

Thelen, M. (2016). The Practice-Oriented Translator Training Curriculum: An Example. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 3, 163–200.

## **THE PRACTICE-ORIENTED TRANSLATOR TRAINING CURRICULUM: AN EXAMPLE**

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### **Abstract**

These days, under the influence of the Bologna Process, the development of the European Master's in Translation (EMT) network and the OPTIMALE project, translator training is in the process of changing considerably from rather purely academic and theory-oriented to more practice-oriented with a strong focus on professionalisation and employability. This paper will outline a curriculum whose footprint was set up almost two decades before the signing of the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 and the Bologna Declaration in 1999, but which is still highly relevant today as an example of a practice-oriented translator training curriculum and which fits well in recent views on translator training.

#### **Key words:**

Bologna Declaration, “emergentist” learning system, employability, in-house simulated translation bureau, language placement abroad, professional attitude, professional placement, professionalisation, skills lab.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, a curriculum is, for a large part, the result of insights and traditions of the discipline and profession involved, insights and traditions of education in general, and views and demands of the society in which it is (to be) situated; in addition it is bound by the prevailing legal system and relating laws of the country in question. Since the Bologna Process, curricula have, furthermore, been geared more and more towards professionalisation and employability. This is also true of the translator training curriculum, which is gradually developing under these influences from purely academic to practice-oriented. A good example is the curriculum envisaged by the EMT network. This development was also encouraged by the international standards EN 15038 and ISO 17100.

This paper will zoom in on the curriculum at the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting (of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands), and highlight its relevance as a practice-oriented curriculum in today's discussion on professionalisation and employability. In this discussion, the competences to be acquired and trained and how this should/can be done are central so as to prepare students best for after-graduate employment in the translation branch, cf. for example Nord (1991), Vienne (1994), Adab (1995), Schäffner & Adab (2000), Gouadec (2003), PACTE (2005), Gile (2009), Calvo (2011), Kearns (2013), Kiraly (2000, 2016), the European Master's in Translation (EMT), and the

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OPTIMALE project (2010-2013)<sup>1</sup>. Of these, Kiraly (2000, 2016) is probably the most outspoken in terms of competence development and its consequences for the training curriculum. In his view, competence development requires time and space in the curriculum, and learning should take place in communities and promote “[...] the self-organization of skills and knowledge from the simple to the complex and from teacher-centred instruction to highly autonomous learning” (Kiraly, 2016, p. 140). For this to be accomplished a work placement is very important. Professionalisation is further implemented in the international standards on Translation Services EN 15038/ISO 17100.

To understand the Maastricht curriculum, some background is needed. On the international map of translator training institutes, the Netherlands is a blank spot as

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<sup>1</sup> OPTIMALE stands for “Optimising Professional Translator Training in a Multilingual Europe” and is an Erasmus Academic Network for Professional Translator Training. It ran from 2010 to 2013) with 70 partners from 32 different European countries. Among its deliverables are an interactive map of the various training programmes, a list of “specific competence requirements for graduates seeking employment in the industry and for programme directors seeking to improve the employability of their graduates in the translation professions” (The OPTIMALE employer survey and consultation” at [http://www.ressources.univ-rennes2.fr/service-relations-internationales/optimale/attachments/article/52/WP4\\_Synthesis\\_report.pdf](http://www.ressources.univ-rennes2.fr/service-relations-internationales/optimale/attachments/article/52/WP4_Synthesis_report.pdf)) (p.1), as well as “Status quo reports on current practices and case studies describing interesting and innovative approaches to teaching and learning” (<http://www.ressources.univ-rennes2.fr/service-relations-internationales/optimale/training>).

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regards EMT membership: none of the institutes in the country is an EMT member or has applied for membership. This is, at least in part, due to the system of tertiary education in the country. Right from the beginning, and thus even before the Bologna process was started in 1998 (the Sorbonne Declaration) and 1999 (The Bologna Declaration), the system of tertiary education has had a division into two categories: university education offered by traditional research universities, and higher professional (or vocational) education (*hbo* for *hoger beroepsonderwijs*) offered by what are nowadays called *universities of applied sciences*. As for translation, before “Bologna”, there was only one university translation institute in Amsterdam offering a translation programme as a top-up specialisation, notably literary translation. This institute closed its doors in the early 80s. It was time for a new institute.

