

History and Evolution of the ILR Translation and Interpretation Committee

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ILR T&I Committee Meeting

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Overview

- ▶ Background
- ▶ 1999: T&I SIG established
- ▶ 2001: T&I SIG becomes a Committee
 - ▶ Concentrates on developing Skill Level Descriptions
 - ▶ 2005: ILR SLDs for Translation Performance
 - ▶ 2007: ILR SLDs for Interpretation Performance
 - ▶ 2011: ILR SLDs for Audio Translation Performance
- ▶ 2011 to present:
 - ▶ Scheduling presentations
 - ▶ Reaching out to outside organizations

Background: 1975-1985

- ▶ 1975: Final version of Proficiency SLDs completed
- ▶ 1985: Office of Personnel Management declares the ILR SLDs as the official standard for measuring language proficiency in the USG
- ▶ ILR minutes do not record any discussion of translation/interpretation
- ▶ Given English as the native language, single skills tests in the foreign language were used to identify translation/interpreting ability
 - ▶ Reference:
 - ▶ Reading SLDs: “The word ‘read,’ in the context of these proficiency descriptions, means that the person at a given skill level can thoroughly understand the communicative intent in the text-types described. In the usual case the reader could be expected to make a full representation, thorough summary, or translation of the text in English.”
 - ▶ Speaking SLDs Level 4: “Can serve as an informal interpreter in a range of unpredictable circumstances.”
 - ▶ If used, translation tests consisted of one or more passages, ratings were based on number of errors expressed in ILR terms

Background: 1985-mid-nineties

- ▶ 1987 - James Child (NCA)/Pardee Lowe (CIA) article
 - ▶ the “combined skills” merit separate consideration
 - ▶ “congruity judgment” term used for the first time
- ▶ Marijke van der Heide (FBI)
 - ▶ Led ILR informal meetings on translation
 - ▶ Agency does not have a language school
 - ▶ Foreign language is native language of most applicants
 - ▶ 1992/1996 “ILR” three SLDs for Translation are developed
 - ▶ 2 sets of English-Spanish, Spanish-English TTs “yield” ratings on ILR scale
- ▶ Glenn Nordin (DOD)
 - ▶ Led ILR informal meetings on translation
 - ▶ Society of Federal Linguists/ATA

Late Nineties to 2001

- ▶ 1996 - James Child “ILR SLDs Translation (Congruity Judgment) published
- ▶ 1996-1999 - NCA/CIA/FBI informal meetings on translation at DLI
- ▶ Summer 1999 -
 - ▶ Meeting: FSI Dean, Glenn Nordin, Rick Jackson
 - ▶ Plan to increase ILR attendance
 - ▶ FSI to develop/host e-mail list to disseminate information
 - ▶ Committees to allow contractors to participate
 - ▶ Establish a Translation and Interpretation SIG
- ▶ September 1999
 - ▶ Rick Jackson becomes ILR Coordinator
 - ▶ Establishes T&I SIG, to meet at the same time as the Testing and Training Committees
 - ▶ Appoints SIG Chair: Glenn Nordin; Co-Chair: (1) Ted Crump (2) Maria Brau

2001 to 2005

- ▶ September 1999 to June 2001
 - ▶ SIG works on “Translation Performance Notes”
 - ▶ Modification of various items from the Congruity Judgment Proficiency SLDs
 - ▶ Examples:
 - ▶ Translation involves performance, not proficiency
 - ▶ Below Level 3, non-professional performance
 - ▶ Top down presentation (5 to 0 instead of 0 to 5)
- ▶ September 2001
 - ▶ SIG becomes a Committee
 - ▶ Congruity Judgment SLDs and Translation Performance Notes presented to the full ILR but not approved
 - ▶ Charge: develop SLDs for Translation
 - ▶ Sub-Committee formed to develop Translation SLDs

2001 to 2005

- ▶ T&I Sub-Committee Members:
 - ▶ Maria Brau, chair (FBI)
 - ▶ Kathleen Diamond (industry)
 - ▶ Pardee Lowe (NCS)
 - ▶ Karen Manna (Homeland Security)
 - ▶ Teresa Salazar (US Courts)
 - ▶ David Sawyer (State)
- ▶ Sub-C meets regularly once a month at Salazar's office

