Impact of Dual Specialisation on Students' Competence

Assessing UR's UndergraduateTranslator and Interpreter Training Programme

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Abstract: Abstract Missing This paper describes the structure of the translation and interpreting programme of the University of Rwanda at the undergraduate level. By analysing theoretical and practical components underlying the two disciplines involved, secondary data from different scholars depict the competencies that are expected from a well-trained translator and interpreter. Though training in the two areas have some aspects in common such as linguistic, intercultural, technological competencies, etc., translator trainees need to acquire advanced skills in textual analysis and writing. On the other hand, apart from listening and speaking skills, the trainee interpreters are required to develop, at a very high level, their speech analysis skills, their memory, and their rhetorical skills. The results in this paper prove that all these competencies that are too exerting on each of the two sides cannot be fully developed in a dual specialisation programme like that of the University of Rwanda, in which trainees major at the same time in translation and interpreting. As shown by the data collected from different respondents, this approach impacts negatively on the trainees' performance in both disciplines, and produces trainees who have not reached an optimum level of competence. As a solution to this crucial problem, the paper recommends tt a fundamental shift in the programme by redesign it to give more space to each of the two areas of specialisation.

Keywords: translator; interpreter; training; programme; specialisation; performance.

Résumé: Cet article revient sur la maquette du programme de traduction et d'interprétation au premier cycle de l'Université du Rwanda pour finalement analyser les aspects théoriques et pratiques qui sous-tendent les deux disciplines. Bien que les formations dans les deux domaines aient des aspects communs tels que les compétences linguistiques, interculturelles, scientifiques, technologiques, etc., en traduction, les apprenants doivent acquérir des compétences approfondies en analyse textuelle, en lexicologie et en écriture. En interprétariat, par contre, outre les aptitudes à l'écoute et à la parole, les apprenants sont tenus de développer les compétences en analyse du discours, et en rhétorique, et les capacités de rétention et de restitution. À toutes fins pratiques, toutes ces compétences ne peuvent pas être mêmement développées. Les données recueillies auprès des répondants montrent que la double spécialisation influe négativement sur la performance des apprenants. Cela nous amène à recommander un revirement fondamental de nature à donner plus d'espace à chacun des deux domaines de spécialisation.

Mots-clés : traducteur ; interprète ; formation ; programme ; spécialisation ; performance.

1 Introduction

Translation and interpretation studies (TS) seem to have a short history in the university arena. However, in practice, these two professions are almost as old as mankind. In Africa, translation and interpretation began to be practised when the European colonisers and missionaries reached the continent in the eighteenth century [1]. At that time, interpretation was predominant, as communication was mainly oral. However, as a response to the need for international global communication in various domains, translation also became necessary in different corners of the globe, not least in Africa:

> *[I]t became increasingly necessary for African countries to communicate not only with other African nations but also with other countries of the world, particularly their former colonial masters. In this context, European-to-European language translation thrived in Africa in the field of foreign affairs as well as in administrative, economic and cultural areas (Baker, 1998:301).*

It is important to note here that it was not until very recently, in the 1980s in fact, that people performing interpretation and translation services started undergoing formal training to acquire all the skills required. In fact, as is the case for many other human activities, a need was felt to integrate these subject areas into academic curricula taught at university level. Gile (2004: 21) emphasises this academic training aspect:

> *In the past, many translation and interpretation courses were part of modern-language programs and did not lead to translation-specific theses, while in high-level professional interpreter and translator training programs, the focus was on professional issues, the instructors were mostly non-academic professionals, and research was marginal. In recent years, institutionally speaking, more translator and interpreter instructors are required to do research and acquire higher degrees in order to obtain tenure and promotion.*

This shift resulted in the establishment, at different times, of schools of translation and interpretation in various African countries such as Algeria (Université d'Alger), Cameroon (University of Buea) [2], Egypt (Ain shams University), Libya (Academy of Higher Studies in Tripoli), Morocco (Ecole Supérieure Roi Fahd de Traduction), South Africa (University of the Witwatersrand and University of South Africa), Zimbabwe (University of Zimbabwe in Harare), etc.

Rwanda was not left behind in this move to offer translation and interpretation as an academic discipline. In 2001, the programme of translation and interpretation

1. For further details see *In the Balance: Themes in the Global History* (1998).
2. Baker (1998:301) notes that 'it was [. . .], in the 1980s, that the Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters (ASTI) was established in Buea, Cameroon'.

