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## **Public Service Interpreting and Translation and Employment in Spain: Overcoming Professionalisation Challenges through Training**

### **Traducción e Interpretación en los servicios públicos y empleo en España: Superando los retos de la profesionalización a través de la formación**

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**Abstract:** Despite its under-professionalisation in Spain, Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) services are necessary. They are intensively used in healthcare settings, social welfare services, and police and court settings, especially during crises. On the other hand, given the significant role PSIT plays in multilingual societies, training translators and interpreters in this field is paramount. However, training in PSIT in Spain and research on the employment and employability of PSIT Spanish postgraduates are scarce. This article fills this need by focusing on the employment situation of the graduates of a PSIT postgraduate programme that trains in different language pairs. It has three objectives: identify the graduates' employment situation, determine the relationship between the programme and its labour market, and fill the gap regarding the literature on the labour market and employability in PSIT in Spain. Based on an analysis of employment reports, it follows a descriptive approach, using data obtained from the 2009/2010 to 2018/2019 cohorts. Results show that the programme has high employment rates, and a clear and solid relationship exists between the labour market and the programme. The short period between graduation and finding a job is a strength of the programme. Respondents tend to be generally satisfied with their jobs and the professional category is related to their training.

**Keywords:** Public service interpreting and translation, Labour market, Spain, Employment, Employability

**Resumen:** A pesar de su escasa profesionalización en España, la Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos (TISP) es necesaria. Se utiliza de

forma intensiva en entornos sanitarios, servicios de asistencia social y entornos policiales y judiciales, especialmente en situaciones de crisis. Por otra parte, dado el importante papel que desempeña la TISP en las sociedades multilingües, la formación de traductores e intérpretes en este campo es primordial. Sin embargo, la formación en TISP en España y la investigación sobre el empleo y la empleabilidad de los egresados españoles en TISP son escasas. Este artículo cubre esta necesidad centrándose en la situación laboral de los egresados de un programa de postgrado en TISP que forma en diferentes pares de lenguas. Tiene tres objetivos: identificar la situación laboral de los egresados, determinar la relación entre el programa y su mercado laboral, y llenar el vacío existente en la literatura sobre el mercado laboral y la empleabilidad en TISP en España. Partiendo de un análisis de los informes de empleabilidad, se sigue un enfoque descriptivo con datos obtenidos de egresados de varios cursos académicos (de 2009/2010 a 2018/2019). Los resultados muestran que el programa tiene tasas altas de empleabilidad y que existe una clara y sólida relación entre el mercado laboral y el programa. El poco tiempo que los egresados tardan en encontrar trabajo después de la graduación es un punto fuerte del programa. Los encuestados están generalmente satisfechos con sus trabajos y su categoría profesional tiene relación con su formación.

**Palabras clave:** Traducción e interpretación en los servicios públicos, Mercado laboral, España, Empleo, Empleabilidad

#### INTRODUCTION

Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) is a field within Translation and Interpreting (T&I) (Valero-Garcés, 2014). The term PSIT, most frequently used in Spain, overlaps with other terms used in English-speaking countries, such as “community interpreting” (Hertog, 2010, p. 49), “public service interpreting” (Mikkelsen, 2014, p. 9), “community-based interpreting” (Pöchhacker, 2004, p. 15), and “community translation” (Taibi and Ozolins, 2016, p. 7). Although researchers tend to distinguish between the different activities (translation or interpreting) or areas involved (e.g., healthcare or legal), the term “PSIT” encompasses both translation and interpreting (T&I) activities and several fields.

In fact, PSIT provides the (foreign) population who are not fluent in the language of the public service providers with equal access to public services such as education, healthcare, social, administrative, police and judicial services, among others (Valero-Garcés, 2014 and 2017; Sánchez, 2020). Its settings are internationally recognised and often classified as follows: “social services such as, e.g., welfare, housing, employment, or schools; medical settings such as childcare centres, hospitals, mental health clinics; or legal

settings such as prisons, police stations or probation offices” (Hertog, 2010, p. 49).

PSIT is under-professionalised in Spain (Lázaro and Álvaro, 2020). Evidence of that are the issues that have been raised in the last decade regarding aspects such as the lack of regulation, a bar association and training standards as well as the absence of a code of ethics (RITAP, 2011), suitable remuneration and recruitment structures. The main elements that characterise this situation are the:

increase in the outsourcing of services (which has led to a corresponding deterioration in the working conditions of both interpreters and translators), the proliferation of telephone interpreting and the prevalence of volunteer and *ad-hoc* interpreters and translators. (Lázaro and Álvaro, 2020, p. 74).

As a result of this under-professionalisation, different solutions have been pursued to overcome language barriers. The solutions depend on the subfield (health, education, social care, administrative, court, or police settings) and the region (the different autonomous communities in Spain) where the PSIT activity occurs. Moreover, the funding available also affected the solutions provided. Lastly, as Foulquié-Rubio *et al.* (2018) underlined, the economic crisis led to the prevarication in the employment of translators and interpreters and has prevented PSIT from achieving a professional status similar to that in Canada, Australia, or United Kingdom.

Thus, for example, in the medical setting, the right to T&I is not guaranteed by any law in Spain (Foulquié-Rubio *et al.*, 2018), which resulted in improvised non-professional solutions such as machine translation, gestures, and the use of patients’ acquaintances, including minors (Del Pozo, 2013). On the other hand, in this setting, different professional solutions have also been used. Firstly, the independent professional interpreting and mediation service provided by Salud entre Culturas, at Hospital Universitario Ramón y Cajal (Madrid), is worthy of mention due to its broad experience (Foulquié-Rubio *et al.*, 2018). Secondly, the use of telephone interpreting, which has become increasingly popular in recent years, especially in areas such as Levante, has a high share of foreign population (Foulquié-Rubio *et al.*, 2018). Other examples are the emergency services at health centres in the Madrid region (El Mundo, 2009) and hospitals such as Hospital Universitario de Fuenlabrada (primary care) and Hospital Universitario Clínico San Carlos (clinical university hospital) (Portal de la Contratación Pública, 2020). Another example is the recent reactivation of the service provided for medical staff throughout the autonomous community of Castilla-La Mancha to cover the needs of the Ukrainian refugees in this region (Hospital Universitario de Guadalajara, 2022).

Another instance is the legal setting related to court interpreting and translation. Court and police settings translators and interpreters consist of a mixture of in-house staff and external contractors (RITAP, 2011). The subcontracting and outsourcing model is, in fact, the predominant system for the provision of T&I services in court and police settings (Foulquié-Rubio *et al.*, 2018). The working conditions imposed by the contracting companies that supply PSIT practitioners in court settings are so precarious at some point that professional practitioners are not willing to work under such conditions (*e.g.*, self-employed, long waiting hours, waiting hours not paid, low fares, no access to internet or translation tools, etc.). Thus, gaps have sometimes been covered by bilingual people with no training or qualifications. In general, the standards for interpreting may be different for court interpreting and police interviews considering the different types of courts and Spanish regions involved; however, as Gascón (2017) and Foulquié-Rubio *et al.* (2018) underline, as a general rule, the lack of rigorous standards and minimum quality requirements resulted in a decrease in the quality of court interpreting services in the last years.

Despite its under-professionalisation and precarious working conditions, PSIT services are necessary and intensively used. Professional translators and interpreters are essential to facilitate communication, especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the population movements caused by the Ukrainian war, in which the foreign population need urgent and effective communication. Moreover, given the significant role PSIT plays in multilingual societies, the training of those who work in this field is paramount. In fact, training is one of the pillars that lead to the full professionalisation of the discipline (Lázaro and Álvaro, 2020; González, 2019). In turn, training as the foundation of the professionalisation process is based on four structural pillars: knowledge (and implementation) of the code of ethics, of “the interpreter’s role and its limitations”, of “the area of expertise and protocols of the field” involved, and the interpreter’s technical expertise (Hale and González, 2017, cited by González, 2019, section 2.2).

