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TRANSLATOR EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CHANGE: COMPETENCES, TECHNOLOGIES, AND MARKET EXPECTATIONS

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of specialized translation and interpreting training in Ukraine, examining curriculum design, depth of specialization, integration of digital and translation technologies, and alignment with evolving professional market demands. The objective is to identify and characterize the gap between university-based preparation and actual labor market requirements by exploring students' evaluations of course relevance, satisfaction with their training, and self-assessed readiness for professional practice. The empirical basis is a stratified anonymous survey of 226 undergraduate and graduate students from six Ukrainian universities. A mixed-methods research design was applied to detect correlations between program characteristics and satisfaction indicators. The results show that higher satisfaction levels are associated with increased specialization, practical orientation, and opportunities for authentic project work; however, the findings also reveal insufficient coverage of domain-specific subjects, limited exposure to CAT tools, artificial intelligence applications, business and legal aspects, as well as a lack of systematic career guidance. Respondents express demand for enhanced training in community and conference interpreting, audiovisual translation and localization, and the development of soft skills. The study's findings support the idea of adapting curricula to align with international competence frameworks, fostering closer cooperation between universities and employers, balancing theoretical knowledge with practical skills, and using student-centered teaching methods to boost graduate competitiveness.

Key words: *competence, curriculum, interpreting, labor market, specialization, student-centered approach, translation.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Relevance. In the evolving landscape of translation and interpreting (T&I) studies, particularly in sector-specific training, bridging the gap between academic preparation and real-world professional practice has become increasingly urgent. The globalization of communication, combined with rising demand for specialized translators and interpreters in legal, medical, technical, and community contexts, places new demands on how universities educate future language professionals.

This article explores two interrelated dimensions. First, it examines the current state of specialized T&I education in Ukraine, focusing on curriculum structures, the scope of specialized disciplines, and the range of professional skills targeted. Second, it investigates student perceptions – how they evaluate their academic experiences, the relevance of coursework to professional needs, and their expectations for future employment.

The study is based on a confidential, stratified survey involving 226 students from six Ukrainian universities. By aligning curricular content with student feedback, the research identifies misalignments between institutional offerings and market demands. In light of current accreditation requirements, which emphasize student-centered approaches, the study advocates for educational models that are responsive to learner needs and employment trajectories.

The primary aim of this article is to assess the depth and breadth of specialized translation and interpreting (T&I) curricula currently offered at Ukrainian higher education institutions. In doing so, it seeks to analyze students' perceptions of the relevance of course content, their level of satisfaction with the training provided, and how well they feel prepared for professional practice upon graduation. Additionally, the paper intends to identify key opportunities for improving educational programs by integrating more pragmatic, profession-oriented content and fostering closer collaboration between educators, students, and potential employers. Such an approach is expected to enhance the overall quality and applicability of translator and interpreter training in Ukraine.

The research methodology draws on thematic analysis [1] and quantitative techniques [14], offering a comprehensive view of the pedagogical and professional challenges in Ukrainian T&I education.

Object and subject of study. This study investigates specialized T&I education within Ukraine's higher education system. The object of the research is the institutional T&I programs themselves, while the subject concerns students' experiences and perceptions within these programs. Special attention is paid to feedback related to curriculum content, teaching quality, confidence in professional competencies, and perceived readiness for employment.

Research materials. Empirical data were collected through a survey of 226 students enrolled in T&I programs across six Ukrainian universities (Ivan Franko National University of Lviv – IFNUL, Kherson National Technical University – KNTU, Kherson State University – KSU, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University – KMU, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv – TSNUK and National Technical University of Ukraine "Ihor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute" – KPI). These responses provide a rich basis for evaluating the alignment between educational preparation and the demands of the contemporary labor market. This aligns with ongoing calls for translation curricula to respond to professional realities [4; 10].

As L. Chernovaty emphasizes, the fast-paced political, technological, and cultural changes of recent decades have transformed the translator's role and pose significant strategic and tactical challenges for T&I education [2]. These challenges range from structural decisions at ministerial levels – such as national education standards and resource allocation – to local issues including course content, methodological innovation, and instructors' expertise. The classical model of translator/interpreter training, with its stepwise apprenticeship structure – from foundational language courses to advanced translation and guided interpreting practice – requires adaptation to meet the expectations of a modern, digitalized, and highly specialized labor market.

Furthermore, students themselves frequently cite dissatisfaction with the level of specialization and practical engagement in their programs. As O. Lemeshko & V. Haponova report, many Ukrainian students experience a disconnect between the theoretical emphasis in curricula and the pragmatic needs of the translation profession [10, p. 124]. Common concerns include insufficient exposure to specific fields (such as legal or medical translation), a lack of employer engagement in the classroom, limited career counseling, and outdated or minimal training in translation technologies.

Theoretical framework. Translator and interpreter training is grounded in models of translation competence and pedagogical design. The PACTE Group defines translation competence as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing bilingual proficiency, subject knowledge, technological skills, strategic management, and psycho-physiological components. Strategic competence, in particular, plays a central regulatory role, ensuring appropriate application of the other sub-competencies [15].

The EMT competence framework (European Commission, 2017) further highlights service provision, technological literacy, and intercultural awareness as essential components of translator training [4]. These models collectively reinforce the idea that effective T&I education must be integrative, context-aware, and skill-based. For interpreter training, cognitive models such as D. Gile's Effort Models [5] illustrate the importance of managing cognitive load and attention under pressure, essential for consecutive and simultaneous interpreting.

Recent research also underscores the role of psycholinguistic and cultural knowledge in interpreter training. R. Povoroznyuk identifies psycholinguistic strategies as critical to community interpreting in Ukraine, particularly when conveying culturally bound or emotionally charged information [16]. L. Kolomiyets stresses that foundational Ukrainian syllabi in translation theory emphasized the cultural and communicative functions of language, suggesting a long-standing but underdeveloped potential for holistic, competence-based instruction [9, p. 146].

Constructivist pedagogies, such as those advocated by D. Kiraly [8], emphasize active, student-centered learning through authentic translation projects, internships, simulations, and collaborative work. These methods aim to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and professional application, empowering students to build their identities as emerging professionals. In line with Yu. Hao [6], the application of theory to solve real translation problems is seen as far more valuable than abstract theorization.

