

Crossing Borders: Translation Studies and Information Science

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Introduction

The University of Ottawa offers a bilingual Master of Information Studies, but has found that there is no obvious undergraduate feeder program. The literature suggests that aspects of translation are complementary to information science. Therefore, this project aimed to discover whether a Bachelor of Arts in Translation might feed logically into the MIS, and further, whether uOttawa should develop a combined BA Translation and MIS degree program.

Methodology

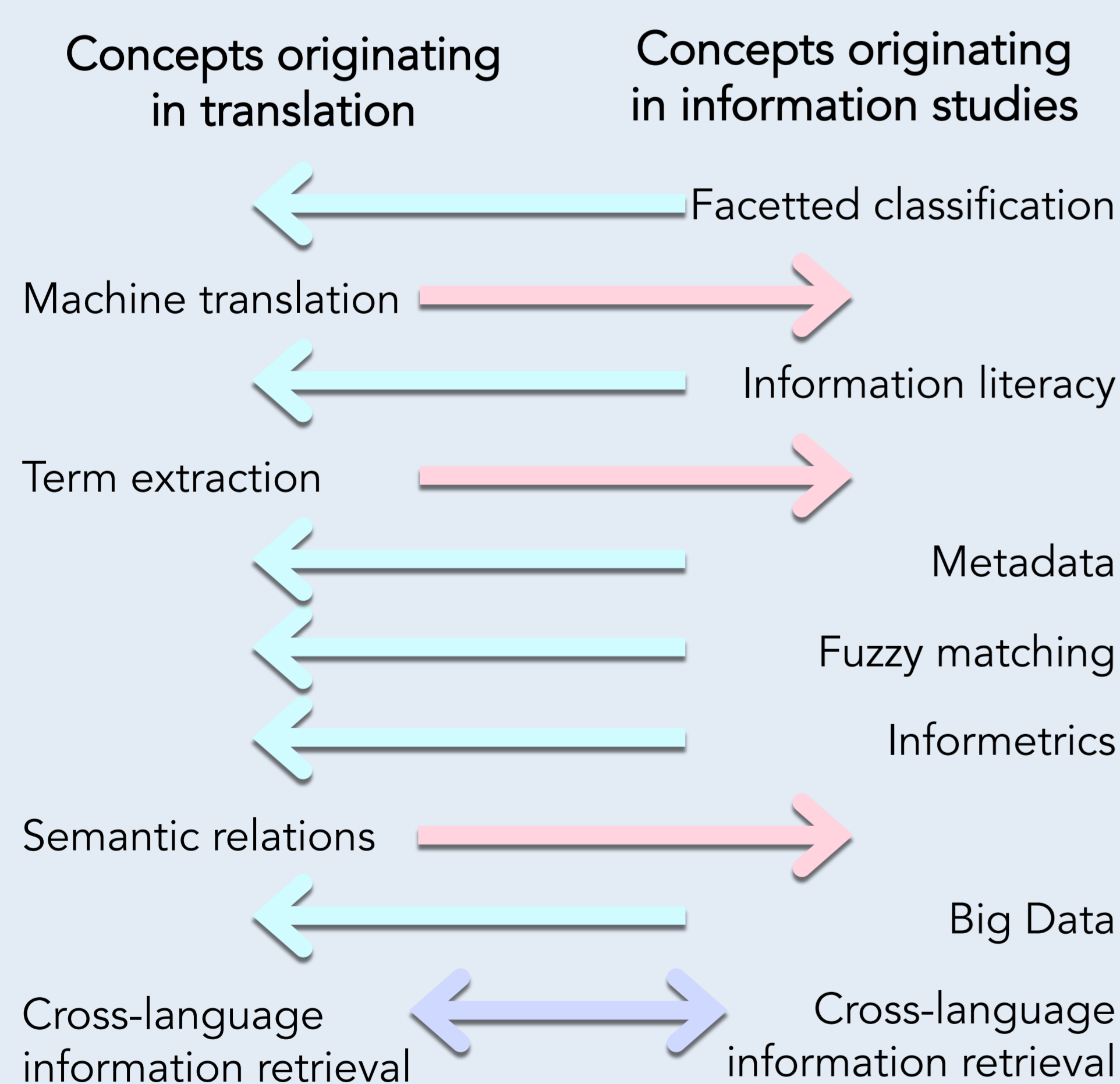
Research: Review of the literature to identify areas of overlapping interest

Practice: Analysis of competency profiles for translators/terminologists and information professionals

Teaching: Comparison of syllabi from the Bachelor of Arts in Translation and Master of Information Studies programs

