

Martin Forstner & Hannelore Lee-Jahnke
(eds)

Peter Lang

CIUTI-Forum

New Needs, Translators
& Programs

On the Translational Tasks
of the United Nations

The United Nations have their own communicative culture in six languages. Ensuring effective communications in such a complex environment requires translators with a high level of translation competence. In addition, there is a growing demand for qualified translators with a strong command in communicative efficiency in the Arabic, Chinese and Russian languages.

Whereas the languages services of the United Nations are highly centralized, the educational systems of the universities are extremely diverse and decentralized. Effective and efficient multilateral collaboration with the United Nations has therefore become a priority for CIUTI institutes. How can universities collaborate more efficiently with the United Nations in order to train translators for specific needs especially in the present years in which many vacancies come up?

The CIUTI Forum took place in January 2007 at the United Nations in Geneva and was centered around the New Needs of the United Nations in language matters. Solutions to existing problems such as scarceness in certain language combinations as well as specific training needs pour UN-purposes were the main issues of this event. Within the framework of this Forum contributors emphasize the different approaches of how to integrate the new needs of the languages services of the United Nations into the training institutions, such as the importance of the necessary different forms of cultural communication in six languages in any kind of discipline. Special stress is put on the two main axes of communication: internal communication between experts and external communication with the broad public.

MARTIN FORSTNER is University Professor (Dr. phil.habil.) at the Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz. From 1996 to 2006 he was President of CIUTI; since 2006 he is Secretary General of CIUTI.

HANNELORE LEE-JAHNKE is University Professor (Dr. phil.) at the University of Geneva. She is President of CIUTI since 2006.



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Préface

Il n'est certes pas trop tôt et il semble plus qu'évident de consacrer un Forum de la CIUTI aux différentes tâches que les Nations Unies, partenaires dès le début des Fora CIUTI, ont prioritairement à accomplir dans le cadre de leurs services linguistiques et de conférences.

Les questions préliminaires posées par ce Forum sont, entre autres, l'efficacité de communication de la part des traducteurs et interprètes des Nations Unies et, dans ce contexte, plus spécifiquement ce qui suit:

1. En quoi consiste la communication des services linguistiques des Nations Unies?
2. Quelles répercussions ces besoins peuvent avoir sur les Universités qui forment des traducteurs et interprètes?
3. Quel rôle la CIUTI peut-elle jouer?

1) La communication des services linguistiques

En ce qui concerne la première question au sujet de la communication, il faut tenir compte du fait que la société du futur basée sur le savoir, dépendra forcément de la communication et, dans ce contexte l'organisation des Nations Unies représente un sous-système basé sur le savoir. Un sous-système qui produit, utilise et diffuse un savoir spécifique en utilisant des techniques d'information et de communication particulières. Dans la présentation d'Erich Prunč il est clairement indiqué que chaque société d'information possède sa propre culture communicative avec, également, des formes de communications spécifiques. L'Organisation des Nations Unies, quant à elle, possède ces formes de communications culturelles

spéciales en six langues et dans des domaines les plus divers: la politique, le droit, l'économie et l'éducation pour n'en citer que quelques-uns. Tâche hautement intéressante, mais exigeante.

De plus, deux types de communication sont à prendre en compte: une communication interne et une externe. La communication interne étant une communication entre experts ce qui engendre une tâche complexe qui consiste à créer des textes en six langues. Quant à la communication externe, elle s'adresse à un large public. La grande difficulté des traducteurs est donc la création de textes qui s'adressent aux experts et à un large public avec un excellent niveau de compétence traductologique.

2) *Quelles sont donc les répercussions de ces besoins sur les universités qui forment les traducteurs et interprètes?*

Dans un premier temps, il me semble évident qu'efficacité et efficacité doivent être définies d'un point de vue académique et professionnel. Le monde académique conçoit l'efficacité de la communication dans le sens de la compétence de traduire et l'efficacité semble jouer un moindre rôle.

