

Career Paths of Translation Graduates and The Alignment of Training With The Labor Market in Algeria

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Abstract

Aligning translation training with the requirements of the labor market is of paramount importance; especially after the advent of Artificial intelligence (AI) and its sweeping impact on a wide array of domains including the translation sector. This study investigates the career paths of translation graduates as well as their perceptions towards translation training and translation market in Algeria. It adopts a mixed-methods approach to collect data from a sample of 66 translation graduates from various Algerian universities. It concluded that the public sector attracts more translation graduates than the private sector with most participants working as language educators or translators. The translation market in Algeria was deemed by participants as weak in terms of job opportunities and remuneration, therefore recommendations were provided to adjust the translation training with the needs of the labor market, improve the translation status and adopt a national policy to enhance the translation profession in Algeria.

Keywords: Translation training; Labor Market; Translation graduates; career paths; translation profession

1. Introduction

The labor market is witnessing constant changes owing to technological development, notably after the emergence of Artificial intelligence, threatening with the extinction of many jobs, demographic development and competition. Hence, higher education should adapt to the needs and changes of the labor market and equip graduates with skills and competences that help them secure a job. A mismatch between higher education and labor market needs results in widening up the gap between higher education and industry, leading to a spike in unemployment among graduates and a decrease of productivity and competitiveness among companies.

The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is one of the biggest challenges to the labor market. Although GenAI is reshaping the labor market, its impact varies across occupations, firms increase hiring in augmentation prone jobs (jobs carried out with the help of AI applications) and reduce occupation prone jobs (repetitive jobs carried out by AI applications) (Chen, 2025, p. 18). Besides, the impact of AI on the labor market may vary from a country to another depending on each one's technological immersion.

According to United Nations estimates, GenAI is threatening one in four jobs around the world (United Nations, 2025). The impact of AI on the labor market is not solely related to jobs loss, Habanabakize (2024) thinks that AI « brings about substantial transformations in working conditions across digitizing industries » (p. 54). Furthermore, some occupations bear the brunt of AI more than others, translating and interpreting, for instance, would be among the most affected occupations by AI (Creamer, 2024). Many translators turned to Machine Translation Post-Editing (MTPE) to enhance the machine translation output.

The practice of translation dates back to the early stages of history, it has helped facilitate communication between people speaking different languages and belonging to different cultures, both in times of peace and war. However, the 20th century marked the emergence of translation studies as a discipline and the boom of institutional training for translators and interpreters (Liu, 2013). Translation, on the onset, was considered as a mere linguistic activity consisting in translating the words of the original text with their equivalents in the target text, the 1990's marked the establishment of the cultural turn that emphasized the role of culture in the translation process (Yan & Huang, 2014).

Hao & Pym (2021) state that "many of the available surveys indicate, with some regularity, that only a minority of graduates from Master's programs in translation actually find stable employment in the translation industry" (p. 185) which raises questions about the effectiveness of the translation training and the skills that translation graduates should possess. Ye et al. (2012) as cited in Yao (2024) argue that translators should also be armed with machine translation knowledge and ability, post-editing ability, terminology management ability, translation memory database establishing and application ability, programming skills, information literacy, translation project management ability, and document processing ability. Therefore, translation skills go beyond mastering the source and target languages and cultures into mastering the technological side of the translation process and being able to produce accurate and highly-valued output in a short lapse of time.

The Algerian economy is highly dependent on hydrocarbon exports, stressing the need to diversify its sources of revenue. The unemployment rate in 2024 was relatively high

and accounted for 12.7 per cent, with 25.4 per cent among women and 29.3 per cent among men (World Bank, 2025).

Several studies have noticed a mismatch between higher education curricula and the needs of the labor market, leading to a high unemployment rate, and suggested a transition from quantity-based education into a quality-based education where graduates will be equipped with the required needs sought for in the modern economy (Noui, 2024), especially that the working population in Algeria is expected to increase by 2035 (Groenewold et al., 2016).

