The Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS: THE ST PETERSBURG SCHOOL OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION

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This is a collection of articles and essays reflecting on the approaches to intensive training of interpreters and translators which may be used in various professional training programmes. It covers both the general principles and specific techniques of translator/interpreter education, and may be found useful by educators and practicing language professionals.

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Foreword

Today's world places extremely high demands on people whose job is to facilitate cross-cultural communication. Therefore, there is a great need to use training methods that will effectively instil professional excellence in future translators and interpreters. The three years of training experience gained by the St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpretation and Translation (SCIT) at the Herzen University in Russia demonstrate that a highly intensive learning process supported by open cooperation with international organizations, universities from various countries and the wider professional community brings about outcomes that go far beyond mere acquisition of professional skills. In this truly interactive model, professionals teach professionals, experienced translators and interpreters learn to reflect on the tricks of their trade, trainers share their daily working practices with their trainees and, as a by-product of their efforts, ongoing reflections and exchanges open the way to theoretical and methodological conclusions.

This brochure offers several articles and essays prepared by professional translators and interpreters who teach at SCIT. It attempts to outline some early outcomes of the approach described above. The results obtained so far prove convincingly that the initiative of the United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to sign a series of Memorandums of Understanding on cooperation in the training of candidates for the UN language services with carefully selected specialized schools representing all six official

languages of the UN quite probably has a significant potential. It gives me a great pleasure to be able to contribute to the development of this initiative. The United Nations and other international organizations will receive high-calibre professional skills and the universities will continue to provide us with valuable theoretical insights and training approaches, some of which are described in this small publication.

Last but not least, I sincerely wish the SCIT team a lot of success in their endeavours.

Igor Shpiniov,
Special Assistant to the Under-Secretary-General
for General Assembly and Conference Management,
Secretary of IAMLADP

Profile of the St Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation at Herzen University

The St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation at the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia is a joint project of the language service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, the European Commission, the UN Secretariat and Herzen University, supported by the City of St. Petersburg.

The School was established in January 2008 and it aims at producing highly qualified interpreters and translators capable of meeting the requirements of the international market.

Accordingly, the School sets for itself the following **tasks**:

• to produce, through intensive training, top-rate interpreters and translators for the needs of the public sector, international organizations and business community;

• to promote a higher status of the profession in Russia and around the world.

The course duration is 10 months, with a possible two additional months of internship in the UN Russian Language Services for the most successful students.

The School provides a non-degree postgraduate vocational training. For this reason the School will accept university graduates (both Russian and foreign) who use Russian as a pivot language of communication.

The following language combinations are available:

Language A — Russian for all students;

Language B — English or French;

Language C — English, French, Spanish, German, or Chinese.

The School offers two areas of specialization: Conference Interpreting and Translation; Translation.

Upon completion of the course the students are issued an officially recognized diploma in Conference Interpreting and Translation, or Translation.

Admission to the St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation is competitive. Besides a thorough knowledge of two foreign languages, successful applicants are expected to have a perfect command of the Russian language and extensive background knowledge.

The admission exams include:

1) a test in language B (oral/written) to check the aptitude for translation/interpretation;

2) a test in language C (oral/written) to check the aptitude for translation/interpretation;

3) an essay in language A (Russian);

4) an interview in languages A, B, and C.

The evaluation panel includes observers from the language services of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations and the European Commission.

The final exams of the Conference Interpreting and Translation programme include exams in simultaneous and consecutive interpretation from B and C languages into A language and from A language into B language, and an exam in translation from B and C languages into A language.

The final exams of the Translation programme include an exam in translation from B language into A language (general text plus economic or legal or technical text), an exam in translation from C language into A language (general text) and an exam in consecutive interpretation from B and C languages into A language.

Just as for the admission exams, the evaluation panel at the final exams includes observers from the language services of the Russian

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Nations and the European Commission.

Most of the training hours are dedicated to exercises in interpretation and translation. All students are taught translation and consecutive interpretation from languages B and C into Russian and from Russian into language B. However, the Conference Interpreting and Translation curriculum involves more classes in interpretation (including simultaneous interpretation), while the Translation curriculum involves more classes in translation.

The general subjects taught at the School include Interpretation/Translation as a Profession (including interpreter/translator ethics and diplomatic protocol), Basics of International Law, Basics of Global Economy, Current Global Issues, subjects focusing on the structure and activities of the UN, the European Commission and other international organizations, as well as Basics of Human Culture (including religion, etc.).

Classes in interpretation and translation are taught exclusively by practicing interpreters/ translators. Certain seminars and lectures are delivered by staff members of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and the UN Secretariat.

Non-resident students are offered accommodation at the University halls of residence.

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Sergei Afonin

**SHAPING TRANSLATOR'S
COMPETENCES
FOR THE UNITED
NATIONS RUSSIAN
TRANSLATION SERVICE**

One of the most important things any trainer or training institution needs is a clear specification of the skills and competences that their graduates are expected to acquire in order to work successfully in a given professional and institutional setting, or possibly, in a variety of settings.

One of the key stakeholders of the St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation (SCIT) at the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia is the United Nations Russian Translation Service (RTS). Historically, candidates for translators' positions with the RTS were trained by the United Nations Translation and Interpretation Courses in Moscow where the trainers were to a large extent drawn from former United Nations translators and revisers and delivered their vast hands-on experience directly to a carefully selected cohort of students. The students also enrolled in the courses with the single purpose of entering a carefully defined professional situation. The UN Courses, discontinued in 1991, represented a rather 'closed' educational setting, and their curriculum, teaching principles and techniques were never fully communicated to the professional and training community in Russia. Since SCIT has undertaken the task of providing eligible candidates for United Nations translation services, it first needed to define a set of goals and benchmarks on which to base its training syllabus and teaching strategies. The pedagogical assistance provided by the United Nations, several traineeships arranged

for SCIT trainers, as well as other direct links with various UN offices and centres established over the past three years, have obviously helped to address this need to a certain extent. Nevertheless, in order to provide a sound footing for the work of SCIT and the international translator training community in general, it would be useful to specify more precisely what is required of a successful UN translator or candidate for a translator's position.

The notes below attempt to discuss these relevant skills and competences.

The observations below are based on three aspects of my involvement in the United Nations translation practices:

• experience gained during my traineeship at the UN Russian Translation Service in New York in the summer of 2010 (three weeks of observation of RTS procedures, interviews with key revisers and translators, and two weeks of work as a translator on actual assignments, followed by discussions of translation and editing issues with three revisers). I also had the benefit of extensive discussions with several UN interns who had just graduated from SCIT and were trained at the RTS during the time of my mission;

• discussions with several experienced UN translators/revisers who visited SCIT on teaching support missions over the first three years of the school's work, as well as observation of their classes and tutorials;

• participation in UN off-site translation assignments also used as 'translation projects' with the current student class (February—April 2011). This work-in-progress was very fortunately preceded by a series of lectures and tutorials given to both the students and teachers by Mikhail Kouzmenko, an experienced reviser from the Russian Translation Service at the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG).

These experiences probably allow for some conclusions concerning how SCIT can contribute to the interests of the UN as one of its key stakeholders. In particular, it seems feasible to use them as a starting point for trying to put together a detailed specification of the translation competences required of candidates who seek job placement in the UN translation services. We will also try to reflect to some extent on the main teaching strategies for the development of the required skills in the context of the SCIT curriculum.

The best among the existing descriptions of translation competences are perhaps contained in two standards which were issued almost simultaneously, however independently, in Europe and in the US. The European Union standard is called EN 15038:2006. Translation Services — Service Requirements and the U.S. standard — ASTM F2575. Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation. It seems useful to begin by looking at what these two authoritative documents have to say about translator competences, and then to provide some comments and adaptations considering the specificities of the UN translation process.

