

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

DECONSTRUCTING THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION CURRICULUM: CASE STUDY HELSINKI

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Abstract

Until recently, few studies existed examining Translation Studies curricula. This descriptive study will examine 20 years of curriculum transformation regarding faculty and staff changes and contact hour changes within English Translation Studies at the University of Helsinki. Data that was analyzed included policy documents as well as learner and teacher perspectives gathered at different stages during the process. Results suggest dramatic changes in terms of contact hours and source language and target language teaching. Pre-Bologna degrees had significantly more contact hours especially regarding Finnish into English translation and other supporting English courses. Another significant finding is that post-Bologna English Translation degrees are now taught mostly in Finnish.

Bologna Process Finland, English Translation Studies Education, Translation Education, Translation Studies, Curriculum Design

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, English Translation students in Finland entered directly into their Master's Degree program from upper high school and took an average of around 8 years to complete their degree. There was no Bachelor's Degree. Because of the Bologna Process, the program has now been divided into a three-year bachelor's level degree and a two-year master's level degree. How did this affect curriculum planning and design? What are the implications for translation teaching and learning as a result? This descriptive paper will examine the transformation of the old curriculum into the new curriculum regarding faculty and staff changes and contact hour changes within English Translation Studies at the University of Helsinki. Data that will be analyzed will include policy documents as well as learner and teacher perspectives gathered at different stages during the process. Results suggest that the changes were dramatic in terms contact hours and source language and target language teaching. Pre-Bologna degrees had significantly more contact hours especially regarding Finnish into English translation and other supporting English courses. Another significant finding is that post-Bologna English Translation degrees are now taught mostly in Finnish.

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

Much has been written about the Bologna Process but very little has been written on the impact of the Bologna Process on the Finnish–English Translation curriculum in Finland. A number of recent studies have examined Translation Studies curricula and the effects of European integration which related to the Bologna Process (see Plaza Lara 2016, van Lawick 2016, Thelan 2016, Skrylnyk 2016, Lakić & Pralas, 2016, Jurid & Pavlović 2016). These studies tend to focus on strengthening, expanding and establishing Translation Studies programs. This study will focus on a theory and method for understanding and comparing Translation Studies Curricula and is anchored within the theoretical framework of sociology of translation (See Walker 2015). Bruner (1996) states that education is cultural specific and what works well in one educational culture might not work so well in another. Further, they are not anthropologists so there is no need for elaborate descriptions of the objectivity of how the writer is non-biased when they write about their own workplace.

This paper will address the following issues regarding English Translation Studies at the University of Helsinki from 1999 to 2015. What are unique features within the Finnish educational culture? What is the ratio of Finnish and English native speakers of the target languages? Are there major shifts in personnel structure that should be considered when planning the curriculum? How many

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

contact hours are offered? Of course, there are other important questions and sub-questions which cannot be addressed in this short article.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Much has been written about curriculum development but very little has been written about this within the field of Translation Studies. It is surprising that the recent growth in literature on translator training has tended to by-pass the issue of curriculum development almost completely (Calvo 2011). She points out that translation studies have, instead, tended to focus on translation competence (see Campbell 1998, Colina 2003, Schäffner 2000, Kearns 2006, Kelly 2002, and Pym 2003). Garant and Eskelinen (2012) point out that recent research on general translator education abound. These include Aranda (2013), Liu (2015), and Chan (2015) among many others. Kiraly (1995: 3–19) puts forth a 9-point model that could serve as a basis for a theoretical model based on empirical evidence regarding professional translation activities. He also stresses the need for an academic approach to translation pedagogy. Although these lines of research are fruitful, what is missing are the concrete details of what happens in Translation Studies programs.

Therefore, there is a need for these specific details in Translation Studies curriculum design. This is especially

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

relevant over the past 15 years because of the major changes in most European Union countries as part of the Bologna Process. This article will utilize participant observation. To quote Bourdieu (2003, 282), “Participant observation, as I understand it, designates the conduct of an ethnologist who immerses her- or himself in a foreign social universe so as to observe an activity, a ritual, or a ceremony while, ideally, taking part in it.” Bourdieu (2003) then goes on to criticize what he calls the false “participant objectification” of Geertz (1988) and the over emphasis on the researcher instead of the data.

