

GLOCAL AND LINGUO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO DOUBLE DEGREES

The Special Case of Italy and Spain

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ABSTRACT • Translation studies as well as linguistic and cultural mediation studies have a strong international orientation. Nevertheless, differences in the length of study cycles and curricular design do obstacle the implementation of DD programs. One of the aims of the Bologna Process, to increase mobility, seems therefore to be only partly accomplished in these fields. The aim of this work is to introduce theoretical-methodological and practical assumptions of a long-term educational project. In the final part, it will be provided a brief account of the results of these years of double degree. The focus is on the specific difficulties of DD involving different academic curricula and language knowledge not as a tool but as an object of study. This work may also be useful as a model for other DDs between countries with different degree systems.

KEYWORDS • Internationalisation; Italy; Spain; Double Degrees; Humanities.

0. Introduction¹

The European Parliament's 2015 report entitled *Internationalisation of Higher Education* (IoHE) clearly highlights some of the key questions related both to the definition of IoHE ("As a concept it is both wide and varied", EP, 2015, p. 27), and to its concrete application. Internationalisation is a phenomenon that accompanies society as it evolves socially and economically on a global scale and finds realisation in the national and institutional micro-context. Local differentiation is therefore one of its fundamental characteristics, the importance of which the report repeatedly emphasizes: "There is no one model that fits all. Regional and national differences are varied and constantly evolving, and the same is true within the institutions themselves" (EP, 2015, p. 27); "Notwithstanding the accomplishment made in the Bologna Process for further transparency, there are still substantial differences in higher education systems, procedures and funding in Europe between countries, which influence the way internationalisation evolves in these countries and how cooperation can be increased" (EP, 2015, p. 30).

Not only does IoHE absorb society's global, centripetal trends, it is also affected by the forces that can impede their realisation. These are sometimes centrifugal trends (particularly in times of

¹ Parts 1 to 2.3 of this paper were written by Elisabetta Paltrinieri while parts from 2.4 to 5 were written by Paola Capponi.

economic crisis, declining population and large-scale migratory inflows) (EP, 2015, p. 31) to which we must add the pandemic of the last three years (De Wit & Altbach 2021², IELS 2021³, De Wit & Jones 2022⁴). It is therefore a phenomenon that is subject to change, and the variations currently being experienced are highlighted in the report (for example, a shift in perspective: from cooperation to competition), as are the problems that need to be resolved (including funding and regulation at the national and institutional levels) and the guidelines that should be followed to guarantee the quality and efficacy of internationalisation policies. Jane Knight's definition can serve as a point of reference:

The intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society. (Knight, 2008, p. 21).

Internationalisation is a sort of umbrella term encompassing the concepts of globalisation and regionalisation and it is in this sense that it lends itself to covering a variety of policies and approaches (EP, 2015, p. 45).

It is in fact the very elasticity of the term, used to define a range of situations that has favoured the spread of a series of divergent and false ideas about internationalisation. In other words, there has emerged a sort of stereotyped vision that needs to be critically re-examined (De Wit, 2011, p. 6) to recognise and prevent mistaken practices and foresee undesired effects. In fact, specifically because we are dealing with a multifaceted phenomenon, clear guidelines need to be established and the modalities, forms and consequences of the different possible ways they can be put into practice must be carefully overseen.

1. Joint Degrees: controversial issues

Although international mobility has ancient roots, internationalisation in Europe, in the terms in which we now understand it, originated principally, albeit not exclusively, as a result of the

² “Internationalization is a process in constant evolution, which changes in response to local, national, regional, and global environments. Current global trends appear to be more radical than in the past and require stronger attention and international cooperation than ever; nationalist-populist movements, the need for climate change, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are particularly vital” (De Wit, H. & Altbach, Ph. G., 2021, p. 44).

³ “We all must also work hard to assure that pandemic-driven fears regarding travel and nationalistic rhetoric around immigration do not inhibit the free exchange of students and scholars or put at risk the necessary public and private investments in higher education and research around the globe. [...] We call on leaders at every level to support measures to allow more students around the world to spend part of their education in other countries and to keep our own academic doors open to incoming students from abroad” (IELS, 2021, p. 3).