2001 to 2005

- ▶ Sub-C process:
 - ▶ Chair prepares preliminary draft based on Translation Performance Notes for discussion by Sub-C
 - ▶ Discussion produces suggestions for modifications
 - ▶ Chair prepares new draft incorporating approved modifications
 - ▶ New draft presented to full T&I Committee at next ILR meeting for comment
 - ▶ Discussion produces suggestions for modifications
 - ▶ Chair prepares new draft incorporating approved modifications
 - ▶ New draft presented to Sub-C for discussion
- ▶ Process repeated from September 2001 to December 2004
- ▶ Presented to full ILR January 13/21/24 2005
- ▶ Approved by ILR February 4 2005/ posted June 2005

Episodes

- ▶ State Department Meeting
 - ▶ Joe Mazza:
 - ▶ Quality control at all levels
 - ▶ Shuckran Kamal:
 - ▶ “that does not contain figurative language, complex sentence structures, embedding, or instances of syntactic or semantic skewing.”
- ▶ Other:
 - ▶ Rick Jackson: “for use by managers” modified to “for use in government settings.”
 - ▶ Suggestions from the floor

2005 to 2011

- ▶ 2005: T&I Sub-Committee undertakes development of Interpretation SLDs
- ▶ Sub-C membership remains the same
- ▶ Process remains the same
 - ▶ Note: Salazar and Sawyer assume leading roles
- ▶ December 2005: First Draft of Interpretation SLDs
- ▶ By June 2006: 9 additional drafts presented
- ▶ 2007: Interpretation SLDs approved

- ▶ Note:
 - ▶ September 2006: Rick Jackson retires
 - ▶ Scott McGinnis becomes Coordinator

2006 to 2011

- ▶ 2008: Work begins on Audio Translation
 - ▶ T&I Sub-Committee no longer active
 - ▶ T&I Co-Chair undertakes task with FBI Personnel
 - ▶ Originally called “Monitoring”
- ▶ 2010: Joe Mazza (State) joins
 - ▶ Name change: Audio Translation
- ▶ 2010-2011
 - ▶ 7 drafts prepared
 - ▶ Final posting draft: May 2011

2011 to 2016

Evolution

- ▶ T&I SLD projects finished
- ▶ Committee shifts to:
 - ▶ Schedule presentations at meetings
 - ▶ Concentrates on outreach
 - ▶ example: continues to build ties to ATA

2011 to 2016

Evolution: Co-Chairs

- ▶ 2011: Pardee Lowe retires as co-chair of the T&I Committee
- ▶ 2012: Teresa Salazar becomes co-chair
- ▶ 2015: Nathaniel Hancock becomes co-chair
- ▶ 2016: David Sawyer becomes co-chair of T&I Committee
- ▶ 2017: Maria Brau retires as co-Chair
- ▶ 2017: Amanda Curry (FBI) becomes Co-chair

2016 to -

- ▶ T&I Committee will continue to evolve and become the focal point for Translation and Interpretation in the USG ...

References:

A paper on translation rating systems, including both the FBI Provisional Descriptions and the “Congruity Judgment” Descriptions, was presented at the 15th Language Testing Colloquium. See Cascallar, E.C., Cascallar, M.I., Lowe, P., and Child, J.R., “*Development of new proficiency based skill level descriptions for translation: theory and practice*,” in: M. Milanovic and N. Saville, eds., *Performance Testing, Cognition and Assessment: Selected Papers from the 15th Language Testing Colloquium. Studies in Language Testing 3.* (Cambridge, 1996). At the time Marijke van der Heide (Cascallar) was manager of the Language Testing Program at the FBI and the FBI representative at the ILR.

Child, J R (1987) Language Proficiency and Translation, in: Gaddis Rose, M (ed.) *Translation Excellence: Assessment, Achievement, Maintenance, American Translators Association Scholarly Monograph Series*, Binghamton: University Center at Binghamton (SUNY).

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