However, training in PSIT in Spain is scarce, and only one officially recognised<sup>1</sup> programme includes training in both translation and interpreting as modalities and several PSIT areas (healthcare, social services, and legal-administrative settings): Máster Universitario en Comunicación Intercultural, Interpretación y Traducción en los Servicios Públicos (the Master’s Degree in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting and Translation), as

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<sup>1</sup> Official recognition in Spain refers to endorsement by the Spanish regulatory agency: Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation).

opposed to other programmes<sup>2</sup> that only focus on one field and/or one modality. This master has been taught at Universidad de Alcalá as a one-year programme endorsed by Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación (the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation, or ANECA) since 2006 in a variety of language pairs: Spanish and Arabic/Chinese/English/French/Polish/Romanian/Russian.

On the other hand, the main challenge for universities lies in designing a curriculum that applies to the labour market of future graduates (Álvarez *et al.*, 2009). In fact, in a study carried out by Fundación Universidad-Empresa, aimed at students and recent graduates of Science or Health Sciences at Spanish public universities, six out of ten Spanish university students did not feel prepared for the labour market after completing their studies (RRHHDIGITAL, 2021). Relying on similar studies in the T&I and PSIT areas would be useful to compare results. Moreover, the graduate's employability and employment rates should also be considered as essential factors by academic programme coordinators to ensure that the subjects they teach apply to the labour market. However, research on the employability of Spanish T&I students is scarce and on PSIT postgraduates even more scarce. Thus, as Muñoz-Miquel *et al.* (2020) also underline, there is a gap considering empirical studies that focus on the employability of master's degree graduates and the potential variety of professional profiles.

Considering this gap, a project<sup>3</sup> is being carried out by the Quality Committee of the Master's Degree in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting and Translation (or PSIT programme) at Universidad de Alcalá to determine the employability of the students trained in this PSIT programme. The project focuses on analysing the employment situation, employability, and competence development of PSIT graduates. It represents a follow-up of the training provided and an analysis of aspects such as the applicability of skills and knowledge, strengths, needs, and weaknesses considering the PSIT labour market. The project aims to compare the results obtained by the different instruments used by the programme to collect information from graduates. These instruments are: a) university reports of data obtained through a questionnaire designed by the Technical Quality Department at Universidad de Alcalá for all the master's degrees at this university, b) a specific questionnaire designed for the graduates of the

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<sup>2</sup> Other officially recognised programmes, such as Máster Oficial en Traducción y Mediación Intercultural (at Universidad de Salamanca) and Máster Universitario de Traducción y Estudios Interculturales (at Universitat Rovira i Virgili), were created later and focus on translation and mediation or intercultural aspects; they do not encompass both T&I modalities and a variety of settings such as the aforementioned programme.

<sup>3</sup> The project is called «Labour market insertion, internships, and competence development for translation and interpreting students».

programme, and c) internship reports from students and advisors. Moreover, the results are meant to lead to improvement actions that will strengthen the employability of the PSIT programme graduates.

This article analyses employment data of the PSIT programme's graduates gathered through the first of the above-mentioned instruments: reports of data collected through questionnaires by the Technical Quality Department at Universidad de Alcalá. It has three objectives. First, to identify the graduates' employment situation. Second, to determine the relationship between the programme and the labour market of the T&I field in Spain, and third, to fill the gap regarding the literature on employability and employment in PSIT in Spain. It relies on the hypothesis that, despite the under-professionalisation of PSIT, the programme has high employability rates, and graduates find jobs in the T&I industry.

To achieve these objectives, it will use the data included in the quantitative reports obtained through the questionnaires designed by the Technical Quality Department at Universidad de Alcalá for all the postgraduate programmes of this university. The analysis will follow a descriptive approach using research questions to guide it. The participants are graduates of the PSIT programme who answered the questionnaire one year after they graduated from the 2009/2010 to the 2018/2019 cohorts. The results will be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme and propose improvements that could serve to increase the employability of its graduates.

#### 1. EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY IN T&I AND PSIT

According to Gammarano (2019), who represents the International Labour Organisation's Department of Statistics, "employment" refers to any activity performed "to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit" (para. 5) and is a type of work that constitutes only a small part of the work that people perform overall. In fact, "work" encompasses all work forms since it refers to "any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use" (Gammarano, 2019, para. 6).

On the other hand, "employability" is a more complex concept related to finding and keeping a job, which is defined and understood in different ways. Employability can be defined as "a set of achievements—skills, understandings and personal attributes—that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (Yorke, 2006, p. 8). Moreover, competence-based approaches to employability underline it as a multidimensional process developed over time (Römgens *et al.*, 2020).

Although several studies include definitions, perspectives, and approaches regarding employability, the descriptions of the concept itself lack clarity and specificity. That is why Römogens *et al.* (2020) conceptualise employability and provide an “overview of [its] competence-based dimensions” (p. 2601). They compare approaches and insights and observe that all definitions of employability have in common “an individual's (perceived) ability to obtain and maintain employment throughout his/her career” (2020, p. 2590). In this study, employability will be understood as the aspects that facilitate graduates' employment or labour market insertion.

As mentioned in the Introduction, very few research studies focus on PSIT labour market and employability in Spain. The studies that follow are mostly centred on translation. However, we must keep in mind that T&I undergraduate degrees in Spain include both translation and interpreting subjects. In some studies, interpreting is considered as part of translation and in others, it is not specified. In any case, there are no similar studies on interpreting graduates.

Generally, in the European context, there is a growing interest in fostering the T&I graduates' employability (Calvo *et al.*, 2010; Peverati, 2013; Rodríguez, 2017; Álvarez-Álvarez and Arnáiz-Uzquiza, 2017a). The main works that focus on Spanish T&I undergraduate studies and employability are Álvarez-Álvarez and Arnáiz-Uzquiza (2017a; 2017b), Cifuentes (2017), Galán-Mañas (2017), Schnell and Rodríguez (2017), and Vigier (2018). Álvarez-Álvarez and Arnáiz-Uzquiza (2017a) analyse the implementation of practical aspects related to employability after the Bologna process by comparing the perception of three different groups regarding the acquisition of employability skills: undergraduates, final-year undergraduates, and employers. Álvarez-Álvarez and Arnáiz-Uzquiza (2017b) describe the project on professional skills developed at Universidad de Valladolid during 2016/2017, which consists of two stages: description of the contents and skills of T&I undergraduate studies in Spain and analysis of training actions focused on developing professional skills. In the same line, Cifuentes (2017, pp. 209-211), at Universidad de Murcia, focuses on identifying “the ten essential employability skills” from the perspective of three groups: undergraduates, academics translators, and interpreters. Moreover, Galán-Mañas (2017) examines some of the specific actions to improve the level of employability of the T&I students of 2011/2015 cohorts from a programme at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Furthermore, Schnell and Rodríguez (2017) provide the perspective of the Spanish translation service providers. They underline employability as one of the main factors influencing higher education quality and the need to consider both practitioners and academics when designing

the T&I curriculum. Additionally, including content that enhances employability skills is essential.