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was introduced for the first time in the former National University of Rwanda at undergraduate level. As indicated by UNESCO (2015:166), with the merger of public institutions of higher education in Rwanda to create the University of Rwanda (UR), a BA programme in translation and interpretation appears on the list of 14 undergraduate programmes run by the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS). After completion of the first two years dedicated to general language skills, linguistics and literature, students in the programme are subjected to an entrance test that serves to determine their proficiency in both oral and written production. Only selected candidates can register for the programme with a dual specialisation in translation and interpretation.

As in all other countries, the UR's translation and interpretation programme was developed to meet the ever-increasing challenges of communication in the contemporary world characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. In particular, the programme sought to accommodate the four major languages used in the country. The languages include Kinyarwanda, which has always enjoyed the privilege of double status (national and official language), French, English and Kiswahili, which occupy only the position of official languages [3]. The programme also opened up possibilities for students speaking Kirundi, due to its intelligibility with Kinyarwanda [4]. The undertaking was driven by the fact that 'the language industry [is undergoing] increasing consolidation and professionalisation, marked by surging revenues and attractive employment opportunities for multilingual communication specialists' (Wood quoted by Sawyer, 2004:2). In this context, Sawyer (2004:2) noted an 'emergence of finer distinctions according to expertise in subdomains, related professional qualifications, e.g. advanced degrees and certifications, the growing movement towards standardisation, and calls from industry to define quality'. Drugan (2013:10), attributes this unprecedented need for translation services to globalisation, a phenomenon 'that has led to increasing volumes of translation', and expands on this need as follows:

> *A rise in migratory flows of people and growing number of international organisations in recent decades has influenced demand. Increasing international cooperation (e.g. on peacekeeping, immigration, drug or people trafficking) is information-heavy and depends on translation.*

However, even though Rwanda is not exempt from this need, the dual specialisation model that UR's programme adopted seems not to be solving the problem of ill-trained translators or interpreters whose competencies and professionalism do not meet the current job market requirements. Through an analysis of the data collected from the students following this programme and those who have already graduated, this paper measures the impact of dual professionalization on the training received by translators and interpreters who are required to meet the challenges faced by Rwanda and other countries.

3. For further details on Rwanda's national and official languages, see Article 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda as Revised in 2015, and Organic Law N° 02/2017/ol of 20/04/2017 establishing Kiswahili as an Official Language.

4. The intelligibility between Kinyarwanda and Kirundi is discussed in detail in Kayigema (2010).

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2 Research problem and objectives

The programme of translation and interpretation is interdisciplinary in nature and exposes students to two major disciplines which, from a theoretical and practical perspective, differ considerably. While translation dwells entirely on written productions concentrating more on reading and writing competencies, interpretation requires strong listening (perception) and speaking (production) skills. Logically, as these disciplines are different, so also are the tools required for their training. Translation, which for a long time relied on pen and paper, now requires trainees to master ICTs, together with the various translation-related applications. The trainee interpreter will need to develop not only his/her listening and speaking skills but also a range of personal capacities, such as memory, for example.

At a rate of 20 students each year over a time span of 15 years, around 300 translators/interpreters have been trained in the former National University of Rwanda, now known simply as the University of Rwanda. Nonetheless, as indicated in a number of research reports (see for example Musindi, 2008; Byukusenge, 2013; Niyonsaba, 2013; Uwizeye, 2008), there have been a number of criticisms and complaints about aspects of the study programmes and their outcomes, for example:

— Insufficient time allocated to each of the two majors (translation and interpretation) in terms of theory and practice
— Competencies of the translator-interpreter trainees after their graduation.

As was hinted at earlier, the UR translation and interpretation programme is designed in such a way that students start practising translation and interpretation in Level Three and finish their undergraduate studies in Level Four. This provides limited time for the training, which requires a combination of in-depth theory and intensive practice for each component.

It is in this context that this paper undertakes to assess the impact of this dual specialisation on the performance of the students trained in the UR translation and interpretation programme. More specifically, the paper examines the effects on the students of dual specialisation in translation and interpretation. After studying the effects of dual specialisation on the UR translation and interpretation programme performance, the paper documents, analyses and recommends appropriate models for its improvement in terms of theory and practice.

The main objective of this paper is therefore formulated as follows: to study the impact on the students' performance of the dual professionalization of the UR translation and interpretation programme. The above general objective is approached through the following specific objectives:

1. To analyse UR's programme in comparison with other translator and interpreter training models as documented by different scholars in the field;
2. To establish differences and similarities between translation and interpretation;
3. To identify different challenges encountered by UR trainees in translation and interpretation;

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4. To devise possible ways of improving the programme to enhance the trainees' performance.