After its independence, in 1962, from the French colonization, Algeria considered Arabic as the first official language and adopted an Arabization policy that consisted in translating all documents written in foreign languages, mainly in French, into Arabic as a token of national identity and sovereignty. Since then, various departments and institutes of translation were created in different Algerian universities, offering trainings in translation from Arabic into foreign languages mainly French, English, Spanish, German...etc and vice versa. These trainings aim to facilitate Algeria's opening up to the outside world and meet the needs of translation in the labor market. Translation graduates in Algeria can work as official translators/ interpreters after meeting certain requirements and passing a contest organized by the Ministry of Justice. Official translators/interpreters in Algeria are accredited judicial agents holding State seals in their names and are responsible for offering translation/interpreting services to judicial, private and public institutions as well as to individuals. Translation graduates can also work as freelancers and language teachers among other jobs.

This study aims to shed light on the career paths of translation graduates in Algeria and gauge their perceptions regarding the alliance of the translation training with the needs of the labor market in Algeria.

2. Literature Review

Several studies have addressed the topic of translation employability in different settings. Surveys have shown that about one third of translation graduates find jobs as translators and interpreters while only half of them find employment using multilingual skills (Hao & Pym, 2022). Hao & Pym (2022) have conducted a survey of graduates of the Chinese-English Master of translation at the University of Merbourne, and concluded that most translation graduates turn to language education and that translation curricula should be adapted to market requirements. Krifa (2022) studied translation landscape in Tunisia, and revealed a gap between the academic training in translation and the requirements of the translation market; Translation services are largely delivered by sworn translators although many of them do not necessarily have formal training or an academic background in translation. Jovein et al. (2024) studied

the relationship between the university translator training programs at Imam Reza International University and the requirements of the translation market in Iran, and concluded that the majority of graduates perceive themselves to be inadequately prepared to enter the workforce.

Although many researches have been conducted about the relationship between translation training and the requirements of the labour market in Algeria and around the world, this study aims to bridge the gap of the employment paths of translation graduates in Algeria, their perceptions of translation curricula and their recommendations for enhancing the translation profession in Algeria.

3. Research Methodology

This research is a case study that adopts a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative data, to shed light on the career paths of translation graduates from different Algerian universities. The data were collected by means of a semi-structured online survey containing close-ended and open-ended questions about the participants' employment, their perceptions of translation training in Algeria and recommendations to enhance it. The survey was distributed to a random sample of 66 translation graduates from various universities. The obtained data were analyzed quantitatively, using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage) and qualitatively using thematic analysis, which consists in identifying and analyzing recurrent patterns within data.

Sample description

The sample of the study is composed of 66 translation graduates; 41 females (63.1%) and 24 males (36.9%). The participants hold different degrees; Bachelor degree (20 participants), Master degree (29 participants), Magister degree (02 participants), and PhD (14 participants). The participants specialties in translation range from Arabic-French- English (40 participants) to Arabic- English- Arabic (9 participants), Arabic-French- Arabic (8 participants), Arabic- Spanish- Arabic (5 participants), and Arabic-Italian- Arabic (4 participants).

Data collection methods

The study uses a semi-structured questionnaire to obtain both numerical and qualitative data. The questionnaire is composed of closed-ended questions regarding the participants' general information (gender, type of degree, translation specialty... etc) and open-ended questions about their perceptions and attitudes towards translation curricula and the translation market in Algeria.