On the other hand, Vigier (2018) highlights some of the challenges faced by translation as an academic discipline and a professional field and its unsolved problems. He underlines that, despite the positive employment figures obtained (30 %) in comparison with other humanities degrees, language teaching, foreign trade or multilingual administration absorb a much higher percentage of translation undergraduates (approx. 60 %) than the T&I industry itself.

Rico and García (2016) show the T&I market tendencies in 2014/2015 by analysing the perspective of both translation companies (those that offer T&I and remote interpreting were included here too) and freelancers. Translation related to the field of technology, followed by general and advertising translation are the main areas of expertise required by translation companies. Moreover, the primary sectors that the freelancers cover are industry/technical fields, technology, health/pharmacy, and tourism. In general, apart from qualifications and specialisations, the translation market also looks for technological expertise. The industry seems to rely almost exclusively on translation.

As far as the employment and employability of postgraduates, Navarro-Brotons and Cuadrado-Rey (2019) analyse the labour market insertion trajectories of 2013 to 2017 graduates of the Master's Degree in Institutional Translation at the University of Alicante. They establish a relationship between the completion of internships and employment. On the other hand, three European projects<sup>4</sup> focused on employability and translation, and/or on the European Master's in Translation network's graduates (as described by Valero-Garcés and Gambier, 2014; Valero-Garcés and Toudic, 2014; Krause, 2017; Valero-Garcés and Cedillo, 2018; and Valero-Garcés, 2018). They show that there are several professional opportunities for translators. Moreover, Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) tools and Machine Translation (MT) skills are essential to increase job opportunities.

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<sup>4</sup> "OPTIMALE project" (2011/2013), "Employment and the future of the profession" (2015-2016), and "EUATC survey" (2016). The first one, the "OPTIMALE project", created by EU's Directorate-General for Education and Culture, aimed to understand the needs regarding translation competences and the competences that employers looked for in their employees. The second one, created by the European Commission Directorate-General of Translation (DGT) and the European Master's in Translation Network (EMT), gathered information about the access of the EMT's programmes' graduates to their specific labour market, employment details, and competences. The last project, focused on establishing the characteristics of the translation industry, includes a survey conducted by the European Union of Associations of Translation Companies (EUATC) and was supported by the EMT network and the DGT through the Language Industry project. Further information: Vitalaru (2022b).



Furthermore, training should be adapted and improved to include a flexible multidisciplinary approach (Krause, 2017).

All these previous studies characterise the translation sector, to which PSIT is highly connected. Still, none of them explicitly analyse PSIT as a professional field nor the situation regarding its graduates' employment. The exception is Vitalaru's (2022a) study, which focuses on the types of jobs and PSIT graduates' employability considering the 2006 to 2017 cohorts of students. The study compares results by language pairs considering aspects such as the types of jobs, the fields the graduates work in, or the perception regarding the applicability of several skills to the labour market, among other issues. It shows that graduates find jobs in PSIT or T&I fields. However, there also are differences by language pairs, such as regarding the usefulness of the training received for the labour market and the applicability of several of the skills developed in their jobs. For example, the degree of applicability of the training received varied. Thus, in general, the Russian and English groups reported less applicability for the PSIT labour market (with three-quarters indicating applicability) than the Arabic, Chinese, French, and Romanian groups. Moreover, the training received was highly applicable to the professional setting for most of the respondents from the French and Arabic groups and only approx. half of the respondents from the other groups. Furthermore, if the Chinese, Arabic, French, and Romanian groups found a variety of skills (T&I skills, working adequately with authentic texts, terminological, cultural and intercultural, and professional skills) highly applicable professionally, the Russian group considered the terminological and T&I skills highly applicable (Vitalaru, 2022a).

These studies demonstrate that higher education institutions must improve and/or adapt the curriculum to include more specific employability skills, add specific training in entrepreneurship (Álvarez-Álvarez and Arnáiz-Uzquiza, 2017b; Galán-Mañas, 2017; Muñoz-Miquel *et al.*, 2020), and consider adapting training to the needs of the language pairs, as suggested by Vitalaru (2022a and 2022b). Moreover, universities must work together with practitioners and/or service providers. Furthermore, offering internships and practical components within the programme is key. Lastly, education institutions should keep in mind that a multidisciplinary training approach that includes technological skills increases the graduates' employability.

## 2. THE PSIT PROGRAMME: TRAINING FOR THE JOB MARKET

In this section, the PSIT programme will be described considering its institutional recognition, enrolment figures, structure, competences, job opportunities, and teaching methodologies.

### 2.1. General aspects

The programme referred to in this study, the Master's Degree in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting and Translation, is well-regarded at the national level since 2006. The increase in the number of students is evidence of that. Therefore, in its inception, the programme had approx. 30 students and this number gradually increased every year until it reached approx. 100 hundred students in the academic year 2010/2011. It has kept similar enrolment figures ever since, depending on the academic year.<sup>5</sup> As a reflection of the T&I market needs, three of the language pairs were taught every year since the master's first edition as an official programme in 2006/2007 (Spanish and Arabic/English/French), and two of them (Spanish and Romanian/Polish) were taught only between a certain period of time: Spanish-Polish between 2006/2007 and 2011/2012 and Spanish-Romanian between 2006/2007 and 2011/2012 and in 2013/2014. Two others (Spanish-Chinese and Spanish-Russian) have only been taught since 2009/2010 (Vitalaru and Lázaro, 2019).

Moreover, this industry-oriented programme has been included in the European Master's in Translation (EMT) network<sup>6</sup> since 2009. All the masters from the EMT network follow the framework of competences meant "to consolidate and enhance the employability of graduates of master's degrees in translation" (EMT, 2017, p. 3). Additionally, as per the European Higher Education Area, postgraduate programmes such as this offer "greater projection towards the labour market" (Muñoz-Miquel *et al.*, 2020, p. 142) and facilitate specialisations, as opposed to undergraduate programmes that cover more generic content in the field. Therefore, the general approach and practical orientation of the PSIT programme under analysis are meant to enhance students' employability skills and increase their possibilities of obtaining a job in PSIT domains. This approach is reflected in the programme's structure, competences, and teaching methodology, which will be described in 2.2.

### 2.2. Structure

The programme combines theory, in-classroom T&I practice, internships in institutions and companies, and research (Table 1). It is structured in five different modules (which encompass a total of nine subjects and 60 ECTS)<sup>7</sup>, each focusing on a different work setting. All the subjects are

<sup>5</sup> *E. g.*, 127 students in 2017/2018, 102 students in 2018/2019, and 107 students in 2019/2020.

<sup>6</sup> This network currently includes 70 universities from 24 countries. Six of the master's degrees are Spanish programmes.

<sup>7</sup> ECT: European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. 1 ECT represents approx. 25 hrs. workload.

compulsory. Of the nine subjects, three are common to all language pairs while six are taught by language pairs:

Modules	Subjects	ECTS	Main topics
1. Intercultural communication and PSIT techniques and tools	1. Interlinguistic Communication. 2. Institutional communication with foreign population. 3. Techniques and resources in PSIT.	18 ECTS	Interlinguistic and intercultural communication.  PSIT research and translation tools.
2. T&I in healthcare settings	4. Translation. 5. Interpreting.	10 ECTS	Focus on developing translation or interpreting competences in specific fields by language pair.
3. T&I in legal and administrative settings.	6. Translation. 7. Interpreting.	14 ECTS	
4. Internship	8. Internship.	6 ECTS	In one of the institutions (healthcare or legal), NGOs, associations, cultural centres, T&I companies, or other centres that the university has signed an agreement with.  150 working hours.
5. Master's Thesis	9. Master's Thesis	12 ECTS	Writing an 80-100-page research paper. Completion: after passing the rest of the subjects.

