

TNP3

Sub-project One: Languages for language-related industries and professions

National report for Germany

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Part I: STATUS QUO

As Chancellor Schröder noted recently, with reference to the forthcoming expansion of the EU on 1 May 2004, a market consisting of 74 million consumers will open up greater opportunities for both German industry and workers. It has been claimed that every tenth job in Germany is export-dependent and that Germany will be the most important business partner for many of the acceding countries.

The Federal Statistics Office prepared for the expansion of the EU by informing exporters and importers of the importance of registering details of trade with near neighbours such as the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary, as well as with Cyprus and Malta, for statistical purposes. Such statistics show that in 2003 Germany exported commodities to the value of €56.5 bn. to the EU accession countries, while importing commodities to the value of €57.3 bn. from them. The importance of trade with these countries is shown by the fact that these were increases of 5.7% and 10% respectively compared to 2002, while German exports increased overall by only 1.6% and imports by 2.6% in the same period. Longer-term analysis also shows the dynamic development of foreign trade with the new EU Member States. Between 1993 and 2003, exports to those countries nearly quadrupled, while imports were up by a third. Foreign trade with the accession countries expanded by a far more considerable amount than German foreign trade as a whole during the period.¹

Clearly, Germany's high profile as a trading nation is reflected in the need for translation and interpretation services. 80% of German enterprises require such services. In the German economy, orders for 30 million pages of translation are placed annually, and turnover in the translation industry has been growing by 14% per annum.

Given the importance of trade for Germany in general and, in particular, the volume of its trade with the acceding countries, it is clear that EU expansion will significantly affect the German language-related industries and language-related professions to be considered in this report. German translators, interpreters, technical writers, language-learning materials writers, as well as export assistants, international publishers and website managers, will all have either new or expanded roles in the enlarged Union.

Here a brief note on foreign language proficiency and language learning in Germany is in order. 'Early English', an introduction to the language, begins in primary school. In secondary education, English is commonly chosen as the first foreign language in fifth grade, although French and Latin are possible options. French is frequently chosen as the second

foreign language in seventh grade; but Spanish is increasingly being demanded, and other languages such as Italian, Polish, Russian and Turkish may be offered at some Gymnasien (grammar schools). It is generally the case that university students with between seven and nine years of school English behind them begin their studies at CEF level B2+, perhaps even C1 if they have spent time in an English-speaking country. Levels of proficiency in other languages vary considerably.

Outside of schools and universities, foreign language instruction is widely available at a range of private schools throughout Germany and in the Volkshochschulen (adult education centres).

I.1. Overview of the present situation of language-related industries and professions in the national labour market (on the basis of existing studies and available data)

The language-related industries and language-related professions are areas of industry and commerce which include translators and interpreters, technical writers and terminologists, some of whom specialise in legal, technical or economic terminology, and all of whom may be found in both the public and private sectors. Ancillary language-related professions are present in the private sector in export-import companies and their consultants, international publishing and in fields of information technology such as multilingual website management.

Statistics on employment in the language-related industries and professions were sought without success from the Federal Statistics Office. They are, however, available, split by age, sex, full/part-time engagement, and qualifications, from the Federal Agency for Employment at a cost of €116ⁱⁱ.

In the private sector, there are organisations such as the Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer (The Professional Association for Interpreters and Translators)ⁱⁱⁱ which are, of course, able to supply figures on the extent of their own membership. However, such figures by no means reveal the size of this employment sector, since not all translators and interpreters are members of fee-charging associations. That translation and interpreting are huge commercial fields becomes apparent with a glance at yellow-page entries.

The lack or unavailability of statistics at national level in both the public and the private sectors has hindered data gathering on the size and extent of the language-related industries and professions. However, an effort has been made in compiling this report to profile provision, standards, levels of language proficiency and needs using qualitative data from case studies, reports and even job advertisements.

I.2. Language graduate employment in the language-related professions: status quo (if existing data available)

Data on language-graduate employment was requested from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung)^{iv}. Unfortunately, efforts to obtain this data resulted only in an e-mail chain of correspondence which led back to the Federal Statistics Office. The FSO has no breakdown of figures on language-graduate employment by subject or language.

