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Lost in interpreting? Analysing the marginalisation of interpreting in Spanish university degrees

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Abstract

This article analyses the marginal role of interpreting within Spanish university degrees in Translation and Interpreting (T&I), by examining both current Spanish T&I curricula and a nationwide survey of T&I students. Although interpreting is a highly specialised and demanding discipline, it remains underrepresented in most T&I programmes, both in terms of compulsory coursework and practical training. In addition, the lack of technological tools, such as computer-assisted interpreting (CAI), further limits students' preparation for the demands of the profession. Through the design and distribution of a nationwide survey, this study gathers students' perceptions, expectations and experiences, revealing widespread concern over the imbalance between translation and interpreting. The results confirm the need to restructure academic programmes by integrating interpreting courses earlier, increasing practical sessions and embracing technological advancements. This research calls for an urgent reassessment of T&I curricula to ensure students graduate with comprehensive, modern and competitive skills aligned with real-world interpreting practices.

Keywords

Curriculum design, interpreting training, Spanish universities, student perception, Translation and Interpreting degrees.

INTRODUCTION

This study emerges from both academic experience and professional practice in the field of Translation and Interpreting (T&I). It is evident that current curricula in Spanish university T&I programmes reflect a significant imbalance: while written interlinguistic translation receives extensive attention, interpreting remains notably underrepresented. This is especially concerning considering that interpreting is not merely oral translation but a complex multimodal process that requires the integration of verbal and non-verbal cues, cultural sensitivity and rapid cognitive processing.

Students themselves are the first to express disappointment at this imbalance. Their initial expectations are often undermined by a lack of structured guidance and practical training in interpreting. Despite the proven demand and professional relevance of interpreting, the discipline remains disempowered in most university programmes.

This study seeks not to radically overturn existing curricula but rather to propose constructive improvements. By documenting current academic shortcomings and exploring students' perceptions, we aim to contribute meaningfully to curriculum reform and advocate for greater academic parity between translation and interpreting.

Understanding the historical foundations of interpreting allows us to further appreciate its central role in human communication —and, by extension, the importance of reinforcing its presence in academic training. Interpreting is described as one of humanity's oldest communicative practices (Valdivia Campos, 1995) —predating even written translation— as it arose naturally when mediators facilitated understanding between cultures. In early societies, interpreters played a key role in trade, diplomacy and military conquest, acting as bridges between different languages and communities. From an evolutionary perspective, humans began speaking approximately 200,000 years ago, while writing systems only appeared around 5,000 years ago. Thus, interpreting emerged long before written translation and still plays a key role in facilitating interlingual and intercultural communication, so it does not deserve a subsidiary treatment in T&I studies and training.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - CURRICULUM DESIGN

This study does not intend to impose a radical transformation on existing curricula but rather to encourage constructive improvement in the design of academic programmes in Translation and Interpreting (T&I). Our goal is to highlight the perspectives of experts in the field, as well as the real experiences of students in order to foster informed curricular evolution.

Curriculum theory in higher education resists absolute models or universally valid procedures. Curriculum problems are not solved through fixed principles, since academic programs are built around human experience and subjective priorities. Researchers, educators and institutions bring different goals to the design process, which naturally leads to diverse approaches across institutions.

In Spain, the development of T&I programmes has been influenced by multiple factors, including legal frameworks, academic reports, evaluation processes and the foundational "Libro Blanco" prepared by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA). Calvo Encinas (2009) stresses that these sources reflect how curricular changes are negotiated through national and institutional agendas. These changes are not purely driven by pedagogical reasoning but, as the author suggests, they are the result of three main milestones: the scientific and technological revolution, globalisation and the information society (Calvo Encinas, 2009).

The current T&I curriculum is the result of a carefully designed structure that seeks to offer specialised, comprehensive training to all students — regardless of their chosen language combinations. Its aim is to ensure that graduates possess strong competencies in translation, interpreting and, more generally, applied linguistics. However, despite this goal, interpreting often receives less attention and fewer resources than written translation, which raises concerns about the professional readiness of graduates.

A consistent academic framework should promote not only linguistic and grammatical proficiency but also fluency, adaptability and oral expression, which are essential to interpreting practice. In many Translation and Interpreting programmes, significant progress has been made towards integrating these competences through communicative (Sawyer, 2004) and task-based approaches (Hurtado Albir, 2007). However, ensuring their systematic development still represents a pedagogical challenge, particularly when students have limited opportunities to engage in authentic or simulated interpreting contexts (cf. Gile, 2009; Sawyer, 2004).