**Table 1. Structure of the programme**

Source. Based on information from Master's in PSIT Leaflet (2021/2022) and Master's in PSIT Curriculum (2021/2022)

The structure shows that the programme gradually moves from more general, introductory, and theoretical aspects to everyday intensive practice, and finally to new situations and environments.

### 2.3. Competences, job opportunities, and teaching methodology

The specific competences developed by the PSIT programme students can be grouped into three categories: related to information mining, to the use of thematic, strategic and textual knowledge, and to the professional market<sup>8</sup>

As a subfield of T&I, the PSIT programme under analysis defines its job opportunities based on the same job opportunities as T&I graduates,<sup>9</sup> but it adds specific components such as mediation and PSIT fields. Thus, job opportunities can be classified into four categories: jobs related to T&I and terminological tasks, jobs that involve intercultural communication and mediation, teaching jobs, and linguistic advising, managing, and reviewing.

As far as the teaching methodology, the overall approach relies on situated learning and experiential learning principles.

Situated learning focuses on learning in context and students “are exposed to real-life and/or highly simulated work environments and tasks, both inside and outside the classroom” (González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído, 2016, p. 8). It aims at enhancing students’ ability “to think and act like professionals” (González-Davies and Enríquez-Raído, 2016, p. 8). Several characteristics of situated learning can be found in the programme’s approach. First, authentic materials (Buysschaert *et al.*, 2018) and contexts are used daily in the two translation-oriented subjects of the programme. In interpreting-oriented subjects, the topics chosen are based on the needs of the foreign population (emergencies, primary care, specialised care, or administrative and legal situations recreated depending on the purpose of the activity). Second, the “learner-centric pedagogy” and students’ interactions and involvement with a topic (Kong, 2021, p. 1) can be found through the practical component of everyday classes based on inductive methods, group work, reflections, and assuming responsibility for decisions, among other aspects.

On the other hand, a clear example of an experiential learning strategy, characterised by the “learning by doing” approach and the subsequent reflection on the experience (Centre for Teaching and Learning, n.d.), is the integration of internships (Navarro-Brotons and Cuadrado-Rey, 2019; Cuadrado-Rey and Navarro-Brotons, 2020; Buysschaert *et al.*, 2018). The PSIT programme’s internships (6 ECTS, 264, approx. 175 hrs. workload)<sup>10</sup> are completed in one of the institutions (healthcare, legal, or administrative

<sup>8</sup> See Master’s in PSIT. Competences (2021/2022) and Vitalaru (2022a) for details.

<sup>9</sup> Programmes endorsed by ANECA define job opportunities in their Applications for Quality Verification. The job opportunities for T&I graduates are mentioned in *Libro Blanco del Grado en Traducción e Interpretación* (ANECA, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Students can work up to 7 hours (maximum) a day during the internships.

settings), non-profit organisations (NGOs), associations, cultural centres, T&I companies, or other centres that the university has signed an agreement with. They are carried out after the introductory and T&I modules have been completed under the supervision of an internship advisor from the internship centre and an academic advisor from the PSIT programme. This involves putting into practice the skills developed in the programme, but also acquiring knowledge about the professional requirements of a particular field (either healthcare, social, or legal-administrative settings), depending on the internship centre assigned, and becoming familiar with the labour market demands. Thus, the programme's internships give access to an actual workplace, allowing students to face new situations and take responsibility for their performance on the task/job required under the supervision of the internship's advisor. Moreover, students reflect on their internship experience and report to the academic advisor, shaping their awareness and improving reflection and critical thinking skills. Therefore, both the internship experience and the reflection contribute to the development of specific and soft skills that increase their employability.

Ultimately, the programme offers an example of good practices regarding the application of practical principles that can enhance students' employability and employment opportunities.

### 3. METHOD

As mentioned in the "Introduction", we have focused on the Master's Degree in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting and Translation for data collection. Thus, the respondents are graduates of this programme of the cohorts between 2009/2010 and 2018/2019, who participated voluntarily and anonymously in the study. They were adequately informed about the objective of the study, the procedures and ethical aspects required, in compliance with the data protection and privacy policy.

The instrument used to collect data is a structured questionnaire designed by the Technical Quality Department at Universidad de Alcalá (UAH), to which the programme belongs, which is sent to graduates one year after graduation. The data collected is included by the same unit in yearly reports for each cohort and made available to the programme organisers approximately two years after each cohort completes their studies. Therefore, for this study, the reports for each cohort were used to analyse the data.

The UAH reports were based on several questionnaires used to collect the information from the targeted graduates, since the Quality Department adds questions and additional details approx. every three years for clarity

purposes.<sup>11</sup> The first questionnaire was used for the 2009/2013 cohorts,<sup>12</sup> while the second questionnaire, which included more questions than the previous one,<sup>13</sup> was used for the 2013/2016 cohorts. The third questionnaire, which was used for the 2016/2019 cohorts, contained even more questions,<sup>14</sup> with the following nominal scales: very low, low, medium, high, and very high. For the third questionnaire, data was gathered by language pair, and global and language pair reports were made available to the programme organisers. For consistency purposes, we only used the questions that referred to the same aspects in all the questionnaires. We included the statistics or values for each cohort in comparative tables by cohorts and calculated the average for each item to make the analysis easier. Whenever the data was unavailable, the most related aspect was included separately in the comparative table.

Specifically, to accomplish the objectives stated above, the following research questions (RQ) were addressed based on the data provided in the reports previously mentioned. We include the questions from the 2016/2017 questionnaire as an example:

RQ1: How many graduates find a job one year after graduation and keep it? The following questions were used from the questionnaire:

- Were you working when you started the Master's? (Yes/No).*
- Please indicate whether you were in any of these situations at the end of your studies (list of options).*
- *Did you find a job or manage to set up your own business after graduation? (Yes/No).*
- How long did it take you to get that job? (list of options).*
- The job you got was: Full-time; Part-time; Self-employed.*
- Is your current job the same as the one you had at the end of your studies? (Yes/No).*

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<sup>11</sup> The most updated version of the questionnaire is available in Spanish on the webpage of the Technical Quality Department: <https://gestioncalidad.uah.es/es/centro-de-datos/encuestas/#encuestas-de-satisfaccion>.

<sup>12</sup> This questionnaire included 14 close-ended questions, either "yes/no" or 1-5 Likert scale questions for questions that focused on the level of satisfaction, with the following options: "1-not satisfied", "2-some level of satisfaction", "3-satisfied", "4-very satisfied", and "5-extremely satisfied". Both "yes/no" and Likert scale questions included a "non-applicable/no answer" option.

<sup>13</sup> These questions referred to salary.

<sup>14</sup> 22 (2016/2017), 24 (2017/2018) and 38 (2018/2019) questions. For the latter, other 18 questions related to satisfaction were included in a separate report. Some examples are the collection of data by language pairs, differentiating between freelance workers and employed workers, previous job(s) and current job, salary, differentiating between satisfaction with professional category and with payment, and indicating satisfaction with a list of competences.

