Second Language Literacy Needs Analysis of Saudi Translation Students at the College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University

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SECOND LANGUAGE LITERACY NEEDS ANALYSIS OF SAUDI TRANSLATION STUDENTS AT THE COLLEGE OF LANGUAGES AND TRANSLATION, KING SAUD UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Sami Abdulaziz Ben Salamh
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
August 2012
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Employing needs analysis, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the Second Language Literacy (SLL) needs of Saudi translation students at the College of Languages and Translation (CLT), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Four sources were examined toward this aim: documents, current students, graduates (professional translators), and faculty members. The documents included two translation job descriptions and 20 translation job announcements. Eighteen participants affiliated with the CLT were interviewed and surveyed. This study addressed four groups of research questions revolving around the SLL needs of translation students. Three instruments were employed to address these questions: documents analysis, interviews, and a questionnaire. The objectives of the findings can be seen on three levels: Professional, Academic, and Pedagogical.

On the professional level, certain prerequisites portrayed in the documents were questioned as to their relevance to translation, such as familiarity with secretarial work and computer proficiency. As a profession, the study showed that translation has a low status. Some participants attributed this status to the misconception that any bilingual can perform translation. This study proposed recommendations to better fulfill the job requirements, and also to better situate the profession of translation.
On the academic level, the study found that the academic degree in translation is not generally recognized by employers. More specifically, the bachelor’s degree in translation that is awarded by more than one third of the Saudi universities is not required for hiring translators. Accordingly, several suggestions were proposed to publicize the translation degree in the job market, including an internship program, workshops, and field trips.

On the pedagogical level, the faculty members interviewed in this study maintained that translation students have different pedagogical needs than their peers in other disciplines. Several pedagogical issues raised by the participants also emerged from the data concerning satisfying these needs, which are discussed in Chapters 4-7. Furthermore, Chapter 8 categorizes certain themes related to the three aforementioned levels, which emerged from the data and the discussion. The themes discussed are: empowerment, the translation practicum, specific pedagogical needs, low status of the translation profession, absence of the translation degree requirement, and fulfilling translation job requirements.