3 Conceptual and methodological orientations

As documented in a number of research reports (Musindi, 2008; Byukusenge, 2013; Niyonsaba, 2013; Uwizeye, 2008), most people, especially in Rwanda, confuse the disciplines of translation and interpretation, and thus fail to distinguish between specialists working in either area. However, certain scholars in these fields have attempted to establish some distinctions. According to Nolan (2005:2), 'a translator studies written material in one language (the "source language"), and reproduces it in written form in another language (the "target language")'. In contrast, Nolan (2005:3) views an interpreter as a person who 'listens to a spoken message in the source language and renders it orally, consecutively or simultaneously in the target language'. In the same vein, Nolan (2005:2–3) identifies further differences between the translator and interpreter, as follows:

> *Both the translator and interpreter must have a thorough mastery of the target language as well as a very good passive understanding of the source language or language with which they work. For most interpreters, the target language will be his or her native tongue.*
>
> *The translator relies mainly on thorough research with background materials and dictionaries in order to produce the most accurate and readable written translation possible. The interpreter relies mainly on the ability to get gist of the message across to the target audience on the spot.*

From the above it seems clear that translation deals with written texts while interpretation is concerned with oral texts. Along the same lines, Cremona and Mallia (2001) observe that 'translators work alone, facing a white sheet of paper and a text. They recreate the text by becoming its second author, understanding and recreating the author's writing skills, possibly referring to other works by the author in order to grasp better his/her style and expression. The interpreter's work is not a solitary one'. As far as the interpreter is concerned, the same authors note that he/she 'works directly with an orator, who possibly elaborates his text as the topic unfolds, expressing his thoughts directly without any time for re-elaboration or rewording. The interpreter also works directly with a public, the floor, who is listening simultaneously to him and to the orator'. To highlight the difference between the two professions, Cremona and Mallia (2001) conclude that 'the interpreter's work, [...], calls for a different dynamic'. The interpreting process therefore involves positioning the interpreter between two types of audiences: the one that is listening to him and the one that is listening to the speaker/orator, while the translation process is addressed to a single audience constituted by readers of the target text.

In an attempt to draw a demarcation line between the two areas of study and professional activity, Gile (2004:22) provides further differences between translation and interpretation with an emphasis on their practical and technical aspects:

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1. Differences in technical constraints: 'Translators have hours, days, weeks or longer to deal with problems that arise, whereas interpreters only have seconds or minutes (depending on whether they work in the simultaneous or in the consecutive mode)'

2. Differences in the working environment: 'Another important difference is that the translation process and the interpreting process are constrained differently in the working environment. In (business) translation, the main source of stress is the required speed of processing and associated fatigue. In conference interpreting, stress may originate in stage fright at high-level meetings or when interpreting for the media, especially in view of the fact that contrary to translators, interpreters cannot correct their initial utterance (with some exceptions), and in the physical environment in the booth'. [...] Generally, while translating, translators can also consult various sources of information, including printed and electronic reference texts, colleagues and experts in the relevant field.'

3. Product differences: 'The product of interpretation is an oral (or signed) Text, which is mentally processed by the listener as soon as it is heard (or seen), at a rate determined by its rate of delivery, generally in the original communication situation. It is highly personal, as its perception by the user of the interpreting service depends not only on its content and linguistic choices in terms of "words", but also on the quality of the interpreter's voice, and on various delivery parameters, including accent, intonation, pauses, articulation speed, etc. (see in particular Collados Aís 1998). The product of translation is a written Text, which is read at the speed chosen by the reader, as many times as the reader wishes, and potentially in any communication or non-communication situation.'

4. Skills and personality differences: 'Both translators and interpreters have to be familiar with the respective norms of their professional environments with respect to requirements from professional translation/interpretation. This includes the acceptability and relative merits of various strategies to help them cope with translation/interpretation problems. [...] Translators are required to produce editorially acceptable written Text, while interpreters produce spoken Text for immediate processing by listeners. Translators therefore have to be good writers, and not necessarily good speakers, while interpreters have to be good speakers (and, in dialogue interpreting, good social mediators), but not necessarily good writers. Interpreters have to master the oral form of their passive languages, including various accents, well enough to process them rapidly and without difficulty. Translators do not need to understand their passive languages as they are spoken.', except when they translate oral recorded texts such as video recordings.