While the inclusion of practical and technology-oriented courses has increased substantially in Spanish Translation and Interpreting degrees, traces of a predominantly theoretical orientation remain, especially in the conceptual design of curricula. Calvo Encinas (2009) has analysed this imbalance and noted that bridging the gap between academic training and professional practice remains a key challenge in the field.

Although the degree has evolved considerably over the last three decades, many challenges remain —particularly the lack of structure, early exposure to interpreting and the minimal integration of digital tools. These shortcomings continue to hinder the development of professional-level interpreting competence among students.

1.1. Historical and institutional context of T&I degrees in Spain

The structure of subjects in Translation and Interpreting (T&I) degrees in Spain is the result of a gradual, deliberate process influenced by international academic standards and professional demands. This institutional evolution reflects both external accreditation requirements and internal debates within university faculties.

According to Calvo Encinas (2009), the curriculum has been shaped by legislation, teaching plans, internal and external evaluations and scholarly discussions. The "Libro Blanco" of ANECA played a particularly influential role in standardising academic expectations across faculties. However, one of the main concerns that emerged during this evolution was the rigidity of the curriculum—especially regarding interpreting.

The creation of the official degree in Translation and Interpreting was established by the Spanish Ministry of Education through the University Reform Act (LRU). The first official implementation of the degree was formalised in the Boletín Oficial del Estado (Official State Gazette or BOE) in 1991. The pioneering universities —such as University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), University of Malaga (UMA), University of Vigo (UVigo) and University of Salamanca (USAL)— began offering T&I degrees in the early 1990s, with the University of Granada (UGR) standing out as a leader in curriculum development.

However, the transition from diploma to degree programmes sparked tensions between academic goals and institutional policies. Discussions held by the University Schools of Translation and Interpreting (EUTIs) identified a key

structural issue: curricula often treated subjects as isolated units rather than parts of an integrated whole. This fragmentation weakened cohesion across the programme, especially in specialised areas like interpreting.

Although many academic leaders advocated for technological innovation and subject diversification, interpreting remained insufficiently integrated in most programmes. This is not necessarily due to a lack of interest but rather a result of the complexity of managing such a broad curriculum for Translation Studies —especially under institutional and bureaucratic constraints.

Even today, questions persist about the academic "location" of T&I degrees. Some programmes emphasise philological and literary traditions, while others focus more on applied or professional training. As Kreutzer and Neunzig (1997) note, T&I has historically oscillated between disciplines: initially tied to applied linguistics, later pulled between humanities, communication and even business studies, among others. This disciplinary ambiguity has often led to curricular inconsistencies and to Interpreting Studies struggling to find its methodological and theoretical identity (cf. Gile, 2009; Pöchhacker, 2004; Sawyer, 2004).

Resource allocation is another factor that shapes programme structure. In public universities, decisions regarding budgets, staff and infrastructure are linked to teaching quality, research activity and strategic priorities. Consequently, technical and practical subjects —such as computer-based workshops or interpreting simulations— often lack adequate support compared to traditional lectures.

Despite efforts to modernise the curriculum, the imbalance between translation and interpreting remains a persistent issue. Translation receives the majority of the teaching load, while interpreting subjects are often optional, introduced late in the degree or minimally resourced. This disparity has significant implications for students' professional development.

1.2. Curricular reforms and European influences

The Spanish educational model has long been anchored in a traditional approach, characterised by a rigid structure of core and compulsory subjects. Until 2006, academic curricula were guided by the General Guidelines and the National Catalogue of Degrees and Professional Qualifications, which shaped the design and approval of study plans nationwide. However, the integration of Spain into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) marked a paradigm

shift, promoting curricular flexibility, transnational harmonisation and pedagogical innovation.

This transition was not without challenges. The move toward a competence-based model introduced tensions between theory and practice, standardisation and institutional autonomy. While the EHEA promoted methodological renewal and student-centred learning, Spanish universities often struggled to implement these ideals within the confines of national accreditation systems and bureaucratic oversight.

