

International Certification Study: Ukraine

By Jiri Stejskal

In the October issue we visited Spain, and briefly also Portugal and the Principedom of Andorra. We saw that the Spanish and Andorran certification procedures were similar to the Scandinavian model sanctioned by the government (which we called the “continental model” earlier). We also saw that Portugal was among those countries which did not offer any form of certification for translators and interpreters beyond academic credentials. The lack of certification is by no means unique to Portugal; a similar situation exists, for example, in nations such as Israel and China. Frequently, in countries without certification, stringent eligibility requirements are enforced for membership in the country’s organization for translators and interpreters. Interestingly, it appears that there are multiple organizations for translators and interpreters in countries offering certification, whereas in countries with no certification, only a single organization exists. Membership in such an organization then serves as a form of certification.

In the Ukraine, the newly formed Ассоциация переводчиков Украины—Ukrainian Translators Association (UTA)—combines the certification examination with stringent membership requirements. The information in this article was obtained largely from the UTA website (www.uta.org.ua). Interestingly, the UTA site is currently not available in Ukrainian, but rather in Russian and (to a limited degree) in English. Igor Malykin, deputy chairman of UTA, supplied additional information. Mr. Malykin participated in the preparation of two standards for rendering translation services and with the qualification of translators and interpreters. He can be reached at info@uta.org.ua.

Founded in May 1999, UTA is a public organization. It is an independent certification body duly registered by the Ukrainian Institute of Certification, Standardization, and Metrology (UkrSEPRO). There are 50 associate members from different regions of Ukraine, 22 full (certified) individual members, 2 full (certified) corporate members, and 1 independent member (Kyiv International University, the former International Institute of Linguistics and Law). In 2001, UTA launched annual seminars for Ukrainian translators and translation companies.

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Membership Structure

Freelance translators are admitted to UTA as full members only after having passed the certification examination, and translation companies may be admitted provided that they meet the requirements of the association’s standards (STTU APU 001-2000 and STTU APU 002-2000, and/or ISO 9002 and ISO 9001). Professional interpreters should have a minimum of 100 hours of interpreting and customer references.

Similar to ATA, UTA has a tiered membership for individuals and

organizations. Individual membership is for translators and interpreters, and collective membership is for translation companies (legal entities). Membership status, which applies to both individual and collective memberships, can be broken down into the following categories.

Independent Member: An individual (minimum age: 18) or collective member who does not deal with translation on a professional basis, but takes an interest in UTA activities, shares its aims and tasks, and takes part in UTA work. The independent member:

- Has a right to obtain general information on translation services rendered by different translators and companies in Ukraine and abroad;
- Receives periodicals issued by UTA and obtains information from UTA databases;
- Has no right to hold positions in UTA, use UTA’s logo, or to refer to UTA membership for advertising purposes;
- Does not take the certification examination; and
- May participate in conferences held by UTA with no vote.

Associated Member: An individual (minimum age: 21) or collective member who is a professional translator/interpreter, takes an interest in UTA activities, shares its aims and tasks, and takes part in UTA work. This status is granted to those who do not completely meet the requirements established for the full members. The associated member:

- Has a right to obtain general information on translation services rendered by translators and companies in Ukraine and abroad;
- Receives periodicals issued by

- UTA and obtains information from UTA databases;
- Has a right to participate in joint projects and conferences, and to enjoy legal and technical support in the field of translation;
 - May apply for full membership status not earlier than six months after continuous membership in UTA as an associated member;
 - Has no right to use UTA's logo or to refer to UTA membership for advertising purposes; and
 - Has no right to hold an office in UTA.

Full Member: An individual (minimum age: 21) or collective member who is a professional translator/interpreter residing in the city of Kyiv (Ukraine), meets UTA certification requirements, and follows the UTA Code of Professional Conduct. A full member can also be a company located in the city of Kyiv that deals with translation on a professional basis, meets the requirements of the association's standards (STTU APU 001-2000 and STTU APU 002-2000) or has an ISO 9002-certified quality system, and follows the Code of Professional Conduct. The full member enjoys all the rights and privileges stipulated by the UTA Charter. The full member:

- Has a right to profit from UTA's database and other information provided by other translators and companies concerning translation activities;
- Has a right to hold a position in UTA and be elected to the governing bodies of UTA;
- Has a right to receive employment assistance, to receive letters of recommendation from UTA, and to use UTA's logo for advertising purposes;

- Has a right to legal and technical support in the field of translation activity;
- Has a right to participate in joint projects and education programs, and to make proposals as to the implementation of UTA's tasks;
- Has a right to participate in the management of UTA and to vote; and
- Is granted a certificate of a full member.

