

All New on the European Front? What the Bologna Process Means for Translator Training in Germany

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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

After giving a brief survey of traditional translator training in Germany, the paper will discuss the changes introduced by the Bologna process. All German universities are reorganizing their translator training programmes, replacing the four-year *Diplom* degree by modular courses leading to a Bachelor's and/or Master's degree. Since legal regulations permit a variety of combinations with regard to duration, each German university is planning its own model. The main bone of contention in this process is the question of whether specialized translation should be taught at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

All New on the European Front? What the Bologna Process Means for Translator Training in Germany

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RÉSUMÉ

Après un bref aperçu de la formation traditionnelle du traducteur en Allemagne, l'article traite des changements survenus en application de l'Accord de Bologne. En effet, toutes les universités allemandes réorganisent actuellement leurs programmes de formation des traducteurs, remplaçant le *Diplom* obtenu au bout de quatre années d'études, par des cursus modulaires menant à un Bachelor (Licence) ou Master. Les décrets autorisant une certaine souplesse quant à la durée, chacune des universités concocte actuellement son propre modèle. Une pierre d'achoppement dans ce processus étant la question de savoir si l'enseignement de la traduction de spécialité doit se dispenser au niveau pré- ou post-gradué.

ABSTRACT

After giving a brief survey of traditional translator training in Germany, the paper will discuss the changes introduced by the Bologna process. All German universities are reorganizing their translator training programmes, replacing the four-year *Diplom* degree by modular courses leading to a Bachelor's and/or Master's degree. Since legal regulations permit a variety of combinations with regard to duration, each German university is planning its own model. The main bone of contention in this process is the question of whether specialized translation should be taught at undergraduate or postgraduate level.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

higher education in Germany, bachelor/master in translator training, diploma, modularity, credit points

Introduction

On May 25, 1998, the ministers of higher education of France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy signed the so-called Sorbonne Declaration, committing themselves to establishing common principles of higher education in Europe. The aim was to facilitate student mobility by improving equivalence of programmes and degrees. Only one year later, on June 19, 1999, in Bologna, 25 more European countries followed suit. They signed a joint declaration on a "European Higher Education Area," which lay the groundwork to what is now commonly referred to as the Bologna Process. A number of follow-up conferences have been held since then in order to reaffirm the aims laid down in the Bologna Declaration and to emphasize the importance of mobility, quality assurance and accreditation in higher education.

In line with the Bologna Declaration, the German Government has decided to adopt a two-tier graduation system combining an undergraduate Bachelor's degree

(three to four years) and a postgraduate Master's degree (one to two years) which are supposed to have replaced the traditional system by 2010. Any combination must not take more than five years altogether (cf. *National Report Germany*). In order to make sure that the new degrees are accepted on the labour market, graduation certificates will be accompanied by a Diploma Supplement and Course Transcript intended to give a future employer detailed information about the qualification obtained by the applicant.

Peculiarities of German higher education

There are a number of fundamental aspects – both ideological and practical – which influence the structure of German higher education in general and translator training in particular. The first is due to the political structure of the country. In Germany, the responsibility for education at all levels rests with the regional states (*Länder*), while the Federal Government only sets the general frame of reference by means of a national skeleton law, which is then adapted to the educational policies of each state. In addition, universities have a certain degree of autonomy to model their programmes individually within the limitations of federal and state legislation. This general framework has not been changed, and this is why the Bologna process will certainly not lead to “uniformity” of programmes or degrees, either in translation and interpreting (T&I), or in other disciplines.

The second aspect refers to funding. Apart from a rather small number of private universities, German higher education is funded by the state, and university training is free of charge for anyone with a university entrance qualification (*Abitur*) or recognized foreign equivalent. This means that – except for certain disciplines, e.g. Medicine, where student numbers are limited – students are also free to enter whatever programme they wish, and universities are usually not allowed to test students' aptitude before admitting them to a programme.

Thirdly, what would seem to be a unique selling advantage for German higher education, proves to be a no less important drawback in hard times. Being dependent on government funding, most German universities cannot afford innovative programmes which would require new staff or expensive equipment at the moment. State subsidies are severely cut down especially in those federal states which are facing severe economic and financial problems (e.g., Saxony-Anhalt, in what used to be East Germany). Therefore, new programmes will have to be planned mainly on the basis of given resources – reshuffling and recycling old subjects into a new modular structure.

