interpreting at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) where only two interpreting courses exist. Similarly, Yarmouk University graduates are expected to work as translators and interpreters, with only two interpreting courses included in the curriculum (Sayaaheen, 2019).

As for interpreting courses, further attention needs to be devoted to the type of practice materials and methods of input delivery. Moreover, interpreting is constantly evolving and expanding to include other settings. Hence, new interpreting modalities such as community interpreting and settings such as remote interpreting need to be accounted for in the curricula as the studies suggest. And given that interpretation is carried out predominantly by self-employed freelancers, graduates need to be equipped with the research and information technology skills to be able to function on their own, and possess the generic skills to be able to function in teams when working with their peers and dealing with employers.

4- Conclusion:

The present study explores T&I training programs employability studies and provides a comparative analysis of their findings. As shown above, employability is recognised by most scholars as an important factor in the curriculum, given the vocational character of T&I training and there seems to be a widespread agreement that T&I training programs offered by Arab academic institutions in Arab countries fall short of local, regional and international markets needs as well as graduates' expectations. The curricula of Arabic T&I training programs thus need to be reviewed and updated in order for HE institutions to better respond to the market demands and enhance the employability of their graduates. The idea is not to produce translators and interpreters who are ready to work directly and immediately after graduation, which seems to be the goal of training in the literature (Sawyer, 2004) but rather functional and “minimally qualified professionals” who are able to fill the gap with contentious self-reflection and self-observation (Pöchhacker 2018). The ultimate objective of a teaching program, as per Aula.Int (2005), is to enhance students' abilities and skills to enable them to succeed on the labour market. “At the same time, they must never lose sight of the fact that a degree program is not the end of the road, but merely a step in the right direction of continued learning, both intellectually and professionally” (Aula.Int, 2005, p. 141). To that end, Harabi (2008) recommends that Translators diversify their portfolio of activities by engaging in both translation and interpretation and Ḥaddād (2006) advises curriculum designers who wish to provide Translation students with the necessary tools to work in today and tomorrow's globalised world to provide a training of a multidisciplinary nature.

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