Several European declarations played a decisive role in redefining curricular priorities:

- Prague Declaration (European Ministers of Education, 2001): Emphasised international mobility for students, teachers and researchers.
- Berlin and Bergen Declarations (European Ministers of Education, 2003, 2005): Advocated for transparency in degree structures and quality assurance mechanisms.
- London Communiqué (EHEA, 2007): Encouraged continued review and enhancement of academic programmes.
- Paris Communiqué (EHEA, 2018): Reaffirmed the need for equal access to higher education.

These declarations shaped the framework for curricular reform in Spain. Universities were encouraged to adopt a more pragmatic, practice-oriented approach, favouring micro-level changes that improved student experience and employability.

Nevertheless, as recent analyses by the OECD (2024) indicates, there is a tendency to over-theorise the curriculum, leading to reforms that may not always translate into meaningful change. In this case, EHEA facilitated a move toward modular structures and learning outcomes, but it also reinforced centralised accreditation systems that limited faculty autonomy.

Curricular engineering —when based on deliberation, conscious reflection and stakeholder involvement— can lead to significant improvements. However, many universities have yet to internalise the reformist spirit of the EHEA. Institutional inertia, bureaucratic constraints and limited resources continue to hinder full implementation of student-centred learning and integrated curriculum design.

In this context, interpreting remains underrepresented. The persistence of translation-heavy curricula, limited integration of interpreting technologies and the oversight of oral communicative skills reveal a gap between European policy objectives and local academic practices. Bridging this gap requires not only structural reform but also a cultural shift in how interpreting is valued within the T&I curriculum.

2. METHODOLOGY - DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The study adopts a dual approach to analyse the marginalisation of interpreting in Spanish T&I degrees from two complementary perspectives: a comprehensive review of the curricula of the nineteen public Spanish universities offering this degree, and an analysis of data gathered through a survey administered to their students. This design aims to explore both the structural framework and students' perceptions of interpreting within academic training.

2.1. Preliminary research and institutional review

The initial step involved the analysis of academic syllabi and official documentation available on the websites of Spanish public universities offering T&I degrees. Special attention was paid to the presence, distribution and typology of interpreting-related subjects, including whether interpreting was offered as a compulsory or optional module and at what stage of the degree it was introduced.

In order to visualise the academic imbalance between translation and interpreting courses across public universities in Spain, the following table compiles the number of compulsory and elective subjects in both fields. This comparative overview illustrates how interpreting continues to be underrepresented in most institutions, highlighting the pressing need for curricular readjustment.

AR[1]	PU	B/C FL	CTS	CIS	ETS	EIS	TT	TI
Andalusia	Granada (UGR)	B	9	2	4	2	13	4
		C	3	0	0	2	3	2
Andalusia	Malaga (UMA)	B	6	2	9	2	15	4
		C	2	0	2	1	4	1
Andalusia	Pablo de Olavide (Seville) (UPO)	B	5	2	3	2	8	4
		C	4	0	2	1	6	1
Andalusia	Cordoba (UCO)	B	7	3	4	0	11	3
		C	5	0	0	0	5	0
Castile and León	Salamanca (USAL)	B	7	2	7	2	14	4
		C	3	1	2	0	5	1
Castile and León	Valladolid (UVA)	B	11	2	2	1	13	3
		C	7	0	0	0	7	0
Catalonia	Barcelona (UB)	B	8	2	14	4	22	6
		C	6	0	0	0	6	0
Catalonia	Pompeu Fabra (BarcelonaUPF)	B	10	2	25	0	35	2
		C	3	0	0	0	3	0
Catalonia	Lleida (UdL)	B	4	Not applic a- ble	—	Not applic a ble	4	0
		C	2		—		2	0
Community of Madrid	Autonomic (UAM)	B	8	3	6	4	14	7
		C	4	0	0	0	4	0

[1] AR: Autonomous Region; PU: Public university; B/C FL: First (B) or second (C) foreign language; CTS: Compulsory Translation subject; CIS: Compulsory Interpreting subject; ETS: Elective Translation subject; EIS: Elective Interpreting subject; TT: Total Translation; TI: Total Interpreting.