Student satisfaction is another critical factor, directly linked to recruitment, retention, and academic performance [3]. When students perceive their educational experiences as meeting their needs, they report higher levels of satisfaction and are more likely to persist in their studies. Moreover, institutional reputation and perceived career opportunities play intangible but powerful roles in shaping student experience and motivation.

Study by M. Marczak and O. Bondarenko [12] show that despite efforts to modernize curricula, Ukrainian and Polish T&I students often lack familiarity with the full spectrum of translation tools used in the industry, especially computer-assisted interpreting (CAI) software. This shortfall underscores a broader issue – insufficient technological integration, which V. Karaban [7] argues must be addressed rapidly in Ukraine to keep pace with international trends, especially in the post-COVID shift to digital modalities.

Thus, scholars identify key challenges in translator and interpreter education, including fragmented competence integration, insufficient technological training, underdeveloped application of constructivist pedagogies, limited incorporation of cultural and psycholinguistic insights, and a misalignment between academic curricula and real-world professional demands.

Materials and methods. This study adopted a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design to explore student perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of specialized translation and interpreting (T&I) training in Ukrainian higher education. Data were collected through an online survey [17] that combined both quantitative and qualitative elements, enabling a comprehensive examination of students' views on curriculum content, training adequacy, skill development, and preparedness for professional practice.

The survey consisted of several components. The first section gathered demographic and academic background information, including participants' age, gender, year of study, university affiliation, and language pair(s). The second section employed Likert-scale items (ranging from 1 to 5) to assess satisfaction with key aspects of the T&I programs, such as teaching methods, instructional quality, availability of specialization options, integration of real-world translation and interpreting tasks, and access to technology and learning resources. A self-assessment component followed, in which students rated their confidence in mastering essential competencies, including bilingual language proficiency, proficiency with computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, various interpreting modes, cultural mediation, and terminology management. In the final section, open-ended questions invited students to reflect on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their training, suggest areas for improvement, and evaluate their readiness for entering the labor market.

A total of 226 T&I students from six Ukrainian universities took part in the study (155 respondents from IFNUL, 17 from TSNUK, 16 from KMU, 14 from KSU, 13 from KNTU, 11 from KPI). The participant sample included students from all years of study (Bachelor students: 29 – 1st year of studies (y.o.s.), 20 – 2nd y.o.s., 76 – 3rd y.o.s., 72 – 4th y.o.s.; Master students: 13 – 1st y.o.s., 13 – 2nd y.o.s.; graduates – 3), different age groups (22 – under 18 years old (y.o.), 189 – 18-22 y.o., 9 – 22-25 y.o., 5 – over 25 y.o.) and were representer by 203 female respondents, 18 male respondents and 5 those whose sex in non-disclosed (see [17]). The Ukrainian-English language pair of T&I training was the most frequently reported one.

Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary and anonymous.

Quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics (e.g., means and percentages) summarized trends in student responses, providing an overview of the data. Inferential analysis was then conducted to test for statistically significant differences and associations; in particular, it assessed whether satisfaction levels and self-assessed competence varied across different years of study.

This methodology provided insights into the current landscape of T&I education in Ukraine. Themes emerging from the student data aligned closely with the broader theoretical and institutional concerns discussed above, reinforcing the argument for urgent curricular reform. As O. Litvinyak [11] observes, the dual crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war have pushed Ukrainian universities to adapt rapidly, highlighting the importance of flexibility, resilience, and technological readiness in both teaching methods and learning outcomes.

2. KEY FINDINGS

Satisfaction by Year: As shown in Fig. 1, the highest level of satisfaction is among the 1st year students of the Bachelor's degree program, 17 out of 29 students, which is 58.6% of the surveyed freshmen of all higher educational institutions (HEIs), and the 3rd year students, 33 out of 76 students, which is 43.4% of the surveyed 3rd year students, the lowest – among the 4th year students, 13 out of 72, respectively, 18% of the 4th year students of the Bachelor's degree program. The most neutral attitude to the chosen specialty is among 3rd and 4th-year bachelor's students, 32 out of 76 third-year students surveyed, which is 42% of respondents, and 30 out of 72 bachelor's graduates, which is 41.7%.

Master's students of the 2nd year of study demonstrate a very high level of satisfaction with the program, which is 64.7%, respectively, 11 out of 17 respondents, with 9 students rated «very satisfied» and 2 «satisfied».

As the thematic analysis shows, it is the specification of the translation and interpreting content of the master's program in comparison with the general bachelor's program that is the cornerstone criterion for student satisfaction with its content. The factors that influenced the results of satisfaction of students of the Master's degree program with the general content of the program are also the motivation of these students who have already received the Bachelor's degree in philology, respectively, their general awareness of the field of study and the ability to independently direct the vector of their own education, its specification within the proposed range of subjects.

Curriculum Content: Further survey questions were designed to investigate students' perceptions of the current state of T&I education. The objective was to assess students' experiences, expectations, and concerns regarding the process of acquiring translation and interpreting skills within the academic setting. In order to achieve this aim, the research identified the subjects most commonly taught within T&I education programs, including industry-specific translation and interpreting. Importantly, the scope of analysis was not restricted to industrial or technical T&I but encompassed a broad spectrum of disciplines relevant to diverse professional domains. These included: translation and interpreting activities in business, services, and related sectors, as well as the specific features of their implementation (see Fig. 2).

The compiled list comprised both theoretical courses (e.g., *Features of Specialized T&I*) and practical courses such as *Legal T&I*, *Technical T&I*, *Economic T&I*, and *Medical T&I*. This approach also explains the inclusion of subjects such as *Literary Translation*, *Conference Interpreting*, and *Community Interpreting* in the survey instrument. It should be noted, however, that the list is not exhaustive.

When responding to the "Other subjects" category, students expanded the list with disciplines such as *Consecutive (Simultaneous) Interpreting*, *Editing* (reported by 3rd and 4th-year students of IFNUL), *Military Translation/Interpreting*, and *Diplomatic Translation/Interpreting* (reported by third-year students of KPI). Several respondents stated that they did not study any specialized subjects. The data reveal that the majority of students study *Literary Translation* (122 respondents or 54%) and *The Basics of Specialized Translation/Interpreting* (126 respondents or 55.8%).

This finding may indicate either the existence of two particularly promising areas in T&I education or the normative status of these disciplines contrasted with the selective nature of others.

The validity of these interpretations will be tested in the subsequent phase of research, which will focus on a detailed analysis of the educational programs offered by the participating universities.