“Insiders” are in the best position to describe and analyze the current state of translation education within the framework of their own *educational culture* (Bruner 1996). Bruner (1996) states that education is cultural specific and what works well in one educational culture might not work so well in another. This paper suggests that there is a need to use first person narratives to describe and analyze specific educational cultures within Translation Studies to gain a better understanding of the whole.

Historical Development and pre-Bologna Process

Historically in Finnish educational culture, students took entrance exams to universities and entered their major subjects directly rather than have a year or two of general

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

studies in systems like, for example, in the United States. Competition was and is fierce for university level study places, especially in popular subjects like English translation. Typically, a student has about a one in ten chance of getting a study place for English Translation. In 1999, students entered the English Translation Studies Master’s Degree program that took an average of 8 years to complete. The program had a total of 160 study weeks (Holvikki, et. al., 1999).

Education in Finland is free although from fall 2017, non-EU students must pay tuition. It was not uncommon for students to take a year or two off or stop studying completely if they found enough work translating. Graduation rates in many Finnish universities hovered around 50%.

Table 1. English Translation Graduations 1999–2014

2014 13	2006 9
2013 16	2005 10
2012 9	2004 5
2011 4	2003 12
2010 3	2002 10
2009 8	2001 8
2008 20	2000 16
2007 17	1999 14
Target: 14	

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

Low graduation rates for almost all majors except Medicine were normal before the Bologna process. The Master's Degree was only necessary if one worked for the government or a company that required it. Many translators did not need the 'papers' and never graduated. Once admitted, students had the *right* to study as long as they wanted and received financial aid, half price train tickets, discount lunches at student cafeterias all over Finland and a variety of other benefits. Then came the Bologna Process.

The Bologna Process is a European Union initiative that seeks to standardize education across Europe (See Council of Europe 2014). Kelly (2015) and Erakovic (2015) state that the Bologna Process also effects the education system in many countries who are not members of the European Union. Because of the Bologna process, Finnish students now study for a 3-year Bachelor's degree and then a 2-year Master's degree. The Bachelor of Arts degree (BA) is 180 credits and includes basic studies in translation studies and Finnish for translators. In the Master of Arts degree (MA), English translation is part of the Degree Program in Translation Studies and Multilingual Communication, whose scope is 120 credits. (Holvikki, et. al., 1999) This is a dramatic change from pre-Bologna Finland.

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

The data that was examined included policy documents in addition to the perspective of the researcher who was active in this process. This paper will present the data regarding changes in staff and faculty, and contact hours and their relation to major studies and a discussion and conclusion section.

3. STAFF AND FACULTY

This section will address changes in staffing and faculty over the past 15 years. During this time, many external factors influenced the changes among which were the Bologna process, budget cuts and the impact of the decline in student intake in Finland as the baby boomers aged and fewer students entered the university system. Gabr (2001) highlights the number of teaching staff and faculty as one criteria for evaluating translation curricula and their training. In Finland, translation teachers have, historically, been academically trained in other language related disciplines such as Philology because until recently few graduates with doctoral degrees in translation studies existed. Only the more recent appointees have doctoral degrees in Translation Studies.

In 1999–2000, English Translation Studies at the University of Helsinki consisted of one Professor who was a Native Finnish speaker, five lecturers of whom three were Native English speakers and two were Native

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

Finnish speakers, and part-time teachers whose hours added up to approximately one lectureship all of whom were Native Finnish speakers. This represented a sort of balance between the English Native Speaker faculty and the Finnish faculty (Holvikki, et. al., 1999). In 2004–2005, the Department consisted of a Professor who was a Native Finnish speaker, six lecturers of which four were Native English speakers and two were Native Finnish speakers, and one part-time teacher who was a Native Finnish speaker. Staffing had basically remained the same in the department since the mid-1980s (Humanistisen tiedekunnan opiskelijapalvelut 2004). Most English Translation Studies departments in Finland had a similar personnel structure at this time.