Le monde professionnel, par contre, exige que la communication se fasse de manière efficace. C'est pour cela que le monde du travail, donc les Nations Unies, exigent de la part des traducteurs diplômés une combinaison entre efficacité et efficacité sous forme de compétence du traducteur.

Afin que les universités puissent au mieux répondre au monde du travail, il faut une plateforme pour un échange d'idées, des besoins et de la faisabilité pour permettre aux formateurs de corriger, rectifier ou anticiper les contenus des cours, répondant ainsi au mieux aux besoins et à la demande des futurs employeurs.

L'objectif principal du Forum est de rendre attentives les universités qui forment des traducteurs et interprètes sur les besoins ressentis et auxquels les Nations Unies n'ont peut-être pas encore trouvé une réponse chez les jeunes diplômés.

Il serait certes utile que les Nations Unies définissent un profil idéal de leurs médiateurs linguistiques qui seront nécessaires dans les vingt années à venir pour répondre aux exigences et aux besoins de la quantité et qualité du travail requis.

3) *Quel est le rôle que CIUTI pourrait jouer?*

D'emblée il s'agit de cerner quelques problèmes d'ordre général: nous savons tous qu'il est très facile de prêcher la coopération mais, bien plus difficile de l'exécuter. Formellement, les services linguistiques des Nations Unies sont hautement centralisés tandis que les systèmes éducatifs des universités sont décentralisés au plus haut degré. Il serait utile et certes souhaitable que, similairement aux différents Masters introduits par la Commission Européenne, les Nations Unies pourraient – en coopération avec la CIUTI – établir un réseau en créant une formation: Traduire pour les Nations Unies. Un tel réseau serait en ligne avec le *higher education management*, et correspondrait au nouveau paradigme d'une recherche collaborative dans une société basée sur le savoir. CIUTI dans ce contexte pourrait servir d'interface entre les services linguistiques des Nations Unies et les Universités qui forment des traducteurs et interprètes pour introduire un *Master en traduction/interprétation internationale*.

Le présent volume est divisé en quatre parties: à la suite de la séance d'ouverture par Vladimir Gratchev et Mariana Fiorito, la section 1) *Communication as a necessity* comporte les contributions de Nicolas Tate qui souligne la formation linguistique à l'école, Marie-Josée de Saint Robert qui aborde plus spécifiquement la problématique de la traduction à l'ONU et Martin Forstner qui insiste sur les tâches de communications particulières des traducteurs à l'ONU. Cette partie se termine par l'article d'Erich Prunč sur le lien étroit entre langue et pouvoir.

La section suivante 2) *Practical experiences* regroupe trois états des lieux en Chine: Lidi Wang et Jianhua Yuan ainsi que Min Lu et une expérience russe: celle de Natalia Sigareva et Tatiana Yudina.

Avec la section 3) *New Visions* nous abordons le *European Master in Translation* par Reinhard Hoheisel, une esquisse d'un Master pour les Nations Unies par Mohammed Didaoui et une recherche nouvelle par Annie Sturm qui dessine une approche novatrice de la recherche interdisciplinaire avec des aphasiques.

La section 4) *Answers & solutions* comporte des articles par Marcel Thelen, Information technology, Diane Howard sur la sélection de textes, Suzanne Ballansat et Gunhilt Perrin sur la comparaison de textes de loi et Jiang Lu sur la problématique des traductions d'enseignes en Chinois.

Nous espérons avoir donné au lecteur de cet ouvrage une vue d'ensemble aussi complète que possible et lui souhaitons de prendre plaisir à sa lecture.

Fait à Genève le 24 octobre 2010

Martin FORSTNER
Hannelore LEE-JAHNKE

Opening Speeches

Vladimir GRATCHEV

Mrs President

Mr. Vice-President of the Swiss Confederation State Council,

Mr. Rector of the University of Geneva,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to address, on behalf of the Conference Services Division, this gathering of scholars and practitioners.