At that time, it had not yet been decided where the seat of this new institute should be and what its educational status should be: university education or professional education. As for the seat, the dispute was between the universities of Tilburg and Nijmegen, and the new University of Maastricht. Had the seat been in either Tilburg or Nijmegen, the institute would have been a department in an existing faculty; in Maastricht a completely new faculty would have to be created. Maastricht got preference because of its short distance from the German speaking area of Aachen and the French speaking area of Liege, but incorporating it in the University of Maastricht was

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rejected because a new faculty was considered too much competition for the other two universities. Had it been part of a university, the institute would have been classified as university education. To settle the dispute, it was decided, however, to grant the institute independent status and classify it as professional education. In 1981 this new institute was founded in Maastricht, the now Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting. The circumstances in which it was founded would turn out to have a major impact on parts of the curriculum.

A couple of years after the foundation, two comparable professional institutes emerged that based their curriculum on that of the Maastricht School. Together these three professional institutes were the only training institutes for translation in the country; there was no university institute. This situation continued to exist until under the Bologna process the BA-MA structure was introduced. For the Netherlands this meant that professional programmes were classified as bachelor with a duration of 4 years (240 ECTS), and university programmes as bachelor (3 year, 180 ECTS) and master (1 year, 60 ECTS).<sup>2</sup> Gradually, also professional masters are emerging.

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<sup>2</sup> The separation between professional and university education has its impact on the spelling of the degrees: the professional bachelor is spelled *Ba*, or *B* followed by an abbreviation of the study taken, e.g. *Btr* for Bachelor of Translation; the professional master is spelled *Ma*, or *M* followed by the study taken. The university bachelor is spelled *BA* and the university master *MA*. There are government plans, however, to abandon this difference in spelling and to use the spelling

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The existing professional translator training institutes were labelled BA and a new university programme at MA level was founded at the University of Utrecht, later followed by Leyden, and Amsterdam (at the University of Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit). The university programmes are either limited in languages and specialisations offered or geared mainly towards literary translation, as is the case in Utrecht. This resulted in a rather strange situation still actual today: on the professional side, there are three BA programmes without successive MA programmes, and on the university side there are MA programmes without preceding BA programmes. The professional BA programmes are not eligible for EMT membership, and the MA programmes do not intend to apply or are not (yet) ready to do so. Consequently, the Maastricht School with its practice-oriented curriculum is not involved in today's discussion on professionalisation and employability. Students from professional BA programmes cannot go directly to a university MA, they first have to take an extra year.

What was clear, though, at the foundation of the Maastricht School were the outlines of its curriculum. These were the result of an elaborate survey among existing training institutes in the Netherlands (Amsterdam) and other countries (Saarbrücken - DE, Heidelberg - DE, Geneva - CH, Antwerp - BE), the profession (translation

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with two capitals (*BA* and *MA*) also for professional programmes. In the rest of this paper I will use the spelling *BA* and *MA*.

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bureaus), and national and international customers of translation services (companies and institutions). The training institutes were surveyed on mission, objectives, and curriculum, and the profession and customers on needs and expectations. The curriculum that emerged from this survey was truly practice-oriented right from the beginning, and still is, despite a number of reorganisations. As such it is still very up-to-date and relevant in today's discussion about the ideal translator training curriculum.

## **2. MISSION, DIDACTIC CONCEPT, COMPETENCES, PROFESSIONALISATION AND EMPLOYABILITY**

The curriculum at the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting is practice-oriented. This is reflected in its mission, didactic concept, competences trained, and the presence in the curriculum of professionalisation and employability.

### **2.1 Mission**

The Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting envisages to train students to become starting professionals of translation and/or interpreting who can find employment in the profession or related areas. Students are trained as specialised jacks of all trades (the first logo of the Maastricht School was the caterpillar, symbolising this multi-employability). As such they are “specialist

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generalists”. The School does this by offering students a practice-oriented learning environment that prepares them for working in the profession and motivates them in learning for the profession. Training and research are, furthermore, intimately connected; graduates have research competence and results from research are “fed back” into the curriculum. Finally, students learn in learning communities that introduce them to the professional culture of the profession.