Correspondent Member: An individual (minimum age: 21) or collective member who is a professional translator/interpreter residing outside the city of Kyiv, meets UTA certification requirements, and follows UTA's Code of Professional Conduct. A correspondent member can also be a company located outside the city of Kyiv that deals with translation on a professional basis, meets the requirements of the association's standards (STTU APU 001-2000 and STTU APU 002-2000) or has an ISO 9002-certified quality system, and follows the Code of Professional Conduct. The correspondent member enjoys all the rights and privileges stipulated by the UTA Charter. The correspondent member:

- Has a right to profit from UTA's database and information provided by other translators and companies concerning translation activities;
- Has no right to hold a position in UTA or be elected to the governing bodies of UTA;
- Has a right to receive employment assistance, to receive letters of recommendation from UTA, and to use UTA's logo for advertising purposes;
- Has a right to legal and technical support in the field of translation activity;
- Has a right to participate in joint projects and education programs,

- and to make proposals as to the implementation of UTA's tasks;
- Has no right to participate in the management of UTA or to vote; and
- Is granted a certificate of a full member.

It is of interest that the distinction between a full and correspondent member is the residential requirement. ATA membership criteria are similar in this respect. However, while an active member in ATA (corresponding to full membership in UTA) must reside in the U.S., to be eligible for full membership in UTA, the member must reside in a single city, namely the Ukraine capital.

Certification

The certification procedure, which is mandatory for full and correspondent memberships, serves as a testament to a translator's professional competence to translate from one specific language into another. Unlike real conditions for translation, the examination is written without access to all the resources normally available, such as the Internet. The three-hour examination is in a specific language pair (i.e., one specific source language and one specific target language). The candidate is not expected to produce a highly refined and polished translation. The written test consists of five passages of approximately 250-300 words, one in each of the following categories: general, medical/scientific, semitechnical, legal/business, and literary. The candidate selects at least three passages, and must satisfactorily translate at least three. To pass the examination, the candidate should adequately convey the meaning of the original, demonstrate knowledge of translation techniques, and observe the rules of the target language. ➡

The candidate may use dictionaries and other reference materials. It is recommended that the candidate bring general bilingual glossaries, a technical dictionary, and a dictionary of the language into which he or she is going to translate. The sharing of resources is not allowed. If the test is handwritten, it must be legible (the examination will be photocopied and provided to the graders). During the examination, the candidate will not be given additional time to complete the translation.

The Examination Process

The candidate will receive the test packets, each with a code number assigned to him or her by UTA to maintain the confidentiality of the examination. The candidate will use that number, not his or her name, on all pages of the examination. In the packet, the candidate will find five passages in the given language combination, marked A-E (A = General, B = Science/Medical, C = Semitechnical, D = Business/Legal, E = Literary). The examination takes three hours. The candidate's papers become the property of UTA's Certification Committee. The candidate should select at least three passages to translate. When taking the examination, the following guidelines are offered to the candidates:

- If a word in the passage does not appear in your reference materials, you may state that the word is not in your dictionary. You will not be penalized, provided the word is considered obscure and not a form of a word found in most dictionaries.
- Avoid regionalisms wherever possible, using instead more standard words.
- Do not omit minor words that you consider unimportant. Stay as

close to the original as possible while still producing a grammatically correct translation.

- Keep in mind that a “clean” final copy of your translations is not required. Do not waste your time by copying your work to a second draft. Deletions, inserted words, and other revisions are acceptable as long as the translation is legible. It is your responsibility to ensure that the graders can clearly understand what you write.

Assessment Criteria

A passage is marked as “failed” when the candidate makes 2 or more major errors, or 1 major error and 7 or more minor errors, or 20 or more minor errors. The following are considered major errors:

- *Incomplete passage*: An incomplete passage lacks one sentence or most of the text.
- *Misunderstanding of the original text*: Ranges from mistaken words to misattributed modifiers.
- *Mistranslation into target language*: The meaning of the original is lost. This may involve a word, a sentence, or even a whole paragraph. Most common are misunderstandings of the original text, misplaced modifiers, and incorrect verb tense.
- *Additions or omissions*: While certain additions or omissions are necessary for a good translation, the candidate must sense what can be added or omitted without changing the meaning of the original text.
- *Terminology, word choice*: A common mistake is to take the first word listed in a bilingual dictionary without checking the meaning in a monolingual dictionary.