Community: Survey of three students who recently completed both programs

Literature Review



Indicative References

- Bowker, L., & Delsey, T. (2016). Information science, terminology and translation studies: Adaptation, collaboration, integration. In Y. Gambier & L. van Doorslaer (Eds.), *Border Crossings. Translation Studies and Other Disciplines* (pp. 73–95). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
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Competency Profile and Syllabi Analyses

The profile comparison aimed to identify skills necessary to both careers. Competency profiles were gathered from publications, professional associations and employers in both North America and Europe. In total, 9 translation and 6 information science skills lists were analyzed. The comparison revealed 19 shared skills, as well as 2 potential areas of overlap.

	Competency	TRA (% of lists)	ISI (% of lists)
More important to ISI	Marketing and advocacy	11%	83%
	Professional ethics and values	11%	83%
	Teaching skills	11%	67%
	Client orientation	22%	100%
	Project management	22%	83%
Important to both TRA and ISI	Interact across cultural and social differences	22%	50%
	Effective verbal communication	33%	67%
	Critical thinking; problem solving ability	56%	100%
	Judge the quality and reliability of information sources	44%	50%
	Synthesize, organize and represent knowledge	89%	100%
	Skill with computers and information technology	89%	100%
	Work collaboratively	44%	50%
	Efficiently gather information from diverse sources	89%	100%
	Work independently and take initiative	33%	33%
	Interpersonal skills	44%	33%
More important to TRA	Curiosity, adaptability and a desire for lifelong learning	100%	67%
	Strong writing skills	89%	50%
More important to TRA	Broad general knowledge; awareness of current events	44%	17%
	Possess specialized knowledge (subject knowledge) and/or the ability to learn quickly about a new domain	78%	17%
Important to TRA but would also be helpful to ISI	Accuracy; attention to detail	78%	0%
	Work on deadlines	44%	0%

A total of 6 syllabi from the uOttawa BA in Translation and 8 from the MIS were analyzed. The syllabus comparison uncovered 18 subjects taught in both programs, although often through different disciplinary lenses.

Subjects taught in both translation and information studies			
	Subject	TRA (% of syllabi)	ISI (% of syllabi)
More important to ISI	Indexing	17%	25%
	Professional ethics	17%	25%
	Concept analysis	17%	33%
	Modelling, structuring and representing information	17%	50%
Important to both TRA and ISI	Localization; web content	33%	25%
	Identify information resources	50%	25%
	Build electronic information resources	50%	25%
	Evaluate tools and technologies	50%	25%
	Human-computer interaction/User eXperience	50%	25%
	Evaluate information resources	50%	38%
	Search electronic resources	67%	38%
	Collaborate	50%	50%
More important to TRA	Verbal communication	50%	50%
	Controlled language; standardization	33%	13%
	Information life cycle	33%	13%
Slightly important to both TRA and ISI	Analysis of user needs	50%	13%
	Abstracting	33%	17%

Student Surveys

Q: If you had personally had the opportunity to pursue a combined degree program, do you think you would have taken it?

"No. I feel that the time that I had in the workforce between the two degrees was essential. It allowed me to have a better understanding of what it is like working in a professional setting and to view first-hand information management issues and how they can impact a workforce."

"YES! I find that the subjects go hand in hand: most likely, a lover of languages will [...] have an interest in libraries, archives, managing information, etc. If that could have shaved off some time in the completion of my degrees, that would certainly have been welcome"

"I like the idea of being able to complete a BA and MIS concurrently. However, depending on how the program was built, I'm not sure if I would. I enjoyed taking all of the TRA courses solely focusing on that. [...] I also enjoy the way the MIS program is currently set-up."

Conclusion

This project demonstrated that significant areas of overlap exist between translation and information studies. The literature review revealed both research advances shared from one field to the other and direct collaboration. The competency profile analysis identified 19 shared skills, from the very broad (e.g. interpersonal skills) to the more specialized (e.g. information synthesis). The syllabi comparison uncovered 18 subjects taught in both programs, though through different disciplinary lenses. The former students also largely supported the idea of a combined program and provided suggestions for its development.

Given the overlapping interests of these two fields with regard to research, practice and teaching, as well as the support from the community, the notion of developing a combined degree program would seem to have merit. We therefore recommend that uOttawa pursue the development of such a program taking into account student suggestions (e.g. a CO-OP option).

Acknowledgements

Deepest thanks go to Lynne Bowker, without whose support and guidance this project would never have happened. Thanks also to the BA Translation and MIS students who participated in our survey.