

Session I:

Summary of discussion 1

(1) Peter Arthern (Head of the English Translation Division of the Council of the European Communities), commenting on Geoffrey King-scott's remark about preference given to younger translators in EEC examinations, said that the age limit was forty, but those passing were younger and new recruits in fact were all under thirty. However, this was a matter of chance rather than decision. Questioners from the floor asked about translation courses at undergraduate level, whether any courses included revision of translated texts, and also whether such revision was practised in commercial companies and bureaux. Jeremy Verrinder mentioned the translation module in the PCL's language degree courses, and Professor Benoît Thouin, from the floor, explained that most training programmes in Canada were at undergraduate level, and half at post-graduate level as well. The approach was professional rather than academic, and included revision of both general and specialised texts. Several Canadian programmes included periods of work in a translation company or public organisation, where work was revised and trainees also had to revise the work of others. In recent years courses had been introduced at Ottawa University which involved the translation of texts for the community (not in competition with business firms). This was at fourth-year level, before graduation. To the second part of the question Catriona Picken responded that revision in the Shell translation department was thorough, and from the floor Ms A. Torsvik (Senior Translation Editor, Digital Equipment Corp.) said that revision was built in through the function of editors, who had language competence and scientific qualifications.

(2) Josephine Bacon, court interpreter, said that she was horrified at the low standard of interpreting and translating she encountered in her work, particularly in criminal matters, and she quoted Lord Hailsham's comment that it didn't matter if an interpreter of Arabic couldn't read or write the language.

Ian Frame agreed that such interpreters and translators should be competent in criminal matters, and suggested that possibly the Lord Chancellor's department should be doing something about providing training. But there was no control over the type of translation work available, and in his experience 98 per cent was civil against 2 per cent criminal, and this was a fact of commercial life.

Geoffrey Kingscott commented that both the Nederlands Genootschap van Vertalers (NGV) and the Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer (BDÜ) had mounted campaigns over the use of unskilled interpreters in court translation of criminal cases, and cited as an example the use in England of community interpreters from police lists who might well speak the wrong dialect. Community interpreting was in its infancy here and elsewhere; it was necessary to spread the idea of a professional approach and convince the police that it was not enough to have an apparent facility in the language. Jeremy Verrinder added that the Nuffield Foundation was thinking of funding a project for community interpreters, and Peter Arthern, from the floor, said that Australia had a developed interpreting system which perhaps should be introduced here.

(3) Inger Rider (Editor, *Esselte Studium*, Solna, Sweden) speaking from the floor, asked what advice was given to students about the use of dictionaries. Were they encouraged to pick out mistakes and inform the publishers?

Jeremy Verrinder said that in the PCL Technical and Specialised Translation course the presenter of the topic guided students over the choice of dictionaries, which, he agreed, contained plenty of mistakes. A project was in hand at PCL which involved going page by page through a major German-English dictionary, listing complaints. Nélida Depiante asked if publishers could insert a note asking for mistakes to be notified, to which Inger Rider responded from the floor that they usually did, in the preface which nobody read. Ian Frame commented that in legal translation he never used bilingual dictionaries without at the same time referring to a monolingual dictionary in the source language.

(4) Lanna Castellano, from the floor, put a question to Geoffrey Kingscott about the organisation of and statistics on literary translators and interpreters.

Geoffrey Kingscott answered that many literary translators were

members of the Translators' Association (TA) and therefore in touch with each other, and although many were not, they were in touch with publishers, who had their own network; there was, for instance, a large group of Bible translators. The Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conference (AIIC) represented interpreters and had a directory listing them. Many remained outside the organisation, but the total number was in any case limited. Most *ad hoc* interpreters were part-timers with other occupations; nobody knew how many there were.

RAPPORTEUR

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