⁴ “[The national report] does not include the perspectives of other regions of the world, and promotes physical mobility, in contrast to the impetus given to more inclusive virtual mobility initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic [...] The overall impression given by the common statement is that of a Western, physical mobility-focused approach to international education, something that may have been relevant in the past, but is much less so in the present and for the future” (De Wit, 2022, p. 6).

Erasmus Programme. The effects of the programme (begun in the 1980s and strongly oriented towards cooperation and increasing the mobility of incoming and outgoing students) have been compared to the Fulbright Program, created in the United States after the Second World War. Erasmus was the basis of the Bologna Process and for a series of useful approaches to internationalisation, most importantly the Europe-wide system for transferring academic credits (European Credit Transfer System - ECTS) (EP, 2015, pp. 41-48). The origins of many joint degrees are rooted in the development and consolidation of cooperation agreements connected to the Erasmus Programme. The proposal we are presenting in this article also draws its inspiration from the long-standing tradition of cooperation encompassed by the Erasmus Programme, its student exchanges and traineeships.

1.1. Discussion on terminology

The terminology used in this article will refer to the definitions set forth in Knight, 2008. The diachronic overview of the terminology evolution that she offers makes it possible to grasp how the definition of forms of internationalisation is fleeting, changing over time as the result of dual tension: on the one hand, inclusive tension (a definition that is sufficiently ample to encompass diverse specific national and institutional instances of realisation), on the other, excluding tension (sufficiently precise and restrictive to define the fundamental characteristics that guarantee its quality and legitimacy):

“Given that these definitions aim to be used in all regions of the world, it is too limiting to include the recognition element as these procedures differ from country to country. The same argument applies to including concepts related to duration, rationales, intended outcomes, types of institutions. There are so many stakeholders and actors bringing different perspectives and approaches to these types of international degree programmes that one needs to develop a generic definition that is useful and relevant to them all regardless of country of origin” (Knight, 2008, p. 19).

The need for clarification grows out of a relatively recent proliferation of competing or synonymous creative words that appears to have hampered the development of clear debate:

“A worldwide review of the literature, university web pages, survey reports, and research articles shows a plethora of terms used to describe international collaborative programmes such as double and joint degrees. These terms include: double; multiple; tri-national; joint; integrated; collaborative; international; combined; concurrent; consecutive; overlapping; conjoint; parallel; simultaneous; and common degrees. They mean different things to different people within and across countries – thereby complicating the situation. One of the key questions to be clarified is whether the terms listed above are used to describe the programme offered or the qualification awarded” (Knight, 2008, pp. 13-14)

Knight then goes on to present terminology based on the following principal characteristics of double and joint degrees:

“An analysis of these definitions shows a variety of core concepts or elements used to describe double and joint degrees. They include: 1) number of collaborating institutions; 2) number of qualifications/certificates awarded; 3) completion time; 4) organisation of the programme; 5) recognition bodies; and 6) number of countries involved” (Knight, 2008, p. 14).

Taking into consideration these diverse distinctive traits, the following is the definition of double degree she offers:

INTERNATIONAL DOUBLE/MULTIPLE DEGREE PROGRAMME

A double/multiple degree programme awards two (or more) individual qualifications at equivalent levels upon completion of the collaborative programme requirements established by the two/multiple partner institutions.

QUALIFICATION

Two/or more qualifications of equivalent standing are awarded upon completion of programme requirements. Requirements for programme completion and qualification may differ between partner institutions but they are established collaboratively.

DURATION

The period of study is usually longer than a single or joint degree programme given the extra requirements needed to receive two (or more) qualifications but less than the time taken for each degree separately (Knight, 2008, p.18).

1.2. Discussion on legitimacy

Concerning the legitimacy of double degrees, there are two basic points of view: while some tend to cast doubt on the legitimacy of programmes that allow students to obtain more than one qualification in a short time, others instead argue that the programmes offered fully guarantee the legitimacy of the qualifications awarded. Knight has summarised the arguments of the first as follows:

“They argue that the duration is shorter for a double or consecutive degree program, the workload is definitely less than for two single degrees, and there is less of a financial burden too. This argument is not valid for all programs of this type, but there is an element of truth in these claims. Double degree programs are being presented by a leading European international education organization as “a lot easier to achieve and not necessarily less valid” and “two degrees for the price of one”. Finally, the status factor cannot be ignored. There is a certain sense of elitism attached to having academic credentials from universities in different countries, even if the student never studied abroad but benefited from distance education and visiting foreign professors” (Knight, 2011, p. 307; see also Knight, 2008, p. 5).