The fourth aspect is related to teaching philosophies. Universities, especially the old and renowned ones, still cling to Humboldt's ideal of giving students an opportunity to form their personality by a broad range of subjects. Polytechnics have always been more vocation-oriented, guiding young students by means of rather rigid study programmes. Accordingly, university students often need more than the regular four or five years to obtain their degrees, whereas students at polytechnics are interested in finishing their courses in the shortest possible time. German students enter university at the age of 19 or 20, and in comparison with other countries, they are often “too old” when they leave it. The government's aim is to reduce the number of long-term students and give incentives to shorter and more efficient study

programmes, particularly at undergraduate level. Of course, this policy will hit universities harder than polytechnics.

The fifth aspect is a structural one. As a general rule, German university staff are civil servants who cannot be “hired and fired” as the need arises – quite a nice way to earn a living, from the professor’s and lecturer’s point of view, but a nightmare for anyone who wants to introduce new programmes or adapt old ones to the needs of the labour market. Staff policy is dictated mainly by biological factors: only posts which are left vacant because a lecturer or professor retires at the age of 65 or leaves out of her or his own free will can be redefined for other teaching purposes (unless it gets frozen or cut down altogether, which almost seems to be the general principle at the moment). This creates a problem with regard to quality control and assessment. Where evaluations cannot result in rewards or sanctions, they do not make much sense. Only very recently have some universities introduced a system whereby some kind of benefit can be granted to good teachers or good researchers. Along the same lines, all the new programmes introduced in the framework of the Bologna process will have to be accredited by an independent national accreditation agency and controlled by peer reviews.

All these problems are supposed to be resolved by the Bologna process. In the following sections, we will see how they determine the reorganization of translator training in Germany.

German Translator Training before Bologna

University translator and interpreter training has had a long tradition in both East and West Germany for more than a century. The first programme for the training of interpreters was established at Berlin University in 1887 (cf. Salevsky 1996:18). Today, translator and interpreter training is offered at 20 institutions, eight of them universities, six universities of applied sciences or polytechnics (*Fachhochschule*), and six technical colleges (*Fachakademie*), a form of private school for higher education typical of the federal state of Bavaria, supervised by the regional Ministry of Education. Some of these colleges are closely linked to a university or in the process of becoming a polytechnic.

Except for the Bavarian colleges, whose three-year programmes lead to the degree of “Officially Certified Translator” (*Staatlich geprüfter Übersetzer*), all translator training institutions used to offer a four-year programme concluding with a “Diplom” degree for either Translation or Interpreting (*Diplom-Übersetzer*, *Diplom-Dolmetscher*) or both (especially in the former German Democratic Republic: *Diplom-Sprachmittler*), corresponding (more or less) to a British Bachelor Honours, a Spanish Licenciatura, or a French Licence. These programmes usually conveyed proficiency in two foreign languages (e.g., English and Spanish, or French and Russian), mostly as B-languages, and translation and/or interpreting from and into the mother tongue (A-language), plus a limited number of courses in one or two non-linguistic fields (e.g., Economics, Law, Natural Sciences, Technology). At the polytechnics, programmes usually included a six-month stay in the language area(s), during which students either did some kind of practical training in companies or translation agencies or attended translation and interpreting courses at one of the partner universities.

As opposed to what a diploma may mean in other countries, the German *Diplom* is a full-fledged university degree awarded after a study programme of at least four years. While the title *Diplom-Übersetzer* denotes academic training, the designation *translator* is not protected by law in Germany. Therefore, anybody with some knowledge of foreign languages may offer their translation services on the labour market, and it is only by trial and error that employers can separate the grain from the chaff. During the past 15 years or so, professional translator associations, training institutions and other bodies interested in translation quality have done a lot of public-relations and image work to make employers realize that in the long run it is more rewarding to hire a qualified translator than give the amateur an on-the-job training. Therefore, quite a few people engaged in university translator training fear that this achievement may be put at risk if the *Diplom* is replaced by a degree which is so far unknown among the future employers of university graduates in translation and interpreting.

