The demand for language translators and interpreters is projected to expand for at least the next decade. That means the U of I’s Center for Translation Studies is going to grow, too.

The center has begun accepting applications for a new master’s program set to launch in the fall. It’s a busy yet affirming time for the center, which became the first of its kind at a major research university when it opened in 2007.

While it’s too soon to know how many students the new program will attract, there is plenty of potential. Elizabeth Lowe, director of the Center for Translation Studies, says they’ve had about 250 inquiries about the center’s master’s program, with most coming before they even began publicizing it.

The master’s program will include both on-campus and online options, meaning that students can choose to complete the degree on campus or via the Internet. Aside from how courses are scheduled, the two options have the same timelines and requirements.

“We anticipate a national and international audience for the online program,” Lowe says. “We are also marketing heavily internationally, and looking at China and Brazil and Europe for potential participants.”

Lowe expects that the online option will be used primarily by working professionals who want to upgrade their credentials. That explains the difference in scheduling between the campus and online options, as research has shown that students who take courses online are more satisfied if they only have to focus on one course at a time as they balance other responsibilities.

Thus, the online option will include two back-to-back eight-week courses per semester as opposed to two 16-week courses running parallel.

Several projections predict that the field of translation and interpreting (translation regards the conversion of text; interpreting is oral) will continue to grow as communications around the world increase. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics expects career opportunities for translators and interpreters to grow by roughly 20 percent between 2012 and 2020; the Illinois Department of Employment Security projected career opportunities in the field to grow by 37 percent within Illinois between 2010 and 2020.

The center, which grants a certificate in translation in addition to the new duties it will take on with the master’s program, is one of the largest programs of its kind in the country, offering translation studies in 37 languages.

It has three full-time staff, including Lowe, a professor with affiliations with appointments in the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese and the Program in Comparative and World Literature, and a lecturer and an instructor. The center also has 15 other faculty in various departments who contribute through affiliate appointments in the program.

The center plans to hire people who are working in the translating and interpreting profession to help run the online master’s program.

“We’re excited about it,” Lowe says, of the new master’s program. “What’s unique is its location at the U of I, which is a comprehensive research university with an incredible depth of resources. Our library is one of the best in the world, and we have a very robust library resource page online where people in the online program can do their research.”

Translators and interpreters are in demand in government, as law requires that agencies receiving federal funding ensure that their services are accessible to people who do not speak English. There is also demand for their services in nongovernmental organizations, security, health care, publishing, the software industry, and other businesses marketing their goods worldwide.

For more about the application process, visit www.translation.illinois.edu.


The Center for Translation Studies now offers a master’s program, which can be taken on campus or online. It will support 37 languages.
How We Teach in the Polygot Classroom

Rainer Schulte, in a recent article in Translation Review (Issue 83), offers a maxim about translation that has profound pedagogical implications: “Our premises of interaction within our own traditions of language and culture are in all probability not the same as those we will encounter in the foreign landscape on the other side of the river. In view of that reality, one could create the maxim: translation is always driven by a never-ending dialogue with the other.”

At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign we have sought to broaden perspectives translation by approaching translation as process and product, a constant act of re-creation and re-interpretation. The perspectives achieved by examining multiple translations of a single work and by opening our classrooms to students working in numerous language pairs help us to make this point. While this has been a practical necessity due to our multilingual student body in the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, where 37 languages are taught in 10 departments, and where a limited number of translation faculty are available to teach translation in any one semester, we also seek to examine how translation choices can vary due to the possibilities offered by different languages. The classroom discussion trains students to explain translation choices not only by referring to the context of the source text, but also to the conceptual framework of the source language.

While most of our students are native speakers of English, we ask those in the “foundation” courses to translate from their second or native language into English (recognizing this is not standard practice) because of the fact that English is the common language in the school. The knowledge and skills learned in the polygot translation classroom are transferable and students can learn to work bi-directionally if needed, a skill that ultimately translates into competitiveness for those who wish to enter the translation services job market. We do offer specialization courses in French, German, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic translation and of course in those settings students may in some cases translate in their strongest language direction.

The concept of translation as performance influences our way of teaching. Shulte reminds us that “the presence of multiple translations clarifies the translator’s interpretive perspective” and how it affects reception and understanding of the work in English.

