

Memorandum

*Coordinating Committee „Praxis & Lehre“
Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ)
(German Federal Association of Translators and Interpreters)*

Translation from the German of the Memorandum first published in
the Mitteilungsblatt für Dolmetscher und Übersetzer (MDÜ),
1986, No. 5, pp. 1-8

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Contents

1. Terms of Reference and Objectives
2. Requirements of the Profession
3. Training
 - 3.1 Objectives
 - 3.2 Course of Study
 - 3.2.1 First-Language Skills
 - 3.2.2 Foreign-Language Skills
 - 3.2.3 General Knowledge within the Respective Culture
 - 3.2.4 Subject-Matter Knowledge
 - 3.2.5 Translation and Interpreting Theory and Languages for Special Purposes
 - 3.2.6 Terminology
 - 3.2.7 Translation Courses
 - 3.2.8 Courses in Interpreting
 - 3.2.9 The Tools of the Translator and Interpreter
 - 3.2.10 Data Processing and Translators and Interpreters
 - 3.2.11 Interpreting for Translators and Translating for Interpreters
 - 3.3 Degrees and Titles
4. Research
5. Continuing Education
6. Support from the Profession
7. Medium-term and Long-term Prospects
8. Further Action

Professional Training and the Profession

"Professional Training and the Profession" („Praxis und Lehre“) was the theme of two symposia organised by the Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer (BDÜ = German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators) in Wiesbaden in 1970 and in Cologne in 1983 to discuss the complex issue of translator and interpreter training and the realities of the profession. The discussions concentrated on whether existing training is geared to these realities or whether there is much divergence between training and the practical exigencies of the profession.

To analyse this problem, the BDÜ decided in response to a unanimous resolution passed at the symposium in Cologne to set up a coordinating committee with the primary function of providing a forum for dealing with all questions and problems relating to translator and interpreter training, including continuing training, and also matters relating to the needs of the profession in a uniform and on-going manner. This coordinating committee is made up of members of the profession, including in-house translators, specialised translators, freelance translators, and others from government bodies, industry and commerce („Praxis“), as well as members drawn from the leading translator and interpreter training institutes in the Federal Republic of Germany („Lehre“). The committee members were appointed directly by the President of the BDÜ on account of their own personal and professional qualifications.

The Coordinating Committee produced this memorandum in the course of ten discussion sessions and submitted the final document to the President of the BDÜ on 4 September 1986. It is now the task of the relevant BDÜ Committees to review the conclusions and recommendations contained in this memorandum and take the appropriate action.

The Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ) takes this opportunity to thank all members of the Coordinating Committee for their dedicated commitment. By sacrificing so many hours of their time, they have substantially advanced the interests of the profession.

Hans Thomas Schwarz
President, BDÜ

Memorandum

Coordinating Committee „Praxis und Lehre“ for Translator Training and the Profession Bundesverband der Übersetzer und Dolmetscher e.V. (BDÜ)

1. Terms of Reference and Objectives

Following on from the BDÜ Symposium on Professional Training and the Profession („Praxis und Lehre“) held in Cologne on 19 November 1983, a coordinating committee was set up under the auspices of the Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ), the German Federal Association of Interpreters and Translators, comprising members of the profession drawn from government bodies, industry, and commerce (Praxis), and also from the leading translator and interpreter training institutes in the Federal Republic of Germany (Lehre). The members were appointed to the committee on the basis of their own professional status. The National Council of the BDÜ was urged to set up such a committee by the Schwerte Group, made up in the main of staff translators and interpreters.

The terms of reference specified that the most important and primary aim of the committee should be consideration of the claims made by the profession as to the lack of professional orientation in existing translator and interpreter training and the search for a translator and interpreter undergraduate development concept which would allow undergraduate translators and interpreters to acquire, by the time of their graduation, the level of professional competence needed for reasonably rapid assimilation into the profession in modern translation and interpretation-oriented positions.

The aims of the Coordinating Committee are

- to enhance the qualifications of graduate translators and interpreters, translating and interpreting professionals, as well as academic staff engaged in teaching translators and interpreters,
- to segregate and make a clear distinction between properly qualified translators and interpreters and those of lower status,
- to secure a status for translators and interpreters in keeping with the responsibilities inherent to the profession,
- to improve the opportunities for translators and interpreters on the labour market, and
- to help satisfy the need for better understanding in the sense of more efficient international and intercultural communication by the introduction of clearly defined measures in the spheres of translator and interpreter training, including continuing training.

