



An Investigation of The Structure of Undergraduate Translation Programmes in Greek Academic Institutions

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Abstract

This paper investigates the structure of undergraduate translation education in Greek academic institutions, focusing on how university departments in Greece design, implement and evaluate their translation programmes. Through a qualitative review of curricula from major universities in which translation is taught, the study explores pedagogical approaches, course content as well as the integration of technology and professional practices. The paper ends up by proposing ways to improve translation education in Greece in accordance with European models such as the European Master's in Translation (E.M.T.) framework.

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1. Introduction

During the last decades there has been an increasing demand for translator training programmes aiming to provide students with the required knowledge and skills in order to become professional translators. One of the main topics raised in Translation Studies regards the structure of academic translator training programmes and, more specifically, the interconnectivity between the practical and theoretical courses offered in these programmes. Translation plays a major role in the globalized world of the twenty-first century. It bridges linguistic and cultural barriers, facilitates international communication and contributes to the exchange of knowledge, literature and technology (Zhang, 2021). The professionalization of translation has consequently led to the establishment of translation studies as an autonomous academic discipline. Within this context, translation education has become central to preparing translators who can meet the demands of an increasingly multilingual and technology-driven society (Zanettin, 2018).

In Greece, translation education occupies a distinctive place within the higher education landscape. Historically, translation was often taught informally or as part of philological studies in the framework of Foreign Language and Literature Departments (Alves & Hurtado Albir, 2016). However, in the past three

decades, several universities have established specialized translation programs that combine linguistic competence with applied translation training (Risku, 2019). The Ionian University was among the first to create a Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting, offering a structured undergraduate curriculum dedicated entirely to translation studies. Similarly, other Greek universities have integrated translation modules within broader language or philology degrees, aiming to develop both theoretical understanding and professional skills (Gile, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to investigate how translation education is structured within Greek academic institutions, focusing on curriculum design, teaching methodologies and professional orientation. By analyzing existing university programs and comparing them with European standards, this paper seeks to identify both similarities and differences, strengths and gaps in the current educational framework. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the ongoing discussion about improving translation education in Greece in order to meet global academic and professional expectations.

2. Research methodology

2.1 Method

Translation Studies has evolved significantly as an academic discipline since the mid-20th century (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2016). Early models of translation training centered on linguistic equivalence theories, emphasizing literal fidelity between source and target texts (Catford, 1965). However, modern translation pedagogy has shifted toward functionalist and constructivist approaches that consider the purpose of translation and the active role of the translator (Schäffner & Adab, 2015; Kiraly, 2000). The emergence of the European Master's in Translation (EMT) competence framework in 2009 further emphasized the need for structured translator education and the development of the translator's competences suggesting five competence areas: language, intercultural, information-mining, technological and service-provision (European Commission, 2022). Scholars such as Pym (2018) and Kelly (2005) argue that translator education should not only develop translator linguistic competence but also professional and ethical awareness, technological proficiency as well as self-awareness. This perspective aligns with the broader trend toward competence-based education in Europe and multicomponential competence models. In Greece, however, translation education developed later than in countries such as Spain or Germany, where specialized

translation faculties were established in the 1980s. Greek translation programs often came from philological departments, maintaining a stronger emphasis on theory and linguistics than an applied professional practice (Kapsaskis, 2018). Previous research has highlighted the tension between academic and vocational aims in Greek translation programmes. According to Somers (2017), Greek institutions have historically prioritized linguistic and cultural education, while professional training especially in computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and localization, remains underdeveloped. Nonetheless, nowadays universities teaching translation have made significant progress toward balancing theory and practice, offering modules in specialized translation (legal, economic and technical) and professional internships (Pöchhacker, 2017).

This study employs a qualitative and comparative approach to examine the structure of translation education in Greek academic institutions. The research draws primarily on document analysis of publicly available university curricula, course descriptions and departmental outlines. The three main institutions analyzed are:

1. Ionian University of Corfu – Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting (DFLTI), the oldest and most specialized translation programme in Greece.