The European standard defines five broad areas of translator competence (see Appendix 1): 1) the purely translation-related competence; 2) the language-related competence; 3) the research competence; 4) the cultural competence; and 5) the technical competence. Although the definitions of these competences in EN 15038 appear to be well-developed and balanced, quite surprisingly, they do not include any reference to the set of skills and knowledge which can be characterised as the 'topic/domain/subject' competence. At the same time, this kind of competence needs special attention in the diverse UN context, where translators are expected to handle a large variety of topics and areas of human knowledge and activity. In general, these definitions of competences deserve a more detailed formulation considering the fairly unique situation at the UN.

The European standard is designed mostly as a 'norm-setting' and 'regulatory' document. It aims to set the rules for the translation market and to provide some quality management guidelines primarily for translation service providers (TSPs), as well the language services industry in general. The US ASTM document, on the other hand, has a more 'explanatory' and 'advisory' quality and is intended for entities and individuals who commission translation services (or, more broadly, all types of industry stakeholders, including translator training institutions). In general, the ASTM standard echoes the five aspects specified in the European standard (1–5 above), but it also provides definitions and recommendations with regard to a number of additional translator qualities (see Appendix 2). These additional qualities include: 6) a specific explanation of the 'task-type competence', i.e. the ability to distinguish between several purely translational assignments

and translation-related assignments – which is rather important in the UN context, given, for example, the differences between the translation service and the verbatim reporting service; 7) the 'subject field competence' which is emphasised as "very important"; and, immediately after that, 8) the 'text-type competence', i.e. the ability to work with clearly defined types of texts within any broad or narrow field of knowledge and communication.

Let us now consider the above eight translator competences in more detail in order to see how they relate to the translation processes at the UN.

1. The Language/Linguistic Competence

Perhaps the most obvious and straightforward is the linguistic competence, which generally means the two-sided ability to understand the source text and to produce an effective target text. Several comments can be made with regard to this set of skills:

1) At the United Nations, translation is performed in one direction only, that is, into the translator's native language. Across the translation industry, however, this principle is as long-established as it is frequently challenged and debated. 'Retour' translation, i.e. translation into one's acquired language, is very widely practiced and is commonly viewed as normal in many translation markets (Russia and many post-Soviet countries in particular) and by many public institutions (such as, for example, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and private companies. This lengthy debate, however, does not apply to translation at the UN and therefore the focus of our discussion can only be on the requirements for foreign-to-native translation.

2) This competence has one obvious side: a translator is a person who understands the source text perfectly. However, the types of texts and language registers, as well as the vast variety of subject fields addressed in UN documentation, place more specific demands on the translator. He or she must be truly erudite in at least several major UN topics. Apart from the obvious mass media and general interest material, they also include many varieties of formal (sometimes very formal or highly ritualised) documents, including carefully written (or sometimes vaguely written) legal texts, documents produced by diverse government bodies in English-speaking and other countries (often

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characterised by varying quality of the English language), international treaties and derivative documents, as well as various United Nations instruments per se. The main didactic idea that can be derived from these requirements and expectations is that a future translator should become aware of all the intricacies of formal registers. He should also learn to pay attention not only to subject-specific terminology and vocabulary (even being sometimes overly paranoid about looking for a possible 'terminology item' in any word or phrase), but also to be on the alert for a wide range of idioms and set expressions which characterise these text types.

3) It goes without saying that a novice translator cannot be expected to demonstrate readily the reading comprehension skills of a professional lawyer or a seasoned civil servant or clerk. However, the tricky nature of this profession demands exactly that calibre of skills, and the importance of familiarization with these types of texts should be systematically emphasised, however tedious or irrelevant they may seem to everyday life or the romantic vision of the translation profession.

4) One of the most important principles of translation work at the United Nations (which distinguishes it from many other settings in which 'formal' or 'declarative' texts are routinely translated, apart from high-level purely legal translation, of course) is the immense attention to the precise meaning of the linguistic material in the source text, and the overall approach to any source text as a 'sacred' combination of words and sentences, regardless its designation or status. The didactic problems associated with the task of teaching the skills of 'slow reading', ensuring genuine mastery of the source language syntactical and lexical features and inculcating a hyper-attentive attitude to detail in the student will be partly discussed later in the section devoted to the translation competence, in the comments concerning the problem of the 'required level' (in EN 15038 terms).

5) Trainers and consultants from the United Nations continuously emphasise that the purely 'linguistic' aspect of the translator competence, above all, true mastery of the target language (Russian), is one of the biggest problems encountered by almost all novice translators. This problem is especially critical considering that high-quality translation at the UN often depends on the ability of the translator to invent

new and innovative ways of rendering foreign concepts/dictions, while scrupulously keeping the overall formal and sometimes very restricted style and long-established terminological decisions. This has proved to be one of the biggest challenges for some of my closest colleagues and for me personally. We invested a significant amount of time and effort in deciding which of the following options is the most appropriate while translating a certain turn of phrase into Russian: (a) whether the translation should religiously follow the traditions established by the existing UN translations; (b) whether it can be transplanted from English 'as is' by means of borrowing/transliteration/calque, which is often increasingly common in numerous current Russian publications and documentation, including quality press and government documents such as those issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs — all this plainly contradicting most accepted UN dictions; or (c) whether the translator should use his own best judgement concerning acceptable Russian usage and develop his or her own translation solutions.

6) A significant proportion of UN translations are apparently based on the old tradition of diplomatic and international treaty translations and tend to reproduce the source text as 'isomorphically' as possible to the original, preferably preserving in the Russian translation the syntactical microstructures of the source language (usually English). At the same time, the general idea is also to write in 'good Russian'. The thin line between these two imperatives is distinctly difficult to discern, let alone define. Also, many UN staff translators readily confirm the observation that current UN translations are, often quite reasonably, resistant to the changes which have emerged and visibly gained momentum in the past two decades in the Russian language, spanning the range from documents issued by Russian government bodies, via quality press, to educated specialist usage. These factors seriously complicate the task of establishing a solid foundation for training future UN translators.

7) Today, the work of a translator often involves not only making purely textual decisions, but also numerous orphotypographic choices, including, but not limited to, capitalization of names, punctuation (in particular, quotation marks), formats of numbers, dates, units of measurement, technical and scientific indices and designations, as well as

some purely DTP aspects of text preparation, and so on and so forth. For these aspects the UN translation services have long relied on the three-layer document processing system which involved a translator, a reviser and a typist. The translator is usually corrected by the reviser who has significantly more experience in the 'technical' aspects of text preparation, and the final proofreading and document layout is performed by the word processing specialist (typist/documentalist). Yet in many other segments of the translation market any translator is expected to be intimately familiar with many of these problems and to make his or her own final decisions about them. There are also indications of the UN process also slowly moving in this direction. In this sense, a detailed and comprehensive style guide covering such technical matters could be immensely helpful.

8) In this context it is worth mentioning one specific phenomenon which bears particular relevance to all areas of English-Russian translation. Modern Russian texts of all kinds are increasingly penetrated by words and designations presented in Latin characters (in particular, company names, brand names, trade marks, product indices and acronyms). In many contexts of translation and information exchange it has become a common practice to provide lexical items such as personal names and titles, names of organizations and companies, acronyms and indices first in Russian but then in their original language (in parentheses), especially if these elements are relatively unknown to the target audience and may have further reference value. This practice, however practical and reasonable it may prove in many intercultural information exchange situations, has been long frowned upon by the UN, where translators remain loyal to the standards established in 1970s and 1980s and tend to provide such elements in Russian only. Whether the new tradition will be accepted in the long run remains an open question, but the general approach to this issue and specific comments on potentially difficult cases should also be included into guidelines for translators and revisers.

2. The (Purely) Translation/Translating Competence

This ability has often been considered the most difficult to pinpoint. Many professional translators, revisers and experts can 'tell a good translator when they see one' (or, rather, when they see his or her

work). Nevertheless, it has always been difficult to formulate what this ability exactly consists of in a couple of short sentences. The authors of the two above-mentioned standards had the benefit of almost three decades of functional translation research before them, and they quite rightly attempt to describe the translation competence referring to such concepts as: the ability to translate the text to the "required level"; the "ability to assess the problems of text comprehension and text production"; the ability to adhere in all this to the underlying "client-TSP agreement" (the EN standard); the "congruity judgment" (as a synonym for translation competence); "specified" (i.e., different for different situations!) level of translator competence; certain skills in the use of translator tools, and thorough knowledge of the translation process and terminology (ASTM standard).