The Palais des Nations is hosting this forum for the third time. Since the Employment Market, held on 23 May 2003, remarkable inroads in the language profession have been made.

Driven by new possibilities offered by computer technology, the United Nations is exploring new vistas: relocation of services or off-shoring, contracting out to external providers or outsourcing, and allowing translators to work off-site at a distance or teleworking. Indeed, the translational scene at the United Nations is changing thus requiring a new approach to the training of translators and interpreters.

Meanwhile, on one hand, a demographic change is taking place which requires careful planning of vacancy management taking into account retirements and new recruitment. The pool of skilled linguists with a potential to work as international translators and interpreters is ominously shrinking as witnessed by the decline in the number of qualified applicants for the UN competitive examinations.

The vacancy rate requires a proactive approach in order to cope efficiently with this state of affairs and pave the way to bring to

life new policies and new visions, through active training. The success will be determined by the qualification of candidates to UN language posts.

Staff at the entry level have been traditionally recruited to work for the United Nations exclusively through competitive examinations. It should be mentioned, however, that administering those examinations has proven to be cumbersome and costly and a downward trend has been noticed in their yield. This may be attributed to the small number of language experts trained by educational institutions and having the requisite competencies. Jointly and commonly held examinations for translators, interpreters, editors and verbatim reporters were organized for the sake of economies of scale and to enable multi-talented candidates to take examinations in all these fields.

The only formal group training sponsored by the United Nations was the Training Programme for African Translators, established in the 1970s to remedy the Economic Commission for Africa's chronic and severe vacancy problem and meet its needs for Arabic, English and French translators. It was discontinued in 1996 due to financial constraints. Also, many international organizations offered graduate internships and traineeships, some in this profession.

The language training and experience gained in Russia and China is worth-mentioning whose representatives will elaborate on these training courses, which have been very instrumental in supplying the United Nations with competent translators.

However, a permanent solution is needed for training better-suited to the specific demands of the United Nations and other organizations. Relatively minor adjustments to the curricula of training entities would be sufficient to increase the numbers of would-be UN translators and interpreters.

The post-recruitment training is very important and should be addressed permanently. Until now, it has been carried out through revision as a quality control tool or by training sessions with a training officer, as it is usually the case at the UN Headquarters.

In this regard, a new concept is being contemplated. It would consist of the establishment, within the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in Beirut, of an Arabic Language Centre, which will have among its goals to organize training workshops “for the continuous learning of in-house translators and eligible free lance translators”. Perhaps, this option should be generalized to cover all the UN official languages and language professions.

Finally, the Executive Session of the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, held in Vienna last June, issued a statement in which it “advocated closer cooperation between the international organizations and universities and other reputable academic institutions to promote the training of conference and language service professionals”.

It is in this spirit that we are gathered here and we are looking forward to fruitful and mutually beneficial exchanges.

Universities and the Sworn Translators' Association of the City of Buenos Aires: A Common Goal

Mariana FIORITO

First of all, let me thank Ms Hannelore Lee-Jahnke for her kind invitation to make this presentation. It's an honour for me to be able to address all of you here today to let you know what we do in Argentina concerning the link between the university and the professional association, and through that link, between graduate translators and the increasingly demanding world of work.

To begin with, let me introduce the Sworn Translator's Association of the City of Buenos Aires, or "*Colegio de Traductores Públicos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*". After that, I'll describe the activities of the University Affairs Committee of the "*Colegio*". Finally (last but most definitely not least), I'll tell you how we connect training and market; that is, the student and his or her dreamed professional achievements on the one hand, and society and the satisfaction of its needs on the other.

Considering that there are differences among countries concerning the denomination and functions of "sworn" or "public" or "certified" translators, let me first of all explain what a sworn translator is in Argentina. A sworn translator is one we call "*traductor público*", who must be trained at university, and then become a member of the *Colegio*, and whose signature must be registered there, for it to be certified every time a client has had a translation made by such sworn translator, provided that translation is to be submitted to official agencies at home or abroad. Certified translation is governed by a law, unlike literary and technical or scientific translation.