4. Results and discussion

The analysis of the participants' answers to the survey has yielded the following results:

4.1 Work Sector

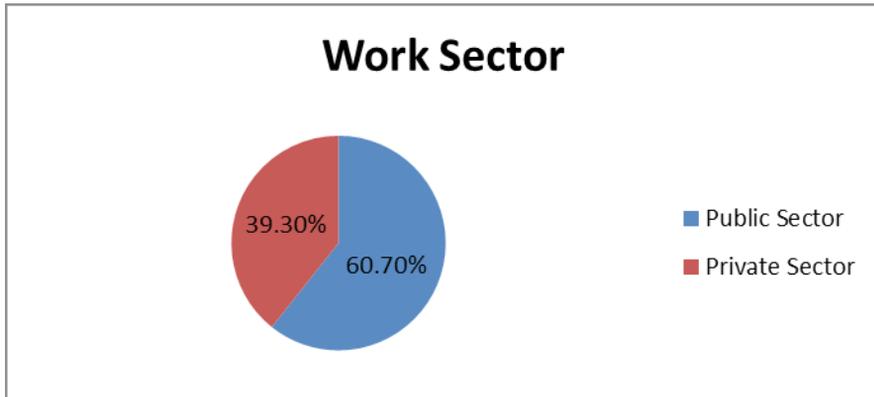


Figure 1: work sector

Regarding the work sector, 37 participants (60,7%) work in the public sector while 24 (39,3%) work in the private sector. This indicates that the public sector in Algeria offers more job opportunities for translation graduates than the private sector; they can work as translators in ministries and central administrations, and as foreign language teachers in the education sector.

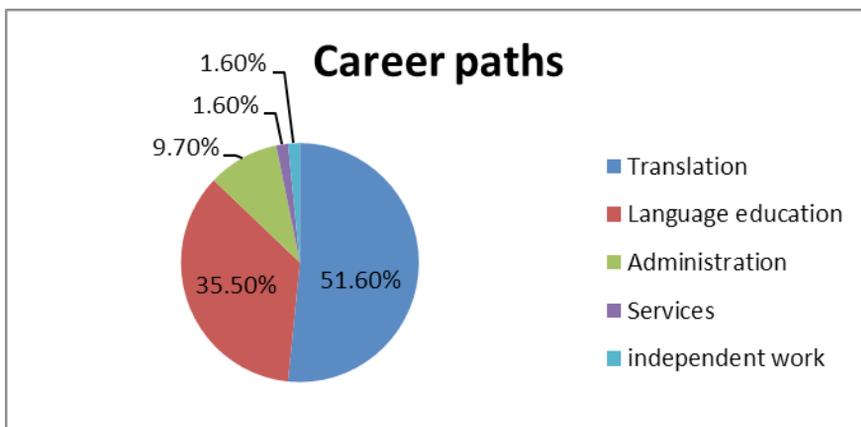


Figure 2: Career paths

Figure 2 shows that 32 participants (51.6%) work in the translation field, 22 of them (35.5 %) work in language education, 6 (9,7%) work in administration, 1 participant

(1.6%) work in the field of services, and 1 participant (1.6%) work as a tutor or free translator.

In response to a question about whether translation graduates have practiced translation, 48 participants (73,8%) answered “yes” and 17 participants (26,2%) answered “No”.

17 participants (35.4%) of those who answered “yes” said they practiced translation in a public institution, 17 participants (35.4%) said they practiced it in an office of official translation, 8 participants (16,7%) said they worked independently, and 6 participants (12.5%) said they practiced it in a private institution.