RQ2: How many graduates are satisfied with their job/s? Question:  
*-I am/was satisfied with my first job (Likert scale).*

RQ3: Is the employment adequate considering the education received?  
 Questions:

*-Considering that first job: was the PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY appropriate to your level of training?(Yes/No).*

*-Considering your current job: is the PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY appropriate to your level of training? (Yes/No).*

*-Considering that first job: was the SALARY appropriate to your level of training? (Yes/No).*

*-Considering your current job: is the SALARY appropriate to your level of training? (Yes/No)*

RQ4: What is the relationship between the training programme and the graduates' employment? Questions:

*-The job I found is/was related to the programme (Likert scale).*

*-The master's degree has helped me: Find a job/Improve my existing job (Likert scale).*

*-Regarding to the degree of adequacy between your studies (master's degree you are assessing) and the job you had at that time, please rate your level of satisfaction with (Likert scale for each):*

- *The job.*
- *The training received in your UAH studies.*
- *The knowledge acquired in your UAH studies.*
- *The competences acquired in your UAH studies.*

#### 4. RESULTS

##### 4.1. Response rate and level of satisfaction with the programme

The response rate of the different cohorts varies between 20 % and 52 % of the students enrolled in each course. The average response was 32 % (Table 2). The 2013/2014 and 2010/2011 cohorts had the highest response rates, with more than half of the graduates of those academic years, followed by the 2015/2016 and 2012/2013 cohorts.

Academic year	Response rate
2009/2010	22 %
2010/2011	51 %
2011/2012	27 %
2012/2013	31 %
2013/2014	52 %
2014/2015	23 %

2015/2016	40 %
2016/2017	27 %
2017/2018	26 %
2018/2019	20 %
<b>Average</b>	<b>32 %</b>

**Table 2. Response rate**

Source. Elaborated by the author

Regarding the respondents' level of satisfaction with the training received in the programme, an average of 85 % of the respondents identified levels 3, 4, and 5 of satisfaction, that is, the options "satisfied", "highly satisfied", and "extremely satisfied" on the scale proposed (Table 3). If considered by cohorts, all the cohorts in question registered a high number of respondents who expressed satisfaction with the programme (between 70 % and 100 %), except the 2016/2017 cohort (66 %). From 2014 onward, the answer to an additional question that involved a scale from 1 to 10, added by the Technical Quality Department, showed an average of 7.5/10.

Academic year	Response rate	Satisfaction with the programme	Different question. Level of satisfaction (scale from 1-10)
2009/2010	22 %	90 %	Not available
2010/2011	51 %	70 %	Not available
2011/2012	27 %	100 %	Not available
2012/2013	31 %	100 %	Not available
2013/2014	52 %	91 %	Not available
2014/2015	23 %	79 %	7.85
2015/2016	40 %	80 %	7.95
2016/2017	27 %	66 %	6.2
2017/2018	26 %	89 %	7.34
2018/2019	20 %	89 %	7.3
<b>Average</b>	<b>32 %</b>	<b>85 %</b>	<b>7.5</b>

**Table 3. Respondents with a high level of satisfaction**

Source. Elaborated by the author

#### 4.2. Professional aspects

##### 4.2.1 Finding and keeping a job

In this section, the results for the first three research questions will be addressed through the description of the following professional aspects: the percentage of respondents who found a job after completing the programme, the time it took to find a job or create their own company, the rate of respondents who kept their first job after completing the programme, and the type of employment.



First, a “yes/no” question was used to gather information about the number of respondents who had found a job after completing the programme. An average of 70 % of the respondents had found a job after completing the programme, 87 % in less than one year and 69 % in less than six months (Table 4). Only 7 % had found it in more than a year. Percentages were generally higher for the 2009/2013 cohorts (86 %, 80 % and 94 %). On the other hand, the percentage was gradually lower for the 2013/2016 cohorts until reaching approximately half of the ratio of the 2009/2010 cohort and started to rise again for the 2016/2019 cohorts (72 % and 74 %).

Second, regarding the time it took them to find that job, the respondents tended to find employment in less than a year, with percentages between 75 % and 100 %, except for the 2018/2019 cohort (69 %). From the 2017/2018 cohort, 46 % of the respondents had found a job in less than one month. The 2017/2019 cohorts had students who already had a job when commencing the programme. It is also noteworthy that half of the 2018/2019 cohort respondents who had found a job did it while enrolled in the programme.

Academic year	Response rate	Found a job after completing the programme	Time it took to find a job for the respondents who found a job
2009/2010	22 %	86 %	Less than one year: 100 % From which 83 % in less than six months.
2010/2011	51 %	80 %	Less than 1 year: 68 % From which 83 % in less than six months. More than one year: 12 %.
2011/2012	27 %	62 %	Less than one year: 75 % From which 38 % in less than six months. More than one year: 25 %
2012/2013	31 %	94 %	Less than one year: 100 %. From which 50 % in less than six months.
2013/2014	52 %	66 %	Less than one year: 92 % From which 24 % in less than six months. More than one year: 18 %
2014/2015	23 %	53 %	Less than one year: 100 %. From which 78 % in less than six months.
2015/2016	40 %	48 %	Less than one year: 94 %

			From which 87.5 % in less than six months. More than one year: 6 %
2016/2017	27 %	66 %	Less than one year: 90 %. All of them in less than six months (37 % in less than one month and 53 % between one and six months). More than one year: 10 %
2017/2018	26 %	72 %	Less than one year: 85 %. All of them in less than six months (46 % in less than one month, 23 % in less than three months and 8 % between three and six months). *Already working before studying in the programme: 15 %
2018/2019	20 %	74 %	Less than one year: 69 % From which 32 % in less than six months. 37 % while studying in the programme. *Already working before studying in the programme: 31 %
<b>Average</b>	<b>32 %</b>	<b>70 %</b>	<b>Less than one year: 87 %</b> <b>Less than six months: 69 %</b> <b>More than one year: 7 %</b>

**Table 4. Respondents who found a job and time it took to find it**

Source. Elaborated by the author

Third, a “yes/no” question was used to obtain the percentage of respondents who kept their first job since they had completed the programme. Results show that, of the 70 % who had found a job, 46 % kept it when the questionnaire was sent. The distribution by cohorts can be seen in Table 5. We observe that the percentage was maintained for the 2009/2012 cohorts (50 %) and increased by 21 % for the 2012/2013 cohort (71 %). On the other hand, it decreased to the initial percentages for the 2013/2014 cohort (53 %). Finally, it fell for the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 cohorts to 36 % and 29 %, only to rise again in 2016/2017. From the 2018/2019 cohort, 22 % kept their job, and 53 % found another job.

Academic year	Response rate	Found a job after completing the programme	Kept their first job
2009/2010	22 %	86 %	50 %
2010/2011	51 %	80 %	50 %
2011/2012	27 %	62 %	50 %
2012/2013	31 %	94 %	71 %

2013/2014	52 %	66 %	53 %
2014/2015	23 %	53 %	36 %
2015/2016	40 %	48 %	29 %
2016/2017	27 %	66 %	60 %
2017/2018	26 %	72 %	Not available
2018/2019	20 %	74 %	Kept the job: 22 % Changed the job: 52 %
<b>Average</b>	<b>32 %</b>	<b>70 %</b>	<b>46 %</b>

**Table 5. Respondents who kept their first job after completing the programme**  
Source. Elaborated by the author

Fourth, regarding the type of employment that the respondents who found a job had, three options were included: “full-time”, “part-time”, and “freelance” (Table 6). For the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 cohorts, additional information was gathered regarding the type of contract and for “the first job” and “the current job”. The following observations show tendencies:

- Of the 70 % who had found a job after completing the programme, 62 % worked full-time, 25 % part-time, 10 % as freelancers, and 3 % had their own company, mixed full-time and part-time jobs, or had “other” options.
- Generally, the tendency is an increase in full-time workers and a decrease in part-time workers. The cohorts with the highest percentage of full-time workers were 2015/2016 and 2013/2014 (100 % and 81 %). The rate for the 2017/2019 cohorts is also high.<sup>15</sup>
- The percentage of part-time workers decreased except for the 2016/2017 cohort.<sup>16</sup>
- Finally, the percentage of freelance workers is generally low, although it doubled in 2011/2012.<sup>17</sup>

Academic year	Response rate	Found a job	Type of employment of respondents who found a job		
			Full-time:	Part-time:	Freelance:
2009/2010	22 %	86 %	40 %	50 %	10 %

<sup>15</sup> For more recent cohorts (2017/2019), the data also shows a tendency to have more temporary contracts (46 % and 55 %) than permanent contracts (30 % and 33.5 %).