Nevertheless, the need for international compatibility and recognition of courses and achievements is more evident in translator training than in any other discipline. Today, translators and interpreters offer their services worldwide, and it is important for them to prove that they have received a good vocational training. Internationally, the *Diplom* has not been so well acknowledged in translation as in engineering, where the German *Diplom-Ingenieur* still seems to have an excellent reputation. Since a diploma is a rather low-ranking educational certificate in many English (or Spanish) speaking countries, translators and interpreters might prefer a degree whose name has an immediate connotation of academic training. In spite of the disadvantages mentioned above, most academic translator training institutions therefore willingly jumped onto the Bologna train rather early, and some have already restructured their programmes or are in the process of doing so.

Chances and Challenges of the Bologna Process

In a situation characterized by lack of political coordination (which may be translated positively as a high degree of academic freedom), scarcity of funds, the obligation to take any student who wants to enter a programme, immobility of staff, lack of quality control and the like, radical changes would be needed to find a way out of the impasse. The Bologna process does not look like a radical change, but at least it made people stop and think about the possibilities of improving some aspects of higher education in Germany.

Students' biographies are different from what they used to be thirty years ago. Four or five years of full-time study do not fit into young adults' lives any more. Like in other places, "life-long learning" has become a buzz-word in Germany, too – but no country, however rich, can afford to offer free life-long education to anyone caring to take it. Therefore, the exemption of tuition fees has recently been limited to the "first degree qualifying for a professional activity." This means that undergraduate training will continue to be free (at least for a while), whereas postgraduate, doctoral and extended vocational training may be charged in the near future.

With regard to entrance qualifications, changes are ahead at least with regard to Master's programmes, where admission will be subject to certain requirements. Some universities have already changed their staff policy. New staff is employed for

limited periods. Universities restructure their programmes in order to make them shorter, they tailor them according to market needs – measures never heard of in the past! The Federal Government has established a national accreditation body, and various accreditation agencies have taken up their work. All the new Bachelor and Master programmes will have to be accredited.

Bachelor and Master in German Translator Training

If the traditional four-year *Diplom* programme is to be replaced by a two-tier Bachelor-Master system in translator training, there are several questions which arise in the reorganization process:

- What is the optimum duration of a translator training programme?
- When should specialized translation be taught?
- Should the programme include a compulsory stay abroad?
- What subjects should be taught?
- Where is the language proficiency achieved?
- How can permeability between programmes be ensured?
- What about quality control and admission requirements?

What is the optimum duration of a translator training programme?

The relative freedom and autonomy of German universities generally allows individual solutions to the same problem – a principle which is deeply rooted in German Academia's identity and self-image. In consequence, government regulations leave it to the university or even the faculty or department to decide on the duration of their programmes as they see fit, as long as the overall duration does not exceed five years. There may be Bachelor-Master combinations of 3+2, 4+1 or even 3.5+1.5 years.

Looking at the general design of the new translator-training programmes we find two basic types: consecutive and non-consecutive programmes. In a consecutive programme, students are expected to do a Master's course right after finishing their Bachelor degree, whereas in non-consecutive programmes undergraduate and postgraduate training are independent of one another. The idea of non-consecutive programmes is that after obtaining their first degree, students leave the university in order to gain some professional experience or enhance their language and culture proficiencies abroad, and then come back for a postgraduate course because they want to obtain further (or a different) qualification. In the present situation in Germany, the advantage of a consecutive programme seems to be that the consecutive Master course might be recognized as the "first degree enabling students to take up a professional activity," which would mean that they will stay exempt from tuition fees, at least until the legislation is changed accordingly. The advantage of the non-consecutive design is that students receive a practice-oriented training right away, which may be enhanced or complemented by further qualifications later. The two universities and one polytechnic which have already implemented the new system, have opted for consecutive programmes consisting of a three-year undergraduate B.A. and a two-year M.A.

When should specialized translation be taught?

It seems difficult to boil the four-year diploma courses down to a three-year Bachelor degree without any loss in quality. Therefore, the universities mentioned above decided to offer a more generalized three-year undergraduate programme leading to a B.A. which is called either "Language and Culture" or "International Communication and Translation" or "Multilingual Communication." Graduates are expected to find jobs in international or multilingual companies or institutions, but they are not trained for specific translation or interpreting activities, which are taught at postgraduate level, e.g. in two-year Master's programmes like "Conference Interpreting," "International Specialized Communication," "Technical Translation," "Terminology and Language Technology," or "International Management and Intercultural Communication." The disadvantage of this system is that those who leave university after the first degree will not have a proper qualification for professional translation activities. Will they nevertheless will they be tempted to work as translators if they fail to find a job as an intercultural or multilingual communicator. Since not all clients are in a position to judge the quality of a translation, there is a risk that they put up with what they get. This would indeed affect the reputation of the whole profession.