The US ASTM standard takes a more practical approach and even includes some guidance on how the translation competence can be assessed by a lay person. The recommended indicators include professional certifications, a specialised degree in translation, the number of years of experience in the profession, references from former clients, and sample translations (or tests). At the United Nations, only the last of these requirements is directly reflected, in the form of a competitive examination, even though competitive examinations do not — and cannot — test all the qualities which a translator needs to possess.

A few important points should be made in this regard:

1) In most situations, professional translators rely on 'terms of reference' or a 'translation brief' which describes the requirements established by the client (and the end user) for a given translation assignment. As a rule, these terms of reference or a translation brief are not presented in the form of a plainly formulated written document. Rather, they are usually a set of commonly agreed parameters that the target text is expected to satisfy. A widespread assumption is that a professional translator (especially a freelancer who regularly works for a variety of clients) is able to formulate these parameters independently, and only a small part of them are discussed explicitly with the party commissioning the translation. As a translator who has performed translations for a wide range of clients for 15-plus years I find it rather difficult, or sometimes plainly frustrating, to agree to a piece

of work without knowing the purpose, the intended publication mode, the target audience and the formal requirements for the expected target text, not to mention the client's specific personal or corporate preferences. In the context of the UN, the availability of a general translation brief and the 'corporate' requirements can be extremely beneficial for the entry-level translator coming from the outside.

2) In an ideal world, all documents and materials produced by the UN as a 'global governing body' should address all members of the adult population of the world. In practice, however, while English and French-language media readily quote and actively discuss the most urgent and far-reaching UN decisions and matters of procedure (a good example is the recent UN Security Council Resolution No. 1973), it is still very uncommon for the quality Russian press to quote or discuss UN documents which are issued in Russian. One consequence of this seems to be that the Russian translators and revisers at the UN find themselves in a critical shortage of any substantive or linguistic feedback with regard to their work. Perhaps it would be even fair to say that United Nations documents in Russian do not directly cater for any imaginable common user in the Russian Federation, Belarus or Kazakhstan (countries where Russian is an official language). Inevitably, officials of the UN delegations of these countries remain the only true and concerned users of these documents.

3) The problem of the 'required level' and 'TSP-client' agreement is quite commonly solved by publishing a 'corporate style guide' and distributing it among all the interested parties. In the UN context, such a style guide could contain the general requirements for and the overall approach to translation of UN texts, complete with detailed instructions on the different choices concerning style, vocabulary, syntax, orthotypography and text layout which a freelance translator has to make on a regular basis. The only such reference currently available is a set of instructions prepared in the early 1980s. However helpful, this document undoubtedly needs revision, expansion and updating. It also may be useful to include into the new version of this 'style guide' the general requirements for translator competences and a general description of the overall approach to translation practiced by the United Nations.

4) SCIT trainers work in a translation school which caters for several stakeholders and a range of potential markets. Because of that, they are expected to teach their students 'all kinds' of skills and approaches. This is a very difficult task from the didactic point of view, therefore, the 'level' required by the UN both needs to be clearly defined and set against the background of other reasonable and legitimate translation strategies and decisions. Whenever students feel that they are given more questions than answers, the trainer needs to put all this variety of approaches in a clear perspective and order. This, again, is where the support of our UN colleagues is very much needed and welcome.

3. The Subject Field Competence

Representatives of many professions and occupations, especially highly specialised branches of engineering, medicine, finance, law, etc., usually consider this aspect to be the most important of all, and tend to look down on translators who struggle with these arcane fields of knowledge. Most experts on translation are less restrictive in their approach, but still suggest that a professional translator must work in not more than 3–5 fields of specialization (however narrowly or broadly defined), and under normal circumstances should avoid trespassing on any foreign territory. By stark contrast, UN translators commonly have to address all kinds of subjects and areas of human knowledge. Indeed, RTS translators have the benefit of working literally next door to some of the most authoritative translation specialists who are extremely knowledgeable in a range of intricate and specialised issues and can be approached any time for consultation and detailed advice, but a novice or trainee translator has to rely on the publicly available resources only.

Still, it is very difficult to define the major fields of knowledge and the specific subjects which any newcomer should be familiar with at the entry level. Just as in many other varieties of the translation profession, a novice translator should first and foremost rely on their research competence, that is, the ability to acquire relevant information quickly and efficiently.

4. The Research Competence

UN translation work is generally based on a vast amount of previously translated texts, but at the same time requires fast and reliable acquisition of completely new information, since topics dealt with in many UN texts may be highly specialised and quite often unpredictable. Moreover, as the world changes, the major UN issues also change: some topics which were of paramount importance a decade or two ago now draw much less attention, while many other, often completely new and highly specialised subjects emerge almost every year. Thus, any translator training programme should first of all aim to develop in the students the set of skills which enables them to handle many topics at once, and acquire new information, vocabulary and concepts almost in a real-time mode.

This kind of competence nowadays includes the multifaceted ability to use all kinds of Internet resources and search techniques. In the UN setting, there are also numerous internal text depositories and databases equipped with numerous IT (and, increasingly, CAT) tools which require specific training and user competences.

The dictionary and the encyclopaedia also cannot be overlooked in this respect. Young people of today may have well-developed skills in using the Internet, but they are more often than not virtually lost in the vast amount of raw data found on websites. The ability to filter and assess the nature and reliability of information found on the web and any other sources is also a crucial teaching point in any current translator training programme.

5. The Cultural Competence

The importance of culture-related knowledge for the translator cannot be overestimated, especially today, when the translation profession is often seen as a subsector of a much broader service sector referred to as 'cross-cultural communication' or 'localisation'. Indeed, it is common for the best representatives of this profession to display extensive and profound understanding of two or more language cultures on many levels and to possess broad knowledge about the world.

In this respect, the role of translators at the United Nations is also rather unique:

1) At the RTS, translators translate from English, French and Spanish into their native Russian. This, however, does not mean that the culture underlying their source texts is only that of the UK, US, France, Spain and Latin America. While most academic programmes in modern languages and translation focus predominantly on the culture and locale of these countries, at the United Nations the translator must be prepared to abandon the notion of languages being culturally dominated by one or two countries and to develop a universal but careful approach to a wide range of cultural specificities which may characterise a document submitted for translation.

2) In addition, the UN paradigm of precise and 'isomorphic' translation resists two common approaches to the target text: foreignization and domestication. Foreignization aims to transplant clearly foreign elements and usage into the translated text in order to highlight the unique and hard-to-translate nature of the original, to weave a foreign culture into the fabric of the target language and to educate the reader in alien concepts and ideas. By contrast, domestication is a strategy of cultural and linguistic adaptation of foreign concepts which aims to ensure seamless communication of ideas while also introducing foreign concepts by way of deletion or addition of information and other text elements that the translator deems either irrelevant or worthy of mentioning for the given target audience and the specific translation task at hand. These two approaches are very rarely found in UN translations (except some elements of foreignization). The avoidance of foreignization and domestication presents a didactic challenge for the trainer, since the pragmatic value of this approach is sometimes difficult to understand, substantiate and communicate to the students.

3) Just as the scope of subject field competence, the breadth of cultural knowledge required of a novice translator at the start of his or her career with the UN is very hard to define. Given the relatively short duration of the SCIT programme, it seems impossible to cover even the basic areas of knowledge, however broad or narrow. Here again, it seems appropriate to focus our training efforts on helping students to develop the transferable skills of information acquisition, to embrace a passion for life-long learning, inquisitiveness and broad cultural awareness.

6. The Text-Type Competence
and
7. The Task-Type Competence
The text-type competence and the task-type competence are probably the most important in any translation situation, and they certainly deserve to be discussed in a separate article. There is a consensus among the SCIT trainers that a professional translator is someone who understands his or her task, has the ability to handle the types of texts in question and is capable of defining and explaining all the relevant parameters of the text and the task. This type of explicit, analytical approach is not often practiced at the UN translation services, however, it appears to be an inevitable and crucial element underlying their practice and conceptual foundations. Therefore, it is highly desirable that the above-mentioned aspects be articulated and discussed in some way.