Community of Madrid	Complutense (UCM)	B	8	7	5	3	13	10
		C	9	5	3	0	12	5
Community of Madrid	King Juan Carlos (URJC)	B	6	2	2	1	8	3
		C	5	2	0	0	5	2
Valencian Community	Alicante (UA)	B	10	3	6	—	16	3
		C	3	0	3	—	6	0
Valencian Community	Valencia (UV)	B	7	2	2	—	9	2
		C	2	0	1	—	3	0
Valencian Community	Jaume I (Castellon-UJI)	B	10	1	12	3	22	4
		C	2	0	0	0	2	0
Galicia	Vigo (UVigo)	B	7	5	4	1	11	6
		C	3	0	3	2	6	2
Canary Islands	Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC)	B	7	5	1	1	8	6
		C	3	1	0	1	3	2
Murcia	Murcia (UM)	B	8	4	1	1	9	5
		C	5	0	0	0	5	0
Basque Country	Basque Country (UPV/EHU)	B	15	1	—	6	15	7
		C	3	0	—	0	3	0

Table 1. Distribution of T&I subjects in Spanish public universities
Source: Authors' compilation based on public university syllabi (2025)

The abbreviations used in Table 1 refer to the classification of compulsory and elective subjects in Translation and Interpreting across Spanish universities. Each cell has been subdivided to indicate the number of compulsory and optional courses in both translation and interpreting offered by each faculty through the T&I degree programme. In this analysis, 'B' and 'C' stand for the first and second foreign languages, respectively. 'Compulsory T. subjects (B/C)' refer to mandatory translation courses from and into Language B and C, while

'Elective T. subjects (B/C)' refer to optional translation courses involving those languages. The variable 'Total B' and 'Total C' indicate the overall credit weight of both compulsory and elective translation subjects in each foreign language as offered by each faculty.

The following figure illustrates the data collected in Table 1.

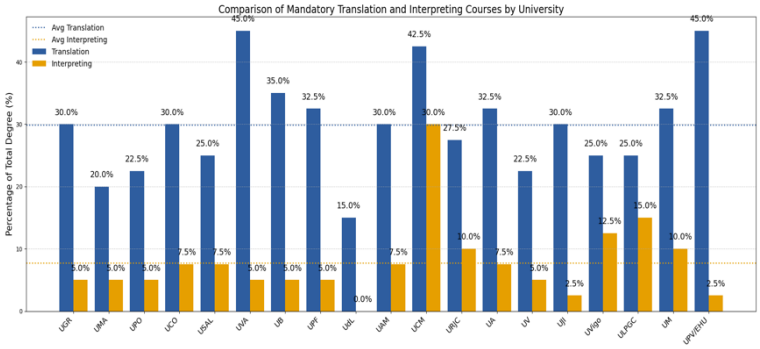

Figure 1. Comparison of mandatory T&I courses by universities

2.2. Survey design and distribution

The main source of empirical data was a nationwide online survey mainly targeted at students enrolled in the final years of T&I programmes (3rd, 4th or 5th years, including double degrees). The survey was designed to explore students' perceptions regarding interpreting training, their expectations before entering the degree and their assessment of the current academic offering.

The survey was developed using Google Forms and disseminated with the help of faculty deans and academic coordinators. It consisted of both closed and open-ended questions, structured around the following key dimensions:

- Demographics (age, gender, university, year of study)
- Reasons for choosing the degree
- Expectations vs. reality of training received
- Interest in interpreting as a career path
- Evaluation of interpreting courses offered

- Familiarity with computer-assisted interpreting tools (CAI)
- Suggestions for curriculum improvement

To maximise clarity and accessibility, the questionnaire was kept concise and user-friendly. Questions were formulated to avoid ambiguity or bias and open-ended items were placed at the end to capture deeper reflections without deterring participation.

The survey is provided in Annex 1 for illustrative purposes.

2.3. Pilot study and refinement

Before dissemination, a pilot version of the survey was tested with a small group of students to evaluate the structure, clarity and timing. Feedback was incorporated into the final version, which aimed to strike a balance between breadth of information and participant engagement.

2.4. Data processing

As mentioned in Section 2.2., the questionnaire included closed and open-ended questions and was implemented through Google Forms. For the closed questions, Google Forms automatically generated descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages and basic graphical visualisations, which were used to identify general trends in participants' responses. We also made used of the service Google Colab for the elaboration of graphics. The numerical results were exported to Microsoft Excel for further processing and refinement. Excel facilitated the organisation of numerical data and its integration with the institutional analysis of compulsory and optional interpreting courses.

Open-ended responses were manually examined by using qualitative thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, representative excerpts and similarities between institutions. This combined quantitative-qualitative approach ensured both numerical consistency and interpretive depth in the treatment of the data.