Then, the situation changed. From 2010–2015, the department consisted of one Professor who was a Native Finnish speaker, and three lecturers of whom one was a native English speaker and two were Native Finnish speakers. In addition, there were fluctuating part-time instructors who were native Finnish and English speakers and amounted to perhaps a half of a full lectureship (University of Helsinki, 2015). In the 2016–2017 academic year, the faculty was further reduced to two native Finnish speakers and a combination of part time teachers to teach the English native speaker courses. The change in English Translation Studies at the University of Helsinki personnel structure since 2010 showed one clear

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

trend. Teaching posts have been drastically reduced. This was mainly due to budget cuts and the general tendency in Finnish universities not to refill posts when people retire. One could argue that both budget cuts and the Bologna process allowed for such drastic changes to occur. Ad hoc discussions with people from other departments across Europe suggest that not replacing retirees is not uncommon. This change in the structure of personnel impacts curriculum development because in Helsinki, there is a regulation that translation courses from Finnish into English should be taught by a native English speaker.

Thus, the English Translation Studies degree has gone from one taught by Finnish native speakers and English native speakers in what was a basically a 50–50 balance to an approximately two to one ratio in favor of Finnish native speakers. The impact of this change should not be underestimated. Because few non-native Finnish speakers ever become Finnish–English translators, it is common for working Finnish native speaker translators to translate into the B-language (English). Further research should be done on the impact of this change on the outcomes of the learners.

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

4. CONTACT HOURS AND MAJOR STUDIES

In the following chapter, this paper will address changes in contact hours in major studies. The view towards contact hours in Finland has changed dramatically over the past 15 years. Until the implementation of the Bologna process, Finnish universities tabulated credit hours in a unit called an *opintoviikko* or study weeks. The term study week in English became so entrenched in Finnish bureaucratic English that before the Bologna process, Finnish academics basically never used the English word credit in relation to Finnish higher education. One *study week* was equivalent to 40 hours university work. University work in Finland does not necessarily mean contact hours. If a student studies a subject such as history or literature, they may take book exams. In this case, a student would submit a brown envelope with their name, course name and number. The instructor would put the test in envelope and the student would take the test on a general exam day with perhaps 100 other students in an auditorium to pass the course. These courses are common in many majors and have no contact teaching.

In the Bologna process, one European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) in Finland, one ECTS is 27 hours work (ECTS 2015). This is different from the traditional Finnish 40-hour study week. One interesting

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

fact is that the number of work hours related to ECTS credits vary slightly from country to country in European Union countries (ECTS Users' Guide 2009). An interesting tidbit of information related to Finland is that when these were first adopted, the word "credit" was not used for ECTS for quite some time. The Finns would use "ETCS" for credits in their English language policy documents. The word "credit" for ETCS has only come into wide use in Finland after 2010. Between 2005 and 2010, Finnish people used ECTS or study points to describe the terminology associated with the new system. They also used the English term "study points".

The 1999–2000 course of study from the University of Helsinki shows a quite different course structure than the one in 2015. That is not surprising. How has the curriculum changed over the past 15 years? In 1999–2000, the degree structure consisted of 20 study weeks in basic studies, 25 study weeks in intermediate studies, 20 study weeks in advanced studies and 20 study weeks for the thesis or a total of 85 study weeks in the English Translation major for the Master's degree. This meant that it took 3400 work hours (85 study weeks x 40 hours per study week = 3400 work hours) to complete major studies during that period.

The first major curriculum change after the adoption of the Bologna Process went into action in 2007–2009.

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

During that period, the degree structure consisted of 25 study points in basic studies, 45 study points in intermediate studies, 20 study points in advanced studies and 20 study points for the thesis. This meant that the entire English Translation major consisted of 110 study weeks or 2970 work hours (110 study weeks x 27 hours per study point = 2970 work hours) to complete major studies during this period.