Should the programme include a compulsory stay abroad?

Two of the three existing consecutive programmes include a compulsory six-month stay abroad, one of them requires an additional six-week period of practical training in a company or translation agency in Germany. In the third programme, a semester abroad is recommended, but it would, of course, extend the time for the first degree by at least six months. On the other hand, there is no denying the fact that a longer stay abroad enhances not only the students' knowledge of languages and cultures but also their personal development and their outlook on life.

What subjects should be taught?

As was the case with the *Diplom* courses, students usually choose two foreign languages and one or two complementary subjects in the B.A. programme. One of the three universities offers the B.A. programme in 12 languages which can be chosen as either B- or C-languages (Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, English, French, German for international students, Italian, Modern Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish), whereas the two others only teach English, French, and Spanish as B and/or C languages on the basis of German as an A language. Complementary non-linguistic subjects taught along with translation and interpreting include Information Science, Medicine, Law Studies, Technology, and Economics (mainly Business Administration). However, in comparison with the four-year *Diplom*, a three-year Bachelor including even a six-month stay abroad must of necessity be limited with regard to the subjects taught. This is one of the reasons why specialized translation was shifted to the postgraduate level.

Where is the language proficiency achieved?

As far as English and French (and, at least at East German training institutions, Russian) are concerned, a good language proficiency has to be proved by the secondary-school final examination (*Abitur*). The other languages are taught from scratch at the

university. Legal regulations do not allow universities to test the level of proficiency before admission. This is a severe problem in translator training, since students come with rather heterogeneous knowledge of their languages after either four or five or six or even nine (in the case of English) years of language tuition. Therefore, a lot of time is spent on language tuition instead of translation and interpreting training in the strict sense.

How can permeability between programmes be ensured?

One of the objectives of the Bologna Process is to promote student mobility in Europe by making achievements comparable. For this purpose, a European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was developed in order to make sure that credits can be transferred from one European university to another. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System is a student-centred system based on the estimated average student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, including classroom and examination time and the time spent in preparing classes and examinations, doing the necessary reading, writing seminar papers, etc. The objectives are preferably specified in terms of learning outcomes and competences to be acquired. ECTS is based on the convention that 60 credits measure the workload of a full-time student during one academic year. Credits are allocated to all educational components of a study programme (such as modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.) and reflect the quantity of work each component requires in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of study in the programme considered (for more details cf. <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/ects_en.html>, 22-04-2005).

Although ECTS is supposed to make student achievements comparable from one university to another both nationally and internationally, the way credit points are allocated to certain types of courses or lectures is highly subjective and depends on the relationship between tuition and independent work considered adequate at a particular type of institution. In Germany, for example, due to the different teaching philosophies, university students are traditionally expected to attend less classroom hours than students at polytechnics. For both, the overall workload per academic year is the same. Therefore, universities assign more credit points to one classroom hour than polytechnics. For example, a seminar taught 2 hours per week during 15 weeks (= 30 classroom hours per semester) is rated at 3 credit points at a polytechnic and at 6 credit points at a university. Obviously, the amount of independent work a student has to devote to this seminar is estimated higher at a university than at a polytechnic. Although government regulations postulate that, in general terms, there should not be a qualitative difference between a university and a polytechnic B.A. or M.A., it is to be expected that for quite some time to come, employers will estimate a university degree to be "better" than the same degree awarded by a polytechnic or "university of applied sciences."

What about quality control and admission requirements?

Accreditation will certainly be a step forward towards more quality in translator training. Since translator training at German universities (not at the polytechnics and colleges) is still very much dominated by linguists and literary scholars, this will depend mainly on the way accreditation commissions are recruited. When I was

involved in a peer evaluation of one of the new translator training programmes recently, I was quite surprised to see that the group consisted of representatives of both translator training and the profession. If this is going to be common practice, the quality of translator training will benefit a lot.