3. RESULTS AND STUDENT FEEDBACK

The survey received 97 responses from students enrolled in Translation and Interpreting programmes at public universities across Spain. The data reveal important insights into their academic experiences, expectations and perceptions —particularly regarding interpreting and the integration of support tools.

3.1. Demographic overview

The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 23, with a small percentage in the 24-27 range. Most participants identified as female (88.1%), a figure that aligns with gender distribution trends in language-related degrees.

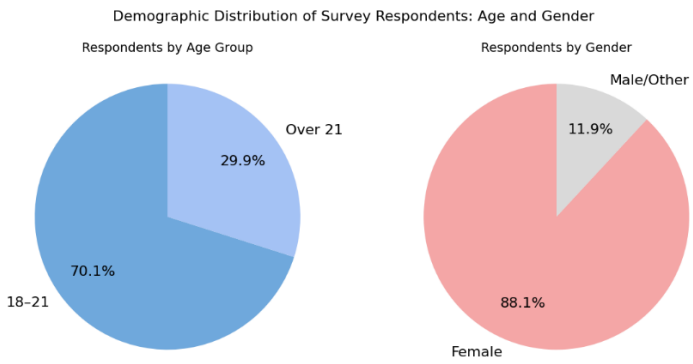

Figure 2. Demographic distribution of survey respondents: Age and gender

A significant proportion of respondents came from institutions such as UPO (20%) and UJI (16%), followed by the UAM (6.9%), UGR (6.9%) and UMA (6.9%). The UM accounts for 6.4%, while the UPV/EHU accounts for 6.2%. Others with a lower student ratio are the USAL (5.2%), UCM (4.9%) and UPF (4.6%). The remaining 16% is distributed among the UCO, the UB, the URJC, the UVigo, the UVA, the UV, the UA, the ULPGC and the UdL. In terms of academic progression, 47.6% were in their third year, 42.9% in the fourth year and 9.5% in the fifth year of double degrees.

3.2. Motivations and Expectations

Most students indicated that Translation and Interpreting was their first-choice degree, chosen during secondary education. Their primary motivations included a passion for languages, the desire to work in international environments and specific interest in translation and interpreting. However, a substantial portion of students expressed dissatisfaction with how the programme met their expectations—particularly regarding the lack of practical training in interpreting, as we can observe in some of the students' feedback:

> "I had always wanted to be an interpreter. Sadly, there are only two mandatory interpreting subjects across the four years of study. I know that you can also choose optional subjects but it is unfair regarding the possibility of trying new translation areas. Interpreting should be more important in the T&I degree. If not, don't call it Translation and INTERPRETING. Also, the first contact with interpreting is in the second semester of the third year, very late. You cannot know if that's what you want to do and it's late if you want to prepare any exam for an interpreting master's degree."

3.3. Perceived gaps in training

Over 50% of respondents felt their initial expectations had not been fulfilled, citing insufficient exposure to real-world interpreting scenarios and a lack of progression in oral skills development. While some acknowledged the usefulness of grammar and language theory modules, many (81.6%) advocated for the earlier integration of interpreting practice throughout the degree.

Others were critical of the absence of digital and technical training. Students reported unfamiliarity with computer-assisted interpreting (CAI) tools and expressed concern that the programme did not reflect technological advancements in the profession:

> "I didn't realise I wouldn't be taking any interpreting subjects until the second semester of the third year. That's too late."

> "There's an over-theorisation of content. Subjects could be combined into a more practical seminar."