However, one study carried out on this topic is worth quoting here. In their February 2003 TNP2 report on curriculum innovation in Germany^v, Mensching and Hagen quote a University of Saarbrücken investigation of the job situation of its translator and interpreter graduates, carried out in 1998. Results were quite positive. The majority of graduates were able to find employment relatively quickly: of those who did not immediately find employment, 43 % had to search for work for between one and four months, and only 14 % for five to eight months. More than half of the graduates who responded to the survey questions are professionally active in areas that correspond directly to their qualification profiles. In addition, there is a large spectrum of professional activities in which a general language qualification is central to working activities. The investigation also showed an increase in freelance activities. An analysis of sectors of language graduate employment produced the following results:

- 27 % of the graduate respondents work for translation agencies
- 56 % work in industrial enterprises
- 17 % work in public administrative institutions; of the latter 19 % at European level, 23 % at national level, 27 % for a Bundesland (administrative county) and 19 % elsewhere
- 17 % work in the private and public education sector
- 20 % work for other employers.

Average annual gross income is around €28,000.

Mensching and Hagen also quote the Federal Employment Agency, which claimed that the number of philology students finding employment in private industry has recently been increasing.^{vi}

I.3. New developments and new professional demands in the language and language-related industries.

I.3.1. The impact of European integration and of globalisation: new directions, re-organisation

Globalisation and European integration have clearly increased the need for competence in foreign languages, particularly English. The further expansion of the EU will accelerate this process.

Given the strong likelihood that Germany's economic ties with the acceding countries will be particularly close (cf. Part I Status Quo), the language-related industries and professions will see a rise in demand for their products and skills. The maxim that it is important to speak the buyer's language is likely to drive demand on the part of German exporters for courses in the languages of the new Member States. An increase is also predictable in demand for the services of translators, interpreters, technical writers and terminologists across many fields.

These developments will be favourable to all language graduates and, in the German context, particularly those who are proficient in the languages of the new Member States. It will also place demands on language-teaching institutions, who will benefit if they are able to provide

instruction in those languages. Proficiency in specialist terminology, particularly legal, financial and technical terminology, in the written language is certain to be highly valued.

I.3.2. New professional demands and professional profiles in the language-related professions

See 1.3.2.4. below.

I.3.2.1. Communications from international organisations

These organisations will be contacted in the second phase of TNP3, after assessment of national reports.

I.3.2.2. Communications from employers, employers' organisations and other organisations

These organisations will be contacted in the second phase of TNP3, after assessment of national reports.

I.3.2.3. Results of local / regional / national surveys

No results are available in this area.

I.3.2.4. Outcomes of academic studies and research

In this section, the results of surveys of professional association websites and of job advertisements are discussed briefly and some conclusions drawn. The results of case study research carried out at the Freie Universität Berlin are also reported.

Technical Writing

tekomp e.V., Gesellschaft für Technische Kommunikation (The Society for Technical Communication)^{vii} describes itself as a non-profit technical society. It is a member of INTECOM^{viii}, the international umbrella organisation for technical writers. With around 4,700 members it is Europe's largest association for technical communication. Its working groups deal with the education and training of technical writers/authors, terminology, usability testing, standards and guidelines. The association website is a mine of information on the work of a technical author. In a section on professional qualifications, 'language training' or even 'a teaching qualification' are listed as possible degree fields for technical authors, indicating the possibility that this could be an area in which language graduates might well be successful in finding employment, as is the case in, for example, Finland.

tekomp report on their website the results of a study undertaken in 2002 to provide empirical data on the status and development of technical writing in the face of progress in technical innovation and the modernisation of the structure of companies in the field. Detailed results of the study can be ordered from tekomp, and only the most significant findings are reported

here. In Germany, about 140,000 employees are involved in technical writing in some way, producing manuals, instructions and catalogues, translating technical texts, supervising publication of these documents, and giving on-line assistance to customers. Around 48,000 are officially classified in Federal Statistics Office publications as ‘Technical Editors’, the only appropriate classificatory category for them. This classification is misleading and inadequate, since it is based on a definition of technical writing which underestimates numbers engaged in this sector. An additional problem in classification is that many technical authors are not engaged solely in technical writing but also in other work.