By 2015, the degree had changed because of the Bologna process. It had become a two-tiered system including the Bachelor's degree (BA). One interesting fact is that although the BA degree is now part of the system, it is not yet considered in funding equations at the University of Helsinki. Funding is still based on Master's degree level statistics. In the newest curriculum adopted in 2012, potential English Translations students take 20 credits (note that now the word credit is used in Finland) of basic studies in English philology (25 credits). This marks a major change in the curriculum. Learners no longer take an entrance test to enter English Translation. Instead, they study for a year in English Philology and take a test from there to enter English Translation. All English majors, including translation, literature, teacher training and the general line which includes historical linguistics and other topics, enter via the same entrance test and study together for the first year.

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

In the 2015–2016, intermediate studies in English translation consists of 45 credits. In addition, the studies include compulsory studies for students at the Faculty of Arts as well as elective studies chosen by the student (English Translation Studies 2015). In accordance with the Bologna system, students then get their BA degree and proceed to MA studies if they choose. In the Master of Arts degree (MA), English translation is part of the Degree Program in Translation Studies and Multilingual Communication, whose scope is 120 credits. These include at least 20 credits in one of the following specialties: law and administration, interpreting, or audiovisual translation. In addition, students may choose courses in language technology and other specialties. If the student has not completed a Bachelor's degree in translation, he or she must also complete 25 credits in Finnish for translators and at least 10 credits in general translation studies (University of Helsinki 2013, 2015).

The division of the total degree into BA and MA degrees and the elimination of translation courses in the first year is a radical change in the English Translation Studies degree. Translation courses were replaced by Philology courses. For the BA degree, learners must take 45 credits of English translation after their first year of 25 credits in English Philology representing 1215 hours of study. (45 credits x 27 hours = 1215 hours). At the MA level, students must take 20 credits in one specialized field.

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

These include Law and Administration, Audiovisual, Interpreting, Trade and Commerce or Technology. The current thesis and related seminar total 49 credits, 1 credit for personal planning and 5 credits for work life experience totaling 75 credits (English Translation Studies 2015). Other courses are in translation theory, most of which is taught in Finnish. For the MA degree, learners must study an additional 2025 hours of study (75 credits x 27 hours = 2025 hours).

So, if calculated in this manner, the number of hours of study to get the degree is actually more than it was 15 years ago with a ratio of 3400 in 1999–2000 to 3440 in 2015–16 hours. In addition, all English majors study 25 credits of English Philology in the first year of which approximately 20 credits are taught in English.

One could argue that the amount of study hours required to complete the Major for an English Translation Studies degree has remained relatively consistent on paper over the past 15 years. However, the amount of contact hours has been reduced drastically. As Kiraly (2015) has demonstrated, contact hours are not necessarily the hallmarks of an effective Translation Studies program. Still, contact hours have been shown to be effective when learning foreign languages (Garant 1997). In 1997, students had about double the number of contact hours that they have in 2016 for the same number or more

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

credits. So, there has been a shift toward larger groups with fewer contact hours for the same number or more credits. It is not yet shown how this has affected outcomes. However, the change took place because Finland had to comply with the Bologna process which has a different basis for awarding credit than what had been traditionally done in Finland. The reduction of contact hours was not because of the Bologna Process alone. Budget cuts were also a major contributing factor.

This study will not elaborate on the courses that were offered during these periods but a representative list is available in Appendix 1. In addition, this study will not address the new curriculum adopted in Fall 2017 because it is too early to analyze such developments.

5. RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has sought to describe changes in staff and faculty and contact hours in major studies with the educational culture English Translation Studies at the University of Helsinki from 1999 to 2016. Initially, the article outlined unique features in the educational culture of the Finnish university. An examination of the personnel structure showed that the teaching personnel in English Translation have been cut dramatically. This was mainly due to budget cuts and the general tendency to not refill

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

posts when people retire. This change in the structure of personnel impacted curriculum development because fewer native English speaker teachers means fewer courses that can be offered in English. Thus, the degree has gone from one with a faculty of approximately fifty–fifty ratio of Finnish native speakers and English native speakers and where teaching was conducted equally in both languages to a degree taught at an approximately three to one ratio in favor of Finnish native speakers where Finnish is overwhelmingly used as the teaching language. This should not be underestimated. One student informant stated that they cannot remember the last time they translated into English.

