

THE BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES
THE FACULTY OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
3rd International Conference: Synergies in Communication
Future of Europe
Bucharest, 14-15 November 2014

**TRANSLATION & INTERPRETATION –
THE NEED FOR LEADERSHIP**

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Abstract: The European market for translating and interpreting services is estimated at about 1 billion euros a year according to the specialized websites of the commission. There are concerns that such expenses are either not enough or not necessary depending on the position taken by the supporters of such views. In the various member states local markets in the field of translation and interpretation services are in various stages of development. Universities respond to the market demands in their own ways. The present paper explores the Romanian situation against the background of the EU specialized institutions. It looks, on the one hand, at the Romanian specialized market in terms of study programmes, competences, competition, costs and business value of services and, on the other, at the way universities position themselves as providers of qualified translators and interpreters. The paper argues the need for highly specialized linguistic professionals and the role of leadership in developing people and institutions to meet that need.

Key words: Translation, interpreting, multilingualism, leadership, university management, developing study programmes

INTRODUCTION

The European market for translating and interpreting services has grown in parallel with the growth of the European Union being estimated in 2011 at about 1 billion euros a year according to the specialized websites of the commission. Nevertheless the translation industry is one of the most fragmented sectors in the world. According to TIME, one of the research projects of the European Society for Translation Studies [1] the top 30 language service provider companies, with an average of over 980 employees, represent only 26.6% of the total market revenue. The rest of the market is fragmented and made up of a large number of small agencies and freelancers as single-person businesses. This situation partly accounts for the general stereotype of translators and/or interpreters as individuals who work by themselves, in relative isolation, with modest expectations towards the market value of their work.

When the European Union started to grow significantly in 2004 with the accession of eight new states and in 2007 of two more the costs of the promised and required translation and interpretation services have grown suddenly. Applicant countries to the EU are required to translate the *acquis communautaire* into their national languages by the time of their accession. Primary and secondary legislation alone represents a considerable volume of texts, roughly estimated at 80,000 pages of the Official Journal in 2007 and to more than double at present. By other estimates the total number of pages of the EU's Official Journal of legislation passed 666,879 pages of law since its setting up in 1957, out of which probably only 170,000 represent active legislation. Over 100,000 pages of the *acquis* have been added in the last ten years which may lead to the conclusion that, if the current trend continues, by 2020 the *acquis communautaire* will have more than doubled to 351,000 pages [2]. This volume of translation represents a huge effort requiring an adequate institutional framework, highly qualified human resources, research in terminology, updated data bases and a market for translation/interpretation services in which fees are regulated mostly by demand and supply. The Romanian accession process has imposed the emergence of a market which has developed ever since. The realization that Romania has not had enough well-trained professional translators came as a disappointment to a country that has always been proud with the language skills of most of its population.

Since 1998, when the first "Regular Report from the Commission on Romania's Progress Towards Accession" was released in view of the opening in 2000 of its accession negotiations, The Country Report of the European Commission had been one of the most waited for documents both for the Romanian government and the general public as it was considered as the benchmark against which Romania's accession process was evaluated. The country was eagerly looking to see whether the economic and political criteria, as well as the commitments and requirements arising from the accession negotiations, were considered as met by Brussels before Romania became a member of the EU. Under the chapter on commitments and requirements every Report since 2000 had a distinct section on the situation of the translation of the *acquis* into Romanian, a section that had not been much read even by those with serious and constant interest in the process of negotiations. The section "Translation of the *acquis* into Romanian" defines the necessity of the linguistic preparation of the acceding countries consisting of the translation of the massive legislation of the EU into their own language.

In accordance with Articles 2 and 58 of the Act of Accession, all acts adopted by the Union's institutions prior to accession become applicable to the new Member States and are to be published in a special edition of the Official Journal of the European Union, also in the new official languages. "Of the nearly 90,000 pages of *acquis*, Romania has translated almost 60%. However, more than 50% of this volume still has to be revised by the national authorities before submission to the EU institutions." [3]

The Romanian public became aware of the importance of the linguistic preparation within the general accession procedures particularly in October 2004 when a public political debate took place for a few days on whether the status of functional market economy had been granted to Romania or not. The situation was clarified by the government press release stating that the controversy was caused by an awkward translation. The above situation together with the by now notorious interpreting gaffes made on the occasion of the 2003 visit of president G.W. Bush to Bucharest highlighted some of the characteristics of the Romanian market in the specialized field of translation and interpretation that the next section of the present paper will explore.