## **2.2 Didactic concept**

This mission is translated into a competence-oriented didactic concept in which students work with a critical attitude on realistic tasks that are common practice in the profession and that enable them to acquire the competences set by the School and required by the profession in order for them to graduate as starting professionals. These tasks progress in difficulty and complexity from rather easy to difficult and simple to complex, respectively, from year one to the end of year 4. In year 4 these are full-fledged tasks that would be carried out by beginning professionals in the profession. In the early stages of their study students learn under direct steering and control of lecturers, which gradually changes into guidance by lecturers as well as external professionals. Students become more and more independent in the course of their study.



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## 2.3 Competences

The competences taught are based on those formulated in EN 15038 (p. 9)/ ISO 17100 (p. 6) and correspond to a large extent with those formulated for EMT<sup>3</sup>. The competences for translation and interpreting trained in Maastricht are:

1. translating/interpreting competence (with 3 sub-competences);
2. linguistic and textual competence (with 4 sub-competences);
3. searching strategies and research competence (with 5 sub-competences);
4. cultural competence;
5. technical competence (with 5 sub-competences);
6. entrepreneurial competence (with 4 sub-competences);
7. inter-personal competence (with 4 sub-competences);
8. problem solving competence.

These competences served as a model for the Dutch national set of competences for translation and interpreting. In this national set of competences, competences

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<sup>3</sup> This holds for translation only, since EMT does not deal with interpreting. For the formulation of these competences see EMT – European Master’s in Translation and EMT, expert group (2009, p. 3-7).

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(6), (7) and (8) have been accommodated in one competence commercial and entrepreneurial competence. Finally, this national set has been endorsed by all the stakeholders in the country and have been declared the minimal competences for registering in the official national register for sworn translators and interpreters.

The Maastricht competences are divided into three levels: level 1 (year 1), level 2 (year 2), and level 3 (years 3 and 4). These levels range from fairly general and simple to specialised and complex. Per level all the competences are trained, practised and assessed with the idea that they are not isolated elements some of which are suited for year 1, others for year 2, and again others for years 3 and 4, but that they form one unity present in translation and interpreting.

## **2.4 Professionalisation**

In Thelen (2016, p. 123), professionalisation is defined as

“[the process to] give a student the qualities, competences and skills worthy of and appropriate to a person engaged in the paid occupation of translation by means of a prolonged training and a formal qualification, so as to gain initial employment in translation, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the translation labour market”.

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The Maastricht curriculum oozes professionalisation in this sense, which is omnipresent in various ways:

1. There is a detailed programme of guest lectures/seminars by external professionals throughout the curriculum.
2. External professionals participate in curriculum development, actual teaching and training, testing and assessing.
3. The materials/texts used are authentic, actual and up-to-date and are provided by external professionals, staff trainer-translators, and sister translation institutes;
4. There are various placements for students:
  - a. short company visits;
  - b. placements abroad;
  - c. placements in professional translation bureau;
  - d. placements in in-house simulated translation bureau.
5. There are also various placements for trainers:
  - a. in translation bureaus;
  - b. staff exchanges.
6. Students and staff are encouraged and facilitated to participate in conferences.
7. The Maastricht School has an in-house simulated translation bureau which is run and managed by students under the supervision of a trainer-director.

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8. The University of Applied Sciences to which the Maastricht School belongs has a quality register for new and “sitting” trainers.
9. Students learn in “learning communities” consisting of trainers, students and external professionals.
10. Professional attitude of students counts towards and may even overrule their final study results.<sup>4</sup>  
(cf. Thelen, 2016: 132-133).

That the Maastricht School is a professional (or vocational) training institute does not mean, however, that the curriculum is adjusted completely to the profession of translation and interpreting and follows every change/development in the profession, and that students are trained for a job in the profession only. This would make the training a kind of in-company training. On the contrary, the Maastricht School takes its role as an educational institution very seriously and, therefore, “[prepares] students for life rather than for jobs” (cf. Kearns, 2013, p. 147). However, because it is a professional training institute, it is obliged by law to train students for jobs, albeit not necessarily just for that one job of translator or interpreter. Students learn more than just

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<sup>4</sup> Professional attitude includes “appearance; participation in class; commitment; appropriate communication with students, staff and externals; keeping deadlines; way of working; taking responsibility for own behaviour, etc.” (Thelen, 2016: 133).

