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Mustapha Taibi
Western Sydney University

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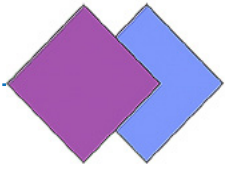
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Public Service Interpreter Education in the Gulf States: Ideas for Curriculum Design and Teaching

Mustapha Taibi

Western Sydney University

Abstract

The Gulf States host large numbers of non-Arabic-speaking residents and visitors. These non-nationals need to deal with such public services as hospitals, schools, courts, and other local administrations. In many cases, English is used as a lingua franca; however, not all public service staff or clients are able to speak or communicate effectively in this language. The communication needs in such situations require the assistance of professional public service interpreters, which, in turn, calls for appropriate education. In this paper, I outline education needs in public service interpreting in the Gulf States; provide an overview of common curricular contents and teaching methods in this area; put forward a proposal for learning outcomes, course contents, and teaching strategies; and highlight the importance of an interpreting practicum for graduate employability and community engagement.

Keywords: public service interpreting, curriculum, teaching, Gulf States

1. Need for Public Service Interpreting Education

The Gulf States have for decades been associated with oil-based development, which has attracted large numbers of expatriate workers and experts. The economies of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, for example, are heavily dependent on a migrant workforce. In some Gulf countries, the percentage of expatriates in the labor market and the overall population is greater than that of citizens (Abdullah, 2009; Al-Najjar, 2009). At the same time, Saudi Arabia, the largest and most populated Gulf State, receives millions of pilgrims every year. Migrants and pilgrims come from different parts of the world, with such Asian countries as Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Pakistan as major sources. With such cultural and linguistic diversity, there is a clear need for professional public service interpreters, who would facilitate communication between migrants, pilgrims, and visitors on one hand and public service providers (immigration officers, police, healthcare workers, lawyers, religious advisors, etc.) on the other. Unfortunately, the need for professional public service interpreters is hardly recognized in the Gulf States (or in the rest of the Arab world, for that matter), and little has been done in terms of regulation, education, and certification (Qadi, 2011; Raddawi, 2015; Taibi, 2011). When communication facilitators are available, they are often untrained and unqualified (ad hoc) “interpreters” (Al-Tenaijy, 2015; Fatani, 2010; Hannouna, 2012; Mahmoud, 2010). Hannouna’s (2012, p. 89) survey shows “that most of the language services offered at Al-Ain hospitals [United Arab Emirates] are now performed by ad hoc interpreters who are neither professional and well-trained, nor accredited or certified. They are non-specialists in Translation and Interpreting and have not taken sufficient and effective university-level courses in the field.” In relation to court interpreting in the same country, Al-Tenaijy (2015, p. 9) agrees that “the use of ad hoc interpreters is common, especially when court interpreters in certain languages are simply not available.” In Saudi Arabia, Abu-ghararah (2017) points out a shortage of translators and interpreters in the court system and a lack of regulation and assessment to ensure that only qualified professionals are employed. Some media reports (e.g., Alharbi, 2015) go further to note that in some cases, defendants are asked to interpret for other defendants.

Adequate language service provision and the professionalization of interpreting in this region (as well as elsewhere) require a number of interventions in different areas: policy, education, and quality assurance (e.g., a testing and certification system, rigorous recruitment processes, and monitored compliance with the relevant code of ethics; Taibi, 2011, 2014). In this paper, the focus is on education, so the other two levels are not addressed, although education is related to both of them: (a) In many respects, the availability, organization, and quality of relevant education depends on policies and national and local directives; and (b) education and training naturally make a significant and foundational contribution to quality assurance. As Hale (2007, p. 166) argues, “[T]he most important [reason for compulsory training] is that of equipping community interpreters [public service interpreters] to provide quality services, in order to avoid the potential negative consequences associated with incompetent interpreting.” “Training also has a social function,” in that it provides a context for professional socialization and contributes to advancing the interpreting profession and improving its status (p. 167). In the case of public service interpreting (PSI) in particular, one could go further to assert that the social mission of education relates not only to the interpreters themselves but also, and most importantly, to the communities they serve (facilitating communication and access for disempowered minority members, upholding human rights, serving justice in courts, etc.).