The answer to these questions depends on what mechanisms exist to regulate quality and guarantee the legitimacy of the programmes, in particular:

“There is no one explanation or correct framework used to set programme completion requirements. This raises the critical question whether the framework is based on 1) the number of completed courses/credits; 2) the student workload; or 3) required outcome/competency? These three approaches lead to different explanations and arguments in the analysis of the “legitimacy” of the double/multiple degrees awarded. [...]. Others believe that if students meet the stated learning outcomes/competencies required to obtain a qualification regardless of where or how the competencies were acquired, the credential is legitimate. This logic infers that double and multiple degrees, based on a set of core courses or competencies and augmented by any additional requirements of the collaborating institutions, are academically sound and legitimate; and it is the process for recognising these qualifications which requires more attention, not the completion requirements per se. Both arguments have validity but the variety of models used prevents a clear resolution to the question of ‘legitimacy’” (Knight, 2008, p. 22).

It seems, for now, that the question can only be faced from below, i.e. at the local level, considering the specific characteristics of the national, institutional and discipline-related micro-contexts. In the specific case being examined here (a Spanish-Italian double degree in humanities), we will emphasize specific national characteristics (the number of years and credits requested for each degree is different in the two countries) and those that are discipline-related (for instance, directional specificities and distinctive linguistic combinations for translation/interpreting studies), giving rise to a series of specific requirements.

The convergence so ardently hoped for and sought in Europe is, at the moment, still far away, at least in the specific case that interests us. Too many hurdles and too much uncertainty still exist (Knight, 2008, p. 22).

2. Proposal for a DD: Planning

2.1. Preliminary thoughts on feasibility

When a proposal for a double degree is drafted, certain key points, fundamental to evaluating the feasibility of the project, need to be kept in mind. Issues addressed by Knight, 2008 and 2011, in general terms have been redefined to apply to the specific case we are interested in: a Spanish-Italian double degree in *Linguistic and cultural Mediation and Translation studies*.

Awarding of the degree. In a double degree, each of the partner institutions is responsible for awarding its own qualification.

Curriculum design. This may be the most delicate point in the project. What it in fact involves is the formulation of an academic proposal that maintains the standards of quality of both participating institutions and the completion requirements for each one's qualification and that is therefore able to guarantee the correct recognition and balanced division of academic work.

Administrative procedures. We need to be aware of the difficulties that in many cases result from grafting new procedures for enrolling students and dual recognition of credits onto a system unprepared to deal with a situation of this kind. The level of coordination required between the actors in the system on both a horizontal and vertical level (international relations, registrars/enrolment offices, faculty planning, vice chancellors) is broad and complex and requires ongoing open and constructive dialogue.

Funding. Lack of funds is doubtless one of the obstacles to overcome.

2.2 Starting point: global convergences and local divergences

The Italian university system, based on a first three-year course of study comprised of 180 CFU, is called *Laurea triennale* or -first-cycle degree, followed by a second two-year course of 120 CFU, called *Laurea Magistrale* or second-cycle degree or master's. The Spanish university system offers a four-year, 240-credit course called *Grado* that allows access to a second level, a master's that lasts one year with a workload of 60 or 120 credits. In order to elaborate this proposal we worked on the *Laurea Triennale* in Linguistic Mediation (L-12) and on the Master's in Translation (LM-94) of the Italian system and on the *Grado* in Translation and Interpreting (TEI) of the Spanish system. After comparing the three curricula, a common curriculum for the DD was created.

Programmes at UNITO usually have a more literary profile, while the programmes of the *Grado* in TEI are based on a more linguistic approach and teach interpreting techniques and tools.

One of the main features of the TEI is in fact that the curriculum includes subjects that give a professional, highly specialised level of preparation and which are usually included in a master's degree.

For this reason, the curriculum that has been created integrates the skills proposed in the programmes of the two universities ensuring that students acquire the requisites necessary to obtain both degrees: first cycle degree *Scienze della Mediazione linguistica* (L12) and *Traducción e Interpretación* (TEI), and at the same time ensure that Italian master's students of *Traduzione* (LM94) can continue their studies and obtain their degree upon return.