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translating and interpreting, as evidenced by competences (2) – (8) and their sub-competences. Students may also find employment in related areas, e.g. language mediator, language trainer, employee international relations, communication employee, account manager with an international company. Graduates may also take up a successive study in economics, law, science/technology, IT, for example, or linguistics, or other subjects.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the competences taught include many of the so-called “transversal” skills (*Bologna Process – European Higher Education Area – EHEA*, and *Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. Bucharest Communiqué, Final Version*, 2012, p. 1) or “21<sup>st</sup> Century” skills (see *The Glossary of Educational Reform*, “21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills”).

## 2.5 Employability

Employability is defined as “[...] the ability to gain initial employment, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market” (*Bologna Process – European Higher Education Area – EHEA*), and is

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<sup>5</sup> According to the most recent alumni survey (2010-2012) – results analysed in 2013, only 38% of the graduates were employed in translation, localisation, interpreting, revising, text writing; 43% in related areas such as project management, language teaching; 2% in domain-specific areas such as law, economics, science/technology/IT; 7% in international business and international relation areas; and 10% in areas not related to the study at all. Altogether, 62% of the graduates found employment not as a translator or interpreter.

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achieved by “[...] improving cooperation between employers, students and higher education institutions [...]” (*Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area. Bucharest Communiqué, Final Version*, 2012, p. 1). This definition can be operationalised as (1) the competences and skills (to be) taught in the training for students to become employable, and (2) the actual chances of graduates to find/keep and switch between employment after graduation.

### 2.5.1 *Competences and skills*

As for employability competences and skills, these are subsumed under competence (6) and (7). The sub-competences of these are:

6. Entrepreneurial competence:
  - a. function efficiently as employee in a foreign language environment;
  - b. take on jobs and project with a commercial attitude (e.g. using general terms and conditions, and quotations) with knowledge of entrepreneurship (legal forms, administration, taxes, assurances, legal aspects relating to profession);
  - c. offer one’s services with knowledge of own speed and quality of production and delivery;
  - d. evaluate own functioning and adjust as required.

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7. Inter-personal competence:
  - a. treat personal or business information of commissioners as confidential
  - b. handle commissioners and jobs/projects discretely, reliably, integrally and responsibly;
  - c. accept criticism and/or well-motivated wishes of a commissioners;
  - d. recognise spontaneously problematic situations in professional practice and find solutions that are acceptable for all parties involved.

Together with a professional attitude (see section 2.4), these competences make graduates highly employable (see section 2.5.2).

These competences and skills are explicitly stated as conditions for the in-house simulated translation bureau (or skills lab) that takes place in year 4 (see section 3.4), but are also trained as part of the professional attitude students must acquire in the course of their study.

### *2.5.2 Rate of post-graduate success of finding, keeping and switching between employment*

Thanks to these employment competences and skills learned in the training programme, 73% of the alumni

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found employment after graduation, 15% took on a further study, 6% combined work and study, and only 6% were unemployed, which means that in total 94% managed to avoid unemployment. The employed alumni managed to find employment within 7.4 weeks after graduation.<sup>6</sup>

### **3. CURRICULUM**

The curriculum spans 4 years. Year 1 is a foundation year in which students get an overview of all the aspects of translation and interpreting they will encounter in years 2-4, and is concluded by an official exam, called “propaedeutic exam”. Year 1 is meant for students to become acquainted with the rest of the study programme and the profession, and to test if they are suited for this study and have made the correct choice of study. The selection at the end of year 1 is quite rigorous (in 2015, for example, 62% failed at the end of year 1), but once students have managed to proceed to year 2, the School will do its utmost to train them to become starting professionals at the end of their study.

On the basis of the outline of the curriculum components in sections (3.1) – (3.4), one might think that the curriculum consists of static and discrete elements, representing “a modularised, reductionist building-block approach [to the curriculum in which] there is no room for

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<sup>6</sup> Data from the most recent alumni survey of 2010-2012, results analysed in 2013.



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progression in terms of difficulty, complexity, depth of topics – or pedagogical approach” (Király, 2016: 131). As pointed out in section (2.2) above, there certainly is a well-defined pedagogical approach with a clear progression in many ways. All curriculum components and tasks are related to/focus on becoming a starting professional in translation or interpreting (or related areas). The various curriculum components flow into one another very naturally:

1. from making acquaintance with the programme and profession in year 1 to further development of competences and skills in year 2 to expansion of areas and specialisation in years 3 and 4;
2. from rather simple and general assignments in year 1 to complex and specialised ones in higher years;
3. from guided learning in years 1 and 2 to independent learning in years 3 and 4;
4. from short translation assignments to longer ones to translation projects;
5. From working on translations in subgroups in year 1 to working individually from year 2 onwards; and, finally,
6. from all areas of translation (translation, subtitling, localisation) to 1 area in years 3 and 4.