Despite all the differences identified above, there is no lack of aspects common to both fields. In this context, the features highlighted by Gile (2004:22) seem to be much more salient:

> *Both translation and interpreting consist in reformulating a source Text (written, spoken or signed) into a target Text (also written, spoken or signed). Both translators and interpreters have to deal with problems*

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> *raised by inter-linguistic issues, such as lexical and grammatical discrepancies which force them to decide what information to keep, what information to discard, and what information to add. Both translators and interpreters have to deal with intercultural issues as well. Both translators and interpreters have to deal with their lack of relevant thematic and LSP-specific knowledge, which forces them to look for additional information in order to complete their translation and interpretation assignment; such additional information is largely terminological, but also phraseological and thematic.*

However, a comparative analysis of both areas of study shows that the differences between these two academic disciplines outweigh their common features. This means that even the conditions for learning and teaching the disciplines are different; and the same applies to the conditions required for the exercise of the two professions. Schaffner (2000:56) hints at these requirements:

> *Interpretation and translation are two closely related linguistic disciplines. Yet they are rarely performed by the same people. The difference in skills, training, aptitude, and even language knowledge are so substantial that few people can do both successfully on a professional level.*

The above statement implies that in its dual specialisation structure, the UR programme of translation and interpretation trains two divergent practitioners. This means that the training and professional needs are also different. This approach impacts on students' in/outside-class performance. This fundamental difference in the needs is overtly expressed by Kermis (2008:1):

> *Translator training deals with several issues which are addressed in interpreter training as well, such as cultural competence and subject area competence, but it also includes courses on topics which are of less importance to professional interpreters, such as writing skills and the use of translation tools during translation.*

Furthermore, Kermis (*ibid.*) states unequivocally that 'translator training does not deal with several issues which should be addressed in interpreter training'. His statement is supported by the following instance: 'interpreters need to be able to interpret a client's intonation, body language and facial expressions, whereas translators are concerned with the source author's writing style and the target culture's writing conventions', except, we might add, when translating video recordings.

3.1 Major challenges facing translator and interpreter education

According to Sawyer (2004:3), 'the need for curricular enhancement in interpreter education emerges from current and future challenges facing these educational programmes'. In this perspective, to ensure that our universities train translators and interpreters that meet the current global professional requirements, translator and interpreter trainers must address the following challenges compiled from various authors by Sawyer (2004:4):

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a) The adaptation of training to the workplace, which is reflected in specialisation according to service sector (often a function of language combination), e.g. public/governmental, private, entertainment, legal, health-care, and social services; and the ability to work with complex subject matter in a wide variety of domains, e.g., political, scientific and technical, economic and financial (Snell-Hornby 1998a: 32–33)

b) The economical use of resources, including instructors, equipment and materials as well as time

c) The training of the interpreter as intercultural consultant (Bowen & Bowen 1987b)

d) Training in the use of information technology for subject preparation before, during and after assignments (Gile 1995a)

This set of exigencies has been complemented by an additional set of constraints in recent years (see Setton 1999:283), which place a severe strain on program resources. These challenges include:

a) The reduction in length of training periods, resulting in the need to streamline

b) A rise in quality requirements in all sectors of the language interpreting industry

c) An increase in the technicality and specialization of subject matter

d) The erosion of working conditions (length of day, number of interpreters)

e) Fast and/or recited discourse, together with large numbers of speakers with little or no training in public speaking

f) The concurrent specializations in subdomains of interpreting

g) A rise in demand for training in less commonly spoken languages, i.e. emerging conference languages[5]

h) The changing role of technology, with hybrid forms of translation and interpretation gaining ground (videoconferencing, voice recognition software, use of superscript, news broadcast interpreting, voice-over-IP [Internet protocol]; written text to voice)

The second set of challenges seems to suggest that, as contexts and needs change over time, there is a dire need for a paradigm shift in relation to the way translation and interpretation have been taught over the last decades. Translator and interpreter trainers need to adapt their teaching methods to the new realities i.e. to meet current workplace requirements and embrace ICT facilities.

One obstacle to the successful implementation of this paradigm shift is the perception by the general public that any bilingual person can translate or interpret. While

5. Here the case of the University of Rwanda is very striking, because the training does not prioritise only international languages but also local languages namely: Kinyarwanda, Kirundi and Kiswahili.

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this notion is not raised by the two scholars cited above, it is reported by many professional translators and interpreters who complain that their specialized skills are not recognised by the public (Musindi, 2008; Byukusenge, 2013; Niyonsaba, 2013).