The study findings show that about 80% of technical writers, 86.5% in manufacturing and 71% in service industries, possess no special qualification for the production of instructions for manuals; they learn through work experience, from talking to colleagues in their company, by attending conferences, and from their own research into specialist literature. The explanation for this situation is to be found in the fact that, until the mid-90s, no courses of studies in technical communication were offered at German universities. Currently, eleven programmes are offered in the Federal Republic. The report points out the great need which exists for initial training and further education for technical writers in Germany, and notes that the umbrella organisation TCeurope^{ix}, using the tekomp study and EU statistics, comes to the same conclusion.

A further point made in the tekomp study is of interest: in total, the cost of technical communication and documentation in Germany is estimated at about €9 bn. per annum. On tekomp’s estimates this is about €83,722 per technical writer. Furthermore, the tekomp study suggests that about 30% of company budgets is spent on services, and 68.7% of this 30% is taken up by expenditure on translation. The reason for this is clear: for most companies it would be unprofitable to employ a translator for work involving each of the countries to which they export; instead small translation agencies or self-employed translators are engaged.

Translation/Interpreting (a)

The Berufsverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer (The Professional Association for Interpreters and Translators, cf. I.1 above) is one of several professional associations of translators and interpreters in Germany. A member of the international umbrella organisation of translators, the Federation Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT), BDÜ sets out its aims on its website. In a legally unregulated profession, it clearly plays an important role in the promotion of high professional standards and good practice.

The BDÜ regional branch in Berlin kindly agreed to circulate a brief questionnaire to its members. The questionnaire asked for responses within the following topic areas: age, sex, part-time or full-time work carried out as a translator and/or interpreter, foreign language competence, qualifications, professional experience, and specialisation. The aim of the questionnaire was to survey a field in which there is a shortage of statistical data, using responses from a small group of professionals to guide the design of a larger-scale questionnaire for use at a later stage in TNP3. Unfortunately, few responses were received from what is undoubtedly a busy sector of the largely self-employed working population. It is likely that in-depth interviews would be a more revealing source of qualitative data than anonymous questionnaires.

Translation/Interpreting (b)

In order to discover the nature of qualifications demanded for professional translators, a survey of job advertisements was undertaken. Local (Berlin) and national newspapers were scanned for entries, but this was a less productive source than an internet search.

No clear profile of the translator of the near future emerged from the search. However, to judge from thirty advertisements scanned, it seems reasonable to predict that the translator will possess at least the following qualifications and competencies in addition to language competencies: the ability to undertake not only non-specialist translation work but also to translate specialist documents, either in the fields of law, finance and IT, or in one or more natural sciences, or in an applied science; either a university-level qualification in translation studies, or in a technical subject, or in a natural science; the ability to work on the development of a terminology database. Computer literacy is probably taken for granted to such an extent that some advertisements omitted to mention it.

The emphasis on specialised knowledge in a particular field emerged clearly from the admittedly limited range of 'data' examined. In some adverts, 'Quereinsteiger', students who have qualifications in subjects other than translation or interpreting, were explicitly invited to submit applications.

The ability and willingness to undertake work on terminology is not only of interest to translators constructing databases, as will be noted by those who visit the German terminology portal^x, which contains links to a large number of sites including that of the main terminology association, the Deutsches Institut für Normung e.V (German Institute for Standardisation). See also the Deutscher Terminologie-Tag e.V. (German Terminology Convention).^{xi}

English use in Berlin companies^{xii}

In 2002, two groups of Freie Universität students taking English as an elective produced case studies which surveyed the use of English in German companies in Berlin. Case study reports were based on data collected from a questionnaire which was administered at the company of the students' choice and a follow-up interview with one company employee. Data was collected from some large transnational companies, as well as from smaller national concerns.

Not all of the findings of these studies are of direct relevance to the language and language-related industries. But they are relevant to new demands and profiles in the commercial and industrial sectors, and in this regard their results might be useful when considering the working environment that language graduates are likely to encounter in the ancillary, language-related professions.