2.Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) – Foreign Language Departments that offer translation modules within broader linguistic programmes: Department of French Language and Literature - Department of English Language and Literature - Department of Italian Language and Literature and Department of German Language and Literature

3.National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) – Foreign Language Departments that offer translation modules within broader linguistic programmes: Department of French Language and Literature - Department of English Language and Literature, Department of Italian Language and Literature - Department of Spanish Language and Literature.

The programmes were analyzed in terms of (a) curriculum structure, (b) course distribution between theory and practice, and (c) incorporation of professional and technological components. The data were compared with the E.M.T. (European Masters in Translation) competence framework and relevant European standards for translator training. Secondary data were drawn from academic publications, European policy documents and institutional reports. Although this analysis is limited to publicly accessible materials, it provides a representative overview of the general tendencies in

Greek translation education and its alignment with international norms. A limitation of this study is that it excluded university departments in Greek academic institutions which, although they do offer limited in number translation modules as supplementary in their curriculum, their main subject field is other than translation studies.

2.2 Results

The Ionian University's Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting (DFLTI) in Corfu, established in 1986, remains the cornerstone of translation education in Greece. It offers a four-year undergraduate program exclusively dedicated to translation and interpreting, combining theoretical, linguistic and practical modules. The curriculum includes various courses such as General Translation, Specialized Translation, Translation Theory, Terminology, CAT Tools, and Subtitling. Students are required to work with at least two foreign languages, most commonly English, French and German.

As far as their theoretical education is concerned, apart from the pure translation theory courses, a number of other courses is offered that regard specific cognitive fields aiming to:

- the study of translation as a cultural event and the development of students' cultural development

- knowledge acquisition in a wide range of thematic fields such as Political and Economic studies, Law, the science of Technology and Philosophy, that would allow students to develop the necessary cognitive background in order to approach in practice the relevant scientific text-types

- student sensitization in various literary text-types and the specific traits of literary translation. More particularly, the subject fields covered are modern and Western Literature, Literary Theory, Comparative Literature, Critique of Literary Translation.

- Student familiarization with modern technological tools and their skill development in evaluating the available electronic sources of information. Within this framework, obligatory technology courses are offered which apart from a theoretical approach to translation technology, they provide the opportunity to students to obtain practical knowledge by exercising in the “real translation environments” (Peng, 2024).

Ionian University offers to translation students the opportunity to develop their cultural and intercultural competence by integrating into foreign civilizations through various mobility programmes or by coming into contact with foreign students who attend the particular Department of the institution.

Regarding culture knowledge acquisition, Kelly (2005) recognizes the value of encyclopedic knowledge acquisition,

however, she stresses that the concept of civilization is wider than simple, institutional, historical and geographic knowledge of different people and societies. For translators, Van Egdom & Schrijver (2024) mention that it is important to acquire knowledge regarding moral values and beliefs, the stereotypes and the ideological beliefs of their “working civilizations”.

Except for the theoretical courses, practical courses are taught throughout the programme aiming to help students understand the theory behind practice and incorporate their systematic theoretical knowledge to the process of translation (Massey, & Ehrensberger-Dow, 2021). In the first four semesters general translation courses are offered aiming to familiarize students with translation methodology through specialised translation exercises. During the first two semesters language courses are also offered aiming to improve student competence both in Greek and the foreign languages, given that in the early stage of student training, trainees do not possess proficiency in the foreign languages they have chosen in advance. There is also a number of optional courses offered in the following cognitive fields:

- Translation of European Union Texts aiming to familiarize students with the difficulties of the specific text-type

- Aesthetic Philosophy examining the Aesthetics as a philosophic science

- Audiovisual translation investigating the particularities of this type of translation
- Stylistics and Translation investigating the connection between stylistics and translation and the translation problems that arise due to stylistic differences

Finally, the program emphasizes professional preparation through internship placements and translation projects in collaboration with the local community and international institutions. The inclusion of courses on CAT tools and audiovisual translation shows a commitment to modern technological demands (Tian, 2024), though the level of access to up-to-date software remains limited compared to European counterparts.

