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**Translation and Interpreting in new geopolitical settings**  
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## **Endeavours of FIT and CIUTI to match New Market Needs**

Translation is as old as humanity itself, although we still struggle today to gain the recognition that we deserve as the guardians of cultural diversity and mediation. Translators and interpreters have been used throughout history to further the aims of various sectors. Technological advances and globalisation have seen the world change tremendously over the past decades. This has had both positive and negative spin-offs for our profession, and although our core activity may not have changed much there have been tremendous changes in the way we carry out that activity and the expectations on the part of both the professionals and their clients. It is therefore important for training institutions and professional organisations to guide those already active in the profession and also those training to enter the profession, to help them in their professional lives and prepare them properly for what they will face on a daily basis.

Globalisation is changing the way that we look at the world. The fact that the world is becoming so much smaller and there is a greater need to communicate across borders and languages brings with it a greater awareness of translation and a realisation of the need to have competent linguists.

We also see an increased awareness of translation – and the need for good translation and competent translators – through the work of international and regional bodies around the world. Here in Europe there is the European Union, which spends a large part of its budget on translation to guarantee the rights of its citizens. The position is similar in relation to the United Nations, although the number of languages they work in is smaller. However, translation is beginning to have greater relevance in other parts of the world too, where it has not traditionally been considered. The African Union is increasing its range of work and so is requiring more and more to be done in the language field. In Asia, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has adopted English as its working language, but there is beginning to be a feeling that perhaps this is not the right course to follow. We are all inclined to view developments within our own restricted sphere, and so this is one area where FIT and CIUTI can help in preparing students of translation and interpreting. The educational institutions need to maintain contact with the international organisations that use translators and interpreters, so that they are able to interpret and inform their students about trends among these organisations, as well as exposing them to the necessary background and vocabulary related to work in these fields.

A very valuable aspect of the work of FIT and CIUTI is to make sure that students are properly prepared to operate as professionals once they are finished their studies. FIT has over 100 members, and in this way represents something in the order of 60 000 practising translators and interpreters. The accumulated experience is tremendous and is something that the teachers in the field of T&I should make use of. These associations represent the people on the ground who work as translators and interpreters and who really know what it's like and what newcomers to the profession need to know and what type of training would be most useful to them. Even better would be if FIT and CIUTI were able to contribute to an internationally accepted norm for what constitutes a truly professional translator or interpreter. Now that the world is changing in the way it operates and in the way that translation and interpreting are looked at, we need to change the way we look at ourselves too. T&I have come of age – they are no longer something done by retired language teachers. Trained translators and interpreters are becoming the norm, and if we want others

to have respect for what we do, we have to respect ourselves too, and act like professionals. So FIT and CIUTI can assist in making sure that newly trained translators and interpreters know what is expected of them and are prepared to enter the world of work once they graduate.

What are some of the characteristics of a professional translator? They need to conduct themselves like professionals. That means being aware of their responsibility to both the client and the profession. They must have a code of conduct or ethics according to which they work. They must accept full responsibility for their work and not expect the client to do a final check. They must not exploit clients in any way – whether in the fees they charge or by accepting work they are not really competent to do, for example – and at the same time must not exploit their colleagues in any way. A confraternal attitude of helping one another and working for the best of the profession rather than just personal gain is at the bottom of all work done within FIT, and I am sure that it is the same in CIUTI. And finally a true professional acknowledges that they will never know everything and that they need to keep on learning; continuing professional development is essential for growth as a professional.

One of the projects in FIT's current Action Plan, for example, is to collect documents related to best practice around the world and to make them available on the FIT web site for general consultation. This will help make the information immediately available to a much wider audience and will hopefully better prepare students to work in the best way.

In addition to inculcating in students this belief in themselves and the value of the work they do, another area in which FIT and CIUTI play a valuable role is simply through keeping students and practitioners informed about the situation in the profession and equipping them with strategies for dealing with them. What are some of the challenges and changes in the market that have resulted from globalisation and new markets?

A major challenge facing translators, especially in developed countries, is that of pricing. A global market means having to compete across the world, not only within your own region. Translation is in most cases not a particularly lucrative occupation at the best of times. Now a client is able to source a translator in another part of the world and benefit from differences in cost of living and work ethic – and different time zones! Our training institutions need to prepare practitioners for this situation and equip them with skills to ensure that they do not come off second-best when they enter the world of work. They need to consult practising translators and interpreters, so that they can pass on tricks about working smarter rather than harder to stay on top in this regard. By the same token, translators in the less developed parts of the world need to be made aware of the value of their work, so that they are not exploited and underpaid.

Another change brought about by globalisation and our modern lifestyle is the fact that everything moves at a far faster pace than in the past. This results in expectations of 'on-demand' translation too. Clients do not understand what goes into producing a translation and expect it to happen at the push of a button. So we face the challenge of 'better-educated' clients, who are becoming aware of things like machine translation and computer-assisted translation and assume that this means the translator is able to produce the goods in half the time they would have a few years ago. Here again teaching institutions and professional associations need to teach their students and practitioners how to educate clients so that they do not make unreasonable demands and teach them how to make their practice as efficient as possible, in order to keep up with these demands.

A related area in which FIT and CIUTI have a very valuable role to play is that of qualifications and the standards applied in this regard. In an unregulated environment, every country, every region, virtually every university will develop their own qualifications and standards. We need to share information from different corners of the world, to ensure that qualifications and standards around the world correspond with one another, so that at the end of the day clients receive a quality product, wherever they have sourced their work. A tremendous step in this direction is the work done on the European Masters in Translation

and in Interpreting, which will undoubtedly be discussed within CIUTI and used to facilitate the formation of similar programmes in other parts of the world.

There are other aspects of quality and qualifications that come into play when we look at things at a global level. The developed world considers translation from the perspective of an ordered society, with established languages and plenty of resources like dictionaries – and expects the rest of the world to meet those standards. But other areas of the world do not necessarily have the luxury of such a settled background. Their languages are not as developed, and nor are the translation-related resources needed in our work. Students and practitioners who work for or start their own translation agencies need to be aware of these differences, to assist them to run their agencies successfully. Is it not easier for them to obtain such information through organisations like FIT and CIUTI rather than having to learn the hard way after graduating? We need to sensitise our students to the *type* of things they need to be aware of, such as differences in language evolution and taboos in different cultures.

A further challenge accompanying the flattening of the world through globalisation is an expectation that service providers will have the latest technology at their disposal. This again highlights discrepancies and inequalities in different parts of the world. Europeans and Americans assume that the majority of translators today work with CAT tools. It makes sense – they enable translators to remain competitive by increasing their output, while at the same time increasing consistency in the translations. However, this is not the norm in other parts of the world. In African terms these tools are extremely expensive, and there is less specialisation in a specific field of translation in Africa. This puts many CAT programs out of their reach. Not only can FIT and CIUTI help with advice on how to prepare students in this regard, by making sure that they are aware of the different programs on offer, or even that they become proficient in at least one, and how business is done in countries where such technology may not be readily available.

Another way that FIT and CIUTI can assist in preparing students is by tracking trends in the main languages used in international markets, so that students can be prepared in these languages to meet the needs.

Organisations like FIT and CIUTI rely on individuals to do the work, though; to make and maintain the contacts and pass on the information. And so I would like to end off by offering a word of thanks to all the individuals who are so generous with their time and knowledge in order to further the profession and enable FIT and CIUTI to make the contributions to the profession that they do.

Thank-you – Vielen Dank – Merci beaucoup