1. The Market

The translation and interpreting market in Romania has developing since 2005. The market is fragmented and information, though existing, is difficult to assemble – a situation that is not unusual for other sectors of Romanian society as well. The emergence of the market is a result of the internationalization of the economy and business, on the one hand, and on the other of the integration process in the EU. The attempts to structure and regulate the market have come from both government and, more powerfully, private initiative. The relevant actors on this market are at the moment: the *customers* demanding the services, the *providers* and the *regulating bodies* of this type of service. It is not the intention of the present paper to look at the profile of customers who request translation and interpreting services. The providers of service are in the following categories: freelance translators and interpreters, private specialized companies, specialized departments of state organizations and universities.

Information on the **service providers** comes from word of mouth and websites. Most of them offer a list of providers in specialized areas, some of them a price and, even fewer, a range of competences. It is practically impossible to have even an indicative number of the service providers in Romania at the moment.

There are, however, signs of **regulation** of the market. What used to be a market relatively dominated by freelancers, particularly at its upper end, has started to become corporate obviously due to increased competition. Competition is a result of the ever increasing demand for translation and interpretation services in Romania. On the other hand the globalization of the translation market and online professional agencies make it possible today for a Romanian living in Japan or California to offer services to a client from Finland or even Romania. Therefore regulation on the market comes both from within the service providing community and from government agencies and institutions that offer a framework in terms of quality standards and fees.

In Romania, the institutional framework for the translation of European legislation is provided by the the *Translation co-ordination Unit* within the European Institute of Romania (EIR). The Unit's mission is to ensure the quality of the translations defined as the "same stylistic and accuracy level with the original and a permanent attempt at unification of terminology and style". The Unit also researches and produces glossaries of specialized terms for the use of translators and public officers involved in the process of European integration, as well as it revises the relevant Romanian legislation into the working languages of the EU.

The **costs** for translation and interpretation services vary: from EUR 0.034 per word to around EUR 35-40 for 1,500 characters representing a standard A4 page of text and from covering expenses plus „you get experience” to EUR 400 per 6 hours of interpretation. These figures are quoted from a brief research on the internet as part of project work by the 2nd year students and from the author's personal experience as a translator and interpreter, working both as a freelancer and through various agencies, mainly in the field of business.

The **business value** of the services for translation and interpretation is significant. Communication is the first and main move in a business strategy. Almost nothing can be done in the global market without some type of translation and interpretation among those who intend to set up a business relation. From the large multinational companies to the small businesses and entrepreneurs everybody needs these types of services in various degrees of professionalism and sophistication. The value of business deals and operations is more or less known being reflected in turnover, taxes, value of service to customers etc.; however what is less evident is how much of the success of those operations is due to the translation and interpretation services. And an even more significant indicator is the number of business deals that failed because of lack of good translation and interpretation services. Actually language is considered a „competitive weapon” [4] in international business. Commerce between the United States and the Commonwealth is facilitated by the common use of English as the use of French in the former French colonies in Africa is an explanation for the competitiveness of French businesses in those regions.

What is significant for the present paper is the competitive advantage offered by the effective use of professional English for Romanian organizations and individuals. The perception of the general public is that English is the most popular language that Romanians speak – which is true to a certain extent. However, the quality of the professional translations services is still something to be improved.

We can therefore conclude that there is a significant impact of the translation and interpreting services on the national economy of any country. This impact is generally taken into consideration by businesses, but it is the duty of the professionals in the field to significantly underline the value of such services not only on the national economy, but also on society in general. The Chartered Institute of Linguists of the United Kingdom [5] pointed out that professionalism in languages made a vital contribution to the success of international business, to the delivery of public services from all corners of the globe and the fostering of an interest in languages at all levels of education. It also pointed out that professionalism in the language industry was too often undervalued or not respected as such.