The translation and interpreting programs in the Gulf region and the rest of the Arab world do not (sufficiently) cater to education needs in PSI (Taibi, 2014, 2016). Interpreting in general is not given its due share, as most translation programs in the Arab world focus mainly or exclusively on translation. Even within translation, Al-Batineh and Bilali (2017, p. 198) note a mismatch of focus between these translator education programs and the translation industry: “[L]iterary translation represents 25% of the field-specific courses offered at the graduate level while the required experience in literary translation represents 3% of market demand.”

2. Curriculum Design in Public Service Interpreting

This paper puts forward a PSI curriculum proposal for Gulf States, but as interest in PSI education is still emerging in this region, the suggestions are mainly based on PSI teaching experiences and literature from

other parts of the world. PSI teaching programs are available mainly in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North America (Stern, 2011, p. 491). Although the types of PSI education in these countries and regions can provide insights into a number of areas (e.g., organization, curriculum design, teaching, and certification), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries would not need or be expected to reproduce curricula that were designed with other national contexts in mind.

PSI programs usually cover public service settings, such as courts, hospitals, and immigration and social services. They vary in terms of provider category (e.g., universities, colleges of further education), duration, and curriculum and teaching standards. There are short programs (e.g., 2-week on-site induction or further education before commencing employment in a court system) as well as bachelor's and master's degree programs. In relation to the region of interest here, the Gulf States, either a short-term or a long-term approach may be adopted, depending on the needs and resources: (a) relevant ministries, public services, and agencies may organize intensive programs for specific purposes when needed (e.g., urgent needs, emerging new languages in the local context); or (b) universities and other education providers may offer specific undergraduate or postgraduate programs in PSI or a significant number of courses within an existing generalist translation and interpreting program. Thus, for instance, a short-term approach could target a specific need—such as interpreting for pilgrims in Saudi Arabia—by providing short training courses (setting-specific, pilgrimage-related) for translation and interpreting graduates a few weeks prior to the commencement of pilgrimage. A long-term approach could address the desirability of a rounded PSI education by purposely catering for it in existing or new undergraduate or postgraduate programs. In this paper, the focus is on the long-term academic option.

To design a curriculum or a curricular component in PSI, program leaders and teaching teams need to be guided by the requirements of the profession. Angelelli (2017, p. 42) points out that prospective dialogue interpreters¹ need to develop basic skills common to all interpreting, in addition to those that are specific to dialogue (public service) interpreting. In relation to the latter, Hale (2007, p. 177–178) lists several competences and types of knowledge that the relevant literature establishes as requirements for the work of a professional public service interpreter:

- Knowledge of professional issues, especially role and ethics
- Advanced language competence
- Excellent listening and comprehension skills
- Excellent memory skills
- Adequate public speaking skills
- Adequate note-taking skills
- Advanced interpreting skills, including in different interpreting modes and sight translation
- Appropriate interactional management skills
- Knowledge of the context and subject matter
- Understanding of the goals and discourse practices of the relevant institutions
- Cross-cultural awareness
- Knowledge of relevant linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and translation and interpreting theories.

Phelan et al. (2019, pp. 8–9) classify the core competencies into linguistic (grammar, specialized terminology, register, etc.), thematic (identifying relevant topics for interpreting assignments, searching for and extracting relevant terminology from resources, demonstrating knowledge of different interpreting modes), interpersonal (coordination of interaction, trust-building strategies, awareness of bias, etc.), intercultural (awareness of cultural differences and related power asymmetries, knowledge of users' cultural backgrounds), technological (e.g., terminology management and, in light of current developments in the profession, video-conferencing), business-related (e.g.,

client and assignment management, finance, membership in professional associations), and developmental (ongoing learning, working with others, flexibility and change management, etc.).