2.3. The Spanish framework: the *Grado en Traducción e Interpretación*

The DD here proposed is to be considered within the Spanish context, which is characterised (EP, 2015, pp. 167-174) by strong differences deriving both from the autonomous legislation of regions in educational matters and a strong dependence on the Erasmus Programme, the main propeller of international programmes. Moreover, internationalisation policies seem to be heavily affected by a scarcity of funding and by a certain slowness or resistance to supplying international students with adequate services. In general, according to EP, the prevailing vision still seems to be excessively based on quantity (internationalisation as a goal and not, as it should be, as a means). Nonetheless, in spite of the difficulties, a good number of international curricula exists, especially DDs in technical subjects.

While at UPO, there are at present five international degrees, the only one concerning humanities is the one herewith proposed. The *Grado en Traducción e Interpretación* (TEI) was designed following the guidelines of the Real Decreto 1393/2007 issued by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia and is a course that includes 240 credits to be taken in four years (60 credits per year). It includes different types of credits according to the subjects.

Distribution of credits according to the type of subject (*tipo de materia*) is as follows⁵:

| TYPE OF SUBJECT | NUMBER OF CREDITS - ECTS |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Basic contents (=BÁS) | 60 |
| Compulsory (=OB) | 132 |
| Elective (=OPT) | 42 |
| Internship (=OPT) | 6 |
| Final project (=TFG) | 6 |
| Total | 240 |

Table 1 • Type of subject (UPO)

The credits for each type of subject are in turn divided into eight different modules (*módulos o materias de enseñanza-aprendizaje*) namely eight disciplinary fields. For example, Module 1: *Spanish language and culture* includes = 36 ECTS, of which 12 BÁS and 24 OPT.

⁵ OB: Obligatoria/compulsory; OPT: Optativas /elective; TFG: Trabajo de fin de grado/ final project.

| TYPE OF MODULES | NUMBER OF CREDITS - ECTS |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Module 1: Spanish language and culture | 36 |
| Module 2: Language B (German, French, English) and culture | 60 |
| Module 3: Language C (German, French, English, Arabic, Italian) and its culture | 54 |
| Module 4: Translation | 75 |
| Module 5: Interpreting | 27 |
| Module 6: Basic theories of translation and interpreting | 9 |
| Module 7: Translation and interpreting tools | 33 |
| Module 8: Final project | 6 |

Table 2 • Type of modules/disciplinary fields (UPO)

The sum is 300 credits, because 102 credits OPT are included of which just 42 are to be selected by students. Students can choose English, French or German as their first language and English, French, German, Arabic or Italian as their second language.

2.4. The Italian framework: the Laurea in Scienze della Mediazione linguistica and the Laurea magistrale in Traduzione

Italy was one of the four countries that signed the Sorbonne Declaration and the country that led the Bologna Process. It hosted the first conference in 1999 and was also the first country to implement the reforms introduced (EP, 2015, p. 119). Nevertheless, its university system has evolved slowly due to a resistance to change and the strong conditioning deriving from excessive bureaucracy and scarce funding (EP, 2015, pp. 119-120). The country does not attract many foreign students and most of the DDs offered are master's degrees in scientific subjects or the social sciences. At the Università di Torino (UNITO) other international degrees are activated, but the DD proposed here was the first one with Spain.

The DD here proposed will be offered within a context -that of the Italian university- still attempting to come to grips with the reforms of the last twenty years, which aimed at harmonisation with European standards (*Decreti Ministeriali* 509/1999 and 270/2004; *Legge Gelmini* 30/12/2010). The first level degrees (3-year degree - L) consist of 180 credits in 3 years and are intended to provide students with basic knowledge of general methods and scientific contents, together with the acquisition of some professional skills. The second level courses (Master's Degree - LM), which can be obtained after the 3-year degree, last two years and require completion of 120 credits; they allow students to reach a level of specialisation that will enable them to practice highly qualified activities in specific fields. As a consequence, when students obtain their master's degree, they will have earned a total of $180+120 = 300$ credits. In the curricula, TAFs (*Tipi di attività formativa* - Types of Educational Activity) are divided in TAF A (basic activities), TAF B (specific), TAF C (similar and integrative), TAF D (electives) and TAF E (other activities). The courses taught are divided into disciplinary fields, that is to say groups of similar subjects that give a minimum and maximum number of credits each. As far as DDs are concerned, both the 3-year degree in Linguistic Mediation (L-12) and the two years Master's in Translation (LM-94) have been taken into consideration, since both of them are considered professional training by the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR).