The translator's profession has been a companion on the road of technological and social evolution. The new demands of contemporary society place us face to face with the need to optimise results and improve efficiency. Too often, services are sought from people who, despite their fluency in a foreign tongue, cannot guarantee effective results. Argentina is privileged in the sense that the profession of sworn translators currently functions within a regulatory-legal framework that protects the translator as well as the user public requiring the translator's services. It is this particular difference that places the sworn translator in a privileged position with respect to other settings in the vast realm of translation, either at the national or at the international level.

The first degree of Sworn Translator was granted in our country by the University of Buenos Aires in 1868. The National Association of Sworn Translators, a non-commercial body that evolved into a professional certifying board was organised in 1946. Finally, in 1973, Act 20,305 established the status of the profession and of its members' association: "*Colegio de Traductores Públicos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*" (the Sworn Translators' Association I am representing today), which means we are 34 years old. Its roster consists now of nearly 5,000 registered members representing 34 languages. Its registered members vote for the members of the Executive Board every 4 years.

The Association has so far had 12 working committees: Legal Experts for Lawsuits, Terminology, Defense of the Profession, Interpreters, International Relations, CAT Tools, Culture, Newly Graduates, and University Affairs, are some of them. This year we're planning to start new committees according to areas of specialisation: legal, financial and medical translation, to start with. The Newly Graduates Committee has recently launched a "Mentoring Programme", where experienced, established translators guide and help those who are treading the initial steps towards becoming accomplished translators. Since last November, one member of the Newly Graduates Committee was elected to integrate the seven-member Executive Board of our Association.

The *Colegio de Traductores Públicos* has a scholarship programme aiming at aiding experienced translators as well as young graduates to pursue master degrees in Argentina, of which there are still a few, but from the Association we are encouraging the creation of new postgraduate studies, and are also starting to do some research abroad, to be able to offer that information to our members.

We also hold International Congresses every two years. In July last year we organised the First International Subject-Specific Translation Conference, which gathered 1,200 people, including visitors and lecturers from other Latin American countries as well as from Germany, France, Romania, the United States, and Spain among others. On that occasion, the University Matters Committee organized a Round Table which discussed “The University and Its Role in Providing Specialization for Professional Translators”.

At the same time, the Association regularly organises one- or two-day conferences on certain aspects of the profession, where also would-be translators doing the last subjects of their careers at university were invited to show their research projects on a couple of occasions.

Argentina is a huge country and distances are a problem. When we (from Buenos Aires) go to the seaside, we travel 400km; when we go to the high mountains, 1,500km; when we go to the southernmost part, 3,000km; when a translator from dramatically beautiful Patagonia wants to specialize or take courses to improve his or her professional performance... the vastness of our country becomes a handicap due to time consumption and very high travelling costs. This is why we started studying “e-learning” and the “*Colegio*” implemented a virtual classroom to shorten the distance between wanting to receive further training and being able to actually do it regardless of geography and time availability. We plan, in this way, to expand the reach of our work countrywide and worldwide. Even though last year our Association offered 171 courses, only 2 of them were virtual, because of course, instructors must be trained and the general public must get used to

the new way of learning. So we are getting ready for a very “course-active” 2007.

But I came here more specifically to tell you about the activities of the Committee I chair: the University Affairs Committee. The purpose of this Committee is to establish (and maintain) fruitful relationships with the 16 universities where translation is currently taught in our country. And my presence here may well initiate our contact with European universities as well.

We aim at gathering information about curricula being used, faculty, students, research and alumni; and we also aim at very actively participating in the process of improving and updating existing curricula. We have on various occasions – and at the request of the authorities of some university translation departments – studied and given our opinion and advice concerning new curricula both for ordinary university courses and postgraduate projects.