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) and National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA):

Institutional and departmental context

Translation and interpreting studies in Greece are typically taught within foreign language departments and combine theoretical modules (translation studies, linguistics, literature) with practice-based training (translation workshops, interpreting labs, terminology, CAT tools). This paper compares how the two major institutions — Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), structure their undergraduate

programmes for students who wish to specialize in translation.

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) houses translation-related courses within its language Schools (e.g., the School/Department of English Language & Literature and collaborative programmes across Romance and Germanic language schools). AUTH provides courses and specializations that cover translation and interpreting topics and cooperates across language schools for more practical/interpreting specialisms. At Aristotle University, translation training is primarily offered at undergraduate level within the School of English and the School of French. These Schools include theoretical courses such as Translation Theory and Criticism and Sociology of Translation, alongside applied modules in Scientific and Technical Translation, Audiovisual Translation, and Translation Technology. The program's emphasis on intercultural mediation reflects the growing recognition that translators act as cultural agents rather than mere linguistic mediators.

The University of Athens does not have a dedicated translation department but translation courses are integrated into several language and philology degrees. For instance, the Department of French Language and Literature offers modules such as Translation from French into Greek and Terminology and Specialized

Translation. Similarly, the English Department provides courses in Translation Theory, Literary Translation, and Language and Culture in Translation. While these courses introduce students to translation principles, they are typically elective rather than core requirements, and they often lack systematic progression from theory to professional application. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA) runs a four-year undergraduate programme in the Department of English Language and Literature; the department's curriculum spans linguistics, literature and translation, and offers translation-related modules as part of the core and elective courses.

Degree length and overall design

Both universities follow the standard Greek higher-education model for bachelor degrees: programmes are structured across four academic years (full-time) with a mix of compulsory (core) and elective modules. The curriculum balances theoretical studies (translation theory, linguistics, literature) with applied training (text practice, interpreting exercises, terminology work).

Teaching methods & learning activities

Teaching mixes lectures for theoretical topics and seminar/workshop formats for practice. Practical translation modules typically include in-class assignments, pair/group work, in-class live translation or interpreting exercises and submission of assessed portfolios. Syllabi from the

departments indicate hands-on sessions (e.g., glossary creation, corpus exercises) and practical workshops. Where interpreting is present, students work in lab settings and practice consecutive/liaison techniques.

Assessment and accreditation

Assessment usually combines written exams (for theory modules), coursework (translation assignments, portfolios), oral performance (interpreting evaluations) and, in some cases, a final dissertation or capstone project at undergraduate level (Ramírez-Polo, 2023). Both universities operate under the national quality framework for Greek higher education; degrees are official bachelor degrees awarded by the universities. (General institutional descriptions and programme guides on departmental pages support the presence of mixed assessment regimes.)

Practical training & employability elements

Many programmes emphasize professional skills (Williams, 2014): specialised translation (legal/medical/technical), CAT tools, terminology, and internship/practicum opportunities when resources and partnerships allow. AUTH and NKUA both show programme components meant to prepare students for professional contexts, from translation in professional settings to postgraduate conversion into specialised MA programmes. This linkage strengthens

graduate employability in translation, education, publishing, public service and localization sectors (Hazaea, 2024).

Similarities between AUTH and NKUA

- Four-year undergraduate structure with a balance of theory and practice.
- Core language and translation theory modules combined with applied workshops.
- Inclusion (or availability) of interpreting training, specialised translation modules, and technology/terminology work.
- Mixed assessment (exams, coursework, portfolios, oral assessments).
- Strong inter-departmental cooperation across language schools and explicit conference interpreting/translation tracks; practical course descriptions show an emphasis on contextualizing translation historically and culturally.

