Monterey Forum 2009: Abstracts

APRIL 2 at IRVINE

✈ 6:00 - 7:30 ● Translator Training: A Systematic Approach to Translation Problems

Christiane Nord

The lecture starts out from a distinction between (subjective, individual) translation difficulties which a particular translator encounters in a translation task (e.g., an unknown word, deficient topic knowledge, short deadlines, lack of dictionaries or other sources of documentation), and (inter-subjective, generalizable) translation problems that remain problems even if the translator has learned to deal with them efficiently (e.g., what to do with references to culture-specific realities, proper names, measures and weights, text-type or genre-specific structures). We suggest a classification of four types of translation problems (pragmatic, convention-related, linguistic and text-specific), which allows for a systematic approach in translation teaching.

APRIL 3 at IRVINE

✈ 9:00 - 10:00 ● Basic Principles of Assessment

Jean Turner

In a forum on principles and practices of assessment, it seems sensible to first address the nature of assessment itself, and why one might choose to use the term assessment as opposed to test or examination. The distinction, if there is one that satisfies everyone involved, is less important than the principles that guide their development or adoption. The decision to use a particular assessment instrument or procedure for any purpose—even to satisfy curiosity—should be guided by a set of four basic principles. Each of the principles entails a series of actions; primary among them is the thoughtful consideration of systematically collected information.

The first principle, ensure the assessment is useful for its intended purpose, indicates that the act of assessment is purposeful; that the purpose has been articulated and is understood and agreed upon by people who take the assessment and people who use the outcomes.

The second principle is ensure the assessment yields reliable outcomes. By definition, assessment is a systematic activity—not only is it conducted according to a set of rules or procedures, but the outcomes are determined and expressed according to established procedures. To be useful, the outcomes must be reliable. The third principle is ensure the assessment is practical. Assessment always requires some commitment of available resources. Demand on resources must be balanced with benefit. The fourth principle is ensure the assessment has a beneficial impact on learning and training. Well-designed assessment provides information that is immediately useful for those who are assessed as well as assessors, but its execution and outcomes can also enhance learning and serve as a basis for improving the nature and quality of instruction. The application of these principles to various formal and informal assessment types, including self-assessment, reveals essential steps in their development.

✈ 2:00 - 3:00 ● A Process-Based Approach to Interpreting Assessment

Chuanyun Bao

The teaching and learning of interpretation is a process with carefully designed strategies and steps that lead to the achievement of a large goal. However, some aspects of the process were often not given sufficient attention as students and sometimes faculty put more emphasis on result. This paper attempts to present a process-based approach to interpreting assessment on the basis of an analysis of the cognitive process of interpreting and the cognitive load of interpreters. The objective of the presentation is to help the students develop a more balanced approach to interpreting practice, and bring more considerations into interpreting assessment by faculty.

✈ 2:00 - 3:00 ● Grading Student Translations: Paring Purpose(s) and Approach

Jule Johnson

What is the best approach for grading student translations? Should one use a point system for different errors and their degree of severity? Mark errors and but then assess the translation holistically? What relative weight should be given to meaning, clarity of style and other aspects of quality? Should assessment always be based solely on product quality or should credit be given for evidence of good technique or efforts to incorporate learning? The answers to these and related questions depend largely on the purpose of the assessment. The more we as teachers are clear-minded about our assessment purposes, the more effectively we can apply appropriate approaches to assessment that serve those aims. This session will present examples of a range of approaches according to purpose.
April 4 at MG100  Translations Assessment • 8:45 - 10:15

Translation Errors vs. Errors in Translations:
A Functional Model for the Assessment of Learning Progress in Translator Training

Christiane Nord

In a functional approach, a translation error is defined as a failure to carry out the instructions implied in the translation brief, i.e. as an inadequate solution to a translation problem. Therefore, I suggest classifying translation errors in analogy with translation problems (Nord 1997: 73ff.) as pragmatic, convention-related, linguistic, and text-specific. However, if the students’ proficiency in the target language is not sufficient for the task in question, there may also be other imperfections in the translation, which are not translation errors in the strict sense but a violation of language rules or usage conventions. In my paper, I would like to show how the distinction between translation errors and linguistic mistakes can help measure the learning progress in the acquisition of translation competence more adequately.


Principles and Practices of Assessing Translation

Said M. Shiyab

Assessing the quality of translation in the classroom, whether done through testing or regular exercises, is a fundamental issue in the field of translation. One of the most problematic issues in teaching translation is appraising the students’ knowledge of translation skills and their competency in translation. Many academic professional translators, though competent in teaching translation, find it difficult to objectively assess students’ performance in translation simply because they lack didactic or pedagogical knowledge. Competency and the pedagogical knowledge of translation should always be top priorities for professional translators.