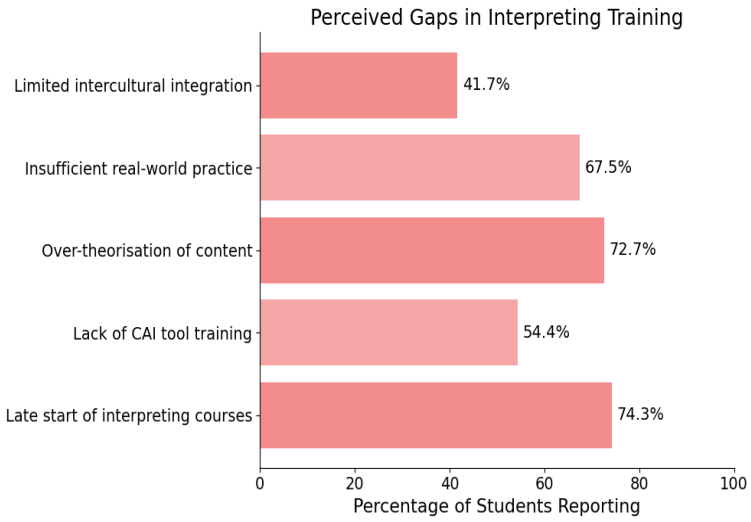

Figure 3. Perceived gaps in interpreting training

3.4. Career aspirations and skill development

19.3% of respondents indicated that they had always aimed to pursue becoming professional interpreters while 30.4% said that they had developed this interest during their degree course. However, although interest in interpreting increases throughout the degree programme, this does not always translate into a clear intention to continue training in this area. Only 18.7% of respondents said they had decided to pursue a master's degree in interpreting, which represents a considerable drop compared to the percentage of those who expressed an interest in specialising in this discipline. This difference could be related to factors such as limited training opportunities, the requirements for admission to these programmes or the employment prospects perceived by students.

Other career interests included teaching, proofreading, international relations and translation in specialised fields. Notably, 80.3% agreed that interpreters are made—not born—and highlighted key attributes such as stress management, oral fluency, multitasking and the ability to summarise and improvise under pressure:

> "To be a good interpreter, you need strong social skills, mental agility and a wide lexical range."

3.5. Suggestions for improvement

Students proposed several improvements to the curriculum, including:

- The early integration of interpreting courses.
- Greater use of technology and CAI tools.
- Increased practical sessions over theoretical modules.
- A more intercultural and content-based approach to language learning.

Many regretted that interpreting courses were optional or delayed until the third or fourth year, hindering their confidence and preparation for real-life interpreting settings. Others wished they had been informed earlier about the programme's limited focus on interpreting.

> "The degree has useful modules but I would have liked to start interpreting from day one."
>
> "If the degree is called Translation and Interpreting, there should be more interpreting modules-not just a focus on languages."

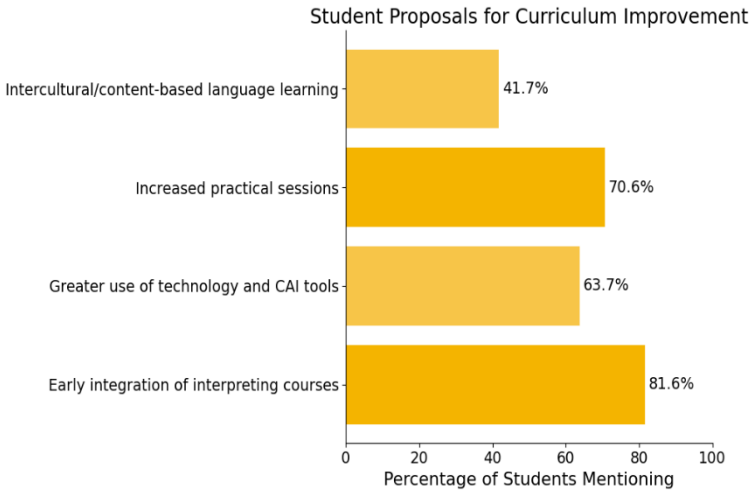

Figure 4. Student proposals for curriculum improvement

Despite the criticisms, only 5.9% of respondents said they regretted choosing the degree. Most remained committed to their professional goals and

demonstrated a clear understanding of the skills and reforms needed to modernise T&I education in Spain.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the first part of this study reveal an imbalance in the curriculum structure of T&I degrees in Spain, especially with regard to the presence of compulsory interpreting subjects. These only represent a weighted average of 8.19% of the total curriculum, as concluded from the analysis in Table 1 regarding the credits for compulsory courses in language B and C interpreting in each Spanish faculty. The data reveal notable disparities among institutions. At the lower end of the spectrum, two faculties (UPV/EHU, UJI) allocate only 2.5% of their total curriculum to compulsory interpreting credits in language B and C; in seven faculties (UGR, UMA, UPO, UVA, UB, UPF, UV) it is just 5%; in four faculties, 7.5% (UCO, USAL, UAM, UA), and in two faculties, 10% (URJC, UM). Only three universities in Spain allocate more than 10% of their curricula to compulsory interpreting subjects: UVigo (12.5%); ULPGC (15%) and UCM (30%). The UdL does not appear to include compulsory interpreting credits in language B and C in its curriculum.