In the immediate context of the classroom, one can impart critical skills to students as they are encouraged to reflect on their own translation processes and review the work of their classmates. In the broader sense, the instructor can emphasize how as languages change and words assume new semantic associations, the translator responds to those shifts and brings the text into the present.

A second benefit of the polygot classroom is that both instructors and students are directed to learn something about the different languages that students use. How does the right to left direction of languages like Arabic affect the conceptual world of that language and its rendering into English? How does a Mandarin Chinese native speaker make critical distinctions in the translation of mental or emotional states that are not commonplace in that language (e.g. the English term “anorexia” that in Chinese is expressed as “revulsion at eating food”—a conceptual difference with profound implications for diagnosis and treatment)? How does the translator deal artfully with the hundreds of “untranslatable” words in many languages, such as the sonorous and emotionally layered Portuguese term “saudade”?

Applying the process of translation as puzzle-solving is useful in the polygot translation classroom. Exercises in word play, rhyme, punning, and creating neologisms are important components of the translator’s toolkit. The topic of translating humor is an endless source of fascinating discussion between students who challenge themselves and each other to translate jokes from their language into English.

If to allude to Gregory Rabassa’s famous dictum that there is nothing to be done if a student “has a tin ear” or cannot hear the sound of the source language or the rendering of it into the receptor language, we as teachers of translation must strive to train rising translators to use all their senses and every language at their command, to rise to new artistry in the field. For if, again in Rabassa’s words, it is impossible to teach translation, we can teach students to use all their senses in the process.
Faculty News and Publications

David Cooper recently presented a paper in Plzen, Czech Republic, at a conference on Historical Fictions and Mystifications in 19th-Century Czech Culture. The work is titled "Author-Translator-Forger: Translation and Mystification in Haniska Protonarodni Srbska muzu and Puskin's Pěšíni zapadnych Slavjan."

Wall Hassan has had three pieces published recently: "Jorge Ahmad" was included in a special issue on the Brazilian writer through Comparative Literature Studies 49:3 (2012): 395-404; "Oyono in Arabic" ran in PMLA 128:1 (January 2013), Theories and Methodologies: An African Classic in Twelve Languages; and "Which Languages?" was part of a special issue, "Original Languages," of Comparative Literature 65:1 (Winter 2013): 5-14.

Elizabeth Lowe's essay, "Clarice Lispector and the Art of the Crónica," and accompanying Lispector translations were included in the fall/winter 2012-13 issue of the University of Illinois' literary arts journal, Ninth Letter.

Reinhard Mayer recently published a book through Dalkey Archive Press entitled "Modern and Contemporary Swiss Poetry," a bilingual edition translated into English from French, German, Italian, and Raeto Romanic. The book includes a vast selection of Switzerland's great authors' work. CTS alumna Lauren Wolfe was one of Mayer's colleagues who contributed to the translations included in the book. In addition, an e-book version of Christian Gasser's work, "Animation.ch," which was translated by Mayer and CTS alumni Dustin Lovett and Jeff Castle, will be released in the fall.

Rosina Neginsky is involved in a poetry translation project, "Poetic Translation and Annensky," with the Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3.

MEET A CTS STUDENT

Hefei Dong, a fourth-year graduate student studying materials science, is devoting much of his time to the development of new microvascular materials; it's the focus of his engineering thesis. Only a few minutes after introducing himself, though, Dong, who is from Botou, Hebei Province, China, it is evident that there's another side to this analytic being who can concisely explain the importance of microchannels in the skin of vehicles.

Dong possesses a command of English and an outgoing manner that belie the fact that he is an international student, arriving at the University of Illinois shortly after graduating from the University of Science and Technology of China with his bachelor's degree. He began studying English in his middle school years but has since discovered a penchant for acquiring languages informally. Through interaction with friends of international backgrounds and watching foreign television shows and movies, Dong has become conversant in French, German, Spanish, and Japanese. After escorting a French friend's sister (who spoke only French) during a visit to the U of I campus and translating all day for her without mishap, Dong decided to look for a way to incorporate translation into his studies. Some sleuthing uncovered the CTS program and Dong didn't hesitate to apply.

"Since childhood, I've been impressed with the interpreter's ability to simultaneously translate and keep a conversation flowing," said Dong. "I feel the need to interact with all types of people, because they all have something to give, and we cannot learn from them without communicating. I would like to be a bridge to bring people together."