In addition, on a very general level all UN translation tasks can be divided into assignments performed by the translation service and documents prepared by the verbatim reporting service. Verbatim reporting sometimes requires summary translations which deserve to be taught as a separate set of skills and a specific type of work. From the pedagogical point of view, this means that future translators should be exposed to two modes of learning. One the one hand, they should be taught to explore the source text slowly, thoroughly and analytically, forging near-perfect target texts in which all translation decisions are double- and triple-checked against all existing reference materials and legacy texts. On the other hand, they need to learn to perform quickly and under the pressures of time, fatigue and insufficiency of background information, so that they can cope with the work flow at the UN where thoroughness and double-checking cannot be sacrificed for the sake of speedy delivery. In any case, variation in the types of tasks and texts which are presented to the aspiring translator should be one of the key features of any effective translator training programme.

8. The Technical Competence
The US ASTM standard quite accurately refers to the technical competence as the "translation technology competence". As in any other branch of the translation profession, the UN translation service

procedures are becoming more and more dependent on a range of computer-based reference systems, text processing technologies and even state-of-the-art CAT tools. The strategy for implementing these tools at the UN in the short and medium term has not been defined clearly yet. This does not mean, however, that translation schools should not follow closely the developments in this field and that they should not prepare students to use them.

Conclusion

The objective of this article was to reflect on how the translation competences required for professional work in the UN language services can be defined, systematised and approached from a broader perspective of the translation profession as a whole. These reflections can only be useful for the training of future UN translators, if all the parties involved in this effort succeed in providing formal guidance, as well as informal recommendations, on how to address some of the problems outlined above. This will help to adapt further the structure, content and methodology of the SCIT training approach in line with the United Nations' vision for the future of its translation services. Therefore, SCIT trainers invite all the stakeholders in this process to provide their comments and proposals and to share their practical insights in translation and translator training.

On a more practical level, and in order to support further research aimed at specifying the professional qualities of the UN translator, it is also desirable to conduct questionnaire-based research and a series of structured in-depth interviews with experienced UN RTS translators and revisers, focusing on the key representatives of RTS who are involved in workflow management, terminology work, revision of high-status documents, training of novice translators and interns and pedagogical support missions.

* * *

APPENDIX 1

EUROPEAN STANDARD EN 15038: 2006 —
TRANSLATION SERVICES — SERVICE REQUIREMENTS
[…]
3.2.2. Professional competences of translators
Translators shall have at least the following competences.

a) *Translating competence:* Translating competence comprises the ability to translate texts to the required level, i.e. in accordance with 5.4. It includes the ability to assess the problems of text comprehension and text production as well as the ability to render the target text in accordance with the client-TSP agreement and to justify the results.

b) *Linguistic and textual competence in the source language and the target language:* Linguistic and textual competence includes the ability to understand the source language and mastery of the target language. Textual competence requires knowledge of text type conventions for as wide a range of standard-language and specialised texts as possible, and includes the ability to apply this knowledge when producing texts.

c) *Research competence, information acquisition and processing:* Research competence includes the ability to efficiently acquire the additional linguistic and specialised knowledge necessary to understand the source text and to produce the target text. Research competence also requires experience in the use of research tools and the ability to develop suitable strategies for the efficient use of the information sources available.

d) *Cultural competence:* Cultural competence includes the ability to make use of information on the locale, behavioural standards and value systems that characterise the source and target cultures.

e) *Technical competence:* Technical competence comprises the abilities and skills required for the professional preparation and production of translations. This includes the ability to operate technical resources as defined in 3.3.

The above competences should be acquired through one or more of the following:

– formal higher education in translation (recognised degree);

– equivalent qualification in any other subject plus a minimum of two years of documented experience in translating;

– at least five years of documented professional experience in translating.

3.2.3. Professional competences of revisers

Revisers shall have the competences as defined in 3.2.2, and should have translating experience in the domain under consideration.

3.2.4. Professional competences of reviewers

Reviewers shall be domain specialists in the target language.

3.2.5. Continuing professional development

The TSP shall ensure that the professional competences required by 3.2.2 are maintained and updated.

3.3. Technical resources

TSP shall ensure the availability of the following:

a) Requisite equipment for the proper execution of the translation projects as well as for safe and confidential handling, storage, retrieval, archiving and disposal of documents and data.

b) Requisite communications equipment as well as hardware and software.

c) Access to relevant information sources and media.

[…]

5.4. Translation process

5.4.1. Translation

The translator shall transfer the meaning in the source language into the target language in order to produce a text that is in accordance with the rules of the linguistic system of the target language and that meets the instructions received in the project assignment (see 5.3.1.2).

Throughout this process, the translator shall pay attention to the following.

a) *Terminology:* compliance with specific domain and client terminology, or any other terminology provided, as well as terminology consistency throughout the whole translation.

b) *Grammar:* syntax, spelling, punctuation, orthotypography, diacritical marks.

c) *Lexis:* lexical cohesion and phraseology.

d) *Style:* compliance with the proprietary or client style guide, including register and language variants.

e) *Locale:* local conventions and regional standards.

f) Formatting (see Annex D).

g) Target group and purpose of the translation.

5.4.2. Checking

On completion of the initial translation, the translator shall check his/her own work. This process shall include checking that the meaning has been conveyed, that there are no omissions or errors and that the defined service specifications have been met. The translator shall make any necessary amendments.

5.4.3. Revision

The TSP shall ensure that the translation is revised.

The reviser (see 3.2.3) shall be a person other than the translator and have the appropriate competence in the source and target languages. The reviser shall examine the translation for its suitability for purpose. This shall include, as required by the project, comparison of the source and target texts for terminology consistency, register and style.

Taking the reviser's recommendations into account, the TSP shall take steps to ensure that any necessary corrective measures are implemented.

Note: Corrective measures can include retranslation.

5.4.4. Review

If the service specifications include a review, the TSP shall ensure that the translation is reviewed. The reviewer (see 3.2.4) shall carry out a monolingual review to assess the suitability of the translation for the agreed purpose and recommend corrective measures.

Note: The review can be accomplished by assessing the translation for register and respect for the conventions of the domain in question.

Taking the reviewer's recommendations into account, TSP shall take steps to ensure that any necessary corrective measures are implemented.

5.4.5. Proofreading

If the service specifications include proofreading, the TSP shall ensure that the text is proofread.

5.4.6. Final verification

The TSP shall verify that the service provided meets the service specifications.

[…]

APPENDIX 2

US ASTM F2575-06 — STANDARD GUIDE
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TRANSLATION
[…]
6.2.1. Sections 6.3–6.8 describe competences that are relevant in selecting a translation service provider.

6.3. Source Language and Target Language Competence:

6.3.1. Knowledge of the source language and target language, more specifically, reading comprehension in the source language and writing ability in the target language, are necessary but not sufficient criteria for selecting a translator or reviser.

6.3.2. Indicators of source language and target language competence can include the following:

6.3.2.1. Test scores or certifications, such as the following:
1) United States Defense Foreign Language Proficiency Test,
2) United States Foreign Service Language Test, and
3) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

N o t e 1. It is important to bear in mind that language competence diminishes over time with little or no use; thus, old test scores may no longer be an accurate reflection of current competence in the source or target language.

6.3.2.2. Number of years of study of language and translation (for example, four or more years of college study minimum for gisting and abstracts, usually more for other kinds of tasks).

6.3.2.3. Years of experience as a translator working with the language combination in question.

6.3.2.4. Years of residence in the countries where the target language is spoken, and in many cases, where the source language is spoken.

N o t e 2. It is often recommended that translators translate into their native language. Thus, the target language should in most cases be the native language of the translator. Note that people who have learned the language at home but have studied in another language (for example, people who have learned Language A at home but have pursued their high school and college education in Language B) may not have the fluency and vocabulary needed to translate into Language A. Conversely, native speakers of Language A who have successfully completed university-level studies in Language B and have resided in a country in which Language B is spoken can be very good translators into Language B despite being non-native speakers.