<sup>16</sup> Thus, although it started with a 50 % rate for the 2009/2010 cohort, it gradually decreased by 25 % and 20 % for the 2010/2012 cohorts, and by 40 % and 35 % for the 2012/2014 cohorts. For the 2017/2019 cohorts, the percentage of part-time workers also decreased considering the 2009/2012 and 2016/2017 cohorts.

<sup>17</sup> It increased from 10 % for the 2009/2013 cohorts to 18 %, 30 %, and 18 %, and decreased to 4 %, 8 %, or 9 %.

2010/2011	51 %	80 %	Full-time: 30 %	Part-time: 35 %	Freelance: 18 % Other: 17 %
2011/2012	27 %	62 %	Full-time: 40 %	Part-time: 30 %	Freelance: 30 %
2012/2013	31 %	94 %	Full-time: 60 %	Part-time: 10 %	Freelance: 18 % Other: 12 %
2013/2014	52 %	66 %	Full-time: 81 %	Part-time: 15 %	Freelance: 4 %
2014/2015	23 %	53 %	Full-time: 56 %	Part-time: 36 %	Freelance: 8 %
2015/2016	40 %	48 %	Full-time: 100 %	Part-time: %	Freelance: %
2016/2017	27 %	66 %	Full-time: 43,5 % (average)	Part-time: 47,5 % (average)	Freelance: 9 % (average)
			Full-time (first; current job): 30 %; 57 %	Part-time (first; current job): 60 %; 35 %	Freelance (first; current job): 10 %; 8 %
2017/2018	26 %	72 %	Full-time: 77 %	Part-time: 23 %	Freelance: %
		Specific question :	Permanent contract: 30 % Temporary contract: 46 % Freelance: 8 %		Own company: 8 % Other: 8 %
2018/2019	20 %	74 %	Full-time: 89.47 %	Part-time: 5.26 %	Freelance: % Mixed 5.26 %
		Specific question :	Permanent contract: 33.5 % (first; current job): 21 %; 64 % Temporary contract: 55 % (first; current job): 74 %; 36		
<b>Average</b>		<b>70 %</b>	<b>Full-time: 62 %</b>	<b>Part-time: 25 %</b>	<b>Freelance: 10 % Other: 3 %</b>

**Table 6. Type of employment**  
Source. Elaborated by the author

#### 4.2.2 Adequacy and level of satisfaction

This section will focus on describing the adequacy between professional category/salary and level of education on the one hand, and the level of satisfaction with their job, on the other.

The results regarding the adequacy between professional category/salary, and level of education are included in Table 7. It is essential to mention that there were differences in some of the questions included in the questionnaires sent to the graduates. A single more general question that referred to both the professional category and the salary and the graduates' opinions regarding adequacy considering the level of education was used for the 2009/2013 cohorts (first questionnaire). Two separate questions (one for each aspect)<sup>18</sup> were used for the 2013/2016 cohorts (second questionnaire). For this article, an average between these two aspects has been used for consistency. For the 2016/2017 cohort (third questionnaire), two separate questions referred to "the first job" and "the current job", for which we also used the average. For the 2017/2019 cohorts (third questionnaire), the questions specifically asked about the salary and the level of education required. That is why they were not included in the overall average for this item. The average considering all the aspects is 49 %.

As regards the adequacy between professional category/salary, and level of education, there had been an increase from the 2009/2010 (40 %) to the 2015/2016 (77 %) cohort and a certain consistency within the rise considering that the percentages are similar: 50 %-54 %-53 % for the 2010/2013 and 2016/2017 cohorts and 67 %- 63 % for the 2013/2015 cohorts.

However, if we analyse each concept separately (2013/2016 cohorts), results show the tendencies more specifically. Thus, we observe that the percentage of respondents for whom the professional category has been acknowledged (74 %) is higher than those for whom the salary has been perceived as adequate to the level of education. Moreover, the acknowledgement increased to 88 % of the respondents with jobs in the 2015/2016 cohort and decreased to a similar percentage for the 2016/2017 cohort. Furthermore, if we consider the results for the 2018/2019 cohort, for 43 % of the respondents with a job, postgraduate studies were required, while for 50 %, undergraduate studies were required. This shows that postgraduate training is acknowledged and required by the professional sector.

Concerning the adequacy between their salary and their level of education (Table 8), it varies between 42 % and 67 % and has decreased for the 2016/2017 cohort. Based on the salary for the 2017/2019 cohorts, we could say that there is a specific acknowledgement in terms of salary, since 62 % and 48 % (37 % first job and 58 % current job) of the respondents earned between €1,000-€2,000. Of the respondents from the 2018/2019

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<sup>18</sup> The first question asked about the adequacy between their level of education and their professional category. The second one asked about the adequacy between their level of education and their salary.

cohort, 21 % earned more than €2,000 monthly, while 69 % earned more than €1,000 monthly.

Academic year	Re-response rate	Found a job	Adequacy between professional category/ salary, and level of education	
2009/2010	22 %	86 %	40 %	
2010/2011	51 %	80 %	50 %	
2011/2012	27 %	62 %	50 %	
2012/2013	31 %	94 %	54 %	
2013/2014	52 %	66 %	67 %:	-Professional category: 67 % -Salary: 67 %
2014/2015	23 %	53 %	63 %:	-Professional category: 75 % -Salary: 50 %
2015/2016	40 %	48 %	77 %:	-Professional category: 88 % -Salary: 65 %
2016/2017	27 %	66 %	53 %	64 % ('yes') Professional category <u>First job</u> : Yes: 67 %; No: 33 % <u>Current job</u> : Yes: 61 %; No: 39 %
				42 % ('yes') Salary <u>First job</u> : Yes: 37 %; No: 63 % <u>Current job</u> : Yes: 46 %; No: 54 %
2017/2018	26 %	72 %	Not available	Salary: 62 % between €1,000-€2,000
2018/2019	20 %	74 %	Not available	Salary: 48 % between €1,000-€2,000 21 % > €2,000
			Level of studies required	Undergraduate studies: 50 % Postgraduate studies: 43 % Other: 7 %
<b>Average</b>	<b>32 %</b>	<b>70 %</b>	<b>49 %</b>	<b>Professional category: 74 % Salary: 56 %</b>

**Table 7. Adequacy between professional category/salary and level of education**

Source. Elaborated by the author

An additional question of the results for the 2018/2019 cohort showed that 100 % of the respondents held positions in their first jobs of professional categories 1, 2, or 3 considering the Spanish National Classification of Occupations (INE, n.d.): 1) directors and managers (7.14 %), 2) scientific and intellectual technicians and professionals (71.43 %), and 3) technicians or support professionals (21.43 %).

