

Preparing translation students for UN exams: How it works

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UN outreach program helping translation students to prepare for UN exam

LCE preparation courses:

- Given by RTS translators at the MoU universities
- Aim to support students in working towards the LCE exam, while giving them a chance to gain an invaluable experience and have an excellent preparation for a UN translator's career
- Gradually build students' translation competence to the exam level

The students learn to:

- Use the UN language resources
- Analyze and assess a variety of texts or text types in source and target languages
- Apply practical translation skills to the standard required of a UN translator
- Explain and justify translation solutions
- Carry out cultural and lexical research relevant to a variety of topics

Teaching methodology

- On-site classes
- Translation assignments
- Individual feedback on translation assignments

Face-to-face and distance learning methods:

- sight translation
- group translation
- text analysis for translation
- strategy discussion
- individual written feedback on translation assignments
- research methods for translation
- analysis of mock exam papers and of UN documents

Mock exams:

- Psychological aspects of test-taking
- Technical aspects of test-taking

Learning by doing: What are the **specific criteria that reviewers look at?**

Accuracy

Does the target language accurately reflect the meaning of the source text?

Probably the single most important factor, also the most difficult to assess:

- no mistranslations
- no omissions
- no unnecessary additions
- no serious shifts of emphasis

Language

The rules of the target language, the “nuts and bolts”:

- spelling
- hyphenation
- spacing rules
- typos
- punctuation
- grammar
- syntax

Terminology

- Generally accepted terminology
- Terms and expressions translated consistently throughout the text

Style

The register, or “voice”:

- UN prose
- Newspaper leader
- Scientific journal

Functional

Technical errors, non-language-related:

- Formatting errors
- Fonts
- Incorrect styles
- Bulleted and numbered lists, etc.

Mock exams: Taking the test

New LCE remote format - use of electronic media:

- On-line resources
- CAT tools

Tips & tricks

1. Get ready.
2. Read through the pieces carefully
3. Get your tools ready
4. Choose your words carefully. Translate the *meaning*, not the *words*
5. ... But maintain stylistic techniques
6. Be faithful to the register of the original

Tips & tricks II

7. Remember your audience
8. Don't get *too* bogged down in details. Focus on the bigger picture
9. Take your time
10. Reread, and make it flow
11. ...And read it one more time

And finally: learn from your mistakes. *The plan to do better. Practice makes perfect*

LCE courses' added value

The takeaway for:

- Student
- Trainer/UN
- Faculty/MoU partners

Final thoughts

LCE course and the future of the translator profession

System that allows for integrating recent graduates into the profession is no longer in place?

The perception that translators have a specialized expertise diminished as the need for translation has grown?

Knowledge and skills that speed up the translation process are not in themselves part of translation competence?

Helping to make a career choice

Professionalism, self-denial and self-control

Self-improvement vs. self-effacement (altruistic control)

Translation vs. interpretation

“You don't have to be good to start ... you just have to start to be good!”

— Joe Sabah

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