Dong's capstone project for CTS is a Chinese translation of the website for the U of I International Student and Scholar Services program. "It's important for families who don't understand English—or don't come here with as good of a grasp of the language as some do—to be able to get the information they need, and it benefits the school, too," he said.

CTS Executive Committee

Antony Augustakis, associate professor Classics
Zong-qi Cai, professor East Asian languages and literatures
Wail Hassan, associate professor Comparative and world literature
Robert Jenkins, assistant professor Germanic languages and literatures
Alexander Mayer, associate professor Religion
Rajeshwari Pandharipande, professor Linguistics

The Center for Translation Studies recently enacted bylaws approved by the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. CTS is now governed by an executive committee charged to work with the director of the center to develop and execute policy and to transact such business as may be delegated to it by the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics, the teaching faculty in the center, standing committees, or the director.
MEET A CTS FACULTY MEMBER

David Cooper, associate professor of Slavic languages and literatures and director of the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center (REEEC), has been involved with the Center for Translation Studies since its founding. He is currently instructor for one of the program’s core courses, Translation Theory and Practice (TRST 410). Cooper’s specialties in Czech and Russian languages and Slavic literature of the early 19th century also help inform his teaching of “History of Translation” (TRST 431).

Cooper’s interest in Slavic culture developed somewhat serendipitously at the conclusion of his undergraduate education. After earning bachelor’s degrees in math and English, Cooper devoted two years to a Peace Corps mission, spending six months in Czechoslovakia before the country split, and his remaining year and a half in Slovakia. Of the time he spent teaching English there in the early 1990s, Cooper said, “It was some of the easiest teaching I’ve ever done. Students really felt that learning English would open their world.” The experience set a professional course for him that was refined by earning advanced degrees in comparative literature, enabling him to carry out specialized research, writing, and teaching.

Involvement with CTS has “sort of opened up a new area for me,” said Cooper. “A translation studies perspective helps to move beyond the artificial boundaries of national literary traditions.” In his most recent book, Creating the Nation (Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), Cooper examines the role that translation plays in developing a body of national literature.

Cooper is currently seeking advanced graduate students and recent post-doctoral scholars who would like to participate in a special research lab opportunity. The Workshop in Scholarly and Literary Translation from Slavic Languages will be held June 10-15. Please see http://www.reeec.illinois.edu/srl/programs/translation.html for more information.

Events

May 2, 2013 - The Center for Translation Studies and the European Union Center at the University of Illinois will hold a translation competition from EU languages into English for Illinois high school students. The winners will be brought to the Champaign-Urbanana campus for Translation Day at Illinois. Visit http://www.euc.illinois.edu/translationcompetition for more information.

What We’re Reading

Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World by Nataly Kelly and Jost Zetzsche (Penguin, 2012) is an accessible read for the layman who hasn’t yet grasped the extent to which translation affects our health, economy, social connections, and more.

Course Information

FALL 2013
TRST 201: Intro to Translation Studies
TRST 406: Translation for Professions
TRST 407: Terminology and CAT
TRST 408/LAS 490: Translation Tools and Practice
TRST 412/SPAN 410: Spanish/English Translation
TRST 431: History of Translation
TRST 440: Translation Studies Capstone
TRST 500: Translation Methods and Ethics

Center for Translation Studies Co-Sponsoring Ninth Letter’s Literary Contest

Ninth Letter, the University of Illinois’ award-winning literary arts journal, and the Center for Translation Studies are co-sponsoring our first annual literary awards competition. Entries in the areas of fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, and literature in translation will be accepted from March 1 to April 20. The winner selected in each category will receive a $1,000 prize and publication in the fall/winter 2013-14 issue of Ninth Letter. Current and former employees of Ninth Letter, current and former students of our judges, faculty of the creative writing and translation studies programs at the University of Illinois, and current and former students of our judges are not eligible to enter these contests. For more information and complete guidelines, visit www.ninthletter.com/contest.
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the CTS when at Illinois?
What skills were you able to build or
have stuck with it.
Translation Studies, I don't know if I would
and Reinhard Mayer in the Center for
Archive Press, as well as Elizabeth Lowe
John O'Brien and Jeremy Davies at Dalkey
the confidence and skills I developed under
most encouraging, and had it not been for
experiences with translation were not the
My favorite living author is David Mitchell,
and international literature. Translation
pursue the translation of some books as well
English teacher are light, allowing me to
writing. Of course, doing work
France?
The hours I spend working as an assistant
English teacher are light, allowing me to
support myself but leaving me with time to
pursue the translation of some books as well
as my own writing. Of course, doing work
like this in France has the added benefit of
helping me to greatly improve my French,
as my time in Austria helped me reach
my current level in German. I’m hoping to
continue the research I began in Vienna two
years ago on a Fulbright grant concerning
the methodology of transmitting culturally-
specific information in literary translation.