The proportion of compulsory translation subjects (Languages B and C) across the Spanish universities is considerably higher when compared to compulsory interpreting subjects: UdL (15% vs. 0%); UMA (20% vs. 5%); UPO (22.5% vs. 5%); UV (22.5% vs. 2.5%); USAL (25% vs. 7.5%), UVigo (25% vs. 12.5%); ULPGC (25% vs. 15%); URJC (27.5% vs. 10%); UAM (30% vs. 7.5%); UCO (30% vs. 7.5%); UJI (30% vs. 2.5%); UGR (30% vs. 5%); UA (32.5% vs. 7.5%); UPF (32.5% vs. 5%) and UB (35% vs. 5%). Finally, the highest proportions of compulsory translation subjects are found at UCM (42.5% vs. 30%), UVA (45% vs. 5%) and UP/EHU (45% vs. 2.5%). In this sense, compulsory translation subjects account for a weighted average of 30.92% of the total credits across Spanish T&I programmes, indicating their systematic consolidation in the curricula. In contrast, compulsory interpreting subjects represent only an average of 8.19%. This scarcity of compulsory interpreting subjects may cast doubt on the ability of current Spanish T&I degrees to properly prepare students for a discipline of high cognitive and professional complexity such as interpreting.

In most of the Spanish public universities analysed, compulsory interpreting subjects are introduced only in the final years of the T&I degree, typically during the third or fourth year. In this sense, the analysis of the nineteen degree programmes revealed that translation subjects always precede interpreting subjects. In some cases (e.g., the UVA), interpreting is not even introduced until the fourth year, frequently as part of a specialisation track or an optional pathway.

By contrast, as can be concluded from the analysis, a small number of institutions (for instance, the UCM) have adopted a more progressive approach by including an introductory interpreting subject in the second year of study. This early exposure enables students to develop oral and cognitive strategies in parallel with their translation training.

The late inclusion of interpreting courses may limit the gradual development of interpreting-related-skills, such as active listening, spontaneous reformulation and oral fluency —since students have little time to consolidate them before completing their degree. In fact, the survey showed that this situation becomes more complex when considering external variables such as participation in international mobility programmes (e.g. Erasmus), which frequently take place during the third and/or fourth year. Since many host institutions do not offer interpreting modules or recognise them within the curricular frameworks, students can miss the opportunity to take these core subjects altogether.

Considering that the curricular analysis confirmed a clear asymmetry between compulsory translation (30.92%) and interpreting training (8.19%), this imbalance appears to influence students' academic choices and perceptions. Survey responses reveal that many students (86.6%) perceive interpreting as a demanding field for which they feel insufficiently prepared. This perception is stronger among older respondents, who tend to prioritise career-oriented decisions and, therefore, opt for translation pathways that they consider more attainable within their linguistic competence. Furthermore, Table 1 reveals a clear imbalance in the provision of interpreting training across the nineteen public Spanish universities analysed. On average, the curricula include 2.61 compulsory and elective subjects in interpreting (covering both Language B and Language C), which represents 6.51% of the total 240 ECTS credits that make up T&I degree programmes. This limited presence of interpreting subjects further reinforces students' perception of insufficient preparation for professional interpreting practice. This paucity of thorough interpreting training

across Spanish T&I degrees may partially help explain why students' initial interest in interpreting (especially as a potential professional career path) often declines as they advanced through the degree.

Not all students begin the degree with the intention of becoming interpreters and some (30.4%) discover this vocation during the course, especially when the subjects incorporate oral practice and applied content. In this sense, bringing forward the introduction of interpreting to the second year could promote a more solid acquisition of oral skills, regardless of mobility preferences or international stays. Other ways to sustain this interest include providing learning environments that reflect the current professional reality of interpreting, where technology plays a central role (Ruiz Mezcua, 2012, 2019a, 2019b). In this regard, although the pedagogical relevance of digital tools in interpreter training seems to be essential, their adoption in current teaching practice remains partial. Along the survey, most students emphasised the need to include support technologies (63.7%) and they also stated (54.4%) that the current integration of computer-assisted interpreting (CAI) tools remains uneven. Both, CAI and CAT (computer-assisted translation) tools have been shown to improve terminology management, concentration and multitasking, which are essential skills in both face-to-face and remote interpreting (cf. Fantinuoli, 2018).