It should be noted that students are eager to study such types of translation as *Community Interpreting, Conference interpreting* and *Audiovisual translation,* which are in high demand, and also feel the need to study both the theory of industry-specific translation and various practical aspects of industry-specific translation (see Fig. 3).

Students additionally regard social and communication skills (soft skills) as paramount, while they perceive business and computer literacy as important, and assign comparatively less significance to the legal aspects of translation education (see Fig. 4)

Satisfaction with the educational program's content: Further survey showed that 142 respondents (62.8%), including the vast majority of both master's and bachelor's degree students of 3rd and 4th years of study, note the lack of specialization, i.e., the specificity of the content of T&I studies programs, 95 (42%) of whom consider it «too broad» or «not specialized enough,» and 47 (21%) respondents directly state that the program «lacks translation disciplines in certain fields.»

And only 84 (36.7%) respondents consider the subject content of the educational program to be adequate, including 2 first-year master's students and 7 second-year students (34.6% of all master's students), which confirms our suggestion about the correlation between the specificity and level of satisfaction of students with the content of the program.

Perceived Competence: The survey showed that only 84 respondents (37.2%) agree that the program of studies adequately prepares them for the demands of the T&I industry, while 33 respondents (14.6%) disagree. An interesting observation is that 109 people (48.2% of the respondents) answered "maybe" to the question about the level of adequacy of the program to the requirements of the translation labor market (see Fig. 6).

In further research, we plan to clarify whether such uncertainty is a result of ignorance of specific industry demands or whether students are expressing their hope that the program content meets these demands. Given

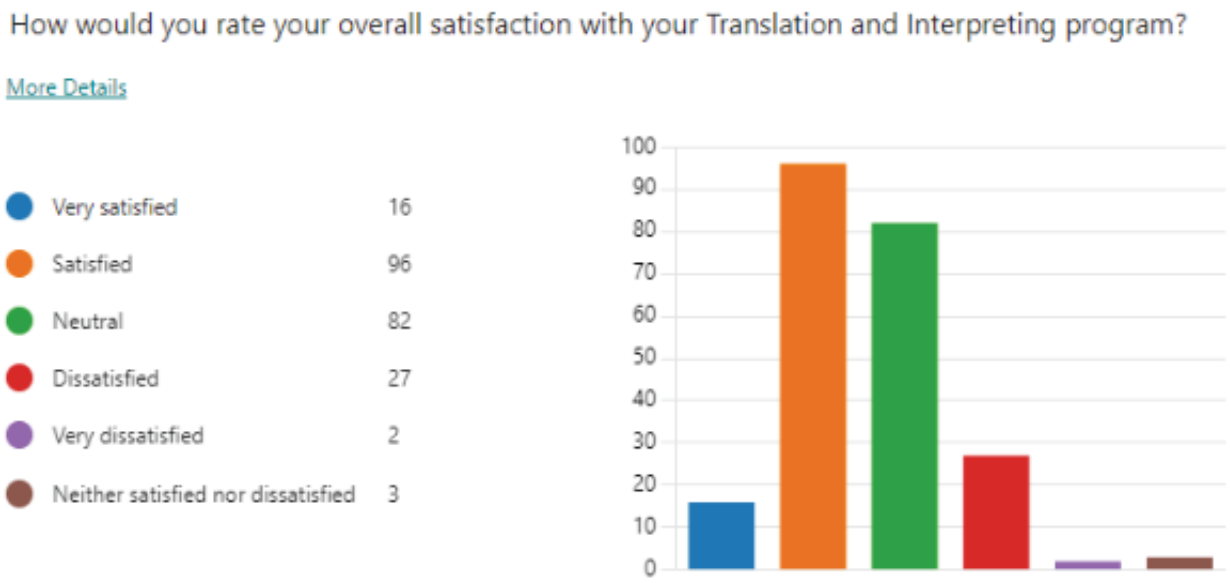

Fig. 1 Overall Program Satisfaction

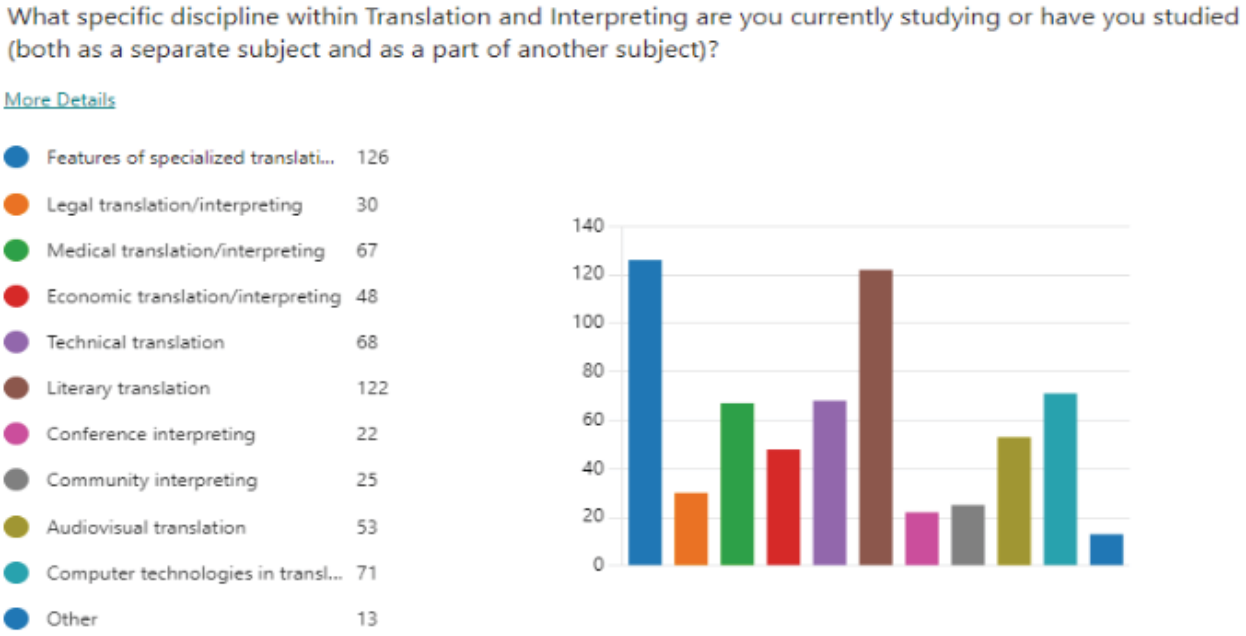

Fig. 2 Content of Translation and Interpreting Training

that the answer «maybe» comes from the overwhelming majority of respondents in the 1st and 2nd years of the Bachelor's degree program, both options are possible.