In Romania it was only recently that specialists in translating and interpreting started to network professionally in a meaningful way, that is started to get organized in modern professional associations with clear mission statements, vision, values, strategy for development, a code of ethics and periodical publications. In 1997 the chapter on Romania of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* [6], written by János Kohn, was acknowledging the existence of two professional associations representing translators and interpreters in Romania: the Translations and World Literature Section of the Writers' Union (a member of FIT) and the Professional Union of Interpreters and Translators (UPIT) – established in 1990. The latter's assumed intention was to protect the rights of authors and promote the professional status of translators and interpreters.

In September 2004 the Romanian Association of Translators (Asociația traducătorilor din România) was set up and has been active both through their website - www.atr.org.ro – and through their monthly publication „ATR Flash”. The association offers a forum for discussion for those interested in translation covering a large range of topics with a focus on practical and particularly topical information. It comes to fill an important gap in the Romanian market by catering for the needs of translators coming from both philological and non-philological backgrounds, i.e. specialists in various fields who developed language proficiency and have experience in translating. The meeting of the two categories is beneficial and a prerequisite for the demands made by the EU institutions on Romania and its linguistic proficiency and professionalism for a better integration.

2. The Universities

At present translators in Romania are trained in five universities while conference interpreters are trained in two universities (Cluj and Bucharest). These programmes do not cover yet the needs of the market pointing to the importance of the restructuring process of tertiary education in this area as well.

During his March 2005 visit to Romania Karl-Johan Lönnroth, then director general for Translations of the European Commission, emphasised the need to set up a European master programme in translations in order to provide the European institutions with a coherent offer of translators. Romania was expected to provide some 150 translators who can perform professionally at the standards required by European Institutions and obviously those specialists had to be trained according to the best practices in the field.

During the talks on the occasion of the same visit, then education and research minister Miclea pointed out the need for interdisciplinary programmes in which persons having a degree in one field can attend a master programme in translation/interpreting and thus acquire the competences for translation/interpretation for that particular field. A background only in linguistics is no longer enough and universities have to assume the responsibility to restructure their educational offers so as to provide opportunities to train the translators needed both in the European Union and in Romania.

Universities have started to offer more practice oriented training by changing existing curricula and, more important, by setting up new programmes focused on the market demand. Starting with 2005 the *Technical and Civil Engineering University* (UTCB) in Bucharest through its *Department for foreign languages and communication* offers a new undergraduate three year programme, with internships in Romanian companies and organizations as well as a six months internship in a country in which the official language is the one studied. The programme specializes translators and interpreters in technical fields.

In 2003 the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest set up a Master in International Business Communication, delivered in English, which has a component on translation and interpretation in the field of business and economics. In 2013 it set up a study programme in applied modern languages and a master in traductology and interpretation which has not been running due to the institutional constraint of having at least 30 to 50 students enrolled.

The Faculty of Letters of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca offers two master programmes: „Traductology-Terminology” and „Conference Interpreting” in the field of translating and interpreting for English, French, German, Italian and Spanish including internships with institutions of the EU.

The Faculty of Letters of the West University in Timisoara organizes a Master and specialization in translation studies and terminology.

The above programmes are much needed for the EU integration of Romania. They are expected to provide the highly qualified human resources that are required in this long and complex process and to bridge the existing gaps in the field: too much focus on theory, providing learning opportunities in „real” contexts, benefitting from the input of practitioner translators and interpreters. And a very relevant area for today’s international markets, an area in which Romania still has to make steady progress: customer orientation, confidence building and assertiveness, in other words developing both „people” and „text” skills. In one word leadership is needed both for institutions and the individuals.

3. Conclusions

- a) There is a developing market for translation and interpreting services in Romania and its impact on the economy seems to be significant. All actors of the market are interested, even though from various reasons, in the development of this market.
- b) So far universities, ultimately the main providers for highly trained specialist translators and interpreters, have chosen to remain relatively isolated on the market due mainly to legislation inadequacies.
- c) More formal networking to share information and develop coherent strategies is required among all the actors on the market: service providers, customers, market regulators and universities.

4. References

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