Another aspect of quality in translator training is the definition of entrance qualification levels. At the moment, German universities are not allowed to test any abilities which are, by definition, testified by the secondary-school leaving report (*Abitur*). This includes language proficiency, at least with regard to languages that are taught at secondary level, like English, French, Russian, and – at least in some federal states – Spanish. But it also includes the proficiency in German as a native language or language of first instruction, although anybody involved in translator training keeps complaining about the poor command students have of their own mother tongue. In this respect, the Bologna Process has not brought about any change so far.

Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal as a Case in Point

Let us now take the Department of Specialized Communication of Magdeburg University of Applied Sciences (*Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal*, located in two towns, Magdeburg and Stendal, in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt) as a case in point. Since I was, and still am, involved in the planning and implementation of the new programme structures, I would like to explain why our programmes are to some extent different from the ones described above.

The Magdeburg Polytechnic, or “University of Applied Sciences,” as we have become accustomed to translate the culture-bound term *Fachhochschule*, is a typical example of this type of university. Founded in 1991 after the unification of the two German states, it offers a wide range of traditional and innovative programmes, such as Electrical and Civil Engineering, Business Administration, Construction and Architecture, Industrial Design, Chemistry and Pharmacological Technology, Social Health Sciences (with a programme for sign language interpreting), and – last but not least – a Department of Specialized Communication (DSC), which after its forthcoming merger with the Department of Media Studies will become the Department of Communication and Media.

The Department of Specialized Communication was founded in 1994. The name “Specialized Communication” instead of “Translating and Interpreting” already indicates part of our philosophy. We wanted to train our students for a broader professional field than just translating and interpreting. Apart from foreign languages (English, Spanish, French, Russian, and – during the first four years – Chinese), intercultural communication and specialized translation (in either Economics or Technology), we taught them (technical) writing and the use of all kinds of computer software, including desktop publishing. Although the degree was a *Diplom in Technical Translation* with two B-languages (one of them English), most of our graduates (around 80 per cent) found good positions mostly in industry and commerce, where intercultural communicative competencies and computer management were asked for – apart from, and along with, translation (for a recent alumni survey cf. <www.fachkommunikation.hs-magdeburg.de>, “Aktuelles”).

In 1999, a second programme was introduced. It is a three-and-a-half-year international programme leading to a Bachelor’s degree in *Court, Community and Health-*

Service Interpreting. In this programme, students choose one B- and one C-language from among the same selection of languages as in the *Diplom* programme. In addition, students whose native language or language of first instruction is not German may choose German as a B-language. The programme hosts international students from a large variety of countries, including Poland, Russia, Iraq, Iran, or China. So far, we have not succeeded in recruiting English speaking international students although there was a certain interest of students from the United States in the beginning. But these very often lack the necessary proficiency in German, which we cannot afford to teach from scratch.

Both programmes now include one year abroad, which can be spent either at a partner university or in some kind of professional setting related to translation, interpreting or specialized communication. It is quite touching to compare the independent young adults coming back from their stay abroad with the immature boys and girls who left their familiar environment – usually for the first time in their lives – a year before. The experience has led to the firm conviction that we do not want to give up the year abroad under any circumstances.

When we designed the Interpreting programme, national or state regulations did not exist. Therefore, we decided to take the indication “three to four years for a B.A” literally and opted for a duration of three and a half years (i.e. 7 semesters). The decision was based on the consideration that a four-year undergraduate programme would only allow for a one-year postgraduate degree in the future, whereas a period of three years seemed too short to integrate both a year abroad and a Bachelor’s thesis. The programme was accepted by the authorities and has been running successfully since 1999. The first three years were funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in order to promote internationalisation and export of German higher education (a more detailed account of the programme’s philosophy and structure can be found in Nord 2003).

The question of programme duration arose again when we had to reorganize our study programmes in line with the Bologna process. In order to use our scarce resources as efficiently as possible, we wanted a similar structure for all our undergraduates. Therefore, we took the general decision in favour of the 3.5+1.5 model, i.e. three and a half years for a first degree (B.A.) and a year and a half for a non-consecutive second degree (M.A.). Unlike the other universities mentioned above, however, we wanted our first degree to qualify graduates for professional work as a translator or interpreter. In our situation, living in the poorest state of the Federal Republic of Germany, we cannot expect state funding for more than the present four years of training. Therefore, a consecutive Bachelor-Master programme was simply out of the question. Moreover, experience at other universities has shown that the majority of the graduates are striving to leave university after obtaining their first degree. If they entered the labour market anyway, we wanted to give them a training that really makes them fit for professional translation and interpreting work. There are a number of surveys among professional translators which show very clearly that 76 per cent of German translators and interpreters work in specialized, mostly technical, translation (cf. Schmitt 1998:11, also Schmitt 1990, 1993).