Excellent listening and comprehension skills, memory and note-taking skills, public-speaking skills, skills in different interpreting modes, and knowledge of the thematic and institutional context are core components of all types of interpreting. A good understanding of professional role and ethical considerations, interactional management skills, and awareness of the nature and discourse practices of each public service (e.g., court, police station, social security, hospital) are particularly important for PSI (Cirillo & Niemants, 2017; Hale, 2007; Phelan et al., 2019; Tipton & Furmanek, 2016; Wadensjö, 2013). The inclusion of other areas, such as language competence, cross-cultural awareness, and knowledge of the context and subject matter, will depend on the local curricular constraints and the backgrounds and needs of student cohorts. Even if these aspects are not specifically taught in dedicated modules, they can be addressed as part of the learning activities in other modules.

The interpreting settings to focus on will vary from one local or national context to another. However, court and healthcare settings would be essential in any PSI program for two main reasons: (a) they are high-stake settings where untrained or ad hoc interpreters may compromise the health, well-being, freedom, or vital interests of their clients (e.g., Flores et al., 2003; Hale, 2007; Pym, 2021); and (b) they involve specialized terminology and discourse that are challenging to interpret accurately and effectively without adequate education. PSI programs in different parts of the world often include these two settings (e.g., the Bachelor of Arts and the Master of Interpreting and Translation at Western Sydney University, Australia; the Master in Intercultural Communication, Public Service Interpreting, and Translation at Alcala University, Spain; the Master's Program on Court and Public Service Interpreting for Arabic, Dari, Farsi, and Turkish in combination with German at the University of Vienna, Austria; or the Spanish Community Interpreting Graduate Certificate, offered by the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, USA).

As mentioned above, the local or national context will have a role in determining priorities. A case in point is the PSI needs in Saudi Arabia. Like other Gulf States, the country hosts many migrant workers, who have frequent interactions with public services, such as hospitals, police stations, courts, or immigration offices. Unlike other GCC States, however, Saudi Arabia hosts millions of pilgrims throughout the year and during the annual Hajj (Islamic pilgrimage). Pilgrims may require public services, such as healthcare, emergency services, or police assistance, but they also engage with other specific services, such as religious advisers, crowd-management services, pilgrimage-related administration, and so on. Designers of interpreting curricula in Saudi Arabia would need to account for these unique situations. As interpreting courses generally are designed and labeled according to setting or domain (e.g., legal interpreting, medical interpreting, business interpreting), one of these courses would need to focus on interpreting for pilgrims. If programs were structured based on interpreting skills or modes (e.g., consecutive, simultaneous, dialogue, sight translation), then the pilgrimage context would need to be part of the communicative situations in which students practice their skills (e.g., dialogue interpretation in interviews with lost pilgrims, simultaneous interpretation of religious sermons, sight translation of pilgrims' statements at a police station).

3. Learning Outcomes, Teaching Strategies, and Resources

Naturally, the aim of a PSI program is to enable students to develop and demonstrate the skills required of a professional public service interpreter. The summary provided by Hale (2007) above is a good point of reference for what to include in such a program. If there were institutional, time, or other constraints, the following learning outcomes would need to be prioritized, as they relate to core skills in this type of interpreting:

- Apply the standards and ethics of the professional role (if a code of professional ethics and conduct does not exist in the country in question, an appropriate code from another country may be taken as a reference while local efforts continue to establish a national code, in collaboration with relevant professional organizations and institutions).
- Demonstrate understanding of the discourse patterns and practices in (relevant) public services.

- Accurately and appropriately interpret the speech of participants in public service interviews (especially in the most relevant settings in the national context).
- Produce an accurate and appropriate oral rendition (sight translation) of public service texts (relevant to the settings covered in the program).
- Coordinate interaction between the main participants in an effective manner (e.g., Wadensjö, 2013, on coordination).