The 180 credits of the degree in Linguistic Mediation are divided as follows:

| TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY | DISCIPLINARY FIELD | NUMBER OF CREDITS - CFU. (min. - max.) |
|---|---|---|
| Basic Activities: from 63 up to 81 CFU | Italian language and literature and comparative literature | 9-18 |
| | General and applied philology and linguistics | 9-18 |
| | Foreign languages and cultures | 45-45 |
| Specific Activities: from 54 up to 72 CFU | Technical terminology, advanced language skills, language mediation from and into the foreign languages studied | 54-72 |
| Similar activities: from 18 up to 27 CFU | Similar and integrative activities | 18-27 |
| Other activities: 27 CFU | Chosen by the student | 12 |
| | Final exam | 9 |
| | Further activities ⁶ | 6 |

Table 3 • Type of educational activity; disciplinary field; minimum/maximum number of credits (UNITO L12)

The 120 credits of the Master's Degree in Translation are divided as follows:

| TYPE OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY | DISCIPLINARY FIELD | NUMBER OF CREDITS - CFU. (min. - max.) |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Specific Activities: 72 CFU | Languages studied | 45-45 |
| | Applied linguistics and communicative processes | 18-18 |
| | Methods and materials of linguistic research | 9-9 |
| Similar Activities: 18 CFU | Similar and integrative activities | 18-18 |
| Other Activities: 30-36CFU | Chosen by the student | 9-9 |
| | Final exam | 15-15 |
| | Further activities ⁷ | 6-12 |

Table 4 • Type of educational activity; Disciplinary field; minimum/maximum number of credits (UNITO LM94)

⁶ Since the curriculum is that of a department of languages, the credits concerning other activities, are given for TICs and internships or for TICs exclusively.

⁷ Credits deriving from further activities will be assigned for specific language skills, in particular for technical terminology or other skills useful for professional purposes; attendance at economic and entrepreneurial seminars held by operators in degree-related topics (e.g. computer skills) and participation in internships related to translations will also be considered.

Two languages must be studied chosen from Arabic, English, French, German, Korean, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian-Croatian and Spanish⁸.

2.5 Aims

The objectives of the DD are the following:

To offer UPO students who have Italian as Language C the chance to attend their third year of “*Grado en TEI*” in Italy so they can obtain a three-year degree in Linguistic Mediation (*Laurea in Scienze della Mediazione linguistica*, L-12). When they return to Spain, students will continue their studies and attend their 4th year of *Grado en TEI* to get the corresponding degree.

To offer UNITO students who already have a three-year degree in Linguistic Mediation (*Laurea in Scienze della Mediazione linguistica*, L-12) the chance to attend the 4th year at UPO and get the corresponding degree in *Grado en TEI*. The 4th year of the TEI course will then be approved as corresponding to the 1st year of the Master’s Course in Translation (*Laurea magistrale in Traduzione*, LM-94). When returning to Italy, students will continue their studies in the 2nd year of the Master’s Course in Translation (*Laurea magistrale in Traduzione*, LM-94) in order to obtain the corresponding degree in *Laurea magistrale in Traduzione* (LM-94)⁹.

3. Proposal for a DD: Doing

A global view of the three degrees in order to identify the most important areas of convergence and divergence was necessary: the comparison was established taking into consideration the *Memoria de verificación* of the Spanish degree and Italian regulations (*Ordinamenti didattici*). Then, an in-depth analysis of the content of each course of the three degrees was carried out and various quantitative and qualitative issues, deeply related, were examined.

Firstly, it was challenging to comply with the constraints imposed by different academic regulations and guidelines with regard to: 1) the number of credits; 2) the type of subject (UPO) and type of educational activities (UNITO) and 3) the disciplinary fields, in terms of modules (UPO) and TAF (UNITO).