The Interpreting programme was only slightly changed. For financial reasons, we had to give up Health-Service Interpreting and replace it by Business Interpreting, since Business Administration can be used for the other programmes as well. Follow-

ing the general model of the Interpreting programme, we have designed two more three-and-a-half-year Bachelor degrees, using the modules that already exist in the *Diplom* programme, which will be replaced as from October 2005.

The first new Bachelor programme is a *B.A. in Specialized Translation*. It offers two options with regard to language status and non-linguistic subjects: either one B and one C language plus one non-linguistic subject chosen from among Natural Sciences and Technology or Law and Economic Studies, or only one B-language and both non-linguistic subjects. The second option may be particularly interesting for international applicants with English, French, Spanish or Russian as a native language, who want to study German as a B-language, and for bilingual German-speaking immigrants from the countries of the former Soviet Union, who often have a rather poor command of English. For this programme, we can use most of the existing modules, reducing the time spent on the thesis from four months (*Diplom* thesis) to two months (Bachelor thesis) and using six months of the year abroad for courses at a partner university, where the focus is on the enhancement of linguistic and cultural knowledge. Moreover, we decided to define the entrance level with regard to language proficiency in line with levels C1 or B2, respectively, of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Proficient or Independent User, cf. www.culture2.coe.int, 24.05.2004, also the framework suggested by the Association of Language Testers in Europe, www.alte.org). These levels correspond, for example, to the *Cambridge First Certificate Grade A* in English, the *Diplôme de Langue Française* in French, the *Diploma de Español (Nivel Intermedio)* in Spanish and *Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung* in German as a Foreign Language (GaFL). Since we are not allowed to test language capacities before admission, intensive language courses leading to the defined level of proficiency are offered for a reasonable fee during the summer months preceding the beginning of the first year of study. These courses were started in 2003 and were accepted surprisingly well.

We have often found that some students, in spite of all the information available on homepages or websites, take up translator training although what they really want is to "do something with languages." After a while, they find out that translator training – lo and behold! – involves "too much translation," which they do not want or are not apt to do. For them we have designed the second new undergraduate programme, a *B.A. in International Business and Intercultural Communication*. This programme does not offer translation courses but focuses on intercultural business communication and cross-cultural writing with two foreign languages. Since all the B.A. programmes are rather similar during the first year and require the second year abroad, it is not too difficult to switch from one to the other without losing much time, instead of giving up university training altogether.

In addition to these undergraduate degrees we will introduce three one-and-a-half-year M.A. programmes. The first is an M.A. *in International Specialized Communication* for graduates of the B.A. programmes (or similar programmes at other universities, including professionals with a traditional *Diplom* degree) who want to enhance their translation competence by a second B-language and an additional non-linguistic subject. The second is an M.A. *in Conference Interpreting*, either with one B- and one C-language (A-B-C) or with three C languages (A-C-C-C) (for details cf. www.emcinterpreting.net, 22.05.2004). The third is an M.A. *in Translation Studies*, a programme operated in close collaboration with a number of partner universities

abroad (e.g., in the United States, France, Russia, Spain) and with some institutions and companies specialized in particular forms of translation, like dubbing and subtitling, literary or Bible translation. All these programmes include one year of studies (at home or abroad) and a Master's Thesis.

All programmes are open to national and international students. Applicants to the undergraduate programmes must possess a secondary or post-secondary degree qualifying them for study at a German University or Applied Sciences, a good oral and written command of their respective native language or language of first instruction and of the chosen foreign language(s), as described above, and a good general education. Non-native speakers of German are required to prove competence in German as a Foreign Language (*Mittelstufe*). For admission to the *B.A. in Interpreting for Business, Courts and the Civil Services* applicants must successfully complete an aptitude test for interpreting in the course of the first year. For admission to the Master's programmes, special requirements have to be met, which are defined in the respective programme regulations (cf. *Studienordnung*, at <www.fachkommunikation.hs-magdeburg.de>).