The development of PSI skills and the acquisition of knowledge of professional standards and discourse practices need to be based on a sound theoretical grounding, including interpreting theories, pragmatic and discourse theories, intercultural communication, deontology, and so on. Students may be exposed to a number of interpreting exercises, role-playing, and ethical scenarios, but without a strong theoretical foundation and a two-way interaction between theory and practice, they will be less likely to develop the required skills to a satisfactory standard and in a meaningful manner. As Stern (2011, p. 502) notes, “knowledge of interpreting theory promotes reflective independent learning, enhances students’ progress, and assists with decision-making and the maintenance of appropriate strategies and tactics.” Thus, for example, if students are to understand accuracy and appropriateness or be aware of the meaning and function of certain discourse practices, they need to be grounded in a good understanding of how communication works, how semantic meaning differs from pragmatic meaning, how language is used for discursive purposes, and how meaning and discourse functions are expressed differently across languages and cultures. Translation and interpreting students, especially in their first semester or year, tend to expect ready solutions (e.g., the teacher’s “model” translation/interpretation of a given sentence or utterance, readily available equivalent terms). However, as can be inferred from Stern’s statement, translation and interpreting are matters of strategizing and decision making that need to be informed and justified by processing language input against a solid theoretical understanding.

In addition to a strong theoretical background, which provides a framework for teaching, learning, and interpreting strategies, the development of PSI skills needs to be closely linked to real-life public service situations. As Ozolins (2017, p. 46) affirms, “[u]nless a training programme is based upon a theory of situations, a taxonomy of encounters, much vocabulary building and practice will be the equivalent of ‘snatching at words,’ practice out of context.” Situating practice in scenarios and simulated public service encounters enables students to make sense of and reflect upon theory and professional ethics, learn about procedures and discourse features in a specific setting, integrate different curriculum components and identify links between them, and practice their own judgment in terms of appropriate interpreting strategies and professional conduct.

In relation to the point about situated practice, Angelelli (2017) proposes a problem-based approach to learning and teaching PSI. This is “a pedagogical strategy in which learners are confronted with significant, contextualized, real world situations” (p. 37). Students address real-life PSI situations equipped with what they already know about theory, the setting at hand, and the interlocutors involved. In the process of addressing this situation or problem, students develop “both content knowledge and problem-solving skills” (p. 37). PSI courses usually rely heavily on role-play activities (Corsellis, 2008, p. 73), which are a type of problem-based learning; thus, to simulate “triadic exchanges” (Mason, 2014) in public services, students are asked to play the role of a public service provider (e.g., police officer, doctor, lawyer), a client (e.g., detained person, patient, defendant), and a PSI interpreter. This is usually a very stimulating classroom practice, as the role-players have opportunities to develop their public-speaking skills, interpersonal skills, and, most importantly, dialogue interpreting and coordination skills. At the same time, their classmates have opportunities to observe and be exposed to setting-specific terminology and practices. They are also able to take notes, provide peer feedback, and engage in discussion of the role-players’ performance and the different aspects of interaction during the activity. This type of activity also creates a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, as the simulation scenario, the dialogue between participants, and the student-interpreters’ own interventions often give rise to humorous situations.

Angelelli (2017, p. 38), however, argues that PSI role-play does not necessarily constitute or lead to problem-solving learning for a number of reasons: (a) It is limited to the safe classroom context, (b) it focuses on the interpreter’s

performance or “product” rather than the process, and (c) the resources used seldom reflect the complexity of real-life PSI situations. Angelelli’s criticism appears to be related more to the way in which PSI role-playing is planned, conducted, and resourced rather than to the effectiveness of the exercise itself. This takes us to the last point in this section: teaching and learning resources.