6.4. Translation Competence — Proficiency in two languages is important but does not necessarily guarantee translation competence. Not all individuals who exhibit language proficiency have the ability to choose an equivalent expression in the target language that both fully conveys and best matches the meaning intended in the source language for the audience and purpose of the translation (translation competence is sometimes referred to as congruity judgment). A specified level of translation competence may in some circumstances be required of a translator. Training in translation processes and tools may also be required. Indicators of translation competence can include the following:

6.4.1. Certification from an association belonging to the Federation Internationale des Traducteurs (International Federation of Translators), such as the American Translators Association.

6.4.2. A degree in translation from a recognized institution of higher learning.

6.4.3. Experience — Years of experience can be a strong indicator of translation competence.

6.4.4. References — Personal references may be helpful, particularly if the task is similar to those the translator has performed for the person providing the reference and that person has the expertise to judge the quality of the translation.

6.4.5. Sample Translations Done by the Translator — If the requester has a trusted reviewer, then the requester may ask a new translator to provide samples of his or her work for evaluation.

6.4.6. Thorough knowledge of the translation process, and terminology pertaining thereto, including the content of this guide.

6.5. Task-Type Competence — Translations are needed for different purposes and audiences, which places different demands on translators and requires different skill sets. Some examples of translation-related activities are:

6.5.1. Polished translation (for example, marketing materials, books, and legally binding documents),

6.5.2. Information translation (for example, translation of e-mails and documents for personal use),

6.5.3. Gisting and abstracts (for example, summaries of materials),

6.5.4. Extraction of information (for example, answering questions and summarizing specific information in the target language based on examination of source texts), and

6.5.5. Identification of topics (for example, sorting documents).

6.6. Subject Field Competence — Subject field competence is very important. Texts associated with many disciplines involve specific terminology, sentence structures, formats, and practices. They demand a good understanding of the subject matter for the translation to be accurate.

6.7. Text-Type Competence — In addition to subject matter, the type of text involved in a given translation task places different demands on the translator. Some translators specialize in specific text types, such as patents or scientific articles. It is important to determine a translator's expertise and preferences before assigning a given job. The following are some examples of text types:

6.7.1. Treaties, contracts, powers of attorney;

6.7.2. Engineering blueprints, installation and maintenance manuals, and user and product manuals;

6.7.3. Patient records, patient instructions, and informed consent forms;

6.7.4. Annual reports and financial statements; and

6.7.5. Creative texts, such as advertising or marketing.

6.8. Translation Technology Competence — Since translation requesters often ask that translations be produced and submitted via electronic means, it is advisable that translation service providers have competence in the following technologies:

6.8.1. Electronic data storage and retrieval,

6.8.2. Word processing with appropriate fonts and formatting,

6.8.3. Computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools (translation memory, terminology databases, and so forth), and

6.8.4. Electronic data transfer (e-mail, FTP, and so forth).

[…]

Dr Irina Alexeeva,
Dr Angelique Antonova

**EXPERIENCE
OF THE ST PETERSBURG
SCHOOL OF CONFERENCE
INTERPRETING
AND TRANSLATION IN
COORDINATING
THE CURRICULUM
WITH PEDAGOGICAL ASSISTANCE
PROVIDED BY THE UN UNDER THE MOU**

The St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation is a young institution. It was established in January 2008 as a response to the growing local and international demand for professional high calibre Russian language conference interpreters and translators.

The School provides non-degree post-graduate vocational training. For this reason the School will accept university graduates (both Russian and foreign) who use Russian as a pivot language of communication.

Two principles — *intensity* and *consistency* — underlie the training process at the School. The course duration is 10 months with 2 additional months of internship in the UN Russian language services for the most successful students, making this one year course very intensive. The School has an extensive program for motivated students with a good aptitude for language mediation who aspire to become professional conference interpreters and translators. Russian economic realities are such that capable and ambitious candidates must achieve a high level of training within a relatively short time, realizing full well that they will need another year to establish themselves properly in the market, entailing additional effort. The intensity of the course and associated high expectations require the concerted efforts of students and trainers, a thoroughly balanced curriculum, and the proper organization of students' self-training.

The curriculum is built on the principle of consistency, which means that all disciplines that comprise the course blend into a single learning model with a single goal of producing qualified interpreters and translators to meet the requirements of the global market. This learning model is flexible and includes short-term and long-term modules delivered by the School's trainers and visiting trainers from the United Nations, the European Commission and the MFA of Russia.

The shorter Pedagogical Assistance modules of the UN, the EC and the Russian MFA contribute to the sustainability of the entire training program and consolidate students' translation and interpretation skills. Thorough planning is required to make the most out of the institutional pedagogical assistance at each stage of the training process. Working plans are discussed in advance with visiting interpreters/translators to adjust to the students' learning status and training needs at the time of the visit. Staff trainers attend visiting trainer's classes and check on the student's progress. Visiting trainers attend faculty gatherings where they share their experience of working in the UN/EC/MFA environment, and practical ways of teaching students the competencies of a professional interpreter/translator. These two types of participation – double attendance and faculty gatherings – help the School become more oriented towards the needs and requirements of major employers. This interactive competency-sharing model is enriching and rewarding both for the partner institutions and the School. It contributes to creating a professional environment within the School and enhancing the pedagogical competences of the faculty and UN/EC/MFA language staff.

The unique environment of the professional school makes it possible to invite language professionals from different institutions with their specific institutional culture and mediation practices. Actually, this diversity is a boon to the program – it offers broader exposure and requires practical flexibility. Moreover, provides graduates with greater career opportunities, a crucial benefit in a globalized world. The difficult part is to fit pedagogical assistance providers into various stages of the training process. The diversity of training methods and the academic freedom of the trainers is a precious advantage which makes this professional school different from the typically rigid programs of traditional college-type education.

The opportunity provided by the MoU with the UN Secretariat, to train prospective candidates for linguistic positions, invested a new energy into the School. Besides being a major employer, the United Nations is valuable to us in a special way. Russian is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. We are convinced that the experience which students and trainers acquire from exposure to the UN language service contributes immensely to their professional growth and motivation, and, ultimately, help promote higher professional standards and performance among language professionals in Russia.

The MoU was signed before the training process at the School began. Therefore, the curriculum was adapted to UN standards and requirements from the very beginning, through the introduction of a course of Institutional Interpretation and Institutional Translation. The course is authored by Mr Boris Pogodin, a former UN staff interpreter with excellent UN credentials who repatriated after 25 years of service at the UN Office in Vienna. This year we also introduced a new discipline into the curriculum, Translation Projects, based entirely on UN texts and software. Translation Projects is an innovative approach in training which became possible due to first-hand exposure to the UN translation practices and procedures via visiting UN staff and trainer traineeships at the Russian Translation Services in New York and Geneva.

The MoU provides for such an important initiative as the participation of UN professionals in the selection of candidates to the School, and in the graduation exams as observers. It is helpful in identifying common evaluation criteria, and methods of screening and testing, which results in better adaptation of the program to UN standards and requirements.

The MoU's competency-sharing model is a mutually beneficial framework for cooperation. It is effective and interactive. It enhances the professional level of all involved (students, graduates, trainers) and contributes to upgrading the pedagogical skills of the UN language staff. Other options for cooperation may include, among other things, collaborative compilation and publication of training guidelines, text-books and databases, as well as editing training manuals prepared by trainers.

Another very promising line of cooperation is joint thematic skills-upgrading workshops, such as "Legislative Process in the Russian Federation", or "Russian Economy and Globalization" and the like, on the premises of Herzen University. Such workshops have been useful to UN translators as a means of updating their knowledge on subject matters and exposure to the living Russian language.

The competency-sharing model, initially meant to be a bilateral framework, has potential for horizontal expansion to bring together other MoU Universities into a network for exchanging training materials and databases. The next step may be "Training for Trainers"-type workshops and virtual classes. A Visiting Trainers Scheme, by far the most successful cooperative project, might provide a unique platform for synergizing programmes and practices. These initiatives may substantially contribute to the development of the competency-sharing model both vertically and horizontally.