With these objectives in mind, the Coordinating Committee has formulated a series of recommendations for translator and interpreter degree courses which will satisfactorily meet the requirements of the profession and which give due consideration to the demands made on the profession up to the end of this century and beyond.

The Coordinating Committee is convinced of the necessity to

- counter the shortcomings already identified by the profession when recruiting graduates, these being, for example, inadequate knowledge of their own mother tongue or language of habitual use (base language), foreign language, subject matter, the cultures involved, as well as translating and interpreting skills;
- design interpreter and translator training such that the graduates will have better professional opportunities on the labour market;
- ensure that their training will prepare the students to assume responsibility and act with responsibility in their subsequent professional careers;
- give due consideration to new challenges to the profession, including those represented by technological advances;
- teach the next generation of translators and interpreters to develop professional competence qualifying them for careers other than conventional translation and interpreting;

- provide continuing training for translators and interpreters after graduation and institute courses to enable translators and interpreters to develop their capabilities to meet the needs of the profession both now and in the future, and
- specify, improve and promote for those engaged in the training of translators and interpreters courses of continuing training and the opportunity to take part in such courses in order to obtain a more practical orientation towards the translating and interpreting profession.

The Coordinating Committee is aware that implementation of the recommendations proposed in this Memorandum will necessitate redefinition of priorities in courses of study and that government bodies, research institutes, industry, and commerce must make more efforts to assist the institutes of learning to improve their translator and interpreter training.

2. Requirements of the Profession

Upon graduation, students of translation and interpreting must be sufficiently qualified to produce texts which fulfil their function in the target language in international and intercultural communication.

Depending on the circumstances, this can involve

- the transfer of a source-language (SL) text into the target language (TL), retaining to the maximum possible the content and style of the original text;
- taking a text and turning it into a text with a function other than that of the original text;
- the revision of original TL texts or TL translations to ensure that they fulfil their function and that they are linguistically correct;
- analysis or condensation of a text or the production of notes or minutes on a text for a given purpose, or
- the independent production of a text for specific purposes.

In the exercise of their profession, translators and interpreters must realise that texts are linked in a chain of actions, i.e. in a continuum, including the past and the future, and that each text has its own function to perform within this continuum.

Translators and interpreters must be able to extrapolate from and apply to the specific practical situation in hand the subject-matter or other specialised knowledge acquired on an exemplary basis in the course of their study as well as having learned the methodology required to extend and broaden their knowledge of language and culture.

Translators and interpreters must also be capable of acquiring a thorough general and cultural grounding in their working languages and be able to carry out the research required to understand and produce a text. Furthermore, they must be familiar with all the conventional and advanced tools relevant to both translation and interpreting.

3. Training

3.1 Objectives

The objective of translator and interpreter training must be to develop the competence, skills, and abilities needed for the professional standard of work as described in Section 2 above.

The professional knowledge required by translators and interpreters must first be imparted in the student's first language (mother tongue or

language of habitual use). During training, the student must realise that there is usually background information to any text which is not shown verbally (e.g. laws, rules and regulations, layout drawings or illustrations).

This competence must then be extended to the foreign languages and their cultures. The process of extension will call for a lengthy period of study abroad.

Students must acquire, reinforce, and maintain the abilities and skills described in Section 2 above by attending appropriate courses, by reading the appropriate literature and carrying out their own research, and, above all, the students must learn how to learn.

Undergraduate study programmes must be so designed that they can constantly be adapted to changing labour market conditions, for example, creating opportunities for graduate translators and interpreters to find work in fields outside conventional translation and interpreting.

For this purpose, study programmes must be more widely differentiated than in the past. In addition to the traditional academic career routes leading to a doctorate and, possibly, to professorship, universities must offer post-graduate courses for translators and interpreters which will impart the knowledge they need for lecturing, research, or other specialised activities, for instance, in language research.

Furthermore, joint degree programmes, which also feature a subject from some other discipline, should be created (cf. Section 3.2.4).

The minimum duration of the study of translation and interpreting should be four years (eight semesters), divided into units separated by examinations. Prior to commencement of the second section of the degree programme, the course of study must include an educational stay not less than four months in the area of each foreign language being studied and a translation or interpreting-related placement is imperative during the second section (cf. Section 6, "Support by the Profession").

Examination conditions must be realistic (e.g. permission to use card indexes, dictionaries, and other aids as well as the use of original texts for translators or, for interpreters, the use of texts spoken by native speakers who can be seen by the candidates).

