EVALUATING INSTITUTIONAL ACADEMIC ENGLISH TERMINOLOGY FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION: THE WEBSITE AND ONLINE STUDENT SERVICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MACERATA AS A CASE STUDY

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The seemingly unstoppable process of internationalization currently underway across European universities entails a progressive transition towards English as the privileged medium of global communication. The success of internationalization efforts pursued by universities hinges on the consistent use of accurate and clear English terminology in a wide range of administrative documents produced (and translated) by individual institutions. These materials include texts published on the Internet (e.g. prospectuses, course syllabi, online student information management systems, etc.) as well as a variety of printed documents (such as transcripts, university regulations, standard forms to apply for international mobility schemes and internship programmes, etc.).

Against this background, the paper presents a case study based on the translation into English of the website of the University of Macerata and its online student services, in which the authors were directly involved. The focus is on the evaluation of the English terms that were chosen to express typical concepts of the Italian academic system and to translate specific administrative vocabulary used locally in Macerata. The paper discusses the significant challenges involved in this process, describing in particular the user-centred validation of the equivalent English terms.

A questionnaire-based survey was conducted with two samples of typical international users of English-language administrative academic documentation: a group of 31 exchange students from across Europe visiting Macerata, and 14 British students attending Italian language courses at Manchester Metropolitan University. They evaluated the accuracy and clarity of proposed English equivalents for a set of key university-related Italian terms accompanied by their definitions in English, including “immatricolazione”, “iscrizione” and “libretto universitario”. The two samples of native and non-native English-speaking students showed strikingly similar preferences, and the results of the survey were used to validate the English terms that were ultimately approved to support the international communication needs of the University of Macerata.

Basic bibliography


Short bio profiles of the authors

Antonietta Lemme holds an MA from the University of Macerata, and was a language tutor at Manchester Metropolitan University for a short period. During a work placement she translated into English the website of the University of Macerata and its online student services. Her MA dissertation concerned the evaluation of the institutional English terminology used in this academic internationalization project.

Federico Gaspari has a background in translation studies and holds a PhD from the University of Manchester. He has 15 years’ experience as a lecturer in specialized translation, translation technology and linguistics at the Universities of Manchester, Salford, Macerata and Bologna at Forli. He is a postdoctoral researcher at Dublin City University, specializing in human and machine translation quality evaluation.