In a doctoral thesis on teaching and learning PSI, Maximous (2017, p. 244) finds that most of the dialogues used for in-class interpreting practice are quite unlike real-life PSI interactions. After observing a number of English-Arabic PSI classrooms at an Australian university, Maximous concludes that the dialogues used are not as complex as real public service interviews, lack the conversational features of these encounters (e.g., speech interruption and overlapping), and are not as “content-loaded” or as lengthy as the speech of public service providers and clients can be. Certainly, PSI teachers understandably use scripted dialogues, shorter segments, less challenging speech turns (e.g., no overlapping speech), and simple terminology as part of a carefully planned approach to expose students gradually to different levels of PSI challenges. However, as Maximous (2017) and many others (e.g., Angelelli, 2017; Rudvin & Tomassini, 2011) recommend, the materials used for PSI practice in general and role-play activities need to be as authentic as possible.

Authentic materials (e.g., audio- or video-recorded public service encounters) can be used unedited or adapted to serve specific learning objectives. A strong link between professional practice, teaching, and research can assist significantly in facilitating access to such materials. As far as the link between professional practice and teaching is concerned, it is ideal to count on qualified teachers who are or have been professional interpreters, as their experience assists them not only in teaching the different dimensions of interpreting and its settings but also in designing activities that are similar and relevant to the future interpreting assignments of their students. In Australia, for example, most PSI teaching staff are practicing interpreters certified by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters and therefore bring a wealth of professional experience to the classroom. They can also draw on the PSI settings and cases encountered in their own professional practice to develop plausible role-play scenarios for their students. As for the link between teaching and research, what is of interest here is that PSI teaching teams who also engage in research on PSI, or on public service discourse generally, are able to generate useful resources for their classes as a by-product of their research projects. For example, in GCC States, the presence of large numbers of migrants and pilgrims offers opportunities for public service interviews and consultations (interpreter-mediated and monolingual) to be video-recorded and transcribed for research purposes; these same resources can also be adapted for PSI exercises or role-playing. Authentic materials may be used in class and at home for developing various attributes, such as background or institutional knowledge, comprehension skills (e.g., summarizing), listening and memory skills, or the core interpreting (meaning transfer) and interactional management skills. The materials can be used as a basis for improvised (but carefully planned) role-play exercises. Care must be taken, however, to adapt and construct the dialogues in a manner that serves the desired learning outcome (Rudvin & Tomassini, 2011, p. 109).

In relation to authenticity of material, it is worth noting that the public services in the Arab world use colloquial Arabic in their interactions with users, except in particular limited contexts that call for Modern Standard Arabic, such as when a judge or a prosecutor is reading from a written text or is citing relevant legislation. However, there is a tendency (e.g., among teachers whose main professional background is conference interpreting) to inappropriately use Modern Standard Arabic throughout PSI exercises, making them unrealistic and inconsistent with everyday PSI encounters in Arabic-speaking services and administrations. Therefore, unless a specific case requires otherwise, the Arabic parts of dialogue used for interpreting practice should be in the local variety of spoken Arabic (not Modern Standard Arabic).

4. Language Diversity and Program Viability

PSI addresses some of the challenges posed by language diversity in communities, yet this diversity may itself pose a challenge to PSI programs and the organizations that offer them. PSI education requires a significant amount of language-specific learning and feedback; however, programs and institutions are unable to cover all the languages needed in a given community, either because of lack of resources or lack of expertise (Hale, 2007; Sawyer, 2006; Stern, 2011). Before proposing new programs or major program variations, education providers would normally

conduct feasibility studies. In a higher education environment that is increasingly conscious of budgetary constraints and cost-effectiveness, only programs or language combinations that are judged viable would normally be approved. As Angelelli (2017, p. 39) suggests, “census data as well as results obtained from sociolinguistic studies on language communities of specific areas is essential to respond to the local market and social needs.” This needs to be complemented with data about potential student cohorts and qualified teaching staff. In terms of languages needed, the significant presence of South Asian migrant workers in GCC countries and the large numbers of South Asian pilgrims visiting Saudi Arabia suggest that such languages as Urdu, Bengali, Sinhalese, Pashto, and Persian would be among the major community languages requiring interpreter education (Taibi, 2014, 2016). In addition to these, Alharbi (2015) notes a high demand also for Tagalog, Indonesian, English, Thai, Swahili, Amharic, and Vietnamese.