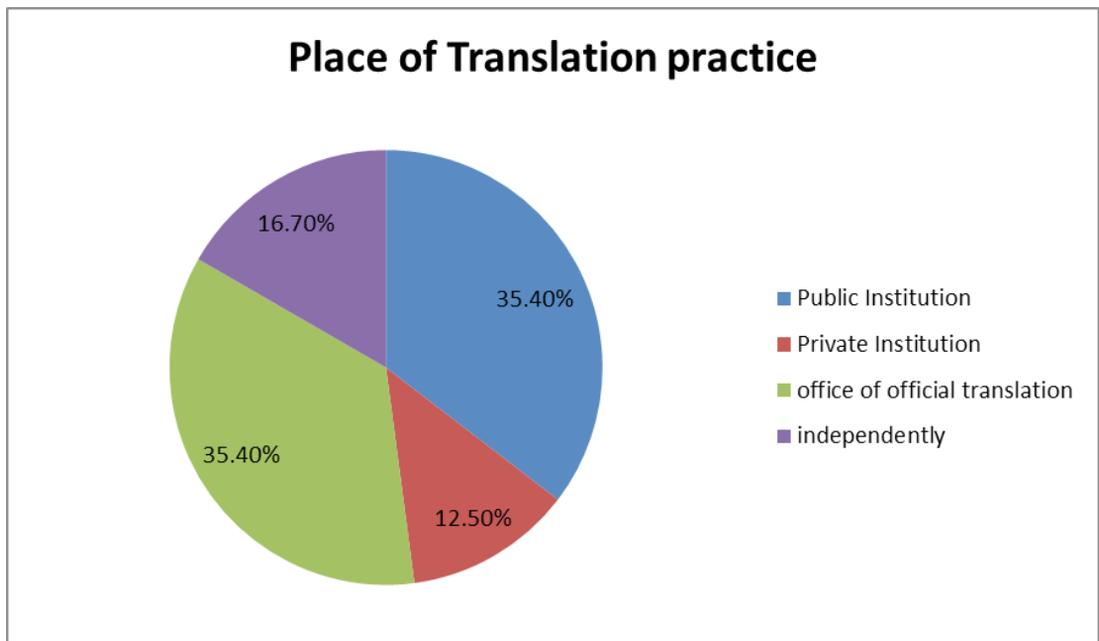


Figure 3: Place of Translation practice

4.2 Evaluation of the translation market in Algeria:

The participants have provided different perceptions about the status of the translation market in Algeria. These perceptions can be categorized into the following themes:

-Translation market condition

Most of the participants have addressed a negative image of the translation market in Algeria, describing it with different adjectives such as « weak », « poor », « insufficient » « mediocre », « neglected », « vague », « utter chaos ». Other participants have shared a rather positive image by thinking that “although the translation market in Algeria is

developing, the pace is slow”, it is “improving, but there is still work to be done”, and “fairly good, but in need of further study and care”.

-Job opportunities and employment

In terms of translation job opportunities, some participants have said that “job positions are rather scarce”, the market is “very weak in terms of opportunities”, other participants raised the issue of the difficulty of entering the translation market by claiming “opening a translation office requires difficult conditions to meet”. Indeed, among the criteria for opening a translation office in Algeria is having a translation degree, having more than five-year work experience as a translator, and most importantly passing a contest organized by the Algerian ministry of justice. Unfortunately, this contest is organized once in a decade or more. The last contest was organized in 2024 and the previous one was held in 2010. Another participant pointed out that translation market is “strongly tied to official translation” which means most of translation services are done in translation offices; civil status documents, legal documents, diplomas...etc, and translated documents should bear the name of the translator and the seal of the Republic. Other participants claimed that “entering the translation market requires external factors unrelated to academic and professional competence”, the translation market is “very weak unless you have the official stamp” and it is “monopolized by offices” which means a non-official translator has little chances to find a translation job.

Various responses have addressed the remuneration of the translation services such as “poorly paid”, “clients still offer meagre rates”, “very weak in terms of remuneration”. The translation rate is indeed very weak and generally refers from 200 DA to 700 DA (1.55\$ to 5.41\$) per page. The translation rates of official translators date back to 1996 (Executive decree, 1996).

Another participant have tackled the problem of “intruders to the field » ; people who may provide translation services without having a training or degree in translation, such as public writers, and foreign languages graduates, which creates more competition in the already scarce translation job market.

4.3 Relationship Between Translation Training and Translation Market in Algeria

In response to a question related to the relationship between translation training and translation market needs in Algeria, most participants think that university translation training is not compatible with the translation market needs using direct and emphatic answers such as “No”, “Never”, “Absolutely not”, “ it is not compatible at all”.