All translator and interpreter training must reflect the normal working conditions experienced in the profession, incorporate continuous input by professionals engaged in the practice (e.g. in informative lectures) and be conducted by professional practitioners with the requisite experience and for whom additional training must be provided.

The universities, in close cooperation with the profession, must also organise programmes of continuing education for the translation and interpreting profession.

3.2 Course of Study

This Section describes measures which the Coordinating Committee consider have to be taken in order to bring the education and training of translation and interpreting students into line with the needs of the profession.

3.2.1 First-Language Skills

The inadequacy of students' competence in the use of their base language (first language, mother tongue or language of habitual use) is a universal problem, although it is of greater relevance in translation and interpreting degree courses than in most other academic courses. The first-language skills required include the ability to master and correctly use that first language in a manner appropriate to the style, subject-matter and addressee and in the appropriate cultural register, as well as the ability to discuss language (metalinguistic competence).

Before they are admitted to a translation or interpreting degree course, the students must possess a high level of first-language skill. These skills must be extended during the course of study to include other skills relevant to translation and interpreting by means of appropriate courses and lectures covering the following subjects:

- Text analysis
- Resume/summary writing
- Text production
- Correction of defective texts
- Pre-editing and post-editing of texts (for machine-aided translation and other work)
- Oral work (including public speaking)

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee proposes the following action to secure adequate first-language skills:

- examination of first-language skills as part of an aptitude test before admission to a degree course for translation or interpreting;
- the inclusion in translating and interpreting programmes of courses designed to broaden and extend first-language skills;
- strict evaluation of first-language skills in all written and oral tests.

3.2.2 Foreign-Language Skills

The foreign-language skills of graduate translators and interpreters must match the first-language skills described in Section 3.2.1, whether or not the foreign languages in question are offered as school subjects.

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee proposes the following action to secure adequate foreign-language skills:

- examination of foreign-language skills as part of an aptitude test for admission to a degree course in translation or interpreting;
- organisation of an ab initio language course for all languages not offered as school subjects;
- the organisation of classes designed to extend foreign-language skills (for instance, teaching conventions for different types of texts) by a comparative approach based on extended first-language skills;
- an educational stay with a duration of at least four months for each student in the area of each foreign language during the first half of the degree course.

3.2.3 General Knowledge within the Respective Culture

The work of a translator or interpreter must be founded on a broad base of general intelligence and in-depth knowledge of the cultures in which the first and foreign languages are rooted. This knowledge is a vital prerequisite for anyone professionally involved in intercultural communications and must be acquired and examined during courses of study in translation and interpreting. This also includes the acquisition of specific information relating to the foreign language culture by way of example.

Courses and lectures covering general intelligence and cultural knowledge should be weighted in keeping with their relevance to the profession. At present, the following order of priorities would appear to be appropriate:

- political and general institutions (e.g. political structures, administration, the educational system, religion, the media);
- the economic and commercial infrastructure (e.g. the economic system, foreign trade, tax system, corporate structures);
- the legal structures (e.g. legal system, law of contracts);
- engineering (e.g. standardisation, units of measurement);
- the arts (e.g. literature and the performing and graphic arts).

Recommendations

Regarding general intelligence and cultural knowledge, the Coordinating Committee recommends the following action:

- organisation of compulsory comparative general intelligence and cultural knowledge classes with subject priorities reflecting their relevance to the profession; and

- organisation of lectures, seminars and short courses by lecturers and speakers representing institutions and organisations involved in intercultural relations such as Chambers of Commerce, the Karl Duisberg Gesellschaft, the Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa Institutes, ministries and embassies.

3.2.4 Subject-Matter Knowledge

In-depth subject-matter knowledge is a prerequisite for professional translation and interpreting. Consequently, appropriate subject-matter expertise has to be acquired by undergraduate translators and interpreters during their studies.

Furthermore, experience has shown that there is a substantial demand for translators and interpreters with in-depth knowledge of non-linguistic disciplines although the depth of knowledge required varies in each sector of the labour market (translation and interpreting professions as compared with other professions with a strong element of foreign-language skills).

Recommendations

In view of these labour market conditions, the Coordinating Committee recommends the creation of alternative programmes of studies as follows:

- One programme should feature two foreign languages and a specialised subject taught in the manner required for professional translation today. In the special subject course, students should learn how to research, evaluate and critically examine a subject. The specialist subject must be taught by subject-matter specialists. The specialist subject course must be integrated with translation courses in that specialised subject matter. Such specialised subject-matter knowledge should also be tested by examination. Failure in this examination must result in failure of the final examination as a whole.
- A second programme should combine translation or interpreting with a non-linguistic discipline. The translation and interpreting part of the course should comprise one foreign language as well as specialised subject-matter translation. The non-linguistic discipline (e.g. mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, chemistry, or law) should rank as a secondary subject and should not necessarily be integrated with translation courses in the specialised subject matter.