The qualitative responses of the participants provide additional information for this discussion section. Some students expressed dissatisfaction with the predominance of theoretical subjects and the lack of practical content geared towards professional application, which coincides with the perception that the practical workload is still insufficient:

> "What else would you have liked to know before applying for the degree programme?"
>
> "That the load of theoretical subjects was bigger than expected."
>
> "What would you disagree with in the academic planning of the degree programme?"
>
> "It's painful to spend so many years following this degree and to see that only a handful of subjects are actually useful. There's a lot of fluff and wasted hours […]; we have done dozens of tests of which we can barely remember anything! There's barely no practical skill component present."

Regarding the demographic parameters of the survey, the gender distribution of the survey participants (88.1% women vs. 11.9% men) faithfully

reflects the real imbalance in T&I programmes across Spanish public universities. According to the most recent Statistical Report on University Students 2024-2025 (Advance), published by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (2025), Translation and Interpreting remains one of the most highly feminised degrees in the Humanities, with the proportion of female students ranging from approximately 69% to over 80%, depending on the academic year and on the university. These figures are consistent with the official datasets for the field of Translation and Interpreting, available through the national higher education statistics portal. Therefore, the demographic composition of our sample can be considered representative of the national trend observed in T&I degrees in Spain. When contrasting the responses from both genders in the survey, no significant differences were observed.

With regard to the variable of age, the analysis reveals interesting nuances in students' perceptions of interpreting training within the T&I curriculum. Older students (aged 22 and above), often with prior academic or professional experience, tended to display greater critical awareness of curricular limitations while younger students (18-21) gradually discovered their interest in interpreting as their studies progressed.

Finally, the emotional and motivational dimension of learning should be highlighted. Students show interest in expanding their linguistic and technological skills (36.9%) and recognise the usefulness of interpreting as a professional tool in a globalised and multicultural world (47.8%). This positive attitude reinforces the importance of promoting active methodologies and teaching materials that integrate oral communication and culture as the cornerstones of meaningful learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the need to discuss the distribution and workload of interpreting subjects within Translation and Interpreting degrees in Spain. The research shows that, while current training offers a solid theoretical foundation, the proportion devoted to interpreting practice remains limited. This situation could hinder the development of the specific skills necessary for professional practice, in modalities such as consecutive, bilateral or simultaneous interpreting.

The results from the survey hence show a clear demand for more practice, technical training and a better balance between translation and interpreting in the curriculum, which could be summarised in the following suggestions:

- Incorporate interpreting subjects from the early years of study, encouraging a gradual progression of oral skills.
- Increase the number of compulsory credits in interpreting to ensure more consistent training.
- Integrate CAI technologies and digital resources into training, given their usefulness in concentration, terminology management and multitasking.
- Encourage collaboration between teachers, students and academic coordinators to align curricula with the real needs of students and the market.

Regarding the limitations of this study, the curricular analysis of Spanish T&I university degrees and the findings of the survey are only part of the picture, so any proposal for reforming T&I curricula in Spain must undoubtedly consider a broader range of contextual variables. While students' feedback provides valuable insight into perceived shortcomings —particularly the limited presence and late introduction of interpreting subjects— curriculum planning can be inevitably constrained by institutional and administrative factors, such as resource allocation or accreditation frameworks derived from the Bologna Process. Furthermore, the diversity of curricular structures across universities underscores the need for caution when interpreting these results, as local priorities and capacities differ significantly.

Another key element concerns access to the degree itself. Currently, admission is based on general university entrance examinations that primarily evaluate written skills without leaving margin to test the oral competence. This limitation has direct pedagogical implications: beginning interpreting training without a sufficient foundation in oral comprehension may hinder learning outcomes. Therefore, curricular reform should aim to introduce interpreting progressively, ensuring an equilibrium between early exposure and students' initial linguistic proficiency. To achieve sustainable improvement, the perspectives of academic institutions, programme coordinators and teaching staff should be integrated into the discussion so that any recommendations are both empirically grounded and realistically implementable.

In summary, this research provides a curricular analysis of Spanish T&I programmes regarding the proportion of interpreting modules and a representative view of students' perceptions of interpreting teaching in order to contribute to a constructive debate on the modernisation of T&I training in Spain. The evidence obtained can serve as a basis for future curriculum improvement initiatives aimed at promoting more balanced, practical learning that is adapted to the demands of a constantly evolving professional and technological environment.

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