As for the amount of theory in the curriculum, there is so much theory as is needed to learn to translate/interpret appropriately. In terms of Adab (1995): “For those involved in the teaching of translation all theory has to be

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related to practice, to empirical observation of what has been done and consideration of what can be done in a given context and for a given communication intent ...” (Adab, 1995, p 281).

All 4 years is related to the professional world. This is very important which is obvious since the training is practice-oriented.

The languages for translation are Dutch (NL) (mother tongue), English (EN), French (FR), German (DE) and Spanish (SP). The areas covered are translation, interpreting, subtitling and localisation, and the specialist domains are economics, law and science/technology/IT. Language proficiency is trained with the specific purpose of using the language in question in translation/interpreting.

There is a high degree of integration between languages and specialist domains. This means that for the specialist domains there are no autonomous study courses, but only general introductions supplemented by self-study projects. Students are expected to become more familiar with the specialist language of a given domain by translating/interpreting texts in that domain. The Maastricht School has fulltime domain experts (one for economics, one for law, one for science/technology/IT) for domain specific guidance and support. These domain experts cooperate closely with the translation/interpreting lecturers.

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Almost from its foundation, the Maastricht School has had placements of various types. There are “snuffelstages” (lit. “sniffing” placements) or short company visits in years 1 and 2, language placements abroad of half a year in year 3, and professional placements of 10 weeks with a professional translation/interpreting bureau in year 4 and the in-house simulated translation bureau of ten weeks also in year 4. All these placements are mandatory. For more details about the various types of placement, see Thelen (2013, p. 237-243).

### **3.1 Year 1**

All students take English as their first foreign language in years 1 and 2. The idea behind this is that, as most of them are native speakers of Dutch and this is their mother tongue, English and Dutch form an ideal language pair for training translation skills and learning general interpreting skills. In year 1, there are also supporting courses for English language proficiency. The same holds for Dutch. For their second foreign language, students choose between French, German and Spanish. For these second foreign languages, the emphasis is on language acquisition in year 1, which gradually switches to translation in the course of year 2.

As can be seen from the tables below, the academic year is divided into four blocks. Each block takes 10 weeks and includes tests in the last two weeks.

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The programme for year 1 is the following:

<b>YEAR 1</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation (practical assignments)</li> <li>• English language + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• FL2 (DE/FR/SP) + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• ICT infrastructure &amp; Word I</li> </ul>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation (practical assignments)</li> <li>• English language + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• FL2<sup>7</sup> (DE/FR/SP) + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Introduction to economics</li> <li>• Dutch language</li> <li>• Professional development</li> </ul>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>15</b>

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<sup>7</sup> FL = foreign language

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation (practical assignments)</li> <li>• English language + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• FL2 (DE/FR/SP) + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Introduction to law</li> <li>• Simulation of professional practice 1.3 (EN-NL)</li> <li>• Dutch language, esp. writing</li> <li>• Professional development</li> </ul>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation (practical assignments)</li> <li>• English language + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• FL2 (DE/FR/SP) + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Presentation techniques</li> <li>• Simulation of professional practice 1.4 (EN-NL)</li> <li>• ICT PowerPoint</li> <li>• Professional development</li> </ul>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total number of ECTS for YEAR 1</b>		<b>60</b>

*Table (1): The programme in year 1 at the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting*

In year 1, students work on translation assignments in sub-groups of 4 students. The idea is that each member first

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produces an individual translation, which is then discussed in the group, and a joint translation is formulated.

Simulation of practice includes learning how to translate and revise individually, dealing with a customer, handling planning and deadlines and reflecting on one's own learning process. Professional development entails tutoring by a lecturer. Each student is allotted a personal tutor who will be contact person throughout the study. General interpreting assignments are intended to make all students familiar with the basics of interpreting (such as memory training, avoiding taking part in conversations, etc.) so that they can make an informed decision when having to choose a specialisation at the end of year 2. These general interpreting assignments continue in year 2.

