Chapter 21

Cross–Fertilization of Training and Research in a Master's Program in Public Service Interpreting and Translation:
Some Challenges and Results

Carmen Valero-Garcés
University of Alcalá, Spain

ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the need to combine training, research, and practice to guarantee the existence of competent professionals in the field of Public Service Interpreting and Translating (PSIT) (also known as Community Interpreting and Translation [CIT]). These elements are integrated in the design of the Master's in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting and Translating (MICIT) at the University of Alcalá, Madrid, Spain. The program is based in the principle of cross-fertilization of these three main parameters: training, internship, and research. The focus of this chapter is to show the inter-relation between these three elements, with special emphasis on the last element: research.

INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION

PSIT originates, fundamentally, within and for the institutions and the public services ("institution-driven") (Ozolins, 2000, p. 32). This implies a strong connection between the functions of interpreting and translation dictated by the immediate needs and expectations and the answers generated to these needs.

Public Service Interpreting and Translating (PSIT) (or Community Interpreting) can be defined as a profession that facilitates access to community services (health, police, school…) for linguistically diverse clients who do not speak the language of service. However, contrary to what can be observed in countries such as Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States, PSIT has not yet been professionalized and is virtually unknown to most in some other countries. Nevertheless, a rising interest can

be seen in the increasing number of publication, conferences and training programs available as indicated below.

In Southern European countries (Italy, Spain, Greece), as had already happened in other countries, the first steps for PSIT were taken by individually-led initiatives, which were held back by limited state support, low pay, if any, and lack of training, coordination, and standardized ethical codes as the collection of papers presented at the First International Conference on PSIT held in Alcalá, Spain in 2002 demonstrate (Valero-Garcés & Mancho, 2002). After that, developments have been made, as the information presented in the subsequent International Conferences held at Alcalá and Critical Link Conference series illustrate.

The information presented at these conferences made it clear that there is a growing interest in this area of work and research, and not only in places such as Australia, USA, Canada and Western Europe. Papers were also presented n Poland, Japan, China, Argentina, or Cuba. These papers all looked at PSIT from different perspectives, but always with one common goal: promoting communication between linguistically and culturally different communities. The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Critical Link Conferences held in Sydney Australia in 2007, in Birmingham United Kingdom in 2011 and in Montreal Canada in 2013 as well as the Third, Fourth and Fifth International Conferences on PSIT held in Alcalá, Madrid, Spain in 2008, 2011 and 2014 (Valero-Garcés, 2005; Valero-Garcés, Pena & Lázaro, 2008; Valero-Garcés, C., Bodzer, A., Vitalaru, B. & Lázaro, R., 2011; Valero-Garcés, Vitalaru & Mojica¸ 2014) only reaffirm this interestAn example of interest can also be seen in the considerable growth in the offer of training programs and practical initiatives in different countries, which tend to have the objective of systematizing the professional's duties. This systematization occurs, without a doubt, as a result of the harmonization of supply and demand between the formal offering and the needs. And this harmonization requires that all interested parties establish alliances solid enough to stand up to the resistance to change and the inertia.

The result of these alliances would be reflected in an optimal cycle of productive development, made possible by a quality assessment that would shape policy, as illustrated by Figure 1.

Figure 1. Optimal Cycle of Productive Development
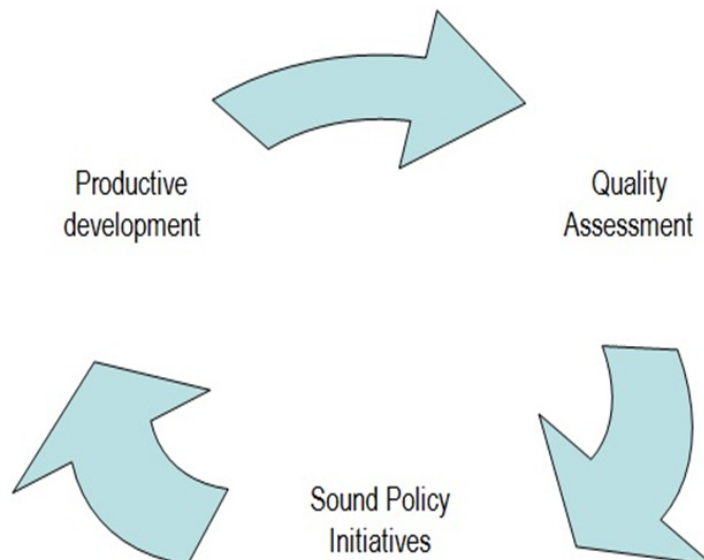
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