Regarding the level of satisfaction with their job, the average level of satisfaction is 78 % (Table 8). The percentage of respondents who were satisfied with their job varies between 67 % and 100 % of the participants. The 2009/2010 and 2011/2012 cohorts obtained the highest percentages (100 %), followed by the 2010/2011 and 2012/2015 cohorts with 70 % and 79 %. Moreover, it is vital to note that, for this question, the 2013/2017 and 2018/2019 questionnaires had different questions for two aspects: the satisfaction with their first job, on the one hand, and the satisfaction with their current job, on the other. For this article, an average between these two aspects has been used for consistency. Thus, we observe that the level of satisfaction with their current job (78 %) was higher than the level of satisfaction with their job(s) in general or the first job (62 %) and for three of the four cohorts analysed: 83 % for the 2013/2014 cohort, 91 % for the 2014/2015 cohort, and 86 % for the 2018/2019 cohort. The 2015/2017 cohorts had a lower percentage than the rest, but still for more than half of the respondents: 68 % and 64 %.

Academic year	Response rate	Percentage of respondents satisfied with their job/current job		
				Satisfaction (1-10)
2009/2010	22 %	100 %		
2010/2011	51 %	70 %		
2011/2012	27 %	100 %		
2012/2013	31 %	79 %		
2013/2014	52 %	70 %:	-Job(s): 56 % -Current job: 83 %	
2014/2015	23 %	79 %:	-Job(s): 67 % -Current job: 91 %	9.15
2015/2016	40 %	67 %:	-Jobs: 66 % -Current job: 68 %	7.75
2016/2017	27 %	67 %:	-First job: 69 % -Current job: 64 %	6.7
2017/2018	26 %	Not available		
2018/2019	20 %	70 %:	-First job: 53 % -Current job: 86 %	6.57; (first job: 5.21; current job: 7.93)
<b>Average</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>-Job(s)/first job: 62%</b> <b>-Current job: 78%</b>	

**Table 8. Satisfaction with their job/current job**

Source. Elaborated by the author

#### 4.3. *Relation between the programme and the PSIT labour market*

The second objective of this article is to identify the relationship between the programme and jobs, to which the fourth research question was assigned. The following aspects will be described: the relationship between the graduates' job and the programme, the usefulness of the programme for finding or improving a job, and the applicability of the knowledge acquired/competences developed in their jobs.

The first aspect focused on identifying whether there was a relationship between the graduates' jobs and the programme. As results show (Table 9), the average percentage is 63 %. By cohorts, the percentage of respondents whose jobs were related to the programme increased gradually from 40 % for the 2009/2010 cohort and to 85 % for the 2017/2018 cohort. The 2013/2015 and 2016/2017 cohorts had similar percentages (67 % and 69 %) and entailed a 27 % and a 29 % increase. The 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 cohorts had the highest percentages (83 % and 85 %) and involved a 43 %-45 % increase considering the 2009/2010 cohort.

Therefore, although an average of 38 % of the graduates did not end up working specifically in the PSIT field, the percentage by cohorts decreased for the 2015/2016 and 2017/2018, and 2018/2019 (current job) cohorts to 17 %, 15 %, and 21 %, which means that the situation improved in the last years.

Academic year	Response rate	Found a job	Job relationship to the programme
2009/2010	22 %	86 %	40 %
2010/2011	51 %	80 %	56 %
2011/2012	27 %	62 %	50 %
2012/2013	31 %	94 %	50 %
2013/2014	52 %	66 %	67 %
2014/2015	23 %	53 %	67 %
2015/2016	40 %	48 %	83 %
2016/2017	27 %	66 %	69 %
2017/2018	26 %	72 %	85 %
2018/2019	20 %	74 %	62 % (first job; current job): 45 %; 79 %
<b>Average</b>	<b>32 %</b>	<b>70 %</b>	<b>63 %</b>

**Table 9. Job relationship to the PSIT programme**

Source. Elaborated by the author



The last aspect considered was the applicability of the content acquired, and the skills developed to their job. Results show a 76 % average (Table 10). By cohorts, we observe a continuous increase from the initial 60 % of respondents that identified applicability for these aspects from the 2009/2010 cohort: first, to 73 % and 70 % for the 2010/2012 cohorts; second, to 75 % and 79 % for the 2014/2016 and 2017/2018 cohorts; and finally, to 87 % for the 2012/2014 and 2018/2019 cohorts.

As far as other variations, only the questionnaire sent to the 2013/2016 cohorts distinguished between content and competences in general and for the current job. The 2016/2017 and 2018/2019 cohorts gave separate answers for knowledge and competences. Thus, we can highlight that the percentage for the applicability for the current job was higher than the percentage for the relevance for all the jobs in general (between 75 %-90 %). For the 2018/2019 cohort, the knowledge and the competences had applicability for more than 84 % of the respondents who had found a job.

Academic year	Response rate	Knowledge acquired and competences developed were applicable to the job found	
2009/2010	22 %	60 %	
2010/2011	51 %	73 %	
2011/2012	27 %	70 %	
2012/2013	31 %	87 %	
2013/2014	52 %	87 %	-In general: 83 % -Current job: 90 %
2014/2015	23 %	79 %	-In general: 76 % -Current job: 82 %
2015/2016	40 %	75 %	-In general: 75 % -Current job: 75 %
2016/2017	27 %	62 %	-Competences: 6.24/10 -Knowledge: 6.14/10
2017/2018	26 %	79 %	-Competences: 7.86/10 -List of competences: between 6.66-8.66/10.
2018/2019	20 %	87 %	-Competences: 84.21 % -Knowledge: 89.4 %
<b>Average</b>	<b>32 %</b>	<b>76 %</b>	7.11/10 7.26 /10

**Table 10. Applicability of knowledge/competences to the job found**

Source. Elaborated by the author

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results obtained provide insights into each of the research questions addressed.

Regarding RQ1, *How many respondents find a job one year after graduation and keep it?* Three questions gathered specific data: a) the percentage of respondents who found a job after completing the programme, b) the time it took to find a job or create their own company, and c) the percentage of respondents who kept their first job found after completing the programme. Results show that most of the respondents tend to find a job one year after completing the programme, most of them in less than a year, a tendency also confirmed by Vitalaru (2022a). Moreover, variations may suggest some difficulties at some point, either in finding a job in general or a job related to PSIT. The fact that percentages increased implies that the job was still in demand. Most respondents tend to work full-time. Although initially the situation of part-time and freelance workers was similar, the number of freelance workers increased for the following cohorts. This reflects, perhaps, the needs of the labour market, that is, the collaboration with different institutions or companies, specialising in several fields, self-sufficiency, etc.; but then, the number of jobs decreased again. Only half of the respondents kept their jobs, which could suggest a certain instability of the labour market for the PSIT sector. We could think of several reasons for not keeping their jobs, such as, for instance, shorter contracts or contractual issues in general, job dissatisfaction due to low salaries and working hours, or even career shifts and creating their own company, among other possibilities. Still, since the statistics also include jobs other than T&I, it is difficult to draw specific conclusions. On the other hand, if analysed individually, most of the cohorts had a percentage of half or more than half of the respondents keeping their jobs, which shows that, despite the initial suspicions of instability underlined by Vitalaru (2022a), the job market of the PSIT graduates is somewhat stable, depending on the cohort. Additionally, most of the respondents who had jobs held recognised job positions.

The research does not include information regarding the actual jobs, except the fact that most of the respondents of the 2018/2019 cohort worked as scientific and intellectual technicians and professionals, and that all the respondents held positions corresponding to relevant professional categories. If we compare our results to Vitalaru (2022a), who focused on the 2006/2017 cohorts of PSIT graduates and asked more specific questions, we can assume that the jobs related to the T&I sector are translators/interpreters, trainers, and coordinators. In Vitalaru's study, 41 % worked as translators/interpreters in the linguistic service (LS) sector, 3 % as copyeditors, 21 % as trainers, and 16 % as T&I event coordinators. Moreover, apart from the T&I/LS sector, other fields that those graduates worked in are healthcare, education, international aid, and tourism, which are related to PSIT. By language pairs, Vitalaru (2022a) showed that the respondents from the Arabic (71 %) and French

(55 %) groups had the highest percentage of T&I jobs, followed by the Romanian, English, Russian, and Chinese groups (approx. 30 % each).