3.2 Minimum competencies required for translation and interpretation training

It is important to understand the minimum competencies required of any person engaged in the translation and interpretation professions, and to structure any competence-based training programme around these core requirements. In this connection, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), an Australian based organisation, proposes a knowledge base and set of core skills which should be taken into account in the preparatory practical coursework for interpreter trainees. The Table 1 combines the knowledge and skills required. However, those that are translator or interpreter-specific are highlighted in bold to show the differences underlying the two disciplines and professions.

Though there is no such national accreditation body in Rwanda, the learning outcomes of UR's translator and interpreter training programme should be sufficiently advanced so as to maintain minimum standards at both national and international levels. It is probably against this background that UR's programme was divided into two blocks: the first two levels of training devoted to modules on languages skill in English, French, Kinyarwanda and Kiswahili; and the last two years, which form the core part of the dual specialisation in translation and interpretation.

As shown in Table 2, the first two levels of the programme consist of preparatory and skills-based modules to be taken by all the students of the School of Arts and Languages (SAL). The core part of the UR's translator and interpreter training programme starts after an entrance examination designed for Level Two students. The exam is intended to select students who prove themselves to have less difficulty in translating simple texts from/into at least 3 languages. However, some criticisms have been levelled against this procedure on the grounds that it does not provide recruiters with enough space to check the students' linguistic competencies in terms of their oral and written proficiencies.

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Table 1: NAATI Translator/Interpreter Knowledge and Skills

Competencies	Knowledge	Skills
Language Competency (in two languages)	Vocabulary knowledge, grammar knowledge Idiomatic knowledge, language trends knowledge	Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer
Intercultural Competency	Cultural, historical and political knowledge	Sociolinguistic skills
Research Competency	Knowledge of research tools and methods	Terminology and information research skills, ability to create and maintain a knowledge bank
Technological Competency	Knowledge of translation/interpretiation technology	Interpreting through communication media Information and communications technology (ICTs) skills Computer skills: text production and management Computer skills: internet Computer skills: computer-assisted translation
Thematic Competency	General knowledge, current events knowledge, subject-matter specific knowledge, institution-specific knowledge	
Transfer Competency	Knowledge of translation methods Knowledge of interpreting modes	Textual analysis skills, writing skills Discourse analysis skills, discourse management skills, meaning transfer, memory skills, rhetorical skills
	Knowledge of translation standards, knowledge of textual conventions	Ability to follow revision specifications, proofreading and post-editing skills
Service Provision Competency	Knowledge of the business of translation/interpretation	Translation/interpretation business skills communication skills, translation business system skills, interpersonal skills
Ethical Competency	Knowledge of ethics	Professional ethics

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Table 2: structure of UR's undergraduate translator and interpreter training programme

BLOC I	
Level One Modules	**Level Two Modules**
Language skills in English	Language skills in English II
Language skills in French	Language skills in French II
Language skills in Kinyarwanda	Language skills in Kinyarwanda II
Language skills in Kiswahili	Language skills in Kiswahili II
Cultural studies	General linguistics
ICT and study skills	Literary studies
	Introduction to translation
BLOC II	
Level Three Modules	**Level Four Modules**
Aspects of linguistics	Aspects of linguistics II
Discourses of translation and interpretation	Professional aspects of translation and interpretation
Professional practice of translation IA	Professional practice of translation IIA
Professional practice of translation IB	Professional practice of translation IIB
Professional practice of interpretation	Professional practice of interpretation II
Internship	Dissertation

3.3 Practical component of the translator/interpreter training program

In addition to the theoretical components that facilitate students' understanding of the theories and techniques of translation and interpretation, experts in translator and interpreter training have always overemphasised language knowledge as a precondition for the programme. This is well noted by Sawyer (2004:3): 'language is a means to an end in translator and interpreter education and the profession'. However, beyond language proficiency, Robinson (1997:57) insists on the importance of practical components: 'the most successful translation and interpretation (T&I) programmes always incorporate real-world experience into their curricula, in the form of internships, apprenticeships, and independent projects'. Internship activities, that are sometimes referred to as *work placement,* enable students and new graduates to acquire the particular skills or experience needed to perform their jobs as required. In the case of the UR' translation and interpretation programme, one month allocated to an internship at the end of Level Three seems inadequate for the acquisition of real-world experience in both areas. The main reason behind this insufficiency is the difficulty for one person to invest an equal amount of energy and time in the practi-

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cal component of the programme through laboratory and in-class practicals and the internship.