Assessment of the program's competence capacity: As for the assessment of the implementation of the competency-based content of the programs, 160 students (71.2%) are fairly confident in their research skills, 23 (10.2%) of them are completely confident and 138 (61%) are rather confident, while 28.8% of the students doubt being able to conduct research in T&I projects (see Fig. 7)

At the same time, only 99 students (43.8%) are confident in their skills in using specific translation software (CAT tools) and large-scale AI language models (GPT chat, etc.), of which 31 (13.7%) are confident and 68 (30.1%) are somewhat confident, and the majority of the respondents are either neutral – 66 people (29.2%) – or can't name themselves proficient CAT tools users – 61 respondents (27%) (see Fig. 8).

Notably, prior research finds that students often underestimate their use of professional tools – for example, M. Marczak and O. Bondarenko [12] observed that translation students' use of technology is "more limited" than professionals'.

Assessment of soft skills presentation in the program:

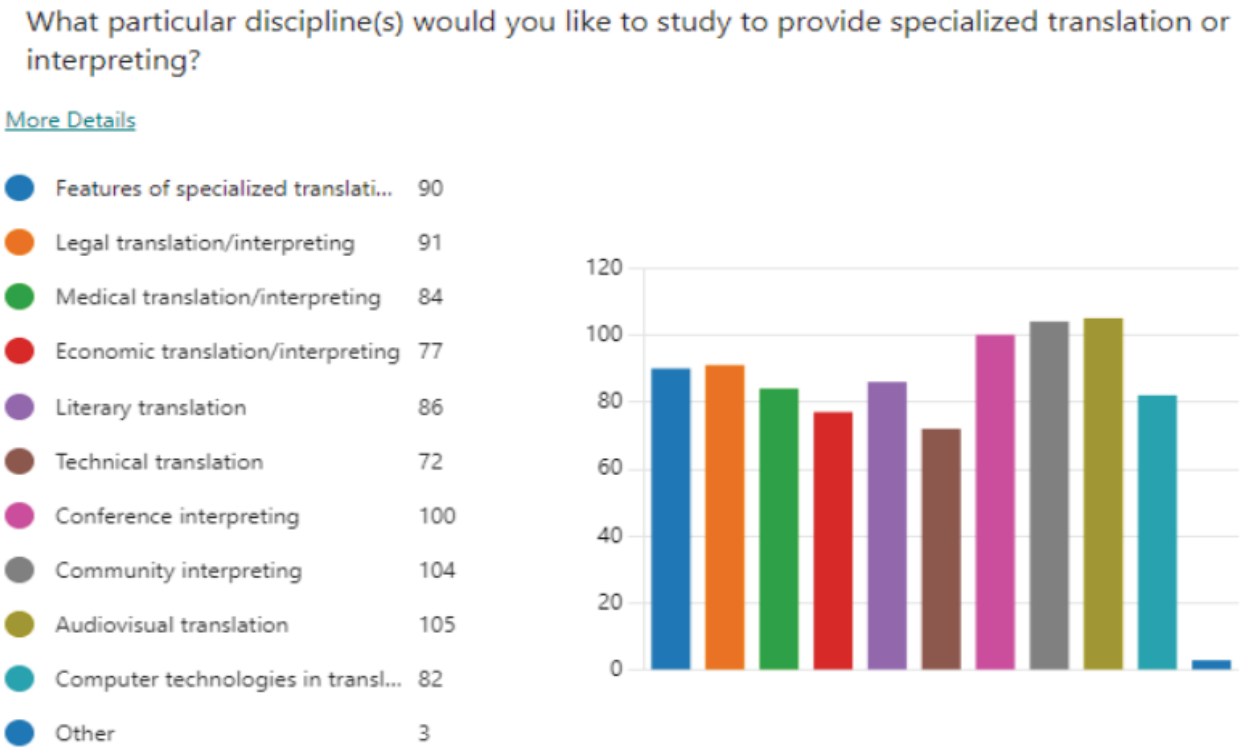

Fig. 3 Desired Specialized T&I Disciplines to Study

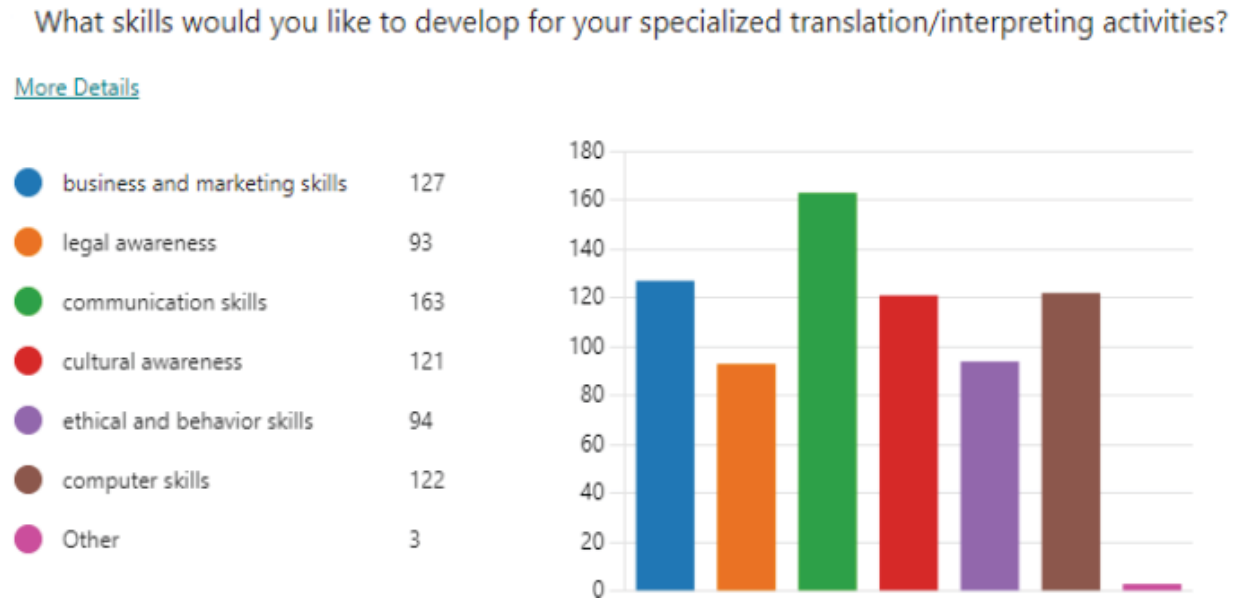

Fig. 4 Desired T&I Skills to Be Developed

Social and communication skills, namely the ethical and cultural aspects of the so-called soft skills implemented by the education program, are positively assessed by 123 (54.4%), 23 (10.1%) and 100 (44.2%) respondents, respectively (see Fig. 9); only 61 students (27%) consider the business and marketing aspects of the program, which are necessary for further employment, to be sufficiently represented – 7 (3.1%) and 54 (23.9%) respondents (see Fig. 10); only 62 (27.4%) students – 12 (5.3%) and 50 (22.1%) – consider the legal aspects important for their future career to be covered in the program (see Fig. 11).

The assessment of the program's competence capacity shows that from the students' point of view, HEIs teach primarily scientific activities, a little less social and communication skills, while the pragmatics of further professional life are taken into account and realized much less. The authors of this paper have

