

## *Original Paper*

# The Quality of Master of Translation and Interpreting Education Abroad: History, Problems and Implications

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### ***Abstract***

*After more than a decade of development, the scale of Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) education has continuously expanded, yet its teaching and management have also revealed several issues that have affected the quality of cultivating translation talents. This article outlines the development history of MTI education abroad, pointing out the dilemmas and problems it faces, such as lagging curriculum settings, inadequate faculty resources, and insufficient practical ability training. To address these issues, the article puts forward several key insights: first, MTI education should keep up with industry development; second, it should focus on enhancing practical abilities and strengthening professional awareness of students; third, it is necessary to strengthen the construction of faculty resources and improve teaching quality. These insights serve as significant references for improving the quality of MTI education in China.*

### ***Keywords***

*MTI, education, dilemma and revelation*

## **1. Introduction**

In the context of globalization, international exchanges and cooperation are becoming increasingly frequent, and the importance of translation, as an essential bridge connecting different languages and cultures, is self-evident. Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) education, as the primary means of cultivating professional translation talents, directly affects the smoothness of international communication. In recent years, cultural-centered communication models have gradually become an important trend in international exchanges. As an important base for cultivating high-quality translation talents, the quality of foreign MTI education has received widespread attention. Both governments, educational institutions, and employers have put forward higher requirements for the quality of MTI

education. Meanwhile, the academic community has also conducted in-depth research on the quality of MTI education to promote its healthy development. MTI education plays a crucial role in international exchanges and cooperation. The establishment of the MTI professional degree provides an important path for cultivating high-level applied and specialized translation talents, points out the direction for the development of translation studies, and lays a solid foundation for adjusting the structure and methods of foreign language talent cultivation, thus providing strong support for international exchanges and cooperation.

This study aims to analyze the history and existing problems of the foreign MTI education quality and explore its implications for China's MTI education. Through in-depth research on MTI education in countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, we can understand the successful experiences and lessons learned in its development process, providing reference and inspiration for China's MTI education. At the same time, it reveals the current issues and deficiencies in MTI education, providing targeted suggestions for improvement, aiming to inspire China's MTI program, promote the development and innovation of the discipline, and contribute to the prosperity of the translation industry.

## **2. The Development Process of MTI Education Abroad**

When discussing the specific development process of Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) education abroad, taking the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe as examples, we can further elaborate on the different stages and characteristics of its development:

### *2.1 The Early Germination Stage (before and during the 19th Century)*

During this period, translation education had not yet formed a systematic professional education system, but it had already demonstrated initial teaching practices in some higher education institutions. For instance, some universities in the United Kingdom began to teach the translation of classical languages, such as Latin and Ancient Greek, providing students with basic translation skills and knowledge. Some colleges and universities in the United States also began to include translation content in their foreign language courses, but these courses were often just a part of foreign language learning and did not form an independent translation education major.

### *2.2 The Initial Stage of Specialization (from the early 20th century to the mid-20th Century)*

With the advancement of globalization and the increase in international exchanges in the early 20th century, translation education began more and more important. During this stage, translation education gradually separated from foreign language education and formed a specialized professional direction. In the 1950s and 1960s, translation education in the United Kingdom began to professionalize. In 1966, Bath University launched the first one-year postgraduate diploma program in interpretation and translation in the UK, marking the official start of MTI education in the country. Subsequently, more and more British universities began to offer Master of Translation and Interpreting programs, forming a relatively complete translation education system.

During this period, the United States began to establish professional interpretation and translation courses in the 1940s and 1950s. Georgetown University established a professional interpretation and translation program in 1949, and the Monterey Institute of International Studies (now Monterey Institute of International Studies at Middlebury College) initiated the cultivation of translation talents at the master's level in 1968. These programs provided students with systematic translation theories, knowledge, and skills training, laying the foundation for the professional development of the translation industry.

Translation education in Europe also developed during this period. Universities in some European countries began to offer multilingual translation courses, such as Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3 and Munich University in Germany. These courses not only focused on the cultivation of translation skills but also emphasized students' in-depth understanding of different cultures and languages.

