



On Language and Intercultural Careers in Multilingual Service Settings

Beating Babel in a Super-diverse Society

European Language Council (ELC) Forum 2014 "Which language policy for Europe", 4-5 December 2014



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Introductory remarks on the European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation (ENPSIT)

What does ENPSIT want to accomplish?

- PSIT = Public Service Interpreting and Translation
- European Union (EU) and member state authorities do not structurally embed public service interpreter and translator training, certification and provision into policy.
- Since PSIT is present in so many policy domains, there is no single European Commission 'desk' to talk to. Is medical interpreting the way in? Or rather employment and EU worker mobility?
- ENPSIT collaborates with Critical Link International (CLI). Thus: EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL APPROACH



ENPSIT's Objectives (Constitution) cf. <http://www.enpsit.eu>

- Promoting the establishment of standards that guide the practice of PSIT
- Encouraging and sharing research in the field of PSIT
- Advancing educational and training provisions and requirements for PSIT
- Gaining the support of the European Commission for the provision of funding of PSIT and PSIT related activities
- Advocating the provision of professional interpreting and translation services in PSIT Settings



2**Beyond interpretation and translation****PSIT Only?****A range of communication support professionals and tools:**

- Speak and write the official language clearly, avoiding complex discourse and linguistic imagery and generate shorter, active voice sentences.
- The use of (internet, video, audiovisual storytelling and other) images
- Pictograms, icons and visualization
- Software applications will no doubt further evolve into something better than they are now: *Google Translate, ICatcher (being developed) ...*
- Multilingual staff: public officers, social workers, doctors, psycho-therapists, or their assistants ... [e.g. “geomed.be”: Find Multilingual doctors in Brussels]



- Intercultural mediators: work in a range from interpretation to clarifying cultural ambiguities, and in some cases even advocacy,

- **FOCUS on a new profession: The language analyst ('Taalanalist')**
 - Speech therapists need a specific 'supporter' of their services to LALP speakers¹.
 - Today, *CODE*, the expertise center on learning and (child) development of the *Thomas More University College* in Antwerp, Belgium, in collaboration with *Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie*, has developed a competency profile and training for language analysts
 - For, too many children from non-official language speaking families end up in special education, due to supposed language development disorders, while mere language acquisition support would often have sufficed.
 - Language analysts help the speech therapist assess foreign language samples that are videotaped in home settings. They analyze whether the linguistic form, content and pragmatics used are 'correct'. The speech therapist, however, bears final responsibility for the diagnosis.

¹ Limited Autochthonous Language Proficiency speakers

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Quality care and control: competency profiles, training, testing (assessing) and accreditation > QUALIFICATIONS are ESSENTIAL

- If the bridges don't hold, they collapse and people get hurt
- This also goes for communication in service settings
- This is where universities and other training and assessment institutions come in!
- Competency profiles (what and how) => Standard: the norm you measure by
- Training: learning how to do it => Assessment: prove qualifications
- Accreditation, diploma, certificat: attestation, proof of qualifications
- Combine qualifications => Proper pay, fair compensation, no "hamburger jobs" or imposed voluntary work



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Why do we need public service interpreting and translation?

The changed nature of migration

Since 1990, the nature of migration has changed. Europe has become 'super-diverse':

- No longer do only influx of the 'classical' groups of immigrant workers and their families, but now people from everywhere.

Two factors predominant, each of a global nature:

- The fall of the iron curtain
- The internet and mobile communication and information technology became widely available.



- The combination of both these factors have helped shape our societies to what they are today: for more diverse and far more complex. (e.g. HERE: Brussels: 104 languages; One in ten residents in Brussels no longer know French, Dutch or English.)



Access and integration programs and processes, that do not take these phenomena of super-diversity and multilingualism into account, are deemed to fail.

Since integration is a two-way process, the receiving side must organize to ensure everyone's access to human rights, so that newcomers can participate and consequently enjoy their rights and fulfil their duties.

Health care, employment agencies, social welfare organizations, schools, youth care programs etc. are human rights 'in the flesh'; human rights concretized and brought to the public.



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Conclusion

Although there clearly is a need to bridge the communication gap in multilingual (public) service settings

And

Although some supranational, national and regional legislation or legislative frameworks explicitly and formally state that language cannot be an obstacle,

it remains to be seen which structural measures in terms of language or communication support will be put or into place or will continue to exist in the decade to come.

For, governments are trying to come to terms with budget deficits by cutting costs. How will this alter the face of access driven democracy?



(Two examples of such legislative frameworks, one on a regional (subnational) and one on a supranational level:

- *In Flanders, the northern part of Belgium, an integration decree passed parliament in June 2013. Section 4: public service interpreting and translation, describing what they are, whom they are for (service providers) and quality care (certification, Central Register, etc.).*
- *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Art. 21, which prohibits any discrimination based on any grounds, including language, which was mentioned in the abstract.)*



ENPSIT organizes to influence EU and national policy. In this vein it recommends:

- Recognition of PSIT [AND BY EXTENSION OTHER BRIDGING PROFESSIONALS] as necessary tools for an EU integration policy that stands for equal rights and treatments, equal opportunities and diversity
- Guaranteeing the right to qualitative language assistance. This right must evolve from a right in principle to a legally enforceable right
- Implementation of a quality standard for PSIT [AND OTHER BRIDGING INSTRUMENTS] in the EU
- Recognition and funding of PSIT services

ELC, European Commission, ENSPIT should sit, and develop a framework for solutions: A LANGUAGE and COMMUNICATION POLICY; A DESIGN FOR A “BRIDGE”.

