

Maria Piotrowska  
Joanna Dybiec-Gajer



ERBA VOLANT



CRIPTA MANENT

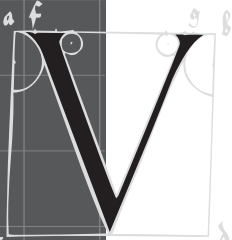
How to write an M.A. thesis  
in Translation Studies

universitas

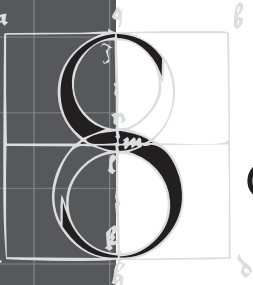
VERBA VOLANT  
SCRIPTA MANENT



Maria Piotrowska  
Joanna Dybiec-Gajer



ERBA VOLANT



CRIPTA MANENT

How to write an M.A. thesis  
in Translation Studies

Kraków

Publikacja dofinansowana przez Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny w Krakowie

© Copyright by Joanna Dybiec-Gajer, Maria Piotrowska and Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 2012

ISBN 97883-242-1583-6  
TAiWPN UNIVERSITAS

Recenzenci

*prof. dr hab. Elżbieta Tabakowska*

*prof. dr hab. Edita Gromová*

Opracowanie redakcyjne

*Piotr Paliwoda*

Projekt okładki i stron tytułowych

*Sepielak*

[www.universitas.com.pl](http://www.universitas.com.pl)

**FROM:**

*I do not know what theory I should use!*  
*I do not know how to organise my contents!*  
*I do not know how to start!*  
*I do not know anything.*

**TO:**

*My M.A. project has been successfully completed.*

For those, who cherish the joy of opening the gates  
to the unknown and under-investigated,  
this book has been written.



## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	11
<b>Chapter 1: Motivation and academic honesty</b> .....	15
Academia and the institutional environment .....	15
Translation seminars .....	16
Academic supervision – working with your supervisor .....	17
Motivation in choosing an M.A. topic .....	17
Academic honesty .....	18
<b>Chapter 2: English for Academic Purposes</b> .....	23
What is EAP – background information .....	23
Understanding academic terminology .....	25
Linguistic and textual considerations in academic writing .....	28
Presenting an argument .....	33
Paragraph and coherence/cohesion .....	33
Signalling words .....	34
Useful expressions .....	36
The use of Latin and other borrowings .....	40
Problems with lexical items in Polish-English translation .....	42
Abstract writing .....	45
<b>Chapter 3: Translation Studies research</b> .....	49
Introduction to research: Polish and English research styles .....	49
Disciplinary classification of TS research .....	50
Understanding the language of research .....	51
TS research characteristics .....	53
Types and areas of TS research .....	55
Historical research .....	56
Basic models of TS research .....	58
Research questions and problems .....	60
Data .....	61



Research methods in TS .....	63
Recent developments and new directions .....	64
<b>Chapter 4: Translation Studies resources and background reading ..</b>	<b>69</b>
Primary, secondary and tertiary sources .....	70
Location .....	72
Publication form: electronic and print .....	73
Evaluation .....	73
Types of TS resources .....	76
<b>Chapter 5: Compiling a bibliography and documenting sources ...</b>	<b>81</b>
Bibliography vs. works cited .....	81
Referencing conventions .....	83
In-text references .....	85
Quoting .....	86
<b>Chapter 6: M.A. project in Translation Studies - time management and research design .....</b>	<b>91</b>
Research projects vs. M.A. dissertations .....	91
Temporal dimension – research in TS is an orderly process .....	92
Textual dimension – M.A. dissertation has a structure and follows a style sheet .....	96
<b>Chapter 7: Quality checks – editing and revision .....</b>	<b>101</b>
Time to revise .....	102
Types of revision and editing .....	104
Computer aids in copy editing .....	111
Typographical errors .....	112
Inclusive language .....	115
Critical point revision .....	115
Correction symbols and proofreaders' marks .....	117
Overview of factors connected with revision .....	120
Punctuation and typographical signs .....	121