The reason for the inclusion of such a secondary subject in the course is to show students of translation and interpreting the approaches and methodologies used in other disciplines, thereby stimulating system and problem-oriented thinking in addition to the primarily text-related analytical approach.

Higher education establishments offering degree courses in translation and interpreting should confer amongst themselves and decide on the subject to be included in their courses for translators and interpreters as specialised subject and/or independent secondary subject in the light of local conditions and the human resources available for teaching those subjects.

3.2.5 Translation and Interpreting Theory and Languages for Special Purposes

For efficient translation and interpreting work, translators and interpreters must be familiar with and be able to apply the strategies entailed in professional translating and interpreting. A translation and interpreting programme should teach these strategies as well as bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The theory of translation and interpreting includes, but is not confined to:

- the development of methods of translation and interpreting-oriented text analysis;
- psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic models of text comprehension and production in a translation and interpreting environment;
- the examination of courses of action specific to translation and interpreting situations;

- translation and interpreting-related LSP research;
- work on the man-machine interface in machine translation and computer-aided translation.

Students should investigate the potentials and limits, freedoms and constraints of translation and interpreting and should acquire the knowledge they need to solve problems rationally. A cognitive and analytical rather than intuitive approach to the text to be translated or interpreted is vital, since it is impossible during the degree course to anticipate all the transfer situations a professional translator or interpreter will subsequently encounter. The professional must therefore be able to apply what has been learned during the degree course to new situations, to generalise, to come to conclusions based on what he or she has learned about the text and situation, and also be able to justify any conclusions arrived at in this way.

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee has agreed on the following recommendations on translation and interpreting theory:

- Translation and interpreting degree programmes must incorporate courses on the theory of translation and interpreting. These courses must focus on theoretical, descriptive and user-oriented factors.
- Theory courses must introduce different translation and interpreting models and methods as well as different views on translation and interpreting, mainly from the standpoint of their practical implications for the translation and interpreting profession.
- Courses of translation and interpreting theory must not become independent exercises isolated from the rest of the translation or interpreting programme, but be integrated with the remainder of the curriculum. It is vital to ensure that the theory is applied to exercises in translation and interpreting.
- Knowledge of translation and interpreting theory must be tested.
- Courses in translation and interpreting theory must be designed in such a way that they lay the foundations for more advanced courses of studies such as post-graduate courses.

3.2.6 Terminology

Higher education establishments which train translators and interpreters must familiarise their students with terminological and lexicographical methodology. For this purpose, a course should be devoted to the principles of terminology (in addition to the LSP studies covered in Section 3.2.5 above).

In the main, the terminology course should cover systems of concepts, coining new designations for concepts, the standardisation of terminology and its use on the basis of appropriate standards (such as DIN and ISO) for terminological work. Students should learn the techniques used by terminologists in their work and should be taught how to carry out their own independent terminology work and research. They should learn to apply terminology methodology to the critical use of dictionaries and glossaries and to the professional solution of translation or interpreting-related problems. Where possible, this knowledge should be backed up by practical exercises which should be organised jointly by the translator and interpreter training establishments and the profession.

All terminological work in higher education establishments training translators and interpreters should reflect the findings and recommendations of the West German Terminology Convention operating under the auspices of the BDÜ.

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee recommends a compulsory course in the theory of terminology and the application of that theory in the profession.

3.2.7 Translation Courses

Every translator graduating from any higher education establishment must be able to translate texts or revise translations or target-language texts in such a manner that the output texts perform the functions for which they are intended. The translator must appreciate that differences

between source language and target language cultures must be taken into account if adequate communication is to be achieved. For this reason, every translator must know the conventions that apply to each type of text.