With regard to comparability of modules, Magdeburg students have to accumulate a total of 210 ECTS credits in the undergraduate and 120 ECTS credits in the postgraduate programmes, which corresponds to the rating used by the other universities. Since most subjects are taught in units of two classroom hours (90 minutes) per week during an average of 30 weeks per year (the rest of the time is used for examinations and independent study work outside the classroom), the number of credits assigned to each subject depends mainly on the estimated workload outside the classroom. As a rule of thumb, one ECTS credit requires 30 hours of work (including classroom tuition). Therefore, the workload of practical classes is usually calculated on a 1+1 basis, i.e. one hour of classroom tuition requires another hour of independent work, whereas lectures and seminars, which require a higher amount of independent work, are valued at 1.5 credits per hour of classroom tuition. For example, 2 credit points are allocated to an undergraduate translation course taught 2 hours per week during the 15 weeks of the summer term, and 3 credit points are assigned to a lecture on translation theory given 2 hours per week during the 15 weeks of the winter term. The B.A. thesis (2 months) and the M.A. thesis (4 months) are valued at 15 and 30 credit points, respectively. Both have to be defended in a colloquium.

Conclusion

As can be seen from what has been explained above, translator training will probably be more diversified in the future than it has been up to now. While the traditional *Diplom* was based on some kind of consensus about a common quality standard, Bachelor and Master programmes seem to offer a surprising variety of modules which, at least in some universities, can be combined according to each student's wishes and needs. Diploma Supplements and Course Transcripts accompanying the degree certificate will be the only way for employers to find out whether an applicant's qualification meets their quality requirements unless they test her or his abilities right away.

Designing three undergraduate and three prograduate programmes within the framework of the Bologna Process, which will be available in October 2005, the

Department of Specialized Communication (then: Communication and Media) of the University of Applied Sciences of Magdeburg-Stendal (*Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal*), has tried to answer the questions mentioned above in a particular way. For us, the optimum duration of an undergraduate programme is 3.5 years, with the possibility of adding a 1.5-year non-consecutive postgraduate programme immediately after finishing the first degree or after a phase of professional activities in the country or abroad. Specialized translation is taught at the undergraduate level in order to make graduates fit for professional activities in industry, commerce, or administration. We insist on an integrated year abroad, which can be spent either in a professional setting or at a partner university. The ideal would be a combination of both. Firstly, from a practical point of view, because experience has shown that these first contacts with the professional world may lead to a topic for the thesis or even a job or – if the need arises – to a reorientation with regard to vocational perspectives, and secondly, from a more academic point of view, because the comparative way of looking at one's subject of study from outside often results in new insights which are crucial particularly in translating and interpreting studies.

The need to reduce the time needed for the first degree has forced us to reflect about what is necessary and what is desirable. If we want the year abroad, we have to cut down the time spent on language teaching and learning and on the multiplicity of language combinations. If we want to offer professional translator training, we cannot spend our time teaching languages from scratch – there are other institutions or courses outside translator training, where this can be done better and more efficiently. And translation competence, once acquired using one language and culture pair as an example, can be transferred to other language and culture pairs, provided the translator obtains the necessary knowledge and proficiency in language and culture. Therefore, the combination of an undergraduate programme, where translating or interpreting competence is taught, for example, using English as an A-language and German as a B-language, with a postgraduate programme, where, perhaps after a year of professional practice in France, this competence is transferred to English-French or French-German in a rather short time, will definitely lead to a higher degree of professional qualification than the one that can be achieved during another undergraduate training. Given the (relative) permeability between the Magdeburg programmes and those offered by other German or international universities, a second degree may even be tailored to the individual person's wishes.

The programmes planned by the Department of Specialized Communication of Magdeburg University of Applied Sciences have been designed to cover a broad field which includes translator and interpreter training as well as international business communication and cross-cultural technical writing, all combined with a good command of computer tools. By diversifying the options offered by the traditional *Diplom* courses we hope to better account for both the various needs and aptitudes of our student clientele and the demands of the labour market, without putting at risk the excellent reputation our *Diplom* graduates have gained during the past few years.

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