A very important dimension of the UN – Universities cooperation is temporary assignments at UN Offices for our trainers. Although the School employs professional interpreters and translators, they are largely unfamiliar with the specifics of work in the UN environment. In order for them to be able to train translators and interpreters capable of working for the UN with minimal or even no additional training, they need more exposure to the UN translation/interpretation environment, to get firsthand knowledge of how the UN works, to internalize that knowledge together with the values and standards of the United Nations. It is important for the School to maintain professional contacts with the UN of some regularity to build up the trainers' knowledge and bring it back to the students.

E-learning opportunities must not be overlooked, especially in translation. The School has an e-learning translation project with the UN Information Centre in Moscow which, in the second semester, provides us with various texts for translation. In the practical translation course, students are encouraged to communicate remotely with an assigned UN Reviser for advice. Thereby students can compare their performance against UN standards. When the translation is returned to them, the UN Information Centre provides the students and the School with feedback, making it a very valuable skill-building exercise.

Periodic videoconferences might be another option to explore as a tool to monitor learning progress. E-learning practices can provide UN Revisers with an opportunity to continuously monitor and evaluate the progress of the trainees, and to identify prospective candidates for internship and, eventually, for employment in the language services of the UN Secretariat.

A student internship in the UN language services is the apex of the training process. Internships are granted only to the most successful students. We are grateful to the UN Secretariat for the well-balanced and excellently organized internship programme. It is a vital point in their budding careers, and a means to promote high standards and best practices among young language professionals in Russia. We sincerely hope that in due time many of them will bring new blood to the UN language team.

The School's graduates have entered the language mediation market in Russia and elsewhere. In 2009 and 2010, 25 of the School's graduates have been awarded diplomas in "Conference Interpreting and Translation" and "Translation". Here are some career starters:

• one joined the UN Headquarters in New York as a translator in the Russian Translation Service;

• one is employed by the UN Information Centre in Moscow;

• five have passed the UN Competitive Translation Exams and are on the UN roster expecting offers of appointment to the UN Russian Translation Service;

• nine are on the UN freelance interpreters list;

• three are staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia;

• six are successful freelance interpreters/translators working in Russia.

And although we are very much aware that a lot of improvements have to be made in the short and longer run, these patterns of employment of the School's graduates are a good indication that our joint venture is on the right track.

Dr. Irina Alexeeva,
Ekaterina Shutova

**POST-GRADUATE
TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER
TRAINING PROGRAMME
AT THE ST. PETERSBURG
SCHOOL OF CONFERENCE
INTERPRETING
AND TRANSLATION**

The St.Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation was founded to meet the demand for professional conference interpreters and translators in both the institutional and private sector markets. In order to accomplish this goal over a short, 10 month course, an innovative curriculum has been developed, which puts to test several rather interesting ideas concerning programme development and delivery.

Several organisations have contributed to the establishment of the School, each with a distinct set of expectations for future interpreters and translators. The requirements of the UN, European Commission, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local language service providers are not only different, but often conflicting. While the UN requires only simultaneous interpretation into the native language (Russian), and does not care for the consecutive mode, the MFA and private market show more interest in bidirectional interpreters who can perform in a variety of situations and under very different conditions. Therefore, the School tries to make sure that its students learn to identify and adapt to the differences in requirements and job descriptions of different organisations. Also, translation is seen as a necessary skill for interpreters, so a course in translation was added to the curriculum of the interpretation students, while all translation students have several classes of introduction to interpreting every week.

All the 'founding fathers' of the School send their visiting trainers on a regular basis to provide extra training to the School students and oversee the quality of training. These regular extra-curricular classes complement the core T&I courses that are taught by professional translators and interpreters with a lot of experience in the local and in-

ternational markets. At the beginning, the School administration felt that the diversity of approaches needed to be closely monitored and streamlined, but in the end it turned out that not only can a comprehensive coordinated curriculum withstand the pressures of outside influences, but the curriculum is also strengthened by them since the visiting faculty provide students with insights into the different facets of T&I situations and techniques. The **'plurality of approaches'** raised awareness of flexibility as an important quality for a professional interpreter or translator. This only works, however, when the approach is explained and clarified beforehand.

The core curriculum includes about 12 hours of conference interpreting per week, with a requirement of two hours of home work for each hour spent with an instructor. Self-study and group practice sessions are not only encouraged but mandatory; in fact, several classes a week at the beginning of the course are dedicated to various exercises and activities that can be used for individual and group training. All students maintain self-assessment journals that are regularly submitted to trainers for evaluation and feedback. Self-assessment is viewed as a critical skill, which is indispensable for continuous professional development. The objective is to grow **'reflective practitioners'** who will continue to hone and perfect their skills throughout their professional career.

The practical T&I courses are supported by intensive courses of language enhancement (T&I oriented), career development, and theoretical lectures which have been customized to meet the objectives of a professional programme. Nine months is too short a time to waste on theory that may or may not prove relevant to the training. Therefore, each course has been carefully selected, and the lecturers briefed to focus on the practical aspect of diplomacy, protocol, elements of political studies, international law and economics.

Another innovation is the so-called **'method of successive recapitulation'**, which involves gradual introduction of a specific skill in one of the courses (usually in a specific language combination, e.g. B into A) and a massive follow up in other classes (A into B, C into A, language enhancement, etc.). This method requires close coordination between the trainers but proves to be very successful as a vehicle for skills demonstration and further acquisition and mastery.

The courses progress from simple to complex elements, gradually increasing the difficulty and complexity of tasks set. This process may be viewed as a progression through a set of stages, each exposing students to a different range of skills, values and expertise (Interpreter – Skills — Speech — Interpreting Situation — Interpreting Community).

The very first level (the first two months of training) focuses on individual skills, such as memory, concentration, speech production, speech manners, active listening, logic, message processing, interpreter awareness, sight translation, with the intent of helping the trainee to break free from the lure of literal transcoding of messages, and teaching them to enhance their practical experience by collaborating with peers in self-study groups. A range of skill-specific exercises are used, most notably the paraphrasing of messages from Russian into Russian and from a foreign language into Russian. The idea is to bring the key skills to the point of automation, so that they require less effort and less concentration.

The second stage focuses on the integration of various skills. It is also the time when various interpreting techniques – compression, generalisation, expansion, etc. are introduced and practiced. Generous attention is paid to conference clichés, openings and conclusions of speeches, 'flowers' and set phrases. Sight translation is practiced as a technique for preparation for simultaneous interpreting. Note-taking for consecutive interpreting is also introduced at this stage. Classes of simultaneous interpreting concentrate on the ability to listen and speak at the same time.

The third stage is all about interpreting in different situations and for a variety of events. At this stage longer (up to four minutes) and more difficult speeches for consecutive interpreting are offered. An activity known as '**stage fright interpreting**' is introduced, whereby the interpreter is required to perform in front of the audience rather that from his or her seat and students reflect on the voice, posture, note-taking and the variables of interpreting in different circumstances. Texts are selected from a variety of topics and situations, including very technical ones. Topics are selected from those which are the most popular among the international organisations and in the local market: energy security, AIDS, NGOs, nuclear non-proliferation,

juvenile justice, the Millennium Goals, banking, forestry, overfishing, etc. Much attention is paid to preparation for an event or a particular topic, maintaining glossaries, warming up before an event, and use of slides during the interpretation.

Around this time a separate course in retour (*A* to *B*) simultaneous interpreting is introduced. Interpreting into a B language has been a matter of debate for a long time. The UN and EU institutions do not recognise retour in simultaneous interpreting. However, there has always been high demand for bidirectional conference interpreters in the private sector market. The course addresses such issues as linguistic interference, use of patterns, clichés, and expansion of the active vocabulary in the B language.