Recommendations

For translation courses, the Coordinating Committee has agreed on the following recommendations:

- Translation courses organised for practice in translating between any two languages must present students with a wide variety of the sort of text that a professional translator is likely to encounter. Students should be taught how to handle differences between the text conventions, styles, and cultures of the two languages.
- Translation courses must cover as wide a variety of text types as possible. The types of texts presented in translation courses must include official announcements, operating instructions, maintenance manuals, papers for oral presentation, papers for publication in scientific or technical journals, specifications, standards, contracts, patents, advertising material, invitations to tender, bids, annual reports, and others.
- Students must practice the skill of rapid familiarisation with unfamiliar subject areas and, for this purpose, translation courses must tackle a wide range of subjects.
- In translation courses, students must learn that, in addition to the text itself, it may be essential to physically examine the object described in the text or consult drawings and illustrations, etc. to be able to understand the text.
- Students must also develop the ability to produce translations of acceptable quality under pressure of time.
- In these translation courses, students must practice using dictating machines and other working aids used in professional translation work.
- Where possible, translation courses should be backed up by such practical exercises as technical visits or operating the equipment etc. described in the text under translation.

3.2.8 Courses in Interpreting

Courses in interpreting must reflect the practical implications of the recommendations for translation courses (cf. Section 3.2.7), taking into account the conditions encountered by professional interpreters and the skills which professional interpreters have to develop.

3.2.9 The Tools of the Translator and Interpreter

Higher education establishments training translators and interpreters must teach their students professional working methods and techniques and familiarise their students with the tools of their trade. A special class should be arranged for systematic introduction to these methods and tools.

This course should cover the use of monolingual and multilingual glossaries, dictionaries and encyclopaedia as well as the systematic analysis of relevant specialised literature. Students must learn translation-related research methods and how to use available literature and data banks. It is also important for students to acquaint themselves with word processors (cf. Section 2).

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee recommends that the curriculum for the first four semesters of degree courses in translation and interpreting incorporate a special course devoted to the use of translation and interpreting tools and to translation and interpreting-related research.

3.2.10 Data Processing for Translators and Interpreters

Modern translator and Interpreter training has to give due consideration to such new technologies employed by the profession as word processors, text editing systems, term banks, and other data bases, translator workstations, computer-aided translation systems and machine translation systems. The curriculum of a forward-looking degree course for translators and interpreters must cover such up-to-date equipment.

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee recommends the inclusion of the following in the curriculum of degree courses in translation and interpreting:

- Teaching of the principles of data processing for translators and interpreters, covering the basic features of microcomputers, the use of word processing and text editing systems, the use of main-frame, mini-computer and micro-computer data banks, the main features of computer-aided translation and machine translation systems and the input of terminology into the term banks of MT systems;
- Presentation of the use of word processing and text editing systems for translation work as part of multi-function translator workstations;
- Presentation of computer-aided translation systems (conditions under which they may be used, functions, limitations);
- Practice and exercises in the fields of word processing, data bank research, the preand post-editing of texts for computer-aided translation or machine translation.

3.2.11 Interpreting for Translators and Translating for Interpreters

Professional translators are often employed for liaison interpreting. In the same way, interpreters often have to do translation work.

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee recommends the following action:

- Courses should be organised so that translators can learn and practice the techniques of liaison interpreting (maximum length of speech to be interpreted not to exceed three minutes).
- Technical or other specialised translation courses should be organised for interpreters.
- Liaison interpreting by translators and technical or other specialised translation by interpreters must be tested by examination.

3.3 Degrees and Titles

The Coordinating Committee considers that a four-year course of studies at a university or equivalent higher education establishment is essential in principle for the acquisition of the competence and skills defined in this Memorandum.

Existing courses for translator and interpreter training and existing translator and interpreter examinations must be critically reviewed in the light of this Memorandum.

4. Research

Higher education establishments training translators and interpreters are responsible not only for the education of their students but also for research. Research may be sponsored by industry or the profession and may, for instance, cover natural language processing or terminological issues.

Higher education establishments training translators and interpreters must have appropriate resources for research and the lecturers and teaching staff in those establishments must be granted sufficient time for research.

5. Continuing Education

Continuing education is vital to both the teaching profession and the translation and interpreting profession. Its objectives are as follows:

- Professional translators and interpreters must be given the opportunity to acquire additional knowledge of linguistics, of theoretical issues associated with translation and interpreting and in disciplines other than translation and interpreting as well as of new tools and equipment for the profession. Furthermore, continuing education must provide practitioners of the profession with the opportunity to broaden their knowledge in order to improve international communication and extend their professional expertise to other technical, scientific and economic, commercial and political fields.

- Continuing education should also facilitate contacts between lecturers and teaching staff at higher education establishments training translators and interpreters and the translating and interpreting profession, creating the basis for continuous updating of professional training methods and the curriculum for translating and interpreting courses so that they can keep abreast of changes in the professional working environment.