The timetable of the scheduled courses was also a tricky issue: each degree course has its own peculiarities, in terms of semester and weekly hours. Our aim was to design a timetable for DD students that would provide, as far as possible, a balanced workload per semester and that would avoid overlapping class hours. In this regard, for instance, we had to consider that in the Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures Department of UNITO, the language courses (usually 6 hours per week per semester) are integrated by language practice activities called *lettorati*, held throughout the year for four hours per week. In order to sit a language exam, students are required to have previously passed the written and oral parts of the corresponding language practice. These

⁸ To enhance these languages, there is also Catalan and a two-year Chinese language course.

⁹ As Daniel Villar-Onrubia and Brinder Rajpal say of the Internationalisation of the Curriculum: “the goal is to help students develop a series of attributes, qualities or competences that may enable them to address the challenges of living and working in contemporary societies – as citizens and professionals – and to assume associated responsibilities” (2018, p. 66).

practices last for one year and have their own examination calendar, with a reduced number of examinations, different from that of the language courses.

The core issue is related to language as subject of study: firstly, the teaching/learning process of Spanish or Italian language for native speakers (as L1) is different from the teaching/learning process of Spanish or Italian language as L2; secondly, the shift inevitably involves directionality in translation or interpreting (from L1 to L2 or vice versa); finally, students are sometimes required to work with two foreign languages, with their own foreign language (Italian for UPO students and Spanish for UNITO students) the language of instruction in the host university¹⁰.

Regarding the admission requirement, UPO students are asked to have passed the first- and second-year courses of the Grado and two elective courses (relating to the economic field) specifically required by UNITO. On the other hand, to participate to the programme UNITO students are required to have obtained the *Laurea in Scienze della Mediazione linguistica* (L-12) awarded by UNITO. If the above-mentioned degree was awarded by another Italian university, the exams and the credits will have to correspond to those included in the curriculum at UNITO. This clarification becomes necessary due to the diversification of curricula, which becomes evident when comparing not only the curricula of different countries, but also of those of the same country, with differences at the regional and institutional levels.

The results are consistent with the different phases of the planning and resumed in a series of tables included in the agreement. In more detail, with regard to UNITO outgoing students, tables are intended to offer:

- (1) **A global view.** A table presents the curriculum UNITO students need to complete in order to obtain the *Grado en TEI*: the first column shows the requirements in terms of modules or academic fields, subject areas and number of credits; the second column shows how many credits per module have been already obtained at the university of origin before departure (120 credits of the Italian degree in *Scienze della mediazione linguistica*); the third column shows how many credits per module have to be obtained at the partner university during their stay at the partner university. The fourth and last column shows that the requirements for graduating in *Traducción e Interpretación* are fulfilled. It is worth noting that since similar skills are dealt with differently in the different curricula, the coherence and the rationale of the proposed curriculum can be understood only through a global vision of the modules and disciplinary fields. The latter derives from a microanalysis of each course programme. In fact, only a detailed analysis of each course programme allows the proposal of an organic and coherent curriculum that can single out differences and similarities that exist beyond the course denominations.

¹⁰ UPO students taking part in the programme must have English, French or German as their first foreign language (Language B), and Italian as Language C. Therefore, as far as the DD is concerned, Language A at UNITO corresponds to Language B at UPO: German, French or English, (the languages offered by UPO's department of foreign languages). Language B (second foreign language) for UNITO students taking part in the programme will be Spanish. Language C for UPO students taking part in the programme will be Italian. UNITO students taking part in the programme must have English, French or German as their first language (Language A) and Spanish as their second (Language B). Moreover, since what is involved is a degree in languages, we avoided falling into the trap of what is termed "English language imperialism" (although English was one of the languages students could choose to study), nor were we tempted to lower the quality standards of teaching and learning, something which can occur when classes are taught by non-native speakers of a language (EP, 2015, p. 53; Knight, 2011, p. 306).

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| GRADO EN TEI (modules and credits) | EXAMS PASSED AT UNITO L-12 (origin) AND APPROVED | EXAMS PASSED AT UPO TEI (during their stay) | TOTAL TEI CREDITS OBTAINED (modules and credits) |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|

Table 5 • Complete UNITO student's curriculum needed to obtain the grado en TEI

- (2) **A focus on the curriculum before the period of study abroad:** a table details the courses taken at the university of origin prior to the transfer and which are recognised as part of the TEI degree (from the Italian degree *Scienze della mediazione linguistica* to the Spanish degree *Traducción e Interpretación*).