One of the objectives of this paper is to identify whether or not professional translators possess the means of objectively assessing students’ language competency and knowledge of their translation skills. Would testing students and assessing their translations be an ideal method of making judgment about their language proficiency and their knowledge of translation skills? What kind of knowledge professional translators should possess before they go into the classroom? How can academic professional translators guarantee that their methods of assessment are good enough to warrant qualified translators? Is there a way where academic professional translators enhance students’ translation experience and make the assessment of their work more valuable and enriching? All these issues will be explored in this paper along with some recommendations for further studies.

Training Literature and Linguistics Students for a Career in Translation:
Difficulties in the Implementation of Assessment Criteria

Anna Maria D’Amore

In the absence of a translation studies program in Zacatecas, the Comparative Literature and Linguistics undergraduate program’s English courses at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (Mexico) aim to address the interests and needs of students, some of whom are already translation practitioners prior to their formal university studies. A relatively recent interest in translation theory and practice together with the fact that many of our graduates have pursued a career in the field of translation—virtually unprepared—has seen the English program transformed to include the study of translation theory and a practical English to Spanish translation workshop. This transformation has led to considerable discussion regarding the assessment of translation assignments which, on occasion, must be reviewed by faculty members whose academic and professional background does not lie in the field of translation. Furthermore, students may now opt for composing translation-related dissertations as final requisite for the award of the undergraduate degree, generally involving the production of five to ten thousand words of translation, in a theoretical or practical framework, usually pursuing topics related to literature or linguistics (theoretical or applied). The oral defense examination system in Mexican universities means that dissertations are assessed by committee; unfortunately, in our case—regarding dissertations on translation practice or theory—this committee is almost inevitably made up at least partially of examiners with little or no experience in translation. Considerable progress has been made and numerous difficulties have been overcome regarding the implementation of criteria in the assessment of these Literature and Linguistics students as potential English to Spanish translators; others, however, persist. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to ventilate these positive and negative experiences in the quest for agreement on assessment criteria, with a view to warning others of potential pitfalls and, hopefully, receive some constructive criticism.
New Approaches to Translation Assessment • 10:35 - 12:05

♦ A Corpus-Based Approach to Sight Translation Evaluation

Wallace Chen

This paper outlines a corpus-based approach to evaluating sight translation, specifically the evaluation of learners’ sight translation assignments involving specialized texts. The data used in the research include a Reference Corpus (RC) and a Learners’ Corpus (LC). As an experiment, the RC is composed of over 25,000 words of naturally-occurring, non-translated and topic-specific English texts in the areas of rainforest conservation, laptop computing and telecommunications. Being authentic and professionally written, the texts contained in the RC can serve as a benchmark against which translator trainers can compare learners’ sight translation outputs in various linguistic levels, including collocation, terminology, idiomatic expression, verification of intuition, translation equivalent, target language patterns and new expressions. The LC, on the other hand, contains over sixty transcripts of learners’ sight translation outputs from two Chinese texts used in two examinations. By consulting the LC, trainers are able to systematically identify learners’ error patterns, individual styles and issues, length of delivery, and the possible connections between lengthy delivery and language use. It is further suggested in this paper that the corpus-based approach to translation evaluation offers an empirical tool to complement traditional approaches that are based on intuition, personal experience, subjective judgment and restricted knowledge of subject matters. It is also argued that, by incorporating these electronic corpora in the learning process, students are equipped with the necessary tools to become independent learners and have greater awareness of language use in specialized translations.

♦ Evaluation in Localization Training: Assessing the Acquisition of Instrumental and Transfer Competence through a Corpus-based Study

Miguel A. Jiménez-Crespo & Maribel Tercedor

Traditionally, localization training has mainly concentrated on the development of instrumental competence (PACTE 2005), such as technological skills, required for the effective production of localized texts. In the context of university translation programs, it is normally assumed that students acquire the bilingual, strategic and transfer competences during regular translation courses. Nevertheless, the specific nature of digital texts requires the systematic acquisition of textual, communicative, terminological and discourse strategies of digital texts as well as the interlinguistic differences between locales. This poses certain challenges as students are normally assessed both through the instrumental use of technology tools and the effective solution of comprehension, transfer, reformulation or pragmatic problems. The objective of this study is to test the basic assumption that technological skills are the main component of localization training.

The methodology for this study combines a localization learner corpus with a comparable corpus of published localized texts from the largest US companies and spontaneously produced texts in Spanish. The localized texts were evaluated through the correct usage of technology tools, such as correct final format or the localization of graphics with embedded texts. The adequacy of students’ solutions to translation problems was evaluated by contrasting their productions to both the corpus of original and published localized texts. The results show that translation problems, such as terminology usage, coherence ties, the formulation of the appellative textual function in the target language or lexical and typographic borrowings, posed a greater difficulty to students than technological aspects. Surprisingly, it also shows that 4th year localization students at the University of Granada produced on average more adequate localized web texts than those of the largest US companies.