### *2.3 The Stage of Rapid Development and Diversification (the 1970s and 1980s)*

During the 1970s and 1980s, the globalization trend became more popular, and peace and development became the mainstream of the world. With the increasing emphasis on education, the demand for bilingual talents in various countries also increased. As the country that pioneered modern translation professional research, the MTI education in the UK underwent rapid development during this period. With its comprehensive range of languages, long research history, and emphasis on practicality, the UK attracted a large number of students aspiring to pursue translation studies. More and more universities began to offer Master of Translation and Interpreting programs, which not only covered literary translation but also extended to various fields such as science and technology, law, and medicine.

Meanwhile, British universities also focused on cultivating students' cross-cultural communication and cooperation skills, emphasizing practical ability training. They adopted the cross-tutoring of large and small classes, as well as cross-disciplinary cultivation models. This teaching approach not only improved students' professional capabilities but also broadened their knowledge and horizons to meet the needs of globalization.

At the same time, MTI education in the United States also showed a trend of diversified development. More and more universities began to offer translation master's programs in different languages and directions, such as Spanish translation, Arabic translation, etc. In addition, the US also saw the emergence of institutions specializing in translation education, such as the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Many European universities also started to cooperate with international organizations and enterprises to jointly cultivate translation talents with a global perspective. Meanwhile, some professional organizations for translation education, such as the European Association for Studies in Interpretation and Translation (EUASIT), emerged in Europe, contributing to the standardization and normalization of translation education.

### *2.4 The Stage of Internationalization and Technological Innovation (Since the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century)*

After entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Master of Translation Studies education has further internationalized and closely integrated with technological innovation, showing a positive development trend in various

countries. The Master of Translation Studies education in the UK actively establishes partnerships with international translation organizations and enterprises to provide students with practical opportunities and internship positions. At the same time, British universities also focus on applying modern technology to translation teaching, such as computer-aided translation (CAT), machine translation, and other technologies, which have been widely used. The application of these technologies not only improves translation efficiency and quality but also provides students with more practical opportunities and career prospects. The United States also focuses on cultivating translation talents with a global perspective and developing students' interdisciplinary abilities. Students in areas such as legal translation and medical translation need to master professional knowledge in related fields to ensure the improvement of education programs. Many universities in European countries have begun to establish partnerships with translation education institutions in other countries to jointly conduct translation research and teaching. In 2006, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation provided a communication and cooperation platform for European universities and other relevant parties, promoting the establishment of the European Master's in Translation (EMT), providing a standardized educational framework, promoting high-quality qualification certification, enhancing cooperation and resource sharing among universities in other member states, and improving the overall level of Master of Translation Studies education in Europe.

### **3. Issues Faced by the Quality of MTI Education Abroad**

#### *3.1 Conservative and Outdated Curriculum, Out of Sync with Industry Needs*

The mismatch between curriculum design and the demands of translation industrialization has become a bottleneck for the development of MTI education. The modern translation industry requires not only linguistic proficiency but also skills in project management, team collaboration, technology application, and so. As the translation industry evolves and technology advances, the content of translation master's programs needs to be constantly updated to reflect the latest industry trends and technological applications. However, many MTI programs have failed to fully consider these needs. In some countries, the curriculum still focuses primarily on theory and basic knowledge, lacking specialized courses such as translation process management and translation assistance software application, leading to students' relatively backward translation practice abilities. While many universities have introduced computer-aided translation equipment and related software for cultivating translation master's students, the frequency of usage is low, with the equipment remaining idle for most of the time. Teachers rarely apply them in class, unable to meet the requirements of information-based teaching. Additionally, some teachers' capabilities in information-based teaching are insufficient, as they fail to master online and offline hybrid teaching modes, and infrequently use other resources or forms of teaching. As a result, the knowledge delivery methods fail to keep up with the times (Liu, 2023, p. 7). Furthermore, considering the current employment prospects, there are differences in the demand for translation talents in various industries and fields. As the curriculum of many translation master's programs lacks

professionalism and industry-specific relevance, it cannot provide students with sufficient practical experience and industry knowledge, making graduates less competitive in the job market and requiring them to invest a lot of time and effort in adaptation and learning when entering specific industries or fields.