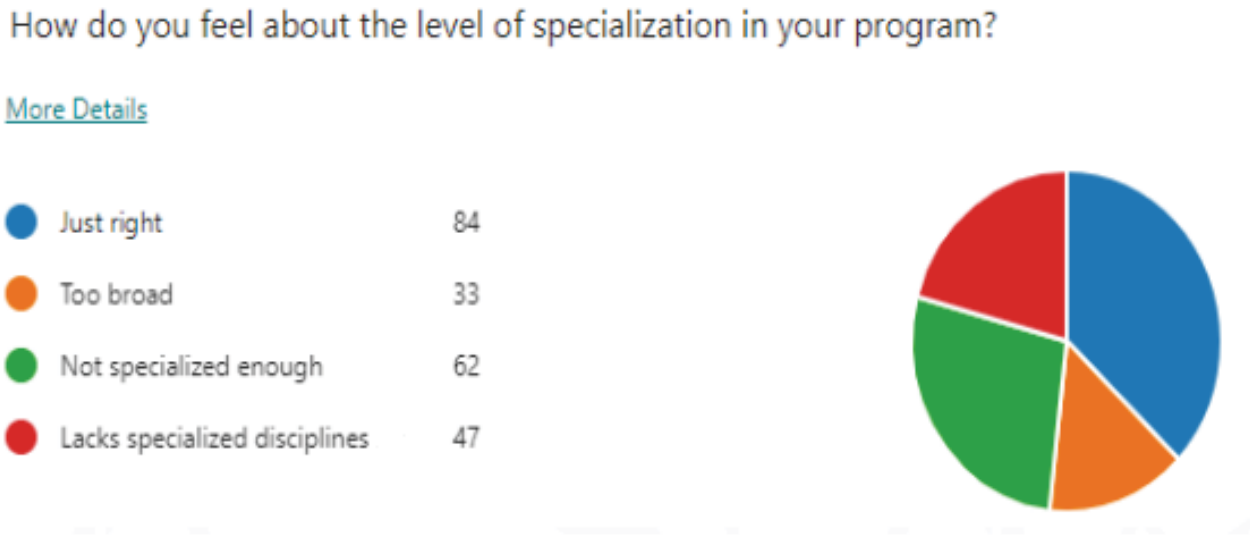

Fig. 5 Satisfaction with the Level of Specialization

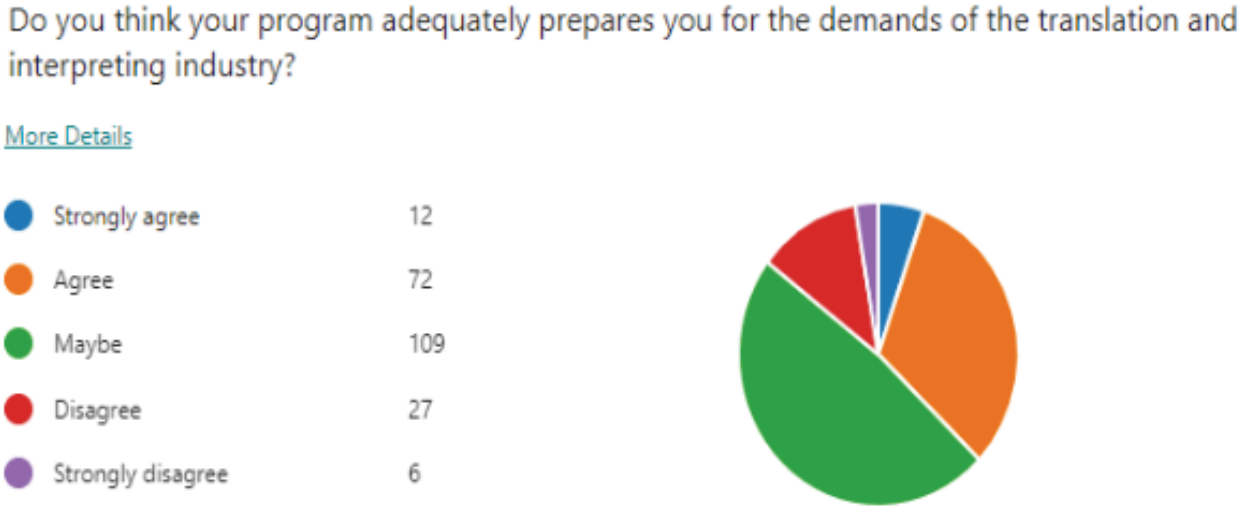

Fig. 6 Program Correspondence to T&I Industry Demands

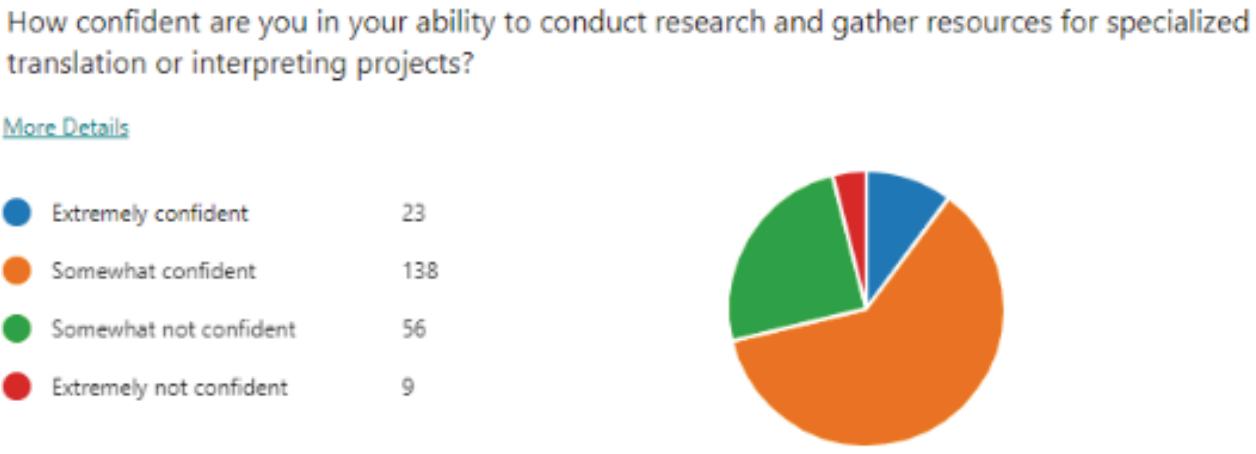

Fig. 7 Confidence in T&I Research Abilities

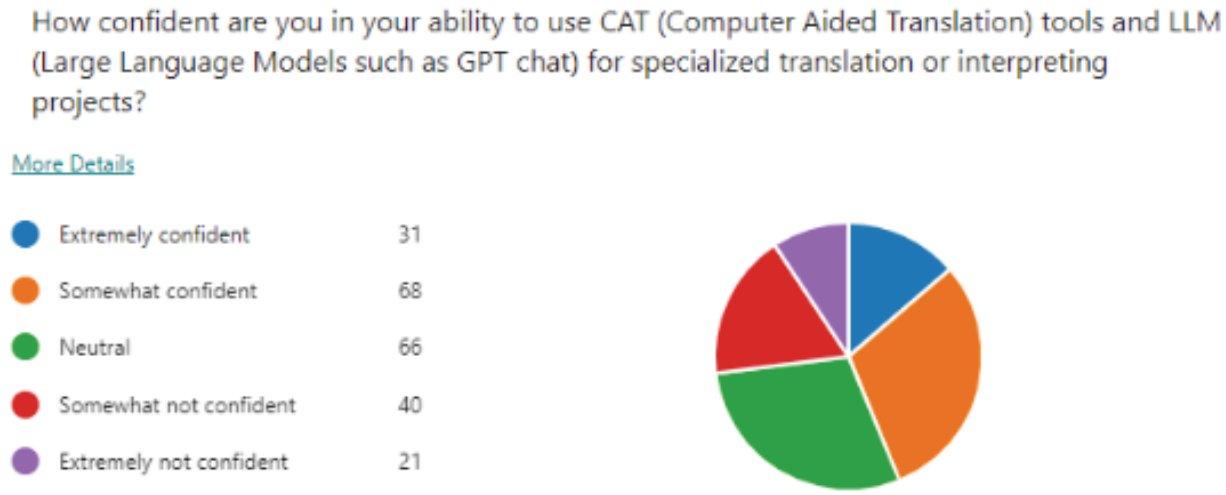

Fig. 8 Proficiency in CAT tools and LLM models using

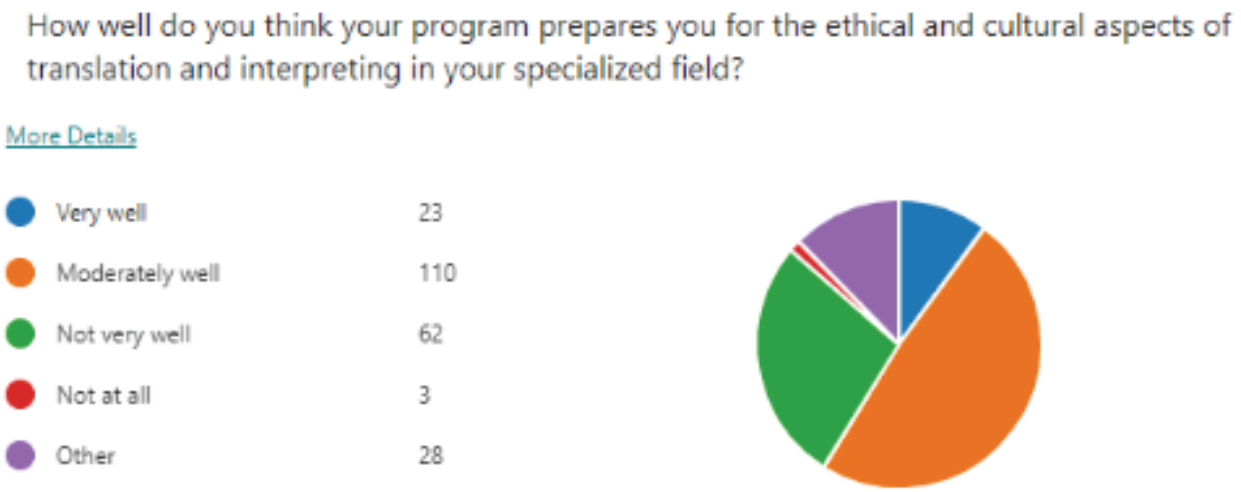

Fig. 9 Ethical and Cultural Readiness in T&I Activities

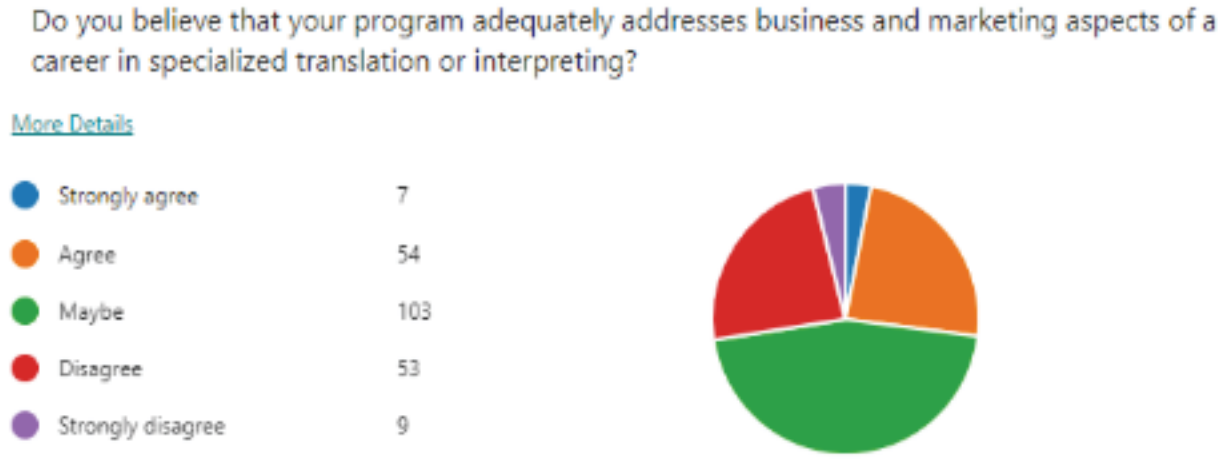

Fig. 10 Business and Marketing Career Aspects

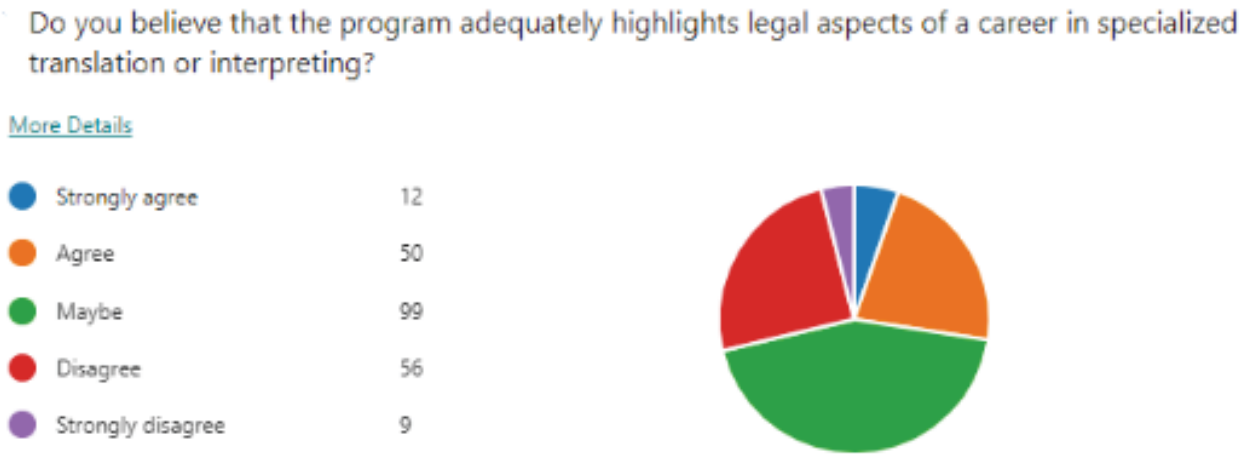

Fig. 11 Legal Career Aspects

Fig. 12 Employment Confidence after LLM Presentation

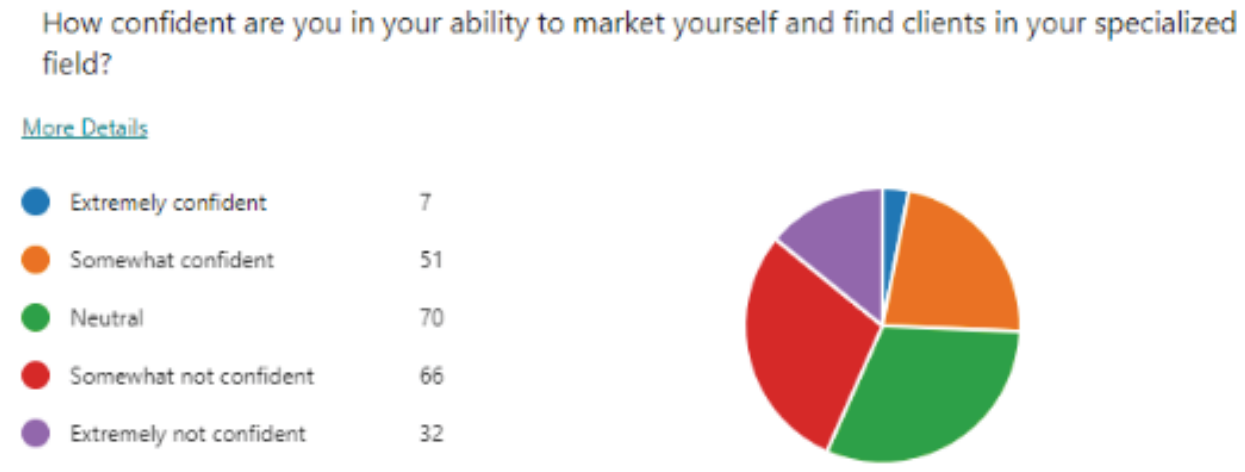

Fig. 13 Confidence in Self-Marketing Ability

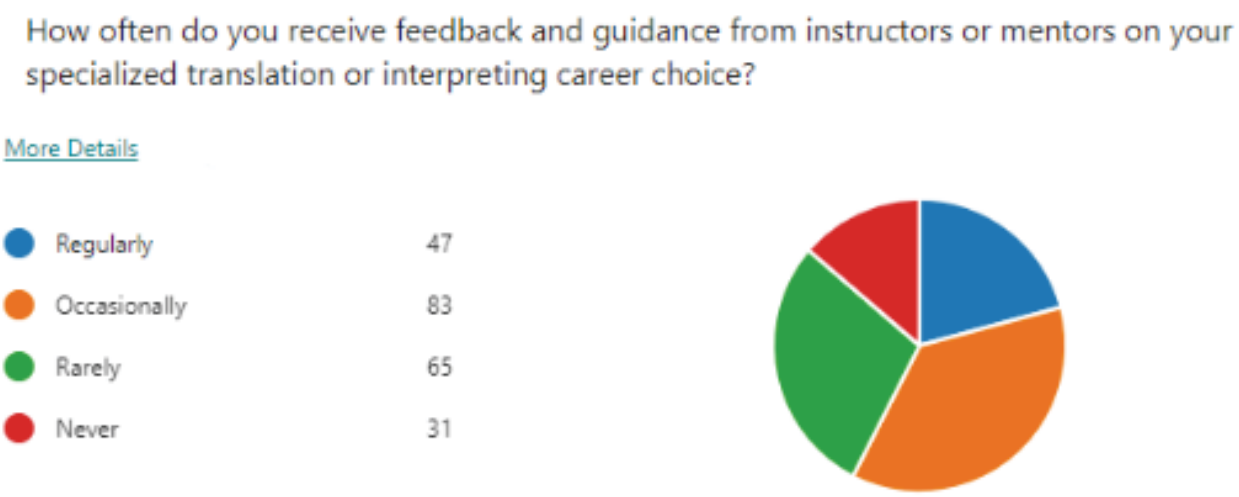

Fig. 14 Feedback or Guidance in T&I Career Choice

already noted that "The results indicate an existing imbalance between the provision of specialized translation knowledge and the development of skills and abilities necessary for employment and professional practice" [13, p. 40]. The findings also echo previous calls to update translator training to meet market needs. In particular, O. Lemeshko and V. Haponova argue that existing programs must be rethought to align with "present-day market demands" [10, p. 112].

Assessing employment prospects:

Despite the achievements of AI in translation, 86 students (38%) are confident in positive employment prospects in their specialty (see Fig. 12), while only 68 (30.1%) are confident in their ability to present themselves on the labor market (see Fig. 13).

The low level of self-confidence in presenting oneself on the labour market is attributed to gaps in the teaching of relevant aspects of professional activity, a shortcoming that did not escape the attention of the students. This is further supported by the fact that the overwhelming majority (127 respondents, 56.2%) expressed a desire for more in-depth study of this subject (see Fig. 4).