When language diversity and social needs exceed the resources available, one possible solution is non-language-specific PSI tuition, or what Slatyer (2015, p. 236) refers to as “multilingual interpreter education”: “The curriculum is a multilingual curriculum; there is no language pair-specific tuition and no language pair-specific feedback to the students in the face-to-face components.” Hale and Ozolins (2014) report on a short program offered in this generic mode to a group of participants from 11 languages. The selection of languages was based on census data, immigration data, and interpreter directories (to identify unmet PSI demand). The program was conducted almost entirely in English and focused on basic knowledge and skills, including professional ethics, dialogue interpreting (with some sight translation and chuchotage), and setting-specific knowledge (health, law, and domestic violence). They also report that a number of short and longer courses has been offered internationally, using the strategy of mixed-language groups. This multilingual interpreter education has its own problematic aspects, but at the same time, it offers opportunities to cohorts and language groups that would not be catered to otherwise.

In the case of GCC educational institutions, such interpreter education would cover the core PSI skills outlined in Section 2; the classes would combine different working language groups, and the teaching would be undertaken only in Arabic (or only in English at institutions where English is the main language of instruction). To ensure that students engage in some language-specific practice and receive feedback, professional interpreters in the relevant languages could be employed as casual teachers or mentors. This might be a challenge for some language pairs, for which few professional interpreters are available. This and other challenges associated with multilingual PSI education could be overcome through the use of technology (e.g., online delivery of some curriculum components, remote teleconferencing with language-specific tutors) and collaborative teaching (e.g., modules or activities covered by teaching teams working cross-institutionally or even cross-nationally).

5. Professional Practicum and Employability

Translation and interpreting programs often include a professional practicum, a capstone course or module that facilitates students’ transition from the classroom to the industry through immersion, observation, and/or supervised practice, followed by a final reflective report on the experiences, challenges, professional relationships, and learning involved. On the importance of this part of interpreter education, Sawyer (2004, p. 77) affirms: “Perhaps the most powerful form of apprenticeship can be achieved through a reflective practicum, which is situated both internally and externally to the educational institution. Such a practicum provides an environment that encourages reflective practice.”

As indicated in Section 3, for PSI students to develop necessary and relevant skills, the course teaching and learning activities must be close to real-life public service encounters. This also means that students need not wait until the final practicum to be exposed to the reality of public services and PSI professional practice. As Corsellis (2008, p. 72) notes, PSI education often involves observation visits to relevant public services and presentations and role-plays by public service staff, such as doctors, social workers, and police officers. This exposure may be extended further by allowing students to undertake their practicum as an ongoing subject throughout their degree program rather than as a discrete bloc at the end, as is usually the case. The underlying rationale for a last-stage practicum is that students need to be equipped with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills before they are sent out to a placement. However, depending on what the administrative and logistic environment allows, they will probably benefit much more if a practicum placement is arranged for them from early stages of their education

program (e.g., Trede & McEwen, 2014, on early placement experiences). This would allow them to engage in a cyclical interaction between reflective learning and reflective practice. Understandably, beginning students would not be expected to engage in supervised practice, but their involvement could be gradually planned to go from on-site observation to supervised interpreting in noncritical encounters. This experience would enable students to better contextualize and comprehend the contents of their learning program and would trigger interesting observations, questions, and reflections, which they would bring into the classroom as active participants. Especially in countries or domains where PSI has not yet been professionalized, students in a practicum placement would also be likely to question existing practices. As Trede and McEwen (2014, p. 28) state, one pedagogical purpose of workplace learning is “to enable students to question the practices they observe on placement and use placement experiences to trigger reflection and search for new knowledge and deeply understand theoretical relevance.” Some students may also be negatively affected by less professional practices (e.g., noncompliance with ethical standards), which is an additional reason for teachers to provide debriefing sessions and/or provide corrective feedback when they become aware of such undesirable influences.