Nonetheless, as shown in the UR's translation and interpretation programme, limited time is allocated to the practical component of interpretation: only two modules are allocated to this part. On top of that, though translation seems to be accorded slightly more space, the programme does not allow the trainees to tackle a sufficient amount of texts in more specialised subdomains such as legal translation, medical translation, etc., as is the case in similar programmes at other universities. This calls for a review of the UR programme and the establishment of appropriate procedures to measure the trainees' learning outcomes, as emphasised by Sawyer (2004: xi): 'I view expertise, or interpretation competence, as an outcome of curriculum design and implementation and review procedures used to assess these outcomes'.

4 Methodological approaches

The study was conducted in the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS) of the University of Rwanda, specifically on how the programme of translation and interpretation is conducted. The study involved three categories of respondents: UR academic staff members, lecturers and students during the academic year 2017. To assess appreciation of the programme, six translators and interpreters were selected from the pool of former UR students who have graduated since the creation of the programme. All of the graduates included in the sample worked either as freelance or contracted translators and interpreters. In total, 23 respondents were selected from a total of 72. Two main sampling techniques were used:

— Random sampling: The random sampling technique was applied to select students in Level 3 and Level 4 of the programme.

— Non-random sampling: In the selection of the remaining categories of respondents, that included UR lecturers, freelance or contracted translators and interpreters, a non-random sampling technique known as the 'purposive sampling technique' was deemed the most appropriate. This technique proved necessary since, due to the geographical distribution of graduates across the country, and because of their heterogeneity, it was very difficult to compile a list for random sampling. The following table shows the total population from which the research sample was selected:

Table 3: Research Sample

Sample population category	Population	Sample
Level Three Students	20	6
Level Four Students	40	9
UR lecturers	4	2
Freelance/contracted translators	10	4
Freelance/contracted interpreters	4	2
TOTAL	**72**	**23**

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To conduct random sampling of the student category from a total of 60 individuals, the following formula was applied: n/N = 15/60= 1/4. The fraction means that one out of 4 students was randomly selected from the list obtained from the SAL's registry for Level Three and Level Four students of translation and interpretation.

To collect field data, different types of methods were used. The first was interviews and the second was questionnaires. The first was used for participants who were deemed to have enough time to meet with the researcher and write down answers as questions were read out to them. The second important data collection instrument was a self-completion questionnaire that was handed to a category of respondents who could not be available at the fixed time when the researcher needed them. As the above respondents had enough time to think on their own, some open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to garner in-depth opinions and recommendations on how the UR translator and interpreter training programme can be improved. This category of respondents included members of UR's academic staff, together with lecturers and some professional translators and interpreters working for translation and interpretation companies in Rwanda.

In this respect, a series of questions on the respondents' attitude, feelings and opinions were formulated to suit the Likert Scale Method of Summated Rating. The method was used to generate these opinionnaires. The respondents' responses were based on 5 categories:

— Degree of their agreement/disagreement (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Undecided, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree);

— Degree of frequency of some items (5=Always; 4= Often, 3=Sometimes, 2=Rare, 1=Never); or

— Degree of quality of some items (5=Very Good, 4= Good, 3=Undecided; 2=Poor, 1=Very Poor).

The collected raw data was converted into statistical data using frequency tables and rating scales for opinionnaires. The items were grouped and analysed according to how they matched this paper's specific objectives.

5 Research findings and discussions

To show the weighting and relevance of each set of data collected, summaries of quantitative findings were presented in frequency distribution tables. In this context, some questions were asked about the students' training prior to induction into the translation and interpretation programme for students in Level Three and Level Four. Lecturers, and professional translators and interpreters working as freelancers, or those employed in translation and interpretation companies were given a self-completion questionnaire to provide their opinions on the programme from which they graduated.

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5.1 Translator and interpreter training, preparatory skills

To collect information on the students' background, a question was formulated to determine whether the students had been registered in the first two years of the School of Arts and Languages before following the UR translator and interpreter programme.

Table 4: Students' training prior to their induction into the UR translator and interpreter programme (source: field data)

Question	Yes	No
Completion of 2 years in SAL before entering TI training programme	15	0
Percentage	**100**	**0**

The percentage (100%) shows that all the respondents reported that before being inducted into Bloc II of the programme, they had all completed Level One and Level Two in the School of Arts and Languages. This implies that the students had studied all the 8 modules that focus on language skills in their working languages (i.e. English, French, Kinyarwanda and Kiswahili) introduced in Level One and enhanced in Level Two. This model is designed in such a way that trainees acquire the competencies as required in NAATI's standards for translators and interpreters (see Table 1).