<b>Chapter 8: Communicating research orally</b> .....	125
Orality, settings and audience .....	125
Important considerations for successful presentations .....	127
<b>Chapter 9: Preparing for an M.A. exam in Translation Studies</b> ....	135
M.A. examinations .....	135
Self-help techniques .....	137
Question time – thematic areas and sample exam questions in TS ....	138
<b>Chapter 10: Tasks and exercises</b> .....	145
Task 1: Information check .....	145
Task 2: Formal register .....	145
Task 3: Hedges .....	146
Task 4: Cohesion .....	147
Task 5: Abstract analysis .....	148
Task 6: Contrastive terminological analysis .....	150
Task 7: Textbook analysis .....	150
Task 8: Key word analysis .....	151
Task 9: Identifying types of research .....	151
Task 10: Introduction and conclusion .....	151
Task 11: Effective use of quotations .....	152
Task 12: Reference list – style sheet conventions .....	152
Task 13: Writing a summary .....	152
Task 14: Individual research project – critical analysis of a TS text ....	153
<b>Appendices</b> .....	155
Appendix 1. FAQs (Frequently asked questions) .....	155
Appendix 2. Frequently used TS abbreviations and acronyms .....	160
Associations, networks etc. ....	160
Appendix 3. Relevant abbreviations in academic writing .....	162
Appendix 4. Diploma thesis timetable. ....	164
Appendix 5. Research proposals and progress reports .....	166

Appendix 6. Sample style sheet for M.A. papers in TS . . . . .	168
Appendix 7. Sample tables of contents. . . . .	176
Appendix 8. Frequently used revision abbreviations and symbols – a key to revision marks . . . . .	180
Appendix 9. Grading systems – how to understand the grading of student assignments . . . . .	182
Appendix 10. Evaluating research – a review sheet . . . . .	183
<b>Translation Studies library . . . . .</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Works cited . . . . .</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Index . . . . .</b>	<b>201</b>

# Introduction

## AUDIENCE AND AIM

The book is aimed at those who want to investigate translation-related problems and write a Master's thesis that is an academic thesis as part of their second cycle of studies in the European Higher Education Area. This target audience may be enlarged to include Bachelor's degree students (the first level) for whom certain remarks and chapters in the book will be equally pertinent.

The aim of the book is to guide and assist its users at each stage of their research, from identifying an area of interest, through selecting a topic, planning and conducting the research, to submitting their thesis and defending it in a final exam. Students may find it useful for self-study and reference, while teachers and supervisors can use it to enhance their course material.

## PRELIMINARY ASSUMPTIONS

This book is not an introduction to Translation Studies (TS), yet it helps the reader to gain a certain overview of the discipline by addressing specific topics and methodologies. It is also not a style manual or a technical writing course book. It does not teach how to write in English (this is a prerequisite) but it does teach how to apply the rules of academic English when writing a diploma thesis on TS. The publication combines in one textbook two things we need to know: what is required in TS research and what is the language that should be used.

## THE KEY NOTIONS

One key notion is research. Coming from the Old French *recercher*, it means to seek, to search. It is defined as a systematic and methodical investigation of a subject in order to discover new facts and new information, or create new laws and to reach a new understanding. It is difficult for research to be truly successful and enjoyable without curiosity, inspiration, motivation, discipline and personal enthusiasm.

Another key notion throughout the book is translation research as this is the target area for the investigations. This involves an academic study of various translation and translation-related phenomena, both theoretical and practical, from a number of perspectives that fall within or cross traditional disciplines, such as linguistics, comparative literature, literary criticism, philosophy, anthropology and cultural studies. These perspectives unite within and also go beyond TS, the discipline dedicated solely to translation research, which is itself an interdisciplinary and international area of scholarship. The book is addressed both to those who are motivated to do TS research and those who struggle with such motivation.

## THE LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

The book is written in English and it is chiefly aimed at Polish-English translation students who are writing their M.A. theses in English although most of the information in the text refers to wider problems than those that concern one particular language pair. Therefore, it is a useful resource book for anyone undertaking research in TS.

Polish students will additionally benefit from the comparative and contrastive aspects that are present at many levels, from the technicalities of writing (lexical problems, styles of academic writing), to actually conducting TS research (research traditions and styles).

## AUTHENTICITY

The material in the book comes from the seminar courses that the authors have conducted over several years and, due to the fact that the feedback is based on experience, the assumptions reflected in the book and the knowledge presented to the reader are well grounded in practice. The problems addressed usually originated from authentic research and writing dilemmas, ranging from major difficulties, such as methodology and thesis design, to the technical details, such as the number of pages, footnotes, fonts, spacing, paragraphing, etc. The book is illustrated with examples taken from the classroom as well as TS dissertations that were actually submitted and defended.

## STRUCTURE

Written in a user-friendly and approachable style, the book has a clear logic and format. It consists of 10 chapters, 10 appendices and, what the authors call a TS library. Although the necessary theory is included, the book is not about abstract thinking and theorising but practice. Frequently encountered problems and common mistakes are richly illustrated with authentic examples.