Undergraduate translation education at both AUTH and NKUA follows broadly similar, academically grounded models combining theory, linguistics and applied practice. AUTH's strengths include inter-school collaboration and clearly advertised interpreting specialisms; NKUA highlights a broad undergraduate foundation with clear postgraduate progression. For prospective students the choice often depends on language pairing offered, the availability of interpreting labs and

personal preferences for more literature/linguistics versus applied professional training (Bowker & Pearson, 2015).

3. Discussion

3.1. Discussion of findings

The findings reveal both the strengths and the limitations of translation education in Greece. The strong linguistic and theoretical background of Greek students provides a solid foundation for translation studies, yet the academic orientation of most programs means that professional training is often secondary. This contrasts with international best practices, where translator training integrates real-world projects, internships, and technology-enhanced learning (Kiraly, 2012).

When compared to the EMT competence framework, Greek programs align well in the areas of language and intercultural competence but fall short in technological and service-provision competences. The limited availability of specialized translation tools and industry collaborations contributes to a gap between academic preparation and market demands. Similar challenges have been noted in other Mediterranean countries, suggesting a regional pattern in translator education development (Gouadec, 2007).

Another issue concerns interdisciplinarity (Bilic, 2020). Greek translation curricula

often remain isolated from related fields such as communication, computer science, or cultural studies. Incorporating elements of localization, machine translation post-editing, and project management could make programs more responsive to the evolving translation industry. Moreover, more emphasis on intercultural communication and ethics would better prepare students for multilingual professional environments (Hurtado Albir, 2017).

Nevertheless, the commitment of Greek universities to advancing translation pedagogy is commendable (Venkatesan, 2023). Recent efforts to adopt blended learning methods, introduce CAT tool workshops, and foster European cooperation indicate gradual progress toward modernization.

To summarise. across all institutions, the following common features emerge:

- Strong theoretical foundation: Courses on translation theory and linguistics are consistently emphasized.
- Practical orientation: Practical translation training, internships, and use of CAT tools are less extensive than in European EMT programs.
- Technological gap: While CAT tools and audiovisual translation are taught at the Ionian University, access to updated software and industry partnerships remains limited (Kenny, 2019).

- Fragmentation: Translation education outside the Ionian University tends to be embedded within broader philology departments, leading to inconsistencies in professional orientation and learning outcomes.

3.2. Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study relies on publicly available documents, limiting insight into teaching quality, student satisfaction, and institutional constraints. Future research should include interviews with faculty and students, surveys on career outcomes, and longitudinal studies tracking graduate employability. Investigating private translation training centers and online courses in Greece could also enrich understanding of the national educational ecosystem (Al Thowaini, 2024).

Another limitation of the study is that the research did not investigate university departments in Greek academic institutions which offer a limited number of translation modules in the framework of a more generalised approach to translation studies. On the contrary, the research centered on those departments which offer a comprehensive curriculum in the field of translation studies.

Finally, the research was limited to undergraduate translation programmes that offer a curriculum with a wider scope and objectives addressing to a greater number

of students as opposed to postgraduate translation programmes whose duration is shorter, their aims and objectives are more specialised and they address to specific target groups.

4. CONCLUSION

The present paper examined the structure of translation education in Greek academic institutions through a comparative analysis of three major universities. The study found that while Greek programmes maintain a strong theoretical and linguistic base, they often lack comprehensive professional and technological training. The Ionian University is the only institution offering a full undergraduate degree in translation, whereas AUTH and NKUA integrate translation courses within broader philological frameworks. To align with European and global standards, Greek

translation education should prioritize the following:

- Expansion of practical and technology-oriented modules.
- Strengthening of ties with the translation industry through internships and partnerships.
- Curriculum further modernization to incorporate digital translation tools and interdisciplinary approaches.

Future research could include interviews with educators and students to assess their perceptions of translation competence and employability. As Greece continues to develop into the European Higher Education Area, ongoing reform in translation education will be essential to produce translators who are both theoretically informed and professionally equipped (Hatim & Mason, 2015).

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