RQ2, *How many respondents are satisfied with their job/s?*, has been addressed through a specific question that asks about the graduates' satisfaction. Most respondents are generally satisfied with their job, with high percentages. Moreover, the level of satisfaction with their current job is higher than the level of satisfaction with their job/s in general. These results suggest that, overall, respondents are satisfied with their jobs. This means that there is some actual stability in the PSIT labour market and that the profession is recognised. Vitalaru's (2022a) study highlighted that graduates from certain language combinations were more satisfied (Spanish and Arabic/Romanian) than others (Spanish and English/Russian/Chinese), underlining differences regarding job opportunities by language pairs.

RQ3 focused on the *type of employment and its adequacy to the education received*, that is, what could be considered as the adequate acknowledgement of the master's studied through professional category and salary.

First, considering the type of employment, the number is distributed among full-time workers, with more than half of the respondents finding a job, and the rest, divided between part-time and freelance workers. The percentage of full-time workers increased while the rate of part-time workers decreased, which is promising in terms of the acknowledgement of the field and stability. Finally, the percentage of freelance workers increased for three of the cohorts and decreased for the rest. Considering that 63 % indicated a relationship between their PSIT studies and the job found, we can assume that there are job opportunities for the PSIT sector considering the training received. The programme's renown may have also contributed to this percentage. The relationship between the graduates' jobs and T&I was also underlined by Vitalaru (2022a), who found an average response of 73 % of that study, with even higher percentages by language pairs.

Second, concerning the adequacy between professional category/salary and level of education, only approx. half of the respondents indicated that their professional category and salary were acknowledged according to their training. On the other hand, the percentage for most of the cohorts was half or higher, which suggests a positive change. Moreover, when the results related to the professional category and salary are analysed separately, they reflect a tendency to perceive these aspects differently. Thus, the rate of acknowledgement of the professional category is significantly higher than the adequacy of salary according to their training. If we keep in mind the salary details of the 2017/2019 cohorts, more than half and close to

three-quarters of those who had a job earned a salary consistent with the minimum social security contribution base categories for bachelor's degree holders and is increasing (Seguridad Social, 2023).<sup>19</sup> The salary might be considered low considering the training received and specialisation involved. However, we must also keep in mind that PSIT has not been professionalised, which means that the situation should improve as the profession gains more recognition. Still, there is sustainability for PSIT training.

Finally, the results for RQ4, *What is the relationship between the training programme and the respondents' employment?* This involved two aspects. The first aspect is the potential relationship between their job and the programme. There is an important relationship between both variables, since the job that more than half of the respondents found was related to the programme. If considered by cohorts, the percentage gradually increased from approx. half to more than 80 % of the respondents. These aspects exhibit growth considering the employment of PSIT respondents and, to some extent, more job opportunities. Regarding the second aspect, most of the respondents perceived the knowledge acquired and the competences developed in their jobs as applicable. By cohorts, a continuous increase is observed, which shows a clear perception of the usefulness of the content and skills developed in the programme to their jobs.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Generally, this descriptive study determines general tendencies regarding the PSIT programme's graduates.

Considering the first objective, the graduates' employment situation, the employment rates are high. Most of the respondents find a job within one year after completing the programme, a tendency also confirmed by previous studies such as Vitalaru (2022a). Thus, the short period between graduation and finding a job is a strength of the programme. The majority work full-time, and the salary is adequate. In general, respondents tend to be satisfied with their jobs, and the professional category is acknowledged according to their training. However, the fact that only assumptions were made about the specific jobs is a limitation of the study.

As for the second objective, most jobs are specifically related to the programme. This suggests either a growth considering the employment of PSIT respondents and, to some extent, more job opportunities, or the fact that the training has been adapted to fulfil specific labour market needs. Some

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<sup>19</sup> This applies if we keep in mind, for example, the minimum social security contribution base categories: Engineers and bachelor's degree: 1629.30 €; technical engineers, experts, and assistants with a bachelor's degree: 1351.20 €.

specific adaptations that the programme has made over the years are allotting more training hours to information mining strategies and the practice with Computer Assisted Translation and corpus management tools, diversifying the tools used for practice (*i. e.*, both a variety of free software and Trados Studio; AntConc and Sketch Engine), and generally stressing the importance of strategic and methodological aspects during classes. It is also worth noting that, although an average of 38 % of the graduates did not end up working specifically in the PSIT field, as it is still under-professionalised (as the review of the situation in Spain showed), the situation improved for the last cohorts of graduates in the study. On the other hand, graduates of the same programme seemed to achieve good employment rates in the T&I sector and other related industries such as education, event coordination, copy-editing, healthcare, international aid, and tourism (Vitalaru, 2022a). Therefore, we could assume that the situation could be similar in this case.

Moreover, there is a clear increase in the perception of the applicability of the knowledge learned in the programme. Generally, there is high applicability of both the knowledge acquired and the competences developed in their jobs. If we keep in mind Vitalaru's (2022b) study, which focuses on graduates of the same PSIT programme, these competences are linguistic competences, specialised translation (including interpreting), terminological competence, and cultural competence. This applicability, combined with the competences that the programme aims to grow (related to information mining, the adequate use of thematic, strategic, and textual knowledge in different fields and situations, and to the professional market), and the pedagogical approach used, could suggest the work-readiness of the graduates regarding the training received. However, no specific question on whether the graduates felt ready before taking the job or the level of preparedness of these skills concerning the T&I job was included in the study. Further research to determine whether or not the teaching approaches used are the reason behind a higher rate of employment related to the training received would also be necessary, as well as establishing a direct relationship between the internships carried out by the students and the jobs that they end up having.

Another limitation that could affect the results is the level of representativity, which is not the same for all the cohorts. Moreover, the data we gathered came from a questionnaire that was used for all the masters and programmes taught at Universidad de Alcalá. Therefore, the questionnaire did not distinguish between different linguistic specialities and its results have not been analysed by language pair, which could have shown different market tendencies or needs, as Vitalaru (2022a and 2022b) showed.

These findings provide a general picture for researchers and trainers, partly filling the gap in the literature about the PSIT employment market in

Spain. The under-professionalisation of PSIT in Spain might make us question the sustainability of this training (specialised, professionalising, high education). However, overall, the hypothesis stated at the beginning has been confirmed. The programme has high employment rates, and a clear and important relationship exists between the labour market and the programme. Further research can offer more details regarding the types of jobs, the requirements of the various PSIT areas, and the students' level of preparedness for its different areas.

We also learned that, to ensure that the programme can be helpful in the different areas it includes, it would be useful to become acquainted with the competences required for those specific jobs by areas (e. g., healthcare, legal, and international protection and social services settings), and language pairs. It would also be useful to gather information about the training aspects missing from the programme that would have helped graduates in their jobs. Offering systematic entrepreneurship training about the job market possibilities (by language pairs) and areas can also be key to ensuring that students are familiar with these professional requirements and expectations. Finally, extracurricular internships can also be encouraged to provide additional practice.

Ultimately, this research shows an example of good practices regarding training, employability, and applicability to the labour market. It can contribute to raising awareness that trained students can cover a variety of PSIT services, that the training is gaining more professional recognition, and that this gradual recognition contributes to the highly necessary professionalisation of the PSIT field in Spain.

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