5.2 Entrance examination

An entrance examination is a *sine qua non* for admission into the translator and interpreter training programme. In this context, the respondents were asked whether they sat an entrance examination before progressing to Bloc II.

Table 5: Entrance examination before progression to Bloc II (source: field data)

Question	Yes	No
Did you sit an entrance examination before progressing to Bloc II?	9	6
Percentage	**60**	**40**

The table shows that 66% of the respondents were all admitted to Level Three (T/I) after passing an admission test. More than 1/3 (40%) of the respondents revealed that they did not sit any test before their induction into the programme. This discrepancy could impact negatively on the admission process and therefore on the students' performance, as some students may be admitted without prerequisites.

5.3 Students' performance in either major (translation or interpretation)

After identifying the students' prerequisites, a further question was asked to determine the major (either translation or interpretation) in which they were most at ease.

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Table 6: Students' opinion on the major they found the easiest (source: field data)

Major found easier	*Translation*	*Interpreting*
Number of respondents	*11*	*5*
Percentage	***73.3***	***26.7***

The respondents provided their opinions on the major they found the easiest in their translator and interpreter training process. The results show that the majority of the respondents found translation easier than interpretation. This degree of facility is confirmed by the students' opinions on their performance in the modules specific to each of the two majors.

Table 7: Students' opinion about their performance in translation-oriented modules (source: field data)

Levels	Very Good	Good	Undecided	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Number of respondents	5	8	2	0	0	15
Scale point	5 × 5 = 25	8 × 4 = 32	2 × 3 = 6	0 × 2 = 0	0 × 1 = 0	63/75

Results in the above tables show a positive trend in the students' opinions regarding their levels of performance in translation-oriented courses: 25 points for very good and 32 for good. These results indicate that students do not seem to encounter difficulties in translation-related modules. As it is a dual programme, the research also concentrated on the second major of the programme i.e. interpretation.

Table 8: Students' opinions about their performance in interpretation-oriented modules (source: field data)

Levels	Very Good	Good	Undecided	Poor	Very Poor	Total
Number of respondents	3	4	5	2	1	15
Scale point	3 × 5 = 15	4×4 = 16	5 × 3 = 15	2 × 2 = 4	1 × 1 = 1	51/75

The above data show that only 3 of the total number of respondents assessed their performance in interpretation courses as very good, while 4 are good and a significant majority of them were undecided. Only 2 acknowledged that they were poor

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while 1 confessed to being very poor. Explicitly or implicitly there might be some factors that are responsible for the imbalance noted in the way students assessed their performance in either area of study.

5.4 Translator and interpreter training period

It is here that the researcher attempted to determine if the two-years devoted to Bloc II of the training programme are enough to produce all-round qualified translators/interpreters.

Table 9: Students' opinions about the sufficiency of the period of training in T/I (source: field data)

Attitudes	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Number of respondents	0	3	6	4	2	15
Scale point	0 × 5 = 0	3 × 4 = 12	6 × 3 = 18	4 × 2 = 8	2 × 1 = 2	40/75

The above table is concerned with students' opinions about the sufficiency of the period allotted to the training of translators and interpreters at UR. Applying Likert's five-point rating scale, a large proportion of students were undecided and others disagreed with the length of the period allocated for their training. This means that for UR translator/interpreter trainees, the training period is not long enough. To confirm this, an open-ended question was put to the respondents, whose answers served to provide further insight into the sufficiency of the time allocated to the programme. The respondents' answers are summarized in the following statements:

— Lecturers focus on translation at the expense of interpretation.

— Time for in-class practical sessions is very short.

— Take-home assignments are not marked and no feedback given by lecturers.

— Time for internships is very limited.

— Trainees cannot have internships for each of the specialization in the same month.

— Interaction with translation and interpretation companies is almost non-existent.

Similar reasons were given by other different categories of respondents, especially professionals and lecturers. Some of their striking statements on this issue are presented in the table below:

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Table 10: Respondents' accounts of the time allotted to the practical component

Respondent's No.	Accounts
1	'All the time is spent on swallowing theories and very little time is given to practice'.
2	'I was involved in real practice of interpreting after I graduated. I got three occasions when I was requested by my colleague to join him in interpreting for a conference that was organised in Kigali'.