- *Stylistics*: It is unallowable to translate, for example, a legal text in a journalistic style.
- *Too freely translated*: Creativity is not being tested.
- *Too literal, word-for-word translation*: Translations that follow the original text exactly yield awkward renditions and, often, mistranslations.
- *Grammar, punctuation, and spelling*: Must follow the rules of the target language.
- *Syntax (sentence structure)*: Following the sentence structure of the source language leads to pitfalls that include misunderstandings of the original text, misplaced modifiers, incorrect use of verbs, and punctuation errors.
- *Usage*: Certain grammatical forms in the source language are not used in the target language and vice-versa. The candidate must be able to tell the difference.
- *Indecision—candidate gave more than one option*: Graders will not choose the right word for the candidate.
- *Abuse of “not in the dictionary”*: This may be invoked for obscure words that only a subject-matter expert would be expected to know. Passages are carefully edited to avoid such terms. Candidates are expected to recognize alternative verb tenses, word root derivatives, compound words, and proper names.

Eligibility and Recertification Requirements

In addition to minimum age requirements (18 years for independent members, 21 for all other individual members), the association's standard (STTU APU 001-2000)—the

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Another Successful ATA Professional Development Seminar Continued

linear story. The first person in the row had to repeat the first sentence. The second person had to repeat (or accurately restate) the first and second sentences. The third person had to recount the first, second, and third sentences, and so forth. The people who relied more on visualization (including some mnemonic devices) did better than those who relied on notes. Those who relied on visualization were concentrating on the logical flow of the story as a whole, rather than on the individual details. Visualization also lends itself to a more relaxed state of mind—and therefore to better concentration—than a meticulous note-taking technique. Attendees looked at examples of how to use certain symbols during note-taking: “notes are just a bridge, a secondary aid after memory.” Some tips from Janis: steno pads are best for note-taking and to space words/symbols out on each page;

don’t try to use unfamiliar abbreviations and symbols, only use those that are easy to remember.

Three days after Janis’s presentation I had an opportunity as a check (not Czech) interpreter to witness an interpreter who relied on a shorthand technique during a deposition. Everyone in the room had to wait for some time before she rendered her interpretation from English into Korean. I did not know at first why it took this interpreter so long, even when relatively short and simple questions were addressed to the Korean-speaking witness. I later found out that she had studied English shorthand for two years in Korea. During the deposition, she nervously and intently took down everything while English was spoken, then transformed that into regular English before rendering the sight translation in lieu of consecutive interpretation. No wonder it

seemed like it was taking at least three times longer!

Overall, this ATA professional development seminar was excellent, and valuable information was given during all the presentations. For me personally, this seminar’s most important contribution was to solidify my desire to become a better court interpreter and legal translator. It gave me an opportunity to think about my skills both as interpreter and translator and ways to improve them. All the sessions were intertwined and closely related, which made learning a lot more interesting and relevant. I wish to thank all the individuals who worked so hard to make this seminar successful, and especially the energetic Marian and friendly and helpful Teresa Kelly from ATA Headquarters for the wonderful time we had together. Please come back to San Francisco any time.

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Qualification and Certification of Translators/Interpreters: General Requirements (available in Russian on the UTA website; passages cited here were translated by the author of this article)—stipulates the following minimum eligibility requirements for candidates:

- Membership in a national or international association of translators; qualification as a professional translator; or
- Two signatures of members from an association of translators confirming the candidate’s

competence; or

- Two recommendations from the candidate’s employer confirming the candidate’s competence.

The certificate is valid for a period of three years. It can be withdrawn if an independent certification body finds the certificant wanting in the area of ethical conduct, and in case of a significant interruption in the certificant’s professional performance. In order to extend the certificate for another three-year period, the certificant must show evidence of his or her continuing performance in the area of

translation or interpretation. Should the certificant fail to produce such evidence, he or she must take the certification examination again.

In the next issue, we will review certification procedures for translators and interpreters in Germany. 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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