In 1999, students spoke and translated into English every day while studying English Translation. This no longer applies. Personnel structure has a great influence on curriculum structure. Less native speakers of English means that more courses are taught in Finnish. How this effects outcome is an area that warrants further research.

Based on the data, one can also conclude that number of hours of study to get the degree has fluctuated over the years. In 2015, it is more than it was 15 years ago with a ratio of 3400 in 1999–2000 to 3440 in 2015–16 hours, however contact hours are fewer. In addition, all English majors study 25 credits of English Philology in the first year of which approximately 20 credits are taught in

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

English. This is an interesting development. The University of Helsinki is currently planning a major curriculum change to put the university more in line with the Bologna process. It will be interesting to see how this development plays out. This is an area that warrants further research.

An interesting line of research in the future could address curriculum development in other departments in Finland and in other countries? It would be useful to produce more research on curriculum development in Translation Studies in general. In the fall of 2017, the University of Helsinki introduced a major reform called the Big Wheel to put the university more in line with the Bologna process. Translation Studies is now a separate Master's Degree and undergraduates come from English or other fields. This is a new development in Finland. It is too early to present an analysis of the impact it will have on Translation studies. Translation Studies have gone through many changes over the past 20 years. Further research is needed to analyze how Translation Studies curricula develop in the future.

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

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Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

Appendix 1

Course offerings 1999–2015

English Translation 1999 - 2000b Same in 2003–4;
Ien 100 Basic Studies (20 study weeks)

Grammar and Contrastive Studies (4 study weeks)

Grammar 2 study weeks

Contrastive Studies Finnish into English (1 study week)

Contrastive Studies English into Finnish (1 study week)

Spoken and Written Communication I (6 study weeks)

Text Analysis (1 study week)

Written Communication I (2 study weeks)

Pronunciation and Intonation (1 study week)

Spoken Communication (1 study week)

Interpreting I (1 study week)

Contrastive Culture (5 study weeks)

British Institutions (2 study weeks)

American Institutions (2 study weeks)

Literature I (1 study week)

Translation I (5 study weeks)

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

Tutorial (1 study week)

Translation I Finnish into English (2 study weeks)

Translation I English into Finnish (2 study weeks)

English Translation 1999–2000b

Ien 200 Intermediate Studies (25/15 study weeks)

Majors need 25 study weeks, Minors need 15 study weeks

Spoken and Written Communication II (4 study weeks)

Written Communication II (2 study weeks)

Spoken Communication II (1 study week)

Culture (4 study weeks)

Literature II (1 study week)

Language and cultural training abroad

Translation II (6 study weeks)

Translation II Finnish into English (2 study weeks)

Translation II English into Finnish (2 study weeks)

Specialized Translation (6/3 study weeks)

Majors need 6 study weeks, Minors need 3 study weeks

Trade (3 study weeks)

Law (3 study weeks)

Garant, M. (2017). Transforming the English Translation Curriculum: Case Study Helsinki. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 296–331.

Technical (3 study weeks)
Literary Translation (3 study weeks)
Documents (3 study weeks)
Medicine (3 study weeks)
Biology (3 study weeks)
Specially agreed upon topics (3 study weeks)
American Institutions II (3 study weeks)
AV Translation (3 study weeks)

Research Preparatory Studies (5 study weeks)
Proseminar and written work (5 study weeks)

English Translation 1999–2000b
Ien 300 Advanced Studies (20 study weeks)

Specialized Translation (5 study weeks)

Trade (5 study weeks)
Law and Administration (5 study weeks)
Technical (5 study weeks)
Advanced Interpreting (5 study weeks)
EU Translation (5 study weeks)
Literary Translation (5 study weeks)
Documents (5 study weeks)
AV Translation Workshop (5 study weeks)

Research Studies: Seminar (5 study weeks)