### *3.2 Fierce Competition and Challenges from Technology Integration*

Due to the popularity of translation master's programs and the appeal of the translation industry, an increasing number of students at home and abroad are choosing to pursue translation master's degrees. However, in countries like the UK, where the translation market size is relatively small, the number of translation talents continues to grow, resulting in limited job opportunities in the market and an imbalance between supply and demand, leading to fierce competition in the job market.

Although the demand for translation services continues to grow globally, market competition has also intensified. Especially in the digital era, the rapid progress of machine translation technology has squeezed the market share of traditional translation services. With the improvement of this technology, especially in terms of accuracy in common languages and some specialized fields, the demand for human translation in the derivative market has relatively decreased. According to the "2024 China Translation Industry Development Report" released by the Translators Association of China, 52.9% of projects in 2023 utilized machine translation. While the development of emerging technologies such as machine translation, speech recognition, and natural language processing has improved translation efficiency and accuracy, it has also posed new challenges for translation master's graduates. They need to continuously learn and master these new technologies to adapt to the needs of industry development. At the same time, how to effectively integrate machine translation technology with human translation and leverage their respective advantages is also an issue that translation master's education needs to address.

### *3.3 Lack of Faculty and Educational Resources*

In the future, the education of graduate students in translation professional degrees should focus on interdisciplinary integration, educational methods, and innovative learning approaches, which serves as an important guideline for the construction of teaching staff (Zhang & Lu, 2022: 1). The faculty of foreign translation master's programs may lack professionalism and practical experience. While some teachers may have profound achievements in linguistics or literature, they may not possess sufficient translation practice experience or professional backgrounds, limiting their depth and breadth in translation teaching. Additionally, some translation master's programs lack sufficient standards and rigorous evaluation systems when recruiting teachers, resulting in uneven overall quality of the teaching staff. Some universities, such as Stanford University in the United States and University College London in the UK, have strong translation master's faculty with rich practical experience, able to provide valuable practical experience and guidance to students. However, not all teachers in all schools possess such backgrounds and capabilities, which involves the uneven distribution of educational resources. Translation master's programs in regions with high rankings, economic

development, and abundant educational resources may have better faculty, teaching facilities, and practical opportunities. In economically underdeveloped areas with scarce educational resources, these conditions may be relatively poor. However, for many students, they may not be able to choose the best translation master's program due to various restrictions and constraints.

#### **4. Inspiration from Foreign MTI Education for China**

Despite the late start of China's translation major, with the country's increasing emphasis on the translation field and the surge in demand for foreign exchange, especially driven by the "Belt and Road" initiative, the translation major has witnessed vigorous development in recent years. Translation master's programs have sprung up across the country. According to the statistics of the National Postgraduate Education Steering Committee for Translation in 2014, more than 200 institutions in China have established postgraduate programs for translation master's degrees. However, it must be pointed out that among these institutions, especially those newly established translation majors, their teaching systems are still immature and need further improvement. The uniqueness of the translation master's major lies in its strong practicality, therefore, pragmatism should be the mainstream ideology of its teaching to ensure that students can quickly adapt and grow in practical operations (Wang, 2008: 20-26). We can also learn from the experience and lessons of foreign translation master's education to further improve China's translation master's education system.

##### *4.1 Adapting to Market Demand and Clarifying Talent Training Objectives*

From the perspective of talent training objectives, the educational mission of academic graduate students mainly focuses on cultivating advanced talents for teaching and research, while the education for training professional degree master's students pays more attention to practical application ability, aiming to cultivate and create high-level professional talents for specific professions. We emphasize the cultivation of practical application ability, especially the integration of talent training processes with practical and career-oriented orientations. The uniqueness of the translation master's major lies in its practicality. Therefore, the talent training process should particularly emphasize practicality and professionalism. This requires universities to strengthen practical teaching components, such as school-enterprise cooperation, internships, and practical training, to allow students to exercise their translation skills and enhance their professional qualities in actual work environments. In terms of enrollment, curriculum design, and teaching methods, they should all be adapted to market demand. Chinese translation institutions should increase horizontal exchanges and cooperation with the translation industry, actively update industry needs, strive to improve the lagging status of training methods, and encourage students to deepen their understanding and acquire knowledge through practical exploration, building this ability into their personal core competitiveness. Only by doing so can we ensure that students' knowledge structure remains dynamically aligned with market demand, avoiding the dilemma of working behind closed doors (Chen, 2012, pp. 75-78).