One of the most efficient methods of skills acquisition and integration combined with self-assessment and peer assessment is the '**exposure interpreting**' method. In the second semester students participate in conference simulations (both consecutive and simultaneous) and mock talk shows (in Russian). The conference simulations expose students to the stress of working in front of a real audience and are followed by a feedback meeting, as well as self-assessment in individual interpreting journals. Students practice relay interpreting, video-conferencing, press-conferences, etc. Mock talk shows focus on register, as well as presentation skills. These are mostly organised as part of the Russian language course.

The final stage of training is dedicated to preparation for final examinations. A separate career guidance course is offered which covers a variety of topics on the realities of the T&I market. The course consists of interactive seminars and results in a professional portfolio compiled by each student.

It is clear, however, that the systemic approach and intensive training do not make a 'ready-to-use' interpreter. The curricular components mentioned above only serve to create a roadmap for future improvement and professional growth. Whether or not this growth will lead to professional success will depend on the interpreter himself.

Dr Angelique Antonova

INDIVIDUAL WORK
AND GROUP PRACTICE
IN CONFERENCE
INTERPRETER TRAINING

This paper attempts to provide an insight into the way self-training of aspiring conference interpreters is arranged at the St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation.

The St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation offers an intensive one-year course aimed at producing highly skilled conference interpreters, the limited time-frame notwithstanding. The Russian economic realities are such that capable and ambitious candidates seek to achieve the highest level of training within as short time as possible, fully aware that they will need another year afterwards to establish themselves properly in the market, which will entail additional effort.

The intensity of the course and the high expectations placed upon it require joint efforts of the students and the trainers, which makes a thoroughly balanced curriculum and well organized self-training of students especially important.

Self-training at the School is divided into group practice and individual work and is supervised by the trainers.

This division is driven by common sense, since interpretation (unlike translation, for example) is an active communicative process, and the acquisition of its specific set of skills, even through self-training, requires group work. At the same time, certain components of that skill set must be perfected by extremely intensive individual work, which would eventually produce the desired effect of quantity becoming quality.

The School monitors the students' progress towards the levels of achievement expected of them – as, I believe, every programme should. Each stage of the training process is geared to developing spe-

cific skills, and the proportion of group practice versus individual work varies.

For example, both group practice and individual work are given equal weight at the early stage, when we practise consecutive interpretation without notes, and focus on developing listening/analysis/memorization skills, improving one's concentration, mastering public-speaking skills, and performing text analysis.

Skills are imparted in class by the trainers and are continuously perfected by the students during group practice and through individual work.

Group practice provides the requisite interaction. The students improve their speaking skills by making speeches and analyzing each other's work, as constructive criticism is very important in the training of conference interpreters. They do memory exercises together by first retelling and then interpreting speeches, by practising with sequences of numbers, etc. The development of their public-speaking skills may also take the form of collective exercises in speech anticipation. These exercises are based on current affairs and issues, and we find them extremely useful, in that they help the students improve their general awareness of what is going on in the world, master the register of official public speaking and develop the skill of the interpreter's anticipation.

The students' group practice is supervised by the trainers and the School management. We have introduced a tradition of graduates tutoring the students, whereby graduates, closely supervised by the trainers, help organize the students' group practice. In September and early October, graduates come to scheduled classes devoted to self-training and show the students how it should be arranged and how the allotted time can be utilized most productively. This provides a useful setting in which students feel comfortable asking graduates any questions they feel pertinent, and learn to fully appreciate the importance of practice in groups.

Group practice is monitored both by the trainers, who receive feedback from the graduates, and by the administration, through a logbook of group practice that the students are required to maintain and that is kept at the School office. The logbook can also be accessed by trainers of different languages, which helps them keep track of, and

better coordinate the efforts at each particular stage of the training process in various language groups, as well as promptly address the problems faced by individual students, making the trainers' response to a student's specific concerns more flexible and parallel in all languages.

At every stage, starting from the very first stage, individual work is very important; it is also supervised by the trainers. During the second week, a trainer will introduce individual progress logbooks where students record every recommendation they receive in class or during group practice from their fellow students or graduates.

As already mentioned above, individual work helps consolidate all the skills acquired during trainer-led classes and during group practice. Moreover, for those who have successfully passed the School's admission exam, individual work starts immediately after their final test, that is, the interview conducted by an international panel that consists of interpreters from the United Nations, the European Commission and the Russian Foreign Ministry, and School trainers. The panel provides all candidates with general and personalized advice on how to improve their general knowledge, enhance their language abilities (with respect to both their mother tongue and foreign languages), broaden their vocabulary, develop the skill of monolog speech, which is important for conference interpreters, and even improve their diction, if necessary.

At the initial stage, when the students have to develop, inter alia, their listening and public-speaking skills, they are provided with various Internet resources that allow them to listen to public speeches in English and Russian. They then perform exercises in rhetoric based on general political issues (or, at later stages of training, based on specific topics practised in class at that time): "Choose a topic for yourself and make a two-minute presentation on it, with an introduction, logical links and a conclusion." This exercise is very useful because it helps the students develop their listening and public-speaking skills, as well as their speechmaking skills, and raise their awareness of current world affairs.

For the purposes of the students' individual work, the School also relies on the Speech Repository of the European Commission, a precious resource generously provided to Herzen University by the Euro-

pean Commission Directorate General for Interpretation (DG SCIC). The students are granted access to it in December, because the period from September to November is taken up by Introduction to Consecutive Interpretation, followed by Note-Taking, followed by Introduction to Simultaneous Interpretation; besides, they need to initiate their group practice and put it on the right track, as well as develop their public-speaking and speechmaking skills.

Such a flexible combination of group practice and individual work when training conference interpreters at the postgraduate level substantially contributes, on the one hand, to the perception of what personal professional responsibility means and, on the other, to the development of teamwork skills; in other words, it teaches how to work together, with shared professional goals in mind.

Boris Pogodin

**CONFERENCE INTERPRETING TRAINING
AT THE ST PETERSBURG SCHOOL
OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETING
AND TRANSLATION:
YEAR THREE OF THE PROJECT**

The St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation is a post-graduate school of professional training tailored for the needs of concrete employers. One of them is the United Nations and its sister organizations. The demand for properly trained candidates is large and stable which means that new cadres have to graduate regularly and constantly. In 2008 Herzen University and its St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation signed an MoU with the UN Secretariat to train prospective candidates for linguistic positions.

The St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation is a successor project of the former UN courses of interpretation and translation in Moscow which were terminated in the early '90s for reasons of "overproduction". Unfortunately, the coherence of tradition and methods of training of the "old school" had been lost and now are in the process of being painstakingly recreated by the living graduates of the "old school", both within the School, and with UN staff visiting for pedagogical assistance. This time the project is adapted to the requirements of a broader range of employers, and in training broader skills. This aspect has a very practical consequence, namely, less statutory time for conference interpreting (CI) training, a greater workload on the students, and greater reliance on homework. Room also has to be made for consecutive and interpreting to B languages.

The Paradigm of Learning
Consecutive and simultaneous are related, they are twin brothers. But like twin brothers, one must come first. It is usually consecutive, if only to give the students an early feeling of the speed and immedia-

cy involved in interpretation. Soon thereafter – usually in early October – CI kicks in. By that time the students are expected to be familiar with all the basics of interpretation. Given that the paradigm of learning is **gradual movement** from simple to complicated, from easy to difficult, the strategy seems justified. It follows from here that quality training at the pre-simultaneous, pre-CI stage is very important, as is every other starting condition for any process.

The same learning paradigm underlies CI training as well. CI training is structured in four loose stages with fluid borders. The main difficulty at the very start is the lack of "hearing habits". This means that students find it hard to identify UN-esque language in the stream of spoken text. Worse, they have little idea what it means. Therefore, we start with exercises for adjusting their hearing to their new linguistic environment. If a trainer does not have structured exercise modules at hand, as was the case with me, it is possible to go by general UN texts – like promotionals from the internet – and do them in the class with explanations of meanings and contexts along the way. Otherwise, a trainer would need an exercise module, a compilation of "UN words and phrases" embedded in a gradually expanding context. An example will give a good idea. *Meeting. Night meeting. Late-night meeting. The meeting is open/adjourned. I look forward to a productive meeting. Plenary meeting. Meeting of the plenary. The plenary will meet again tomorrow at... To chair a meeting. The meeting of ... will be chaired by ... Open-ended intergovernmental expert group meeting to discuss... is scheduled to meet... according to...* and so forth in dozens of combinations. The more the better. The same block of phrases will be for *session, conference, agenda, issue, voting, elections…* over the entire range of conference vocabulary – a whole book of exercises.