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| EXAMS TAKEN AT UNITO L-12 (origin) and approved | Type of credits approved |
|---|--------------------------|

Table 6 • Exams taken at the university of origin (UNITO) and approved by the hosting university (UPO)

- (3) **A focus on the curriculum during the period of study abroad:** a table lists the exams taken during the student's stay at UPO and recognised by the university of origin (from the Spanish degree *Traducción e Interpretación* to the Italian master degree *Traduzione*).

| | | | | | |
|---|------|-----|-----------------------|---|-----|
| EXAMS PASSED AT UPO TEI (during student's stay abroad) | ECTS | TAF | DISCIPLINARY FIELD | EXAMS APPROVED BY UNITO LM- 94 | CFU |
|---|------|-----|-----------------------|---|-----|

Table 7 • Exams taken at the hosting university (UPO) and approved by the university of origin (UNITO)

- (4) **A focus on the curriculum after the period of study abroad:** the table lists the exams that students have to take upon return to their sending university (UNITO) (Checking the fulfilment of the requirements for the Italian master's degree in Translation).

We proceeded in the same way for UPO students. A series of tables first shows an overall view of the entire curriculum and then details which exams taken before the period of study abroad are recognised, which exams taken during the period of study abroad are recognised for obtaining the Italian degree *Scienze della mediazione linguistica* and which exams are recognised upon return to complete the master's degree in *Traducción e interpretación*. The tables allow to easily check the fulfilment of the requirements for the Italian degree in *Scienze della Mediazione Linguistica* and the Spanish degree in *Traducción e Intepretación*.

The programme has been run without any funding, although students can apply for an Erasmus grant as a form of economic support. As an integration, UNITO has recently allocated a monthly contribution based on ISEE¹¹. The agreement includes a joint document concerning taxes and accessory expenses¹².

¹¹ ISEE: is the indicator that is used to evaluate and compare the economic situation of a family requesting financial aid. (Retrieved September 20, 2021, from <https://www.lavoro.gov.it>).

¹² In order to design the curriculum, we have considered weekly class schedules so that the programme pro-

4. Proposal for a DD: checking

At the end of the Double Degree course, we submitted a questionnaire to the students UNITO who participated in the programme. It is split into 9 sections:

- A) Socio-linguistic data and education;
- B) Acquisition of skills in TEI;
- C) Academic achievements at the Spanish University;
- D) Acquisition of skills in the LM-94;
- E) Academic achievements related to the LM-94;
- F) Integration in the Spanish context;
- G) Employment after graduation in LM-94;
- H) Personal comments

Nine responses were collected from a.y. 2014-2015 to a.y. 2019-2023. In a.y. 2016-2017 only one student participated and in 2017-2018 there were no suitable candidates. The students are aged between 22 and 32 and mostly between 24 and 28. In addition to Spanish, most (76,9%) studied English. The third best-known language was French.

Concerning the acquisition of skills at UPO, the students were very satisfied with the progress in Spanish language (69.2% maximum rating: 5/5) and culture (76.9% maximum rating). For the second foreign language and culture, the level drops slightly (61.5% evaluation 4/5 for language and 53.8% evaluation 3/5 – 30.8% evaluation 4/5 for culture). Translation skills in both languages as well as the textual, instrumental, research and intercultural skills were very well rated (between 4 and 5), while for the professional and interpretative skills (especially with the second foreign language) the value is lower (from 3/5 to 5/5). Finally, it should be noted that students consider the Double Degree programme very interesting (with values between 4 and 5) although difficult (most report between 3 and 4). The academic results, mostly good (average grade between 8 and 9/10), enabled all students to obtain their degree with a final dissertation (TFG) evaluated between 9 and 10/10.

As far as the University of Turin is concerned, the skill in second-language culture is considered higher compared to UPO (66.7% highest mark), while skills in Spanish culture, translation into the two languages (especially the second), research and interculturalism do not reach the same level. Most students have average marks between 28/30 and 29/30 as well as graduation grades ranging between 108 and 110/110.

Integration into the Spanish context did not present any particular difficulties: very good results for the academic environment and excellent for the city. The only difficulties reported were related to bureaucratic-administrative issues.