Who or what inspired your interest in
translation studies?
My favorite living author is David Mitchell,
and around the time I was leaving for
college, I found out he had studied
comparative literature. I looked into it and
decided it fit me like a glove, since I was
passionately interested in foreign languages
and international literature. Translation
didn’t really enter my mind, though, until
people started asking me what I would
do with a comp lit degree. Still, my first
experiences with translation were not the
most encouraging, and had it not been for
the confidence and skills I developed under
John O’Brien and Jeremy Davies at Dalkey
Archive Press, as well as Elizabeth Lowe
and Reinhard Mayer in the Center for
Translation Studies, I don’t know if I would
have stuck with it.

What skills were you able to build or
enhance through your involvement with
the CTS when at Illinois?

All of them. While I had certainly developed
a wide array of skills through my practical
work at Dalkey and in Vienna and gleaned
something of a theoretical framework from
classes at the Translationszentrum in Vienna,
my involvement with CTS helped immensely
by putting everything I had learned into a
larger context. It provided me with a firm
knowledge and theory base from which to
proceed and gave me the impetus and space
to practice many types of translation.

You have worked on a project for Amazon.
What did that entail?
I received a fellowship to attend the 2010
American Literary Translators Association
conference in Philadelphia where I was
put in contact with one of the editors for
the new Amazon Crossings project, which
represents Amazon’s foray into translation
publishing. Initially, I worked on a flurry
of translation samples for mostly older
German literature, including some classics
by Jean Paul, Kleist, and Rilke, as well as some
more contemporary fiction and non-fiction.
I’ve since worked with Amazon on a full
novel project that has been published: In the
Land of the Long White Cloud.

What is the scope of your work in France?
The hours I spend working as an assistant
English teacher are light, allowing me to
support myself but leaving me with time to
pursue the translation of some books as well
as my own writing. Of course, doing work
like this in France has the added benefit of
helping me to greatly improve my French,
as my time in Austria helped me reach
my current level in German. I’m hoping to
continue the research I began in Vienna two
years ago on a Fulbright grant concerning
the methodology of transmitting culturally-
specific information in literary translation.

The University of Illinois Center for Translation Studies
is in its fourth year of a partnership with the University
of Paris Denis-Diderot Center for Translation Studies. The
two similarly-sized schools share an interdisciplinary philosophy and have
created successful collaborations of faculty and students by organizing international conferences
on translation and establishing a teaching exchange program. Antoine Cazé, head of the master’s degree
program in literary translation and founder of the University of Paris’, has joined us for a month of
the semester, teaching a short course in literary translation with the intriguing title “Translation
Beyond Invisibility: How to Weaken Texts” (LAS 490).

“The idea and the term of ‘weakening’ come from the work of the Italian contemporary philosopher
Gianni Vattimo, who was also a member of the European Parliament in the early 2000s and is one of
the keenest observers of the political scene in Italy today,” says Cazé. “Vattimo’s field in philosophy
is hermeneutics, the science of interpreting meaning, which makes him a promising theoretician for
translation studies, even though, to my knowledge,
his works have never been used in this field. When
he speaks of ‘weak thought,’ he certainly does not
mean it in a disparaging way; rather, he examines
the ultimate consequences of Nietzsche’s idea that
‘there are no facts, only interpretations.’

Cazé’s course explores the ways in which
translation and translators need to maintain
awareness throughout their interpretation of
language as to how their work may be contributing
to “strong thinking,” which he describes as “thinking
that claims to be able to get at and interpret the
essence of reality through master concepts that
would somehow be immune to language.”