♦ An Exploration of the Crowd as Assessors of Translation: Training of Translators of Popular Entertainment in the Context of Crowdsourcing

Minako O'Hagan

The world of translation continues to be affected by the changing technological landscape, including the emerging model of translation by the Internet crowd, which exemplifies “crowdsourcing” (Howe, 2008). While fans of popular culture genres such as anime and manga have been churning out their own fan translation over two decades, more recently translation of Wikipedia and Facebook is being tackled by self-selected volunteer translators with a new way of assessing their translation; letting the crowd decide the best translation. Afforded by the technological environments of the Internet and Web 2.0, volunteer translation networks are increasingly visible, translating anything from open source software manuals to popular entertainment content. Against this backdrop, this presentation questions the shelf-life of the conventional methods of translator training and assessment in academia especially in view of training the new generation of “digital natives” and preparing those who wish to translate for the popular entertainment sector in the digital era.
Assessing Aptitude and Language Skills in T&I Training • 1:30 - 3:00

Assessing B Language Skills in an Intensive Pre-MA English Program for International Students

Lisa Leopold & Peter Shaw

This paper describes a six-week intensive course, English Preparation for Translation and Interpretation (EPTI), at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, designed to hone the B language oral and written skills of international students about to enter the MA program in T&I. The curriculum combines relevant content areas (business, law, politics and so on) with T&I-related skills and tasks. Extensive pre- and post-course assessment procedures examine the applicants’ aptitude to enter the MA program and to gauge progress made within the course.

These assessment procedures are described and exemplified in detail, as a model for assessment design for aptitude testing for students about to enter a T&I program. Specifically, the components of the assessment battery include such crucial aspects of oral language performance as extemporaneous speaking, summarizing and shadowing; in written terms, the assessment tools include attention to summarizing, register-shifting, and paraphrasing. The paper will also underscore the close relationship between such procedures and the actual training provided in the MA program. In addition, issues related to the selection of authentic spoken and written texts are explored; and various facets of the scoring of such tests, including the development of rubrics and the training of raters, will be presented and illustrated in detail.

Finally, data will be presented from pre- and post-course assessments to show both the extent and quality of the development of students’ proficiency in the key skill areas mentioned. Findings are also presented comparing the EPTI population with non-native speakers of English entering the MA program directly (the latter having been excused EPTI on the grounds of a higher TOEFL score, longer residence in an English-speaking country, or both). A final data set compares the graduating average GPAs of the two populations.

Aptitude test at MIIS

Miryoung Sohn

The aptitude test administered at the Graduate School of Translation & Interpretation (GSTI) of Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) is the first series of tests students have to go through in the two-year graduate program. Most renowned graduate level translation and interpretation training institutes administer some form of aptitude test and yet not so many studies have been conducted on the issue of aptitude testing and its predictive validity. A case study on the aptitude testing administered at the GSTI and its predictive value will be presented. In the study statistical analyses of EDT/ODT (GSTI’s entrance exam) scores of students in the Korean program in comparison with their actual GPA and the Professional exam results was conducted to find correlations between these three data sets. Test construct of the aptitude test tied to the competence deemed critical to successfully complete the rigorous two-year MA program and a faculty survey on the current practice of EDT/ODT will also be presented.

Assessing Aptitude for Interpreting: A New Approach

Franz Pöchhacker

While it is now generally accepted that interpreters are “made, not born”, the long-standing issue of aptitude for interpreting, which dates back to the earliest research efforts in this field, has lost nothing of its significance. On the contrary, one- or two-year Master’s programs, which are now becoming the standard curricular format also in Europe, need to select their students as carefully as possible to ensure optimum use of teaching resources and high success rates for their trainees. A number of tests for the screening of potential interpreters have been proposed, but no generally accepted – and easily administered – testing procedure has yet been established. Based on a review of some of the most promising aptitude testing methods in the literature I will describe a new approach that has been piloted at the Center for Translation Studies of the University of Vienna. A newly conceived monolingual test combining an auditory cloze with an expression fluency task (SynCloze) is embedded in an introductory interpreting course. The presentation describes the rationale and design of the SynCloze test and presents the findings of several rounds of test administration to students in the final stage of their undergraduate studies.
Interpreting Assessment • 3:20 - 5:20

Small Sample Sizes: A Roadblock for Valid and Reliable Interpreter Assessment?