Finally, at the time the questionnaire was carried out, 5 out of the participants in the DD were employed.

posed would have timetables compatible class times. A specific equivalence is added for the conversion of the grade obtained for the final project, which is rated out of 110 with a minimum qualification of 106. In this regard it is necessary to point out that students have to present different final projects (at UPO and UNITO) that have to deal with topics regarding translation.

From the students' personal comments, it appears that the Double Degree programme was formative both from a personal and professional point of view, and that they appreciated the opportunity to experience interpreting techniques, even though, as the questionnaire shows, this is one of the difficulties of the programme.

It can therefore be inferred that the DD reinforced both translation skills (highly characteristic of the LM-94) and research skills. In fact, students had to submit a final dissertation related to translation studies before the Master's LM-94 thesis in order to obtain the Spanish title. The skills acquired in Spain enabled the students to continue their studies in Turin without difficulty, obtaining good results in line with the assessments obtained in Spain.

5. Discussion

Translation studies and language and cultural mediation studies are strongly internationally oriented. Nevertheless, the implementation of joint programmes can be hampered by differences in the length of study cycles and curricular design. The step-by-step process which leads to the final result highlights key points to be taken into consideration when different university systems are involved in creating a new, shared educational scheme. In particular, as far as this DD is concerned, the three degrees involved are focused on achieving high competencies in foreigner languages and cultures: the mother tongue at one University is the language of study at the partner University, this implies a series of changes in the core itself of the subject studied. We consider that often this key point is underestimated. Our intent was to offer a really integrated DD, not a flat sum of credits obtained in different Universities¹³. The result has been a programme that includes – rather than excludes – two different approaches to teaching and learning and provides students with a solid background that is simultaneously theoretical-methodological (widely cultural, literary, diachronic in Turin) and practical-career-oriented (more professional oriented, technical and synchronic in Seville)¹⁴, fully complying with what is stated in EP: “HEIs are careful in choosing their key partners and pay attention to both the similarity of focus and complementarity of skills and knowledge, to ensure that there is shared interest and added value for all parties involved”. In creating this international curriculum, there has in fact been a strong pedagogic approach.

The DD programme is undoubtedly more complex than the two national programmes because it stems from an integration of the three curricula (L-12, LM-94 and TEI).

We consider that while the above-mentioned difficulties are already well known (lack of funding, lack of European convergence in curriculum regulation) less attention has been paid to the peculiarities of DD involving languages as subjects of study.

We consider that the process leading to a double degree with a strong focus on learning other languages and cultures, where directionality plays an important role and the vehicular language

¹³ On the contrary, “Some private and public education providers are lowering academic standards and transforming into visa factories due to revenue generation imperatives and immigration pressures”, tendency that often originates “dubious double degree programmes” (Knight, 2018, p. 13).

¹⁴ “The notion of Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC) focuses on the idea of developing an international and intercultural dimension into a programme of study, which includes curriculum content, delivery methods and other services aimed at supporting students' educational journeys” (Villar-Onrubia, D, & Rajpal, B., 2018, p. 66).

is, at the same time, the language of study, can perhaps be read as a process of meta-translation: that is, translating a degree into another linguo-culture. The target audience are the students who have a specific source university system (in a broad linguo-cultural sense, also technical-administrative). Whoever is responsible for translating a university degree into another culture cannot fail to consider the expectations, shared knowledge, norms and practices governing the degree in the source-culture. In order to work and to provide students with a plus in their education, the DD must therefore, on the one hand, implement a domesticating strategy, so as to be consonant and acceptable, and at the same time a foreignising strategy, so as to be able to enhance the other, to make it visible. Therefore, the product of the translation has to work in the target-culture as well as in the source-culture. Moreover, a DD involving degrees which have languages and cultures as subjects of studies, causes a deep contact between two cultures through the academic educational system itself, or, in other words, through the system that is institutionally responsible for the development and construction of the culture.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CFU: “Credito formativo universitario” (=ECTS)
 DD: “Double degree”
 EP: “European Parliament”
 IELS: “International Education Leadership Summit”
 IoC: “Internationalisation of Curriculum”
 IoHE: “Internationalisation of Higher Education”
 MIUR: “Ministero dell’Istruzione, dell’Università e della Ricerca” (Italy)
 UNITO: “Università degli Studi di Torino” (Turin)
 UPO: “Universidad Pablo de Olavide” (Seville)

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