Many translation and interpreting programs in GCC countries already have a practicum component (e.g., the Master of Arts in Translation and Interpreting at the American University of Sharjah, UAE, or the translation stream of the English and Translation undergraduate program at Effat University, Saudi Arabia). In a PSI program or a translation and interpreting program with a significant curricular share for PSI, the practicum would offer placements in particularly relevant settings (e.g., courts, police stations, ports of entry, hospitals, pilgrimage sites). Where applicable, practicum students would undertake their observation and interpreting practice under the supervision of a professional interpreter. When this is not possible, supervision could be provided by relevant staff at the public service entity, in collaboration with the program teaching staff or practicum coordinator. At early stages of the practicum, even unsupervised observation of institutional settings would be extremely useful. Like other aspects of the curriculum, the practicum would need to be carefully planned and its learning outcomes, requirements, expectations, and assessment criteria clearly outlined—not only in the program documentation processed internally or externally for approval but also in the information provided to students.

The importance of a practicum cannot be stressed enough, especially in a translation and interpreting education context such as the Arab world, where students are exposed to much more theory than practice (En-nehas, 2018, pp. 50–51). A practicum would provide valuable opportunities for programs and universities to engage with their social environment, local and national public services, and relevant industries. For students, it would enhance employability in at least three different ways: (a) It would enable them to develop their interpreting skills and institutional knowledge further, thus bringing them up to, or closer to, professional performance standards; (b) it would assist in their socialization and identity development as members of a PSI community of practice; and (c) it would allow them to develop their own professional network, including in the practicum organization, which would later facilitate access to employment.

6. Conclusion

The Gulf States are home to millions of non-Arabic-speaking workers. Millions of non-Arabic speakers also visit for religious and other purposes. These speakers of other languages engage with local public services of different types (healthcare, police, courts, immigration, etc.). These interactions and transactions between Arabic-speaking (and sometimes English-speaking) public service staff and speakers of other languages require professional interpreting services to overcome the challenges of language diversity in institutional settings. For migrants and visitors from South Asia and elsewhere to communicate effectively with doctors, lawyers, police officers, religious service providers, and so on, qualified public service interpreters are essential. Only adequately educated and appropriately selected interpreters can bridge the communicative gap in these settings.

Public service interpreter education is still an area requiring attention and development in GCC countries. When universities and program leaders are in a position to propose new education initiatives to address the existing needs, they will have a body of relevant publications and curriculum design experiences at their disposal. Work done elsewhere around the world in PSI research, curriculum design, and teaching can offer GCC curriculum

developers a strong foundation to build upon. Rather than reinvent the wheel, curriculum designers and teachers in the region can draw on the PSI training experiences of such countries as Australia, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Existing literature also provides guiding principles in relation to institutional settings, the position of theoretical knowledge, essential PSI skills, teaching methods, and learner resources. The literature also suggests that a hands-on approach to teaching and learning, accompanied by or concluding with an internship or practicum, is effective not only in developing students' interpreting skills and other competencies but also in enhancing their employability and professional integration.

However, although PSI programs within the GCC can usefully draw upon experiences from other countries, it is indispensable for designers to examine and consider the existing local needs and resources and to adapt course objectives, contents, teaching methods, and delivery modes to the strengths and constraints of the local environment.

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Endnotes

- 1 Dialogue interpreting is another term that is commonly used to refer to public service interpreting, although it may also cover other settings, such as business and media interviews.