Others justified the gap between academic training and professional practice by pointing out that “the training is theoretical and completely disconnected from

the job market”, “No, not at all. There is no relationship between what is taught at universities and what the job market requires, and this is a major problem that needs to be solved », « Self-development and benefiting from the experience of an official translator are the way to master the field. » and “Unfortunately, it is not compatible. Even foreign companies don’t require a specialized translator; it’s enough for the job applicant to be proficient in English or French. ». Another participant replied “absolutely not, University training in translation is very weak and doesn’t meet the market’s expectations, especially concerning foreign offers”. However, few participants have demonstrated positive perceptions in this regard indicating that “There is an attempt to keep pace with the development of the translation market, unlike in the past. However, this is limited to the translation institutes in major universities, which have added specializations like institutional translation”, “Yes, to a great extent. Most of those who practice the profession are highly skilled in its secrets.” And “Translation training today tries to respond to the job market, but it is still somewhat far off”.

5. Recommendations for improving the translation market in Algeria

The participants have suggested different recommendations to enhance the translation market in Algeria, these recommendations were thematized as follows:

- Education and curriculum reform

This theme focuses on ways to improve the translation training in Algerian universities most importantly on enhancing the way translation is taught in tertiary level,

- advance translation is to adapt university translation curricula to market requirements so that graduates can keep up with new employment opportunities and not fall behind their peers in the same specialty in other parts of the world.
- Tie training institutes directly to the job market through agreements for student and graduate internships, and connect translation research centres with institutions by funding research.
- Find a suitable combination of theoretical and practical training and field internships in various specializations and branches of translation.
- Translation training should be more practical and focused on professional more than on academic translation.
- Incorporating Compute-Assisted Tools (CAT) tools, interpretation equipment and AI in training.

- Labor Market and Employment Opportunities

This theme encompasses suggestions to enhance the working conditions as well as the employment opportunities of translation graduates such as;

- Regulating the freelance translation market to protect “freelance” translators.
- Changing the accreditation method for sworn translators to prioritize translation mastery.
- Linking training institutes directly to the labor market through agreements for student and graduate internships.
- Providing special job positions for translators in both administrations and educational institutions.
- Developing Algerian freelance platforms similar to “Upwork” or “Mostaqil”.

- Status and National Policy for Translation

This theme highlights the need to improve the status of the translator and to build a national policy for the development of this profession in Algeria, among the suggestions provided in this regard;

- Creating a fund dedicated to translation into national and foreign languages.
- Encouraging publishers to translate Algerian books into other languages.
- A political decision to arabicize all official correspondence.
- Giving translators their necessary status as an effective tool in society.
- Government and educational institutions showing genuine and sustained attention to translation, allocating substantial funds for it.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the career paths of translation graduates as well as their perceptions regarding the translation training in the tertiary level in Algeria. The mixed-methods approach adopted to tackle this problem revealed that most of the participants hold positions in the public sector, as translators or language teachers, with translators working either in public institutions, or in offices of official translation. Besides, participants deem the translation market in Algeria as mediocre and scarce in terms of job opportunities and remuneration, and think that there is a huge gap between translation training and translation market as the former does not meet the requirements of the latter. To promote the translation profession in Algeria, the participants have suggested a myriad of recommendations so as to adapt the translation training with the needs of the labour market, improve the working conditions and employment opportunities of translation graduates and to build a national policy to enhance the status of translation and translators in Algeria. Although the sample is diverse and participants have graduated from different Algerian universities, and though the data obtained give us a glimpse of career paths of translation graduates, the results may not fully capture the experiences of all translation graduates in Algeria.

Therefore, future research could expand to a larger and more representative sample and would provide deeper insights into how translation training could better meet the requirements of the labor market especially in the advent of artificial intelligence and its huge effect on the translation and interpreting profession.

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