Correspondingly, one lecturer acknowledged the insufficiency of the time allotted to practice, but qualified this by saying that not everything can be learned in class:

> *It is true that the time allotted to practice for both areas is not enough. This becomes even more complicated when you have to handle a very large class, let's say beyond 30 students. For a class like this one, if one interpreter trainee is given 5 minutes to interpret, it takes two hours and a half to finish, without counting the time lost when replacing one trainee with another in the booth.*

Another lecturer said:

> *Practice seems to be very daunting in translation training as the lecturer has to select a text for translation, translate it himself, hand it out to trainees who in turn translate it and hand it back to the lecturer. In normal circumstances, the lecturer has to read the translated texts from the students, and provide feedback for further improvement.*

All these accounts underscore the very limited time allocated to the practical component for each major. For a programme like that of UR, in-class practice should be enhanced throughout the training and reinforced by allowing trainees to go for internships in their areas of specialisation. It is in this respect that it was judged important to know the area in which a particular respondent chose to carry out his/her internship.

Table 11: Area of internship chosen by each respondent

Area	Translation	Interpretation
Number of respondents	11	4
Percentage	73.3	26.7

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The above table shows that the majority of the trainees conducted their internship in translation, while a very small number of them were attached to interpreting companies. Apart from the limited time available, there may be other valid reasons why trainees are not given opportunities to practice as interns in both areas. Another question was therefore put to the graduates in order to determine how they chose their internships. To this question the following answers were provided:

— I chose the area I was comfortable with;
— The lecturer chose for me;
— A friend advised me to go to a place where he had undertaken an internship.

Another probing question was formulated for students in Level Four (translation and interpretation option) in order to determine whether they agreed with the way their internship was organised and conducted.

Table 12: Trainees' appreciation of the way internship is organised and conducted

Opinion	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Number of respondents	1	1	3	3	3	9
Scale point	1 × 5 = 5	1 × 4 = 4	3 × 3 = 9	3 × 2 = 6	3 × 1 = 3	27/45

The table shows that only 1 trainee strongly agreed with the conditions in which the internship was organised. At the other extreme 4 students strongly disagreed, 3 disagreed and another 3 were undecided. The data in the table indicate very low appreciation by the respondents of the way the internship is organised and conducted. For respondents who did not agree, a further open-ended question was added to help them substantiate their dissatisfaction:

— Some of us were just observers rather than practitioners during the whole period of internship.
— We had no opportunity to handle equipment and use it comfortably.
— There is no guidance from senior translators and interpreters. They are busy with their everyday assignments.

6 Conclusion

The results of this study prove that the dual specialisation approach that is adopted by the University in designing its translator and interpreter training programme impacts negatively on the students' performance. As Cremona and Mallia (2001) and many other scholars in the field note, translation and interpretation are different in practice and training. Thus, for the programme to be effective there is a need to envisage a

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fundamental shift by designing a programme that gives more space for each area of specialisation. This move would help the UR translator and interpreter trainees and other stakeholders to cope with all the challenges described throughout this paper. The strategy would also help translator or interpreter trainees to 'develop expertise more rapidly and efficiently to the skill levels required at the top of the language industry' as formulated by Sawyer (2004:5):

> *(1) Curricula must be designed for new programmes. Concurrently, curricula in existing interpreter education programmes must be updated.*
>
> *(2) Student performance must be assessed appropriately, meaningfully, and usefully at all stages of the curriculum.*
>
> *(3) Academic environment and instructional settings must be optimised.*

However, as time for training will always be relatively insufficient, translator or interpreter trainees must make individual efforts to improve their linguistic skills and practical competencies. Sawyer (2004) also calls for lecturers and academic staff to create a learning environment which furthers linguistic and T/I practices.

More concretely, based on the findings of this paper, the practical component of the programme designed for UR T/I students would be successful if the following conditions were fulfilled:

— Admitting students into the UR translation and interpretation programme after a well-designed competitive entry examination which takes into account both oral and written skills.

— Allocating equal training periods to practical sessions for translation and interpretation; or, alternatively, developing separate options for each area to allow in-depth specialisation in either domain.

— Making use of modern technology tools in the coursework, especially computer/Internet research, audio-visual activities, and interpretation equipment training to enhance students' research, technological and thematic competencies as proposed by NAATI.

— Enhancing regular interaction between translation and interpretation service providers to increase opportunities for internship and mentorship for trainees.

— Increasing the internship period and establishing appropriate ways of conducting and following up for the benefits of the trainees.

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