Qualitative responses underscored a desire for career guidance and industry links (see Fig. 14).

These sentiments are consistent with the literature calling for closer academia-industry collaboration. M. Marczak and O. Bondarenko [12] highlight the "need of increased collaboration between academic institutions and business" to tackle these gaps. which could improve employability and ensure that graduate capabilities match employer expectations.

Moreover, on the websites of higher education institutions and in advertising brochures, employment prospects are outlined, but, as the survey of students shows, they are not adequately covered and communicated to future specialists. This raises the question of the effectiveness of interaction between stakeholders, higher education institutions, and students.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, students report a high level of satisfaction with their academic programs, particularly with regard to the breadth of translation/interpreting content. Satisfaction levels appear to increase proportionally with the degree of specialization and narrow focus within the chosen field of study.

Nevertheless, the findings reveal notable discrepancies between the provision of specialized academic knowledge and the development of practical skills required for employment and professional activity. Students demonstrate a pragmatic awareness of labor market demands, expressing strong interest in subjects related to business and legal aspects of the profession. This reflects their recognition of employers' expectations, competitiveness criteria, and the need for market-oriented competencies. While feedback on academic performance is perceived as satisfactory, the perceived lack of career guidance from universities underscores the insufficient implementation of systematic career development activities.

These results are consistent with earlier research, which has identified persistent challenges in translator and interpreter education, including: the fragmented implementation of competence-based frameworks; limited integration of digital and computer-assisted interpreting tools; insufficient emphasis on intercultural and psycholinguistic training; underutilization of experiential, student-centred pedagogies; and the misalignment between academic curricula and professional realities. The current data reaffirm that while Ukrainian students gradually acquire core translation competences, advanced, domain-specific, and technologically supported skills remain underdeveloped.

The pedagogical implications are clear. Ukrainian T&I programs must enhance their alignment with international competence models such as PACTE and EMT by strengthening the pragmatic component of curricula, including economic/business orientation,

legal awareness, competitiveness, and stakeholder-informed employment preparation; fostering digital literacy and integrating computer-assisted translation and interpreting tools; increasing student-centeredness by aligning content with learners' expectations and involving them in curricular development; promoting sustained communication between employers, universities, and students; developing students' ability to position themselves effectively in the labor market.

From a comparative perspective, benchmarking Ukrainian programs against those in other countries and adapting best practices to local contexts would further enhance the relevance and quality of translator and interpreter education.

Prospects for analysis. Future research should expand the scope of inquiry by incorporating the perspectives of recent graduates and employers, comparing outcomes across public and private institutions, conducting longitudinal studies to track competence development, and assessing the impact of targeted curricular reforms.

Addressing the identified gaps will help bridge the divide between academic preparation and the evolving requirements of the global language services market.