Higher education establishments training translators and interpreters should make available the facilities and resources needed for the continuing education of translators and interpreters. Continuing education should offer professional translators and interpreters the opportunity to update the knowledge they have acquired during their studies and to familiarise themselves with new technologies and their terminologies, sophisticated equipment for translators and interpreters, new working methods and new literature. The profession and the training establishments will jointly determine the demand for continuing education and develop continuing education projects. To this end, they propose that a joint organisation be set up to ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Persons teaching or lecturing at translator and interpreter training establishments must, by the same token, attend professional conventions and conferences as well as continuing education courses. The funds needed for this purpose must be made available by the ministries or other organisations running the establishments which train translators and interpreters.

6. Support from the Profession

Through close contacts with universities and higher education establishments, the profession must contribute towards the constant adaptation of training methods and the curriculum for translation and interpreting courses to the realities of professional life.

To this end, the profession must support the higher education establishments training translators and 6 interpreters. In particular, the profession should ensure that:

- Each year, practitioners present papers in establishments training translators and interpreters on typical working conditions and the problems facing the profession. These papers will, for example, survey working languages and language directions for translation and interpreting, type of texts and subjects encountered, working methods, terminology work, the use of equipment and tools, responsibilities over and above direct translations and interpreting, and matters of status.
- The profession supports higher education establishments training translators and interpreters by supplying information, tests and other material for courses (of e.g. equipment, technical or other specialists, texts, glossaries, brochures, prospectuses and displays) and by organising technical visits and excursions.
- The profession will provide opportunities for hospitation placements. As with other disciplines, these placements are intended to give students an insight into practical life in the profession. Each placement should cover a period of at least 6 weeks and, where possible, last for 12 weeks. For recognition as successful completion of a part of the degree course, the placement must be adequately organised, structured, and supervised. Trainees will be employed under contract and will receive certificates on completion of their placements. Where applicable, they will also receive the standard payment for trainees.
- The profession will also provide support for students writing their final theses, particularly when such papers include terminology. To this end, the profession will notify the higher education establishments training translators and interpreters of subject areas in which new terminology research is required and support can be provided. The higher education establishments training translators and interpreters will notify their students of these subject fields. The appropriate bodies in the higher education establishments will be responsible for allocating subjects and approving the titles of final theses as well as for academic support and marking of these theses. The profession will support students preparing for their finals by facilitating access to sources, for example, by providing literature or access to libraries or, where appropriate,

factories or company departments, and will also verify the accuracy of the non-terminological parts of the thesis if so requested by a higher education establishment. Those practitioners who have provided such support will receive a copy of the thesis on completion for in-house use. Any other use, such as the commercial exploitation of the terminology or its inclusion in an external term bank will be subject to written approval by the author of the thesis and his or her higher education establishment. The profession will also support higher education establishments training translators and interpreters by supplying teachers for courses, for example under contracts for a single-term (if need be without remuneration). Practitioners employed in this manner must possess appropriate teaching and professional qualifications and skills.

The particulars of employment, including the subjects to be tackled by the class, must be agreed between the higher education establishment and the practitioner concerned. The participation of the profession in teaching in higher education establishments training translators and interpreters (practical exercises, seminars, workshops, etc.) is mainly foreseen in the following areas:

- First-language skills;
- Background and cultural knowledge;
- Special subject matters;
- The translator's and interpreter's tools (machine-readable terminology where applicable, technical and other literature, and dictionaries will also be provided by the profession);
- Translation and interpreting courses (to help create realistic working conditions);
- Data processing.

The profession may also award research contracts to higher education establishments (cf Section 4).

To facilitate cooperation between the higher education establishments training translators and interpreters, the profession will set up a liaison office to coordinate and implement the activities described above. The administration of the liaison office will be the responsibility of the profession.

Support by the profession to the higher education establishments training translators and interpreters will, in principle, be provided at no cost to the higher education establishments.

7. Medium-term and Long-term Prospects

There is a growing need for qualified and responsible language experts. Although there is a continual increase in internal communication, the number of posts for the conventional translator and interpreter is decreasing.

It should be appreciated, however, that the word "translator" is an inadequate reflection of the working environment. Translators and interpreters work in an environment of (usually) specialised communication between different (language) cultures where there are often conflicting interests. To satisfy the real needs, translators and interpreters must be specialists in subject-related international communication. Those needs must be met by university education which teaches both practical skills and the theoretical grounding for those skills.