Andrew Clifford

In many professions, the notion of “assessment” is strongly linked to psychometric principles. Tests for doctors and nurses, for example, are scrutinized to see whether the scores they generate are reliable, and whether the decisions made from them are valid. Yet interpreting has been slow to follow the same path. Aside from some general discussions (Sawyer 2000, 2004) and the validation of the US Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam (Hewitt & Stansfield, 2002; Hewitt, Romberger & Ostrom, 2003), very little research in Interpreting Studies has made use of psychometrics.

One explanation may be sample size. In the health professions, it is not uncommon to administer a credentialing test to hundreds (Violato, Salami & Muiznicks, 2002) or even thousands (Norcini, Hancock, Webster, Grosso & Shea, 1988) of candidates. However, in interpreting, the number of test takers is invariably much lower, often below the sample size of 30 required to assume a normal distribution. Yet professional interpreters are not a large population – it is rare within any one country, for example, that the total number of interpreters with the same language pairs would approach the number of credentialing candidates found in other professions.

This situation begs an important question: can tests for interpreters be psychometrically evaluated, given that their sample sizes will invariably be small? In this presentation, we argue that they can. We will demonstrate, using pilot data from a new certification exam for interpreters, some of the techniques that can be used in a validation study with small sample sizes. The presentation will interest all those involved with certification and other employment-related tests. It will also address testing in training programs, where the quality of in-class tests or exit exams depends on the consistency of scores and on evidence that test instruments are assessing what they are intended to assess.

References


Self-assessment in Interpreter Training

Yun-Hyang Lee

In the traditional learning environment, assessment meant different things to teachers and students. For teachers, assessment was the primary evaluation tool for which they were solely responsible for in most cases. For students, assessment was a source of stress and anxiety where they had no responsibility or ownership in the process. The author suggests that students’ self-assessment be used as the starting point for students to become more involved in the assessment process. The author proposes a Student-Teacher Interface Model of Assessment where student’s self-assessment is used in conjunction with teacher’s assessment as the interface between the teacher and the student. The Model takes advantage of the different characteristics of teacher’s and student’s assessments to facilitate a more comprehensive approach to assessment as a learning tool. The Model is geared toward sharing of objectives and responsibilities between teachers and students while promoting better communication and collaboration between teachers and students.
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Interpreting Assessment (continued) • 3:20 - 5:20

◆ Rating Scheme of Taiwan’s First Certification Exams for Interpreters and Reliability Issues

Minhua Liu

Taiwan held its first certification exams for translators and interpreters in December, 2007. Prior to the launch of the “Chinese and English Translation and Interpretation Competency Examinations,” rating schemes for both the translation and interpretation tests were developed and tested in a three-year research project led by this author. The rating scheme involves the use of two 6-point scales, one for fidelity and one for intelligibility - the two criteria used in judging a translation or an interpretation. This paper discusses the development of the rating schemes for the interpretation tests, the comparison with other rating methods and tools, and the reliability issues. Specifically to be discussed are issues such as how smaller rating units, separation of the two rating criteria, and rater training affect rating reliability and the way inter-rater reliability is affected by whether an A-language or B-language performance is rated. Discussion in this paper is based on the analysis of the data from some experiments in this author’s research projects and from the interpretation tests of the Competency Exams. It is anticipated that the rating scheme of the Exams will have a wash-back effect on interpretation training and the practice of interpretation exit exams in Taiwan, as has already been observed in several graduate-level translation and interpretation institutes in Taiwan.

◆ Investigating the Examiners’ Judgement Processes in a Simultaneous Interpreting Exam

Shao-chuan (Fred) Wu

The field of assessment in interpreter training within the educational context is still under-researched. Among the urgent issues to be addressed in the assessment of interpreting, those that surround the test validity and reliability are most in need of clarification. This study tackled this subject by firstly exploring what the examiners are really paying attentions to when assessing student interpreters. Thirty examiners were invited as study subjects to participate in a simulation of simultaneous interpreting exam. Thurstone’s Paired Comparison Method was employed to monitor the consistency level of the subject examiners’ judgements. Cluster analysis was used to explore and identify patterns of the examiners’ judgement results, which is used as a framework for qualitative analysis on the examiners’ verbal comments when they were comparing the student interpreters’ performances. Five judgement patterns emerged and seven categories of concepts in judging interpreting performances were identified. The examiners may be using the same assessment criteria, but there are variations in the way how the criteria are used. Some prototype norms of interpreting examiners’ judgements are proposed based on the findings. At the end, implications of the study method are discussed and suggestions are made for future studies in this area.

April 6 at IRVINE • Post-conference Lecture • 4:00 - 5:30

◆ Interpreting Studies: Present State and Future Trends

Franz Pöchhacker