Chapter Ten is devoted entirely to practical tasks and exercises. The Index and FAQs (Appendix 1) allow for a quick search of pertinent information. Chapters One to Nine follow a similar arrangement. For the sake of clarity, they begin with sections entitled *Key words* and *Key questions*. The *Chapter guidelines* at the end recapitulate the major issues and offer practical hints and advice. Finally, the *Recommended reading* lists further reading, including web pages relevant to the topics and problems discussed in the chapter.

Appendices offer practical and illustrative material, such as, e.g. frequently used TS abbreviations, a sample style sheet and lists of contents. A diploma thesis timetable (Appendix 4) will assist students in planning their work on their thesis while a review sheet (Appendix 10) will enable them to self-evaluate their research.

Because research is understood as social communication, the book also discusses aspects of the academic environment, such as working with a supervisor (Chapter 1), communicating research results (Chapter 8) and taking the M.A. examination (Chapter 9).

The Translation Studies library is a helpful TS bibliography which provides an overview of canonical TS reference works, journals and relevant publications on translation theory (mainly companions and manuals), as well as other important works that are arranged thematically. The themes range from audiovisual and multimedia translation to legal translation and translator training. The TS library could be a starting point for TS reading and is useful when evaluating research in the field. Further TS reading is included in the section *Works cited*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are grateful to their seminar Students whose motivation and work on their theses made the work on this book purposeful and worthwhile. Considerable inspiration for this publication came from *The Map* by Jenny Williams and Andrew Chesterman. The book convinced the authors that it is possible to write a simple, brief, yet informative and useful resource book on translation research for translation students.

We hope that undertaking research on translation can be an exciting voyage of discovery.

*Bon Voyage!*  
Szerokiej drogi!

The Authors  
Kraków, March 2012

## Chapter 1: Motivation and academic honesty

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

### KEY WORDS

academia, academic environment, international, motivation, plagiarism, seminar course, supervision, supervisor, topic selection

### KEY QUESTIONS

What are seminar courses in TS?

How best to approach the selection of your topic?

What to consider in choosing an M.A. supervisor?

What is plagiarism? What are its consequences? How can I avoid it?

### ACADEMIA AND THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In those European universities where the Bologna Agreement has been implemented, certain similarities in the academic systems have started to appear. A discipline like Translation Studies, which is relatively young, interdisciplinary, ‘multilingual’ and multicultural in nature, in particular calls for communication and international exchange. It is hardly an overstatement to label TS institutes across Europe as ‘corporate academic culture’. Many translation research projects are conducted ‘horizontally’ – with scholars participating from different universities in various countries. Therefore, M.A. work in TS done by a student from Italy, or Spain, for instance, will share characteristics with the work of a Polish student because it is a TS dissertation, rather than be distinctive because it comes from another country. In other words, TS research and papers have become **international**.

Institutional conditions may and should have some influence on the work done. If the translation institute in which you are studying for an M.A. degree specialises in audiovisual translation, for example, the



availability of AVT research tools, AVT data corpora and experience in designing AVT studies will be greater than in an institution where AVT material is less central and not easily accessible because the research focus is elsewhere.

Generally, the choice of the research study depends on existing knowledge of the subject and the resources available. Hence, it is necessary to pose various questions with the enquiry to be undertaken dependent upon different research designs.

## TRANSLATION SEMINARS

In academia, writing academic papers in order to attain academic degrees is a central part of studying and a considerable time investment in your own development. In Polish M.A. programmes, research is the focus of courses called ‘seminars’. Seminar guidelines address writing and argumentation but the main objective is the preparation of an individual research project and writing a diploma thesis according to the criteria established in a given discipline, in this case – the Translation Studies.

Translation **seminar courses** focus on teaching students about academic research in the area in question and preparing them for writing and submitting a diploma work based on their research. A seminar is not a technical writing class, although it may incorporate some elements of technical writing towards project preparation and apply the principles of academic English usage when writing a diploma thesis. Competence in English is a prerequisite, however, any opportunity to improve and expand your linguistic repertoire during the seminars is to be encouraged. Two perspectives are usually adopted for such courses: a global view, in which TS as an autonomous discipline is recognised and TS research is mapped onto TS; and a regional approach, which focuses on an individual student’s research work towards their M.A. degree. The seminar course encompasses elements of general TS research and specifically offers **supervision** and guidance with regard to an individual M.A. project.

As far as teaching arrangements are concerned, the seminar course is offered over the four semesters of a master’s degree, and consists of 30

contact hours every semester plus an estimated 45 hours of individual homework in the first two semesters' time, which gradually increases in semesters three and four.