The case study findings may be summarised as follows: in general, English no longer has the status of a foreign language within German companies which operate internationally, but of a second language; employees in high positions do not always use English most, since sales, supply management, project management, and marketing departments may have more frequent contact with firms abroad; proficiency in English may be related to the age and background of an employee, so that older top managers might not be as proficient in the language as younger middle managers; English is almost exclusively the language used for communication at company meetings with participants from other countries; if meetings are held in English, minutes are circulated in English and a German translation will not always be attached; misunderstandings occur less because of inadequate language skills than for cross-

cultural reasons; for financial reasons, interpreters are rarely hired for meetings; translations are outsourced at all but the largest companies.

I.4. Contacts and co-operation between the language and language-related industries and HE institutions

Contact with language and language-related industries will be made in the second phase of TNP3, after assessment of national reports.

I.5. Impact of language industry developments and new professional demands on existing specialist HE language courses (status quo)

I.5.1. Programmes and courses

A good review of the status quo in translation and interpreting programmes offered at universities and universities of applied science is given in the 2003 study by Mensching and Hagen (cf. I.2 above and the relevant reference note). These institutions include Berlin's Humboldt University, the universities of Bonn, Heidelberg, Hildesheim, Leipzig, Mainz/Germersheim and the Saarland, the universities of applied science at Flensburg, Köln and Magdeburg, and the Languages and Translation Institute Munich. It should be noted that, with modularisation taking place rapidly in German HE institutions, it is important to check the online course programme of institutions in order to obtain an up-to-date picture of their course offerings.

I.5.2. Definitions of learning outcomes

Definitions of learning outcomes were until recently given only in programmes of study directly aimed at fitting students for work in commerce and industry. However, with the modularisation of course curricula in universities and universities of applied science, the specification of learning outcomes has become widespread. Designers of language course programmes are thus being required to respond to some of the new professional demands discussed above.

I.5.3. Methods

It is clear that the traditional teaching methods still to be found in many university language classrooms will not fit the needs of future generations of language students. Much of the impetus driving classroom activities will have to come from the students themselves in the shape of project and team work; and many course activities will be closely related to students' future workplace activities. In language courses, presentations will, for example, become the work of the student rather than the teacher, will involve the use of computer software, and will be graded not only on language content but also on professional effectiveness.

I.5.4. Resources

Given the changes outlined in the previous section, it is clear that there will be challenges for teaching staff in coping with changes in the traditional structure of language teaching. Higher education institutions will be required to invest in staff training to enable teachers to meet the new demands placed on them.

Part II: NEEDS AND CONSTRAINTS

II.1. Improved cooperation between the language and language-related industries and HE institutions

In many HE institutions in Germany, the introduction of new modular structures in curricula has either only just begun or is scheduled to begin in the near future. It is already placing strains on human resources, involving as it does the redesign of course structure and content, course re-scheduling to avoid overlaps, the writing of new materials, and so on. Given this situation, it will by no means be easy for institutions to establish cooperation with employers at the same time as implementing the current changes, even though it could be argued that any changes considered should reflect labour market needs, as expressed by employers, from the outset.

II.2. Identification of the need for curriculum innovation in response to new professional demands

A more comprehensive survey than the present of the situation of language-related industries and professions in the German labour market will be required in order to make firm predictions about the need for curriculum innovation in response to new professional demands. Nevertheless, some tentative suggestions for curriculum development can be made.

Technical writing appears to be a growth area which offers employment prospects for language graduates. While it is likely that only larger concerns which do business on a global scale will employ full-time specialist technical writers, smaller concerns which want to avoid the expense of engaging the services of translators might well show an interest in employing language graduates with technical writing skills. It will be necessary for course designers in higher education to enhance language students' employment prospects by ensuring that they are equipped with a wide range of writing skills, including skills required in commerce: the format and typical contents of a range of business letters, agendas, memos and minutes should not be esoteric for language graduates. Experience in writing for a variety of audiences and awareness of a greater range of genre in writing than is provided by reading and producing traditional essays is needed.

Clearly, greater IT knowledge and skills will be demanded of language graduates, who are not encouraged in their university work to employ IT resources and develop IT-related skills to the same extent as students in the social or natural sciences.

Lastly, even in an HE setting, language studies students can acquire and practise some of the competences demanded by a commercial or industrial organisation. These include the ability to carry out project work, to work in a team, to retrieve information, organise it and share it, and to meet deadlines. These competences could be further developed if work-related periods of study were to be incorporated into a syllabus.