We usually hold regular meetings with translation departments’ authorities in order to strengthen our relationship with them, and also to interchange information, comment on university problems and training, common concerns, etc.

Apart from that, we visit universities with a view to meeting students before they graduate and showing them the end of their university studies is definitely not the end of their training. In that way a strong connection is then established between the university and the association that watches the profession and counsels its registered members. But not only do we go to universities; we also have students come and visit us at the *Colegio*. In this way they get acquainted with the functioning of the institution, the legislation governing their future profession (still not every university trains would-be translators in this area), they get to know the *Colegio*’s library where they can attend in order to work on their papers and projects, etc.

We also organize special conferences to contribute to the training not of the translator herself or himself, but of the one in charge of training the future translator. But what I’ve said is incomplete, for professors and lecturers know a lot. Therefore, another aim of

next March's conference is to provide them with some time to tell each other what their experience has taught them, so that everyone will be able to profit from everyone else's expertise.

Finally, concerning the activities of the University Affairs Committee, let me mention a project we have been involved in, which we expect will be officially implemented in the future. It is true that every university has its characteristics, and it is also true that in a free country there should be freedom to engineer curricula without restrictions. But the search after individuality and originality combined with inexorable budget restrictions has led to a varied offer of translation diplomas where certain key aspects of translator training have been neglected, given that time and resources had to be allotted to courses inherent to the character of the universities containing them.

Thus it is very hard for students who start their courses at one university and want (or need) to continue them in another. This, coupled with the growth of *Mercosur*, (whose component parts have the same problems of diversity I am describing to you now, and which is still a commercial association of Latin American countries, but which aims in the long run at legislative, educational and political union) has led us to believe that the establishment of minimum contents that should be common to every career of translation – regardless of the character of every university – is a must.

So we drew up the list of what we consider are “minimum contents” that the *Colegio* recommends should be considered when updating or creating curricula. The list contains a series of contents concerning five areas: language, translation, juridical area (don't forget we are training sworn translators), professional practice, CAT tools, and introduction to new specializations.

Such minimum contents have been discussed by the University Affairs Committee, by other committees of the *Colegio*, and by other registered members who attended an “open day” debate. We are currently waiting for translation departments' authorities to approve of them before we submit them to the Ministry of

Education. Our aim is to guarantee end users of translation services that every translator in our country has received a basic common training to which every university has been free to add what their faculty and authorities have considered proper.

The last aspect of this presentation has to do with the connection between training and market, and the obvious role that the *Colegio* has taken up in order to be a vehicle, to facilitate this passage from student to actual performer, sort of from worm to butterfly.

Universities produce graduates every year, but they need these graduates to return to them in the form of professors and researchers. On the other hand, the market demands experienced as well as newly trained graduates to satisfy its hungry needs. We feel it is our duty to do our bit to be of assistance to both of them.

It is through a wide assortment of postgraduate specialization courses, through the Scholarship Programme I have already described to you, thorough the disinterested work of the members of the Committees, that the *Colegio* encourages valuable graduates to return to their alma maters to help train future colleagues.

It is through the Mentoring Programme, through the Defense of the Profession Committee and its talks with official agencies and private institutions for these bodies to resort to professional translators (and also of course to the work of all the other committees), through the constant monitoring of market needs, through our untiring encouragement to our registered members to develop an area of specialization, through the Communications Committee, which is always striving to let people and institutions know that professional translators know better than untrained “people who translate”, that the *Colegio* contributes with universities by helping graduates in their hard transition after university into their professional lives.

When I was a student at university I had no idea what the Association was for. Then, twenty years ago, I became a lecturer, and as such I didn’t want my students to be unaware that there is an

institution which can actually help them after the protective wing of the university has turned to other new students. Being a bridge between training and market, that is between personal projects and professional realization, is perhaps one of the most rewarding and compromising roles our Association – the *Colegio* – can take upon itself in terms of training.

1. Communication as a Necessity