## **3.2 Year 2**

Year 2 is the year for laying the foundation for years 3 and 4 and for further developing competences and skills. As in year 1, there are also general interpreting assignments. The programme in years 1 and 2 is mandatory for all students, so that all of them have the same basis at the end of year 2 when they have to choose a specialisation (translation, interpreting, subtitling or localisation) and a subject domain (economics, law or science/technology/IT). In year 2, all students are introduced to subtitling, localisation and project management.

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As for project management, since this is deemed too small a subject to fill a complete course, it was decided to integrate it from this introduction in year 2 onwards in all the work to be done by students. This is a good example of learning by doing and students are guided and assessed on it. In the in-house simulated translation bureau in year 4 project management plays an important role.

For professional development students go on a half-day to whole-day visit to a translation bureau. They are prepared for this visit and have to do a number of assignments for this visit on which they will be assessed afterwards.

For simulation of practice, students do a number of translation and revision jobs as junior translators/revisers for the in-house simulated translation bureau. In this part of the programme they also translate two texts that are also translated by 4<sup>th</sup>-year students, and are jointly discussed and commented on afterwards.

The programme for year 2 is outlined in table (2):

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YEAR 2	Block	ECTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation EN-NL + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Translation FL2-NL + general interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Introduction to subtitling</li> <li>• Introduction science/technology</li> <li>• ICT html + Word II</li> </ul>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation NL-EN + gen. interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Translation NL-FL2 + general interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Dutch for translators I</li> </ul>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>15</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICT WordSmith + Word II</li> <li>• Professional development: company visit</li> <li>• Introduction to localisation</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation EN-NL/NL-EN + gen. interpr. assignments</li> <li>• Translation FL2-NL/NL-FL2 + general interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Introduction to project mgmt.</li> <li>• Dutch for translators II</li> </ul>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>15</b>



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICT terminology management systems + Word II</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation EN-NL/NL-EN + gen. interpr. assignments</li> <li>• Translation FL2-NL/NL-FL2 + general interpreting assignments</li> <li>• Simulation of professional practice EN</li> <li>• Simulation of professional practice FL2</li> <li>• Dutch for translators III</li> <li>• Specialist domain (1 of economics.; law; sci/technology)</li> </ul>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total number of ECTS for YR 2</b>		<b>60</b>

*Table (2): The programme in year 2 at the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting*

At the end of year 2 students wishing to take interpreting as their specialisation have to do an aptitude test. Only those are admitted to interpreting that pass this test.

At the end of year 2 students also choose which language will be their first foreign language: either English, French, German or Spanish.

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### **3.3 Year 3**

In year 3 the basic programme is supplemented with specialisations.

#### *3.3.1 Basic programme year 3*

In the first two blocks in year 3, all students go on a 20-week language placement abroad. The objective of this placement is for them to improve their proficiency in their first foreign language, and to learn to survive in a foreign language environment. They go to a country where this language is the language of habitual use. The placement is either a working placement, a study placement or a combination. Placements are provided by the Maastricht School or found by students themselves. In the latter case, these placements have to be approved first. Students are prepared for this placement. Placements are assessed by placement lecturers and placement hosts; placement hosts may give an advisory assessment only.

#### *3.3.2 Specialisations year 3*

In year 3 all students start with their specialisation and subject domain chosen at the end of year 2. Generally, these choices remain unchanged in year 3 and year 4 and can only be changed for interpreting, i.e. if tests are failed.

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Students taking the translation specialisation also translate between their second foreign language and Dutch. Excellent students may also take up a third foreign language out of the languages taught at the institute.

The programme of year 3 is the following:

<b>YEAR 3</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
<b>Basic programme:</b> language placement abroad	<b>3.1 + 3.2</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Basic programme + specialisation</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>15 =</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Basic programme:</i></li> <li>- Workshops specialised translation FL1-NL/NL-FL1</li> <li>- Translation and reading project FL1-NL</li> <li>- Translation Studies</li> </ul>		4 5 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- visit to EU institutions in Brussels</li> <li>• <i>Specialisation</i>, 1 of:</li> <li>- Translation FL2-NL</li> <li>- Interpreting</li> <li>- Localisation</li> </ul>		4 4 4

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- Subtitling		4
<b>Basic programme + specialisation</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>15 =</b>
• <i>Basic programme:</i>		
- Workshops specialised translation FL1-NL/NL-FL1		4
- Dutch for translators IV		5
- Terminology project		2
• <i>Specialisation, 1 of:</i>		
- Translation FL2-NL		4
- Interpreting		4
- Localisation		4
- Subtitling		4
<b>Total number of ECTS for YEAR 3</b>		<b>60</b>

*Table (3): The programme in year 3 at the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting*

### **3.4 Year 4**

Also in year 4 there is a basic programme for all students and a specialisations programme.