#### *4.2 Emphasizing Practical Abilities and Enhancing Professional Awareness*

As an essential part of the professional master's degree training, the reform direction of the MTI program should align with the overall trend of national reforms in professional master's degree training modes. Ultimately, the MTI program aims to achieve practicality and career-oriented guidance, requiring students to meet the employment requirements of professional oral and written translators upon graduation and be competent in translation work. Enhancing practical abilities relies on controlling the quality of practical teaching components, and establishing off-campus internship bases can effectively translate the outcomes of theoretical education into practice. Universities can establish off-campus internship bases with enterprises, and based on the needs of cultivating talents for specialized translation, universities can also build specialized internship bases. While constructing internship bases, universities should gradually improve the internship management for students. Diverse internship bases provide MTI students with a large number of stable internship opportunities, which meet the practical-oriented requirements of the program and provide a smooth transition for students to enter the language service market and achieve successful employment (Zhang & Wang, 2023, pp. 184-196). China's MTI students should quickly immerse themselves in the broader context of the translation industry, cultivate their professional awareness and abilities through translation practice, continuously enhance their value and strengthen their professional competitiveness in a competitive environment, and become qualified translation talents that meet the requirements of the translation industry.

The characteristics of being competent in translation work are not only reflected in translation knowledge and skills, but also include professional ethics, market orientation, innovation orientation, achievement orientation, and values (Zhou & He, 2013, pp. 65-67). Career planning and employment guidance are crucial links in enhancing students' professional awareness. MTI education should strengthen career planning education for students, help them understand the employment prospects and development trends of the translation industry, and clarify their career goals and positioning. At the same time, personalized employment guidance services should be provided to help students understand the employment market and the needs of employers, improving job-hunting skills and competitiveness. The university can also invite industry experts or outstanding alumni to conduct career sharing and exchanges with students, inspiring their professional enthusiasm and confidence.

#### *4.3 Updating Teaching Methods and Enhancing the Construction of Teacher Teams*

Ding (Ding, 2012, p. 181) and Zhu (Zhu, 2, pp. 105-107) believe that mentors engaged in teaching for MTI programs should not only possess strong professional backgrounds but also rich practical experience. For instance, the cooperative mechanism of a dual-mentor system emphasizes the importance of the participation of mentors from outside the university. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge; they are providers of resources. The knowledge that students acquire through lectures is limited and abstract. However, through effective and open guidance from teachers, students can learn how to access resources and apply their "learned" knowledge in a targeted manner

(Zhou & Li, 2017, pp. 21-26). Teachers' teaching should not be constrained by space or time. Instead, they should guide students in the manner of translation project managers, enabling students to apply the theoretical knowledge they have mastered to translation practice. Teachers should also continuously participate in translation practice to accumulate experience. Universities can organize regular training and exchanges for teachers to enhance their teaching abilities and professional qualities. By introducing outstanding talents, cultivating young teachers, and other means, a team of teachers with profound theoretical knowledge, exquisite teaching skills, rich practical experience, and strong service capabilities can be built.

## 5. Conclusion

After an in-depth exploration of the history, issues, and enlightenment of foreign Master of Translation education, it is not difficult to find that the development of MTI education globally is filled with both challenges and tremendous opportunities. Firstly, reviewing the history of foreign MTI education, we have witnessed a transformation from traditional translation teaching to a close integration with modern technology and industry demands. This process not only reflects the rapid development of the translation industry but also embodies the unremitting efforts of translation education in adapting to the changes of the times. However, in this process, we also have to face a series of issues. From outdated curriculum settings, insufficient teacher resources, to inadequate practical ability training and lack of academic research capabilities, these issues not only affect the quality of MTI education but also constrain the cultivation and development of translation talents. Facing these issues, we need to draw inspiration from them and explore solutions. Additionally, we can also draw inspiration from the successful experiences of foreign Master of Translation education to enhance the quality of our country's MTI education. As long as we can continuously summarize lessons learned, explore innovative paths, and strengthen international cooperation and exchanges, we will undoubtedly be able to promote the continuous improvement of the quality of MTI education and the cultivation and development of translation talents.

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