II.3. Needs for future projects, studies and research

Consideration needs to be given to the possibility of short-term, subject-relevant employment for language studies students. In the social sciences, it is taken for granted that students undertake periods of practical training during their studies, and methods of organising and financing such periods could be extended to language studies. Companies which are prepared to offer such periods of practical training will need to be identified at local and regional level.

At Member State level, research is needed into the means by which language-graduate employment in small- and medium-sized companies can be promoted.

Part III: RECOMMENDATIONS

Until further research has been conducted into the questions raised and topics discussed in the report, recommendations are premature. Nevertheless, it is already clear from initial research that an urgent need exists for regular, goal-oriented dialogue to be established between HE course providers and the language and language-related industries, and some tentative suggestions can already be offered on establishing or improving relations between the world of higher education and the world of work.

A useful bridge between these two worlds might be provided by professional associations, some of which were mentioned above (cf. I.3.2.4). The Society for Technical Communication could clearly be of assistance in linking technical writing and higher education institutions. And in translation and interpreting, the cooperation of the BDÜ and similar professional associations^{xiii} could be enlisted. The Federation of the German Export Trade is one of the key organisations of the German export industry and would doubtless be a useful adviser on relevant language needs and competencies for language students considering in a career in this sector of commerce. The German Chamber of Commerce^{xiv} could also be consulted to the same end.

In many cases, the websites of these professional associations not only provide information about standards in the language and language-related industries but also about the expectations and demands of employers in respect of their workforce. These websites could form a starting point for students' research in work-related projects, with project work thereafter focusing on specific companies or company types.

To judge from the – admittedly small – sample of job advertisements examined (cf. I.3.2.4), translators and interpreters will increasingly be expected to be able to undertake work in specialist fields of the social and natural sciences. Can a parallel development be predicted for language graduates who do not enter the teaching profession? If it can, better access to interdisciplinary studies for students of language might improve their career prospects and simultaneously increase the attractiveness of language studies programmes. A modest move

in this direction is effected by modularisation, which should introduce increased flexibility into study programmes.

Flexibility will also be needed on the part of employers in the provision of periods of practical training for language studies students. But the onus will be on HE institutions to persuade employers of the potential benefits which could accrue to them through provision of such training periods. Only if HE institutions can, in their course offerings, demonstrate a clear commitment to preparing language studies students for employment will potential employers be persuaded to cooperate in establishing training and work placement schemes.

References

- ⁱ Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Statistics Office)
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<http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/>
To obtain statistics, contact
<mailto:Service-Haus.Statistik-Datenzentrum@arbeitsagentur.de>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V.
<http://www.bdue.de/>
- ^{iv} Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research)
<http://www.bmbf.de>
- ^v Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies
<http://www.lang.ltsn.ac.uk/tnp.aspx>
- ^{vi} *Arbeitsmarkt Philologen. Chancen als Quereinsteiger*, UNI 2/2002: S. 52-56.
<http://www.unimagazin.de/200202/10.pdf>
- ^{vii} tekomp e.V. Gesellschaft für Technische Kommunikation
<http://www.tekom.de/frameset/index.htm>
- ^{viii} International Council for Technical Communication
<http://www.intecom.org/dynindex.html>
- ^{ix} Dachverbandes Tceurope
<http://www.tceurope.org>
- ^x German terminology portal: Institute of Information Management at the University of Applied Sciences at Cologne
<http://www.iim.fh-koeln.de/dtpEN/indexEN.htm>
- Deutscher Terminologie-Tag (German Terminology Convention)
- ^{xi} <http://www.dttev.org>
- ^{xii} Erling, E. J. and A.L. Walton: *A global English survey in Berlin: the use of a lingua franca in thirteen companies* (forthcoming)

^{xiii} Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence

<http://www.aiic.de>

<http://www.aiic.net/>

Verband der Übersetzer und Dolmetscher e.V.

<http://www.vued.de>

CIUTI

<http://ciuti-akademie.com>

^{xiv} Bundesverband des Deutschen Exporthandels e.V. (Federation of the German Export Trade)

<http://www.bdex.de>

German Chamber of Commerce

<http://www.wahk.de>