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ПЕРЕКЛАДАЦЬКА ОСВІТА У ЧАСИ ЗМІН: КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ, ТЕХНОЛОГІЇ ТА ОЧІКУВАННЯ РИНКУ

Дослідження пропонує аналіз сучасного стану спеціалізованої підготовки перекладачів в Україні, розглядаючи структуру навчальних програм, ступінь спеціалізації, інтеграцію цифрових і перекладацьких технологій та узгодженість із динамічними вимогами професійного ринку. Метою є виявлення та характеристика розриву між університетською підготовкою і реальними потребами ринку праці шляхом аналізу оцінок релевантності дисциплін, рівня задоволеності навчанням та самооцінки готовності до професійної діяльності. Емпіричну базу становить стратифіковане анонімне опитування 226 студентів бакалаврату й магістратури з шести українських університетів. Застосовано змішаний підхід для виявлення кореляцій між характеристиками програм і показниками задоволеності. Результати свідчать, що вищі рівні задоволеності пов'язані з більшою спеціалізацією, практичною спрямованістю та можливістю виконання автентичних проєктів; водночас виявлено недостатнє охоплення вузькогалузевих дисциплін, обмежене використання інструментів комп'ютеризованого перекладу (CAT), застосувань штучного інтелекту, бізнес- і правових аспектів, а також відсутність системної кар'єрної орієнтації. Респонденти відзначають потребу у посиленій підготовці з соціального та конференційного перекладу, аудіовізуального перекладу й локалізації, а також у розвитку «м'яких» навичок. Отримані результати підтверджують доцільність адаптації навчальних програм до міжнародних моделей компетентностей, налагодження тіснішої співпраці між університетами та роботодавцями, балансування теоретичних знань і практичних умінь, а також впровадження студентоцентричних методів навчання для підвищення конкурентоспроможності випускників.

Ключові слова: *викладання перекладу, компетентність, навчальна програма, переклад, працевлаштування, спеціалізація, студентоцентричний підхід.*

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