It is the purpose of theoretical work to expand and critically review knowledge, whereas practical work, on the other hand, calls for the application of existing knowledge to deal with a specific situation. These two aspects are the two sides of the same coin. In the academic training of translators and interpreters, students must become familiar with the history and structures of their discipline and on-going research. They must acquire relevant knowledge and methodologies and must learn how to apply this knowledge on their own initiative critically and creatively.

Higher education establishments which guide their work by such principles must engage actively in professional research. The higher education establishments training translators and interpreters and the German Federal states, together with industry and government agencies

must therefore cooperate to ensure that the organisational structures, tuition and teaching staff are continually improved for translator and interpreter training and for professional research.

Recommendations

The Coordinating Committee has agreed on the following recommendations for the medium and long-term development of the training of translators and interpreters:

- Courses must be created and developed which satisfy both the needs of the translation and interpreting profession and the need for higher qualifications among staff engaged in translating and interpreting training and research. The structures and curricula of existing degree courses must be reviewed in the light of the recognition set out in this Memorandum.

In addition, however, innovative courses should be developed to combine translation or interpreting with a second discipline, thereby giving graduates a recognised dual qualification. (The need for such an innovative course is justified not only by the great demand made on the linguistic and non-linguistic confidence of translators and interpreters. As international communication continues to grow, new careers are opened up which necessitate this dual qualification spokesmen (and women) for large companies, foreign consultants, and foreign correspondents for the media, to name but a few.) This combined course might follow the example of existing courses with two main subjects. It should comprise translation or interpreting and an appropriate second discipline such as physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, law, business studies, mechanical engineering or computer engineering. Through the inclusion of practical translation or interpreting exercises in such a course, a bridge should be created between the two disciplines.

- The language skills of students admitted to degree courses for translators and interpreters must be sufficiently advanced to ensure that adequate time can be devoted to professional theory in a four-year course. Progress must not be delayed because of insufficient knowledge of the language, although the course must naturally develop certain language skills specific to translators and interpreters.

It should also be borne in mind that translation courses attended by sixty to a hundred students as frequently occurs under current conditions will not transfer professional skills to students. Admission criteria and human resources at higher education establishments must be adequate to ensure that no more than 20 students attend practical translation courses. All courses must be geared to the realities of the profession. This implies practical work on translation and text editing under realistic conditions as well as practical courses in which students are shown how to use word processors, data banks and computerised translation equipment. Since all practical work at a higher education establishment will none-the-less represent only a smaller subset of what a professional translator might expect to encounter, it will be essential to introduce placements to give students experience of professional conditions, opportunities, and problems, and enable them to relate this experience to their courses of study (cf. Section 6).

- Two-year post-graduate courses should be introduced to further the education of the young academic staff required as lecturers in higher education establishments and for research. Such post-graduate courses, which should be inter-disciplinary, would have to be adjusted to the potential offered by the conditions in each higher education establishment. For instance, they should cover translation didactics, the psycholinguistic aspects of translating and interpreting and international communication for special purposes, computer-aided translation, machine translation, knowledge engineering, expert systems and all areas of natural language processing.

In addition to (although not necessarily integrated with) post-graduate courses, procedures and resources for awarding doctorates and allowing academic advancement to professor must be developed in all higher education establishments training translators and interpreters.

- Present-day teaching and research resources in higher education establishments training translators and interpreters are inadequate. They do

not have the human resources to create the flexibility that is needed to keep abreast of new developments. In the current phase of recession in universities and other higher education establishments, the development and implementation of innovative concepts is hampered or even prevented altogether by the lack of resources, mainly due to the minimalist view of translator and interpreter training, the assumption being that translation and interpreting and its teaching call for very few skills apart from command of two or three languages. This view is a complete misunderstanding of translation and interpreting and fails to do justice to the profession or its professional training. One striking deficiency is that translating and interpreting-related research needed to create the theoretical foundation of degree courses is so limited and sporadic. An essential reason for this deficiency is the shortage of human resources. Priority must be to create posts for academic staff with a commitment to research in addition to their teaching and lecturing duties. The substantial backlog of research can be dealt with and reduced to the benefit of both translator and interpreter training and to the profession only if an appropriate infrastructure is created integrating training and research.

- The present unsatisfactory situation can be remedied only if the implications in terms of funding and human resources are recognized and the appropriate action is taken. Higher education establishments, ministries, industry and government services are called upon to develop concepts and furnish the financial resources needed for forward-looking training for translators and interpreters and to take appropriate action in support of the gradual improvement of conditions.

8. Further Action

The Coordinating Committee proposes that the Council of the BDÜ should entrust the Committee with the further implementation of the recommendations laid out in this Memorandum and with the coordination of the necessary cooperation between the higher education establishments and the Practitioners of the profession.