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Free choice courses (5 study weeks)
Language Change and Variation (2 study weeks)
Simultaneous Interpreting (2 study weeks)
Special Choice Courses (2 - 5 study weeks)
Culture Research (2 study weeks)
British Drama (2 study weeks)
Terminology (3 study weeks)
Shakespeare (3 study weeks)
British Dialects (3 study weeks)
Special Agreed Upon Courses (1–5 study weeks)

Master's Thesis (20 study weeks)

English Translation 2007–2009 Ien 100
Basic Studies (25 study points)

Multilingualism (10 study points)
Written Communication I (4 study points)
Speech Communication and Phonetics (3 study points)

Language and Cultural Studies (6 study points)

Contrastive Grammar (4 study points)
Contrastive Studies Finnish into English and English into Finnish (2 study points)

Translation Theory and Practice (12 study points)

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Translation I Finnish into English (6 study points)

Translation I English into Finnish (6 study points)

English Translation 2007–2009

Ien 200 Intermediate Studies (45/35 study points)

Majors need 45 study points), Minors need 35 study points)

Multilingualism (10 study points)

Written Communication I (4 study points)

Speech Communication and Phonetics (3 study points)

Language and Cultural Studies (14 study points)

Literature I (4 study points)

Written Communication II (EAP) (3 study points)

Interaction and Interpretation (3 study points)

Contrastive Studies Finnish into English and English into Finnish (2 study points)

British and American Institutions (4 study points) 7 weeks x 2 hours each

Translation Theory and Practice (12 study points)

Translation II Finnish into English (4 study points)

Translation II English into Finnish (4 study points)

Specialized Translation (6/3 study points)

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Majors need 6 study points, Minors need 3 study points

Trade (3 study points)

Law (3 study points)

Technical (3 study points)

Literary Translation (3 study points)

Documents (3 study points)

Medicine (3 study points)

Biology (3 study points)

Specially agreed upon topics (3 study points)

American Institutions II (3 study points)

AV Translation (3 study points)

Research Preparatory Studies (5 study points)

Proseminar and written work (5 study points)

English Translation 1999–2000b

Ien 300 Advanced Studies (20 study points)

Specialized Translation (5 study points)

Trade (5 study points)

Law and Administration (5 study points)

Technical (5 study points)

Advanced Interpreting (5 study points)

EU Translation (5 study points)

Literary Translation (5 study points)

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Documents (5 study points)

AV Translation Workshop (5 study points)

Research Studies: Seminar (5 study points)

Free choice courses (5 study points)

Language Change and Variation (2 study points)

Simultaneous Interpreting (2 study points)

Special Choice Courses (2–5 study points)

Culture Research (2 study points)

British Drama (2 study points)

Terminology (3 study points)

Shakespeare (3 study points)

British Dialects (3 study points)

Special Agreed Upon Courses (1–5 study points)

Master's Thesis (20 study points)

English Translation 2013–2015

English Philology basic studies

Eng114a Text Analysis E–F

Eng115 Structures of English

Eng116 Spoken English

Eng117 Topics in English Linguistics

Eng122 Literature Tutorial

Eng125 Culture and Society: US and UK

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Intermediate Studies

Translation II Finnish into English (4 credits)

Translation II English into Finnish (4 credits)

Interaction and Interpretation (4 Credits)

Global and Regional Varieties (4 Credits)

Proseminar (4 Credits)

Intermediate studies

Must complete 12 credits at least 3 of which in English

Trade and economy (3–6 credits)

Law and administration (3–6 credits)

Audiovisual (3–6 credits)

Interpreting (3–6 credits)

Other special fields: Literature (3–6 credits)

Other special fields: intensive courses, other programs (3–6 credits)

Advanced studies

Must complete 12 credits at least 3 of which in English

Trade and economy (3–6 credits)

Law and administration (3–6 credits)

Audiovisual (3–6 credits)

Interpreting (3–6 credits)

Other special fields: Literature (3–6 credits)

Other special fields: intensive courses, other programs (3–6 credits)

Seminar

Thesis