Cazé’s students at the U of I range from
undergraduates to PhD candidates—“a small but
very keen and lively group,” he says. Cazé has had
several opportunities to meet students outside
the classroom as well. He has been the featured
speaker at several events presented by CTS and the
European Union Center, which is co-sponsoring
Cazé’s visit.
Ev

van Fallenberg is an award-winning translator living in Tel Aviv, Israel, where he is Director of Fiction for the Shaindy Rudoff Graduate Program in Creative Writing at Bar Ilan University. He also teaches and mentors students in the MFA writing program at City University of Hong Kong. Fallenberg is the author of two novels, Light Fell (Soho Press, 2007) and When We Danced on Water (HarperCollins, 2011) and translator of many more. His name is still growing in familiarity among the populace as his longtime role as the English voice of former journalist Yair Lapid, Israel’s current Minister of Finance, circulates on the rising arc of Lapid’s career. As several CTS students conclude their capstone projects and seek work as graduates, we asked Fallenberg to share some insight into building a successful career in the field.

A recent article about your experience translating for Yair Lapid, “Being Yair Lapid,” “making a splash among professionals in translation. What are people connecting with when they read of your work?

In my case, Yair Lapid was already a top Israeli celebrity when I began working with him, but now that he is a kingpin in Israeli politics the interest in him has grown internationally and exponentially. There is a race to translate and publish his many books because there is a desire to know who this man really is. I feel lucky to have been in the right place at the right time with the right person, especially someone who is deeply appreciative and very pleasant to work with.

How would you compare translating the words of a living being versus those of an individual who is no longer alive?

I have worked with dead and living authors, and I can assure you that there is no comparison; give me a living author any day. True, the dead ones are deliciously complacent, so if you are looking for peace and quiet while you work, then you will enjoy their company. And of course you will have full control, the first and last word on the finished product. However, if you would like to sharpen and improve your skills, if you wish to learn something new, if you are not afraid to discover that a certain word or expression you chose is not the best one, I'm grateful to have perfected a language and cultures you understand deeply, the better equipped you are for the task.

And yet, there is a flip-side to this equation. Growing up in a culturally homogeneous part of Ohio I was jealous of anyone raised speaking two languages; all that energy I was expending to learn first Spanish, then French, then several other languages before I got to Hebrew in my mid-twenties, and here were people fluent in more than one language without making the slightest effort! But while I still think it’s wonderful to be born into multiple languages (and raised my own children that way), I’m grateful to have perfected a single language, reached its apex, as it were, since nearly all the people I know raised bilingually may be fluent in two languages but often fail to reach that summit—in either language—that is so necessary for literary translation. Put another way, a translator of literature can always ask for help with the text he is translating—the words, expressions, cultural references, grammar—but if he cannot render it with grace and precision and insight and confidence in the new language, well, nobody can help him with that.

How do you maintain a balance between your creative writing and the translation work? Does one practice inform the other?

A surprising number of Israel’s top authors of fiction also write children’s books, mostly during the cooling off period after finishing a new novel. In my case, the balance is novel/translation. Both tasks are immensely challenging, but in different ways, so that when one exhausts me I am only too happy to move to the other.

I cannot translate fiction when I’m at the creation stage of writing a novel (revisions are a different story). The voice of the author I’m translating is too prevalent, too insistent; I risk sounding like him or her instead of myself. In fact, only once have I managed to translate and write during the same period of time, and that was with Yair Lapid’s Memories after My Death, a work of creative nonfiction in which the voice, like most good nonfiction, is neutral, subdued.

As for the way translation has seeped into my own writing, when my first novel, Light Fell, came out in 2008, a number of reviewers referred to my “rich and unusual” use of language. Immediately, I understood it was the way Hebrew had infiltrated my English, and in a good way, a way that made me more aware of nuance and cadence and word choice. But the opposite can be true, too: I know a writer raised both in the U.S. and Israel whose English is so weighted with Hebrew that her prose often sounds as though it was written by a non-native speaker of English; one reviewer actually suggested she perfect her English before writing another book. I suppose the lesson to be learned is one of dosage; you can let the new language in to your own writing, but make sure it does not take control.

One of the questions said to be rendered by your most recent novel is this: “What constitutes a life well lived?” How would you answer that question?

Now you’ve caught me—I like to ask the questions, then listen to others answer them for me! The characters you are referring to—Téo and Vivi in my second novel, When We Danced on Water—grapple with this issue from opposite sides of the divide. But if pressed, I’d have to say that it’s a life of balance between creativity and responsibility, between family and work and art and pleasure. That, to me, is a life well lived.