Further action should comprise four phases, which should, in part, be simultaneous:

1. A publicity campaign should be launched and consistently pursued so that the recommendations set out in this Memorandum are brought to the attention of all members of the BDÜ (for instance through the Schwerte group) and the profession in general as well as higher education establishments training translators and interpreters and ministries, thus generating general discussion of the recommendations.

The Coordinating Committee is willing to draft appropriate documents on the basis of this Memorandum.

2. Recommended measures not necessitating any change in existing curricula and examination regulations should be reviewed by translator and interpreter training establishments without delay and should then be implemented by those establishments, with the backing of the profession.
3. Longer-term measures will then be necessary, entailing changes in courses and examination regulations in the light of new concepts. The Coordinating Committee will endeavour to bring about agreement between higher education establishments as to the course of action. The higher education establishments should agree among themselves to develop and introduce post-graduate courses.
4. The Coordinating Committee considers that it would be useful to draft a professional profile for translators and interpreters as well as for academic staff teaching or lecturing at higher education establishments training translators and interpreters. It proposes that the professional profiles of translators and interpreters, once drafted, be included in the series of career leaflets published by the German Federal Labour Department as well as in International Labour Office publications.

The Coordinating Committee is willing to act as a consultant for the implementation of its recommendations.

The Coordinating Committee Praxis & Lehre wishes to express its gratitude to the following experts who provided their important advice for the present Memorandum:

Dipl.-Übers. B. Gabrian, Heidelberg
Professor F.T.J. Holz-Mänttari, Turku, Finland
Dipl.-Übers. Dr. P.A. Schmitt, Gernersheim
Akad. Rätin Dr. G. Thiel, Saarbrücken
Dipl.-Dolm. Professor Dr. H.J. Vermeer, Heidelberg
Professor Dr. N. Wegner, Hildesheim

The following persons served on the Coordinating Committee Praxis & Lehre:

Professor Dr. R. Arntz
Dipl.-Übers.
Institut für Angewandte
Sprachwissenschaft
Hochschule Hildesheim
Hildesheim

Dr. W.-D. Hähl
Dipl.-Ing.
Ingenieurbüro für technische
und naturwissenschaftliche
Übersetzungen
Stuttgart

S. Kester
Sprachen- und Dolmetscher-
institut
Munich

Professor Dr. K. Kohn
Dolmetscherinstitut
Institut für Dolmetschen
und Übersetzen
Universität Heidelberg
Heidelberg

F. Schneider
Dipl.-Dolm.
Leitender Regierungsdirektor
Bundessprachenamt
Hürth

H. J. Stellbrink
Dipl.-Dolm.
Leiter des Zentralen
Fremdsprachendienstes
Ruhrgas AG
Essen

J. D. Graham, B.A.
Leiter des Zentralen
Übersetzungsdienstes
Mannesmann-Demag AG
Duisburg

J. Kern
Dipl.-Übers.,
Industrie-Kaufmann
Leiter des Referats
„Übersetzungen“
Sprachendienst BASF AG
Ludwigshafen

Professor Dr. B. Kirstein
Fachbereich Sprachen
Fachhochschule Köln
Cologne

U. Reisen
Leiterin des Sprachendienstes
Rheinische Braunkohlenwerke AG
Cologne

Dr. I. Steidle
Würzburger Dolmetscherschule
Würzburg

Professor Dr. K.-H. Stoll
Fachbereich Angewandte
Sprachwissenschaft
Universität Mainz
Gernersheim

E. Tanke
for Sprachendienst
Siemens AG
Munich

J. Zeumer
Dipl.-Übers.
Leiterin des Sprachendienstes
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH
Eschborn

Professor Dr. W. Wilß
Fachbereich Angewandte Sprachwissenschaft
sowie Übersetzen
und Dolmetschen
Universität des Saarlandes
Saarbrücken

**Published by Bundesverband der Dolmetscher
und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ), © 1990**

Editor responsible:

Hans Thomas Schwarz, BDÜ, HON, FIL, HON.FITI
President, BDÜ,
Olbrichstraße 53
6000 Frankfurt 90
Federal Republic of Germany
Telephone: (69) 76 22 70

BDÜ press office:

Kettelerallee 19
6000 Frankfurt 60
Federal Republic of Germany
Telephone: (69) 45 36 69

BDÜ secretary:

Rüdigerstraße 79a
5300 Bonn 2
Telephone: (228) 34 50 00