Iteration is the mother of all learning. Conference terminology is a constant part of any international gathering. It is stable in time and in all settings, with minor variations due to the personality of the chairperson or working habits of a conference. Thereby, it is a structural element of interpretation, and as such must be learned practically by heart. This will spare the interpreter "thinking" effort and ensure a smooth start. Indeed, "thinking" how to render them is counterproductive. They ought to be "spat out" so to say.

Exercises for CI in the beginning are similar to basic simultaneous interpretation training but done with the use of UN conference material (after all, CI is a specialization in the profession). This requires exercise books and modules adapted to CI. Exercise books like the one I am describing above are best prepared by a trainer based on his personal experience and resources. The more so that they come in different language combinations. However, borrowings from existing materials, if available, are possible and legitimate.

After the trainer is confident that the class is reasonably fluent with the first part – this will usually take one or two weeks – he will move to the next block of exercises. This time they will be offered another set of structurally important repetitive texts. These are congratulatory remarks, expressions of gratitude, reassurances of support, wishes of success, as well as condolences, words of sympathy and solidarity, and a few other recurrent themes. The method is the same as above: dozens of pages of text read out by the trainer, or recorded in advance, to be interpreted by the students until they learn them by heart. Again, these are a structural element and their easy handling by an interpreter is crucial for a smooth start. Few things look more ridiculous than botched up initial remarks.

Once conference vocabulary has been reasonably acquired, it is time to do the same thing with a similar block of exercises designed to train in the current political vocabulary of the UNGASS General Debate, and a thematic block of small and repetitive texts on separate themes quoted from the General Debate. They can be: Middle East, disarmament, Afghanistan, climate change, reflections on the UN, reform of the UN and many others.

Some UN glossaries, like the glossary of international organizations, programs and initiatives, may be a good training resource... They contain hundreds of entries and names. They will be provided on request by UN staff coming for pedagogical assistance. But there is a caveat. Not all UN glossaries are useful for training. Glossaries of, say, procedural terminology or lexicon of resolutions are of limited training value, repeat: training value (*note*: for CI training vs. Translation training). They contain a complete collection of terms, whereas for training purposes a limited set of frequently used terms is needed. And they do not come with context. This is not a fatal drawback,

however. Such glossaries can be redone: abridged and contextualized with **iterative examples of gradually increasing complexity.**

Moving on to Full Texts

After these initial steps the class may move to full texts. Here again, the movement is from the easy to the difficult. Texts are usually graded into three categories of difficulty in terms of speed, in the first place, but also some other factors like accents, subject matter, and style. The best, and just about the only source of live texts is the General Debate in the UN General Assembly, courtesy of the UN webcast. They come sequenced into bite-size separate speeches rather than in recorded meetings of two or three hours. These jumbo-size recordings are unmanageable and cannot be sequenced into smaller chunks by the School. Special software is required. Some recordings – of any grade of complexity – can be done by the teacher. It is a painstaking and time-consuming experience, but with time a good collection will be built.

Other organizations of the UN family do not maintain webcasts of their proceedings, although they will make sound recordings of public meetings on request for training purposes. But those too, are long and unsequenced. This is regrettable since it denies diversification by subject matter.

It is important to start with easy level one texts, for the sake of graduality. Students will fail level two or three texts if given prematurely, and that is simply a waste of effort. Therefore, quality training must strictly comply with the principle of graduality, of incremental growth. Trainers must invest time into classifying texts that they will use for training.

It is somewhat more difficult and more expensive in time terms to comply with the rule of iteration. And yet it is worthwhile. Try to revisit the same text, if done to satisfaction, after a period of a week or two. Texts interpreted with unsatisfactory outcomes ought to be done over and over until a satisfactory outcome emerges.

Intensity: a Fine Balance

Intensity is another aspect of learning and training. Good **results come with sweat**, just like in sports. Easy classes are something of a

contradiction in terms. Yet, the trainer has to be careful not to overdo it. The thing is that CI training has to compete with other modules for students' learning time and effort, and all have to be reasonably balanced. Usually the signs of overload are easy to see. Either the students tell the trainer that they simply cannot handle the homework, or the trainer will see that the students come to classes with unprepared or sloppily done homework. This is also demoralizing for the students. Then it is time to slow down and play safe. It is pointless to end up with a heap of undone homework, it is better to do smaller jobs thoroughly – an obvious statement. And nobody wants fainting students. When signs of overload are there, the trainer ought to make this known to the administration to make possible adjustments with other modules.

Signs of a Quantum Leap

Soon into the second semester students start to worry about their progress, or rather the absence of it. This is counterintuitive to their expectations. But **learning is not a linear process**. It is also intrinsically individual. Not only do results come in leaps and bounds, they come with a face – to put it figuratively. This idea has to be clearly and patiently explained to the students to avoid unnecessary frustrations. "But when will we start seeing it?" – they will usually follow up on your explanation. Well, overall we register the first signs of a stable delivery by mid-March or even April. "Stable delivery" means when students stay "above water" throughout the full length of a level one text without major failings. To be sure, the delivery will be rough, with bad linguistic choices, but from thereon the progress gradually consolidates. When I am reasonably sure that the breakthrough is real, I will announce this fact to the class if only to cheer up the spirits amidst the bleak weather of an early Baltic spring. It works.

Ekaterina Shutova

HOW TO HIT THE GROUND RUNNING: TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION AS A PROFESSION

The professional competencies of conference interpreters and translators include not only linguistic and inter-cultural skills, but also a big cluster of skills associated with professional standards and practices. The St. Petersburg School of Conference Interpreting and Translation aims to graduate not only high-quality T&I professionals, but people who would be immediately employable, too.

For that purpose a special course in 'Translation and Interpretation as a Profession' was introduced at the end of the second semester. The course covers such topics as professional ethics, professional resume writing, in-house vs. freelance work, job interviews and contract negotiations, stress and voice management, professional associations and web-resources (including discussion boards and databases), quality and self-assessment, working conditions and client education, etc. The trainer describes the main problems for each topic relying on personal professional experience and gives prompts and examples to students who are invited to make their own conclusions and later look for answers in the recommended background reading material.

'Translation and Interpretation as a Profession' is not a lecture course. It is a very practical and interactive course that has been integrated into the overall training and assessment strategy. Each class begins with a general introduction, which is followed by group work: discussions, presentations, role play and case studies. All deliberations are interpreted simultaneously into A and/or B languages by students who take turns every 20 minutes. Group discussions are interpreted in the chouchotage mode (usually into a B language). At the end of each class, students not only formulate lessons learnt with regard to the main topic of the class, but also provide peer feedback on interpreting

using assessment sheets. The students also fill in interpreting journals, thereby ensuring self-assessment. The assessment criteria are the same for this course as for the interpreting courses, thus ensuring uniformity of approach.

This format helps to create a professional environment where students are stimulated to share their opinions and identify problem areas under the guidance of a professional interpreter and translator. They analyze different situations which they may find themselves in, and at the same time try out different roles (presenter, interpreter, fellow interpreter, direct customer, assessor).

At the end of the course students prepare a portfolio comprising a professional resume in Russian and in their B and C languages, a draft contract for freelance work (separate ones for translation and interpreting), business cards, and other important boilerplates. But more important still, students gain a better understanding of the world waiting for them outside the School. They will be able to see the dangers and appreciate the opportunities that the market will throw at them, and adjust to various situations and environments. Students also come to realize the importance of career-long learning; learn to manage personal and professional behaviours; and apply professional conflict-resolution strategies.

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TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS:
THE ST PETERSBURG SCHOOL
OF CONFERENCE INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION

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