#### *3.4.1 Basic programme year 4*

Professional training in the basic programme consists of a full week in which all students get a 3-day professional

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application course including writing a CV and doing application interviews. The selection committees consist of lecturers and external professionals, usually placement hosts. For the latter it is an outstanding occasion to pre-select students for a placement (and very often already for a job after graduation). On the other 2 days of this week, there are lectures and workshops by external professionals on all kinds of topics relevant for translation, interpreting, subtitling, localisation, project management, etc. Students have to apply what they learned from this application course for their application for a professional placement and their placement in the in-house simulated translation bureau in the second half of year 4.

The “pièces de resistance” of the Maastricht curriculum are the professional placement and the in-house simulated translation bureau. Both have been important parts of the curriculum for more than 30 years.

The professional placement is a placement with a professional translation/interpreting bureau in the Netherlands or abroad. Students work as interns under the supervision of professionals. For these placements, students have to apply directly (guided by a placement lecturer) with the various bureaus, i.e. send their CV and application letter and have one or more application interviews. Very often, students are offered a job after their placement/graduation.

The other practical period is the in-house simulated translation bureau. Originally set up as a replacement for

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the professional placement, it has developed into a fully-fledged placement. Students have to apply for positions in the bureau, ranging from translator and reviser to member of the management. The bureau is run and managed by 4<sup>th</sup>-year students under the supervision of a director-lecturer. The students working in the bureau work as professional translators, revisers and managers that are jointly responsible for its success in terms of earnings (in fictitious Euros), quality, and customer satisfaction, etc. They have to do their own PR and contract jobs. Jobs may vary from translation to interpreting to subtitling to localisation to terminology to cleaning translation memories etc. The bureau functions as if a real professional translation bureau. For a detailed description, see Thelen (2005).

### *3.4.2 Specialisations year 4*

In block 2, the specialisation options are interpreting, subtitling and localisation, but no longer translation. Instead, student choose a minor on offer in another institute/department of Zuyd University. This minor is a true elective; students are completely free in their choice.

The programme for year 4 is the following:

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<b>YEAR 4</b>	<b>Block</b>	<b>ECTS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic programme:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshops specialised translation FL1-NL/NL-FL1</li> <li>- Professional training</li> <li>- Project management</li> <li>- Project specialised translation FL1-NL</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Specialisation, 1 of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Translation NL-FL1/FL2-NL</li> <li>- Interpreting</li> <li>- Localisation</li> <li>- Subtitling</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	4.1	15 = 3 1 1 5 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minor</li> <li>• Specialisation, 1 of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpreting</li> <li>- Localisation</li> <li>- Subtitling</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	4.2	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation practice 1 (professional placement) of 2 (in-house simulated translation bureau)</li> </ul>	4.3	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialisation:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpreting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translation practice 1 (professional placement) of 2</li> <li>• (in-house simulated translation bureau)</li> </ul>	4.4	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialisation: - Interpreting</li> </ul>		
<b>Total number of ECTS for YEAR 4</b>		60

*Table (4): The programme in year 4 at the Maastricht School of Translation and Interpreting*

## 4. EPILOGUE

Despite a number of adjustments (some of which were major) in the course of time, the curriculum at the Maastricht School has remained about the same, dating back to 1981. Its organisation and content are still completely up-to-date and fit very well in today's discussions about the ideal training curriculum with placements, as small a skills gap as possible (preferably none at all) between training and employment, professionalisation and employability. As such it may well serve as an example for training institutes that are still finding their way.

The curriculum also has the elements that Kiraly (2016) thinks necessary for a translation training curriculum to be an appropriate curriculum: time and space for competence



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development, progression between curriculum components, as well as work placements and an “emergentist” learning system that is “dynamic, self-generating, and self-perpetuating” (Kiraly, 2016, p. 130). The curriculum, in particular the in-house simulated translation bureau offers students the ideal conditions to work and learn together in a social constructivist way.

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