

International Certification Study: Non-Degree Professional Certificates for Arabic

By Jiri Stejskal

So far, this series exploring non-U.S. certification and similar programs for translators and interpreters has taken us to South America and, in the August issue, to South Africa. This time, we will remain on the African continent, moving north to Egypt. Dr. David Wilmsen, director of the Arabic and Translation Studies Division (ASD) of the Center for Adult and Continuing Education at the American University in Cairo, is among the supporters of cooperation between ATA and foreign institutions. The information below is based on a letter received from him last year.

The Arabic and Translation Studies Division offers two non-degree professional certificates in Arabic/English translation: the Professional Certificate in Written Translation and the Professional Certificate in Simultaneous Interpreting. A full certificate requires successful completion of 21 classes, or 63 instructional units (comparable to credit hours), which may be completed in one year over three terms of seven classes each, a full-time load. Each term of seven subjects carries a mini-certificate related to the subdiscipline of translation emphasized in the given level.

Because some ASD students are also enrolled in degree programs at Egyptian national universities and others are already working, many of them opt to pursue their study of translation at ASD on a part-time basis, and therefore take longer than a year to complete a certificate. The course sequences for each certificate are described in detail in the ASD brochure, which can be obtained directly from Dr. Wilmsen (DWILMSEN@aucegypt.edu). ASD is currently involved in an institutional process studying the possibility of offering translation or similar certificates as associate degrees. ASD certificates are currently recognized in the local translation market as testifying to the bearer's training and ability in translation.

The student body at ASD often includes foreign nationals, the largest number of these coming from Sudan, Palestine, the Arabian Peninsula, and other Arab countries. Other students come from such places as Japan, Korea, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Spain, England, the U.S., and Canada. In order to succeed in obtaining certification, a non-native speaker of Arabic must have attained, by the time of entrance to the program, a proficiency in Arabic of at least Advanced+ as defined by the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages. This is determined by a standard two-hour entrance examination, in which the applicant is to translate two passages each from Arabic and English (or Arabic and French). Each passage is of a semitechnical nature and comprises about 150 words.

The Professional Certificate in Written Translation is composed of the following three mini-certificates:

1. Groundwork in written translation, which provides an introduction to the discipline of translation, along with theoretical background and the requisite linguistic skills. Emphasis is on writing and inter-lingual transfer skills.
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2. Print media translation, which provides training in the language of newspaper reporting, in economic, financial, and commercial translations, and in various other topics. It is intended to increase students' mastery of techniques and terminology in various fields.
3. Legal and UN translation, which provides intensive training in the language of legal documents, UN terminology, documentary translation, and manuscript editing. Emphasis is on acquiring the skills of professionals in these fields.

The Professional Certificate in Simultaneous Interpreting is also composed of three mini-certificates:

1. Groundwork in simultaneous interpreting, which provides an introduction to the discipline of translation and interpreting, along with theoretical background and the requisite linguistic skills. Emphasis is

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International Certification Study Continued from p. 17 on oral performance and inter-lingual transfer skills.

2. Developing skills in simultaneous interpreting, which provides an increased mastery of the various techniques employed in achieving immediate response and accurate communication of a message. It is intended to increase competence in message recasting and in problem-solving strategies.
3. The Conference Interpreter Certificate, which emphasizes the skills of professional interpreters. All practice sessions are simulated real-life situations in various fields and with different accents. Holders of the Professional Certificate in Simultaneous Interpreting can also take a refresher course and obtain a Certificate of Achievement in Advanced Simultaneous Interpreting Practice.

In the next issue we will take a look at the accreditation process of translators and interpreters in Australia. As the editor of this series, I encourage readers to submit any relevant information concerning non-U.S. certification or similar programs, as well as comments on the information published in this series, to my e-mail address at jiri@cetra.com.

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