## **ACADEMIC SUPERVISION - WORKING WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR**

Academic supervision is another factor to consider. Your research work for your dissertation will go more smoothly if your and your supervisor's intellectual styles are not dissimilar. Communication is vital to your progress and that is why in your choice of a supervisor you should be guided by how easy communication might be between you and your supervisor.

In the context of topic selection, interest is another significant factor: it is more sensible to choose a supervisor whose research area covers your M.A. topic. Their help will be more fruitful then. Otherwise, if you insist on sticking to a topic of your choice (that you have selected randomly without proper enquiry and background knowledge, for example, on the basis of few internet articles) which has nothing to do, or not much to do with the seminar theme and your supervisor's specialisation, your work may be held back due to a lack of adequate guidance. Use the opportunities you have – seminar time, office hours, to communicate with your supervisor. E-mail correspondence works well for simple matters and arrangements but is not really suitable for conceptual queries.

## **MOTIVATION IN CHOOSING AN M.A. TOPIC**

Let us quote a fragment from the conclusion of a book written by two acknowledged translation scholars, Williams and Chesterman: "Research is a journey with no ultimate end-point. But the travelling can be fun" (2002: 128). And let us disagree. Research is abstract – it never ends, true, but on the other hand, a specific study conducted within the framework of a wider research scheme and undertaken with the inten-

tion of completing it does have and should have an end. Not always is this end an end in itself. Sometimes it may be a means to another end, as in, for example, a pilot study to investigate translation market needs in a specific target area, which may also inquire into theoretical models of translation competence.

Translation research, like other kinds of research, should be motivated, should have some **inspiration**, a researcher's drive to go further, to explore, to aim at a goal. The researcher's joy and fun, as Williams and Chesterman put it, starts already at the very beginning of a given project. In other words, in your TS research try to explore the areas you really do want to investigate, and find a topic that promises satisfaction in delving more deeply into something you are truly interested in. Irrespective of what you intend to attain, the goal of gaining a degree, of having your text published, of completing an academic project, of fulfilling institutional or academic requirements, the path to your destination may either be nightmare when doing research that is boring or the pleasure of discovery and a scholarly adventure. Aside from the satisfaction of completing the task and gaining an M.A. degree, writing can be both challenging and creative, provided you do it with the right motivation and passion for translation.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Writing an M.A. thesis, and indeed any academic text, involves more or less direct dialogue with other authors through their books and articles. In each and every act of communication in which the parties respect and take each other seriously, which is the ideal of the academic community, we would not like to have our words distorted, misinterpreted or simply stolen. Maintaining the principles of academic honesty and integrity involves avoiding a serious breach of such principles, which is **plagiarism**.

Literally, plagiarism means kidnapping (from Latin *plagiarus*, 'kidnapper'). In the context of research papers it means appropriating somebody else's words or ideas without giving them credit. It can have a number of forms. Another author's expressions (sentences or even passages)

are quoted verbatim yet are not marked as quotations, or are written in a slightly paraphrased way, likewise without specifying the source. Finally, another author's book, article or argument may be copied. It is in the last case that it may be the easiest to commit what is called unintentional plagiarism. Reading a well-written and well-structured text on a closely related topic, a student may – somewhat inadvertently – follow another author's argument, structure or line of thinking.

With the editing possibilities of modern software and the availability of material in electronic form, you may copy something without noting the source and later assume this is your own work. Good note-taking can save you a lot of time, trouble and embarrassment. Further, easy access to free, on-line texts does not mean that internet publications can be copied and distributed as you please. This is the same with regard to audio-visual material (photos, diagrams, films, recordings, etc.). Good academic practice has it that information from personal communication (e-mails, letters, conversation) should also be acknowledged. No matter whether you deal with print or internet material, it is vital to properly **acknowledge sources** whenever quoting, paraphrasing, summarizing or borrowing ideas (see Chapter 5 for details).

In the student context, **self-plagiarism**, also referred to as recycling fraud, text recycling or text reuse, may take place when you decide to write your M.A. thesis on a topic very closely related to that of your B.A. diploma work, reuse a substantial part of one of your texts in a different one or submit a course paper already completed for another course. Discuss such cases with your instructors and ask their permission to stick with the topic addressed in your B.A. thesis or to rework a paper prepared for a previous course.

In the academia, authors who use some of their earlier publications typically make a note of this and quote the pertinent material (self-citation). Self-citation which is excessive and/or unjustified tends to be approached with distaste. Follow good academic practices and avoid recycling your work.

Some writers, unfortunately, for a number of reasons decide to commit plagiarism advertently. Yet plagiarism is easier to detect than some students may think. On the one hand, anti-plagiarism software has become widely available and is used by many universities as a default