

PSIT & LLD - CONTRIBUTION TO EMT PSIT-WG-BOOK

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Public service interpreters education in French-speaking Belgium

Abstract

Over the past three decades, the professionalisation of public service interpreters has increased with training increasingly targeting specific settings, and pedagogical approaches being more and more reflexive (e.g. Cirillo/Niemants 2017). Given the dramatic rise in migratory movements in recent years (UNHCR 2022), the current major issue is to develop effective university-level curricula for interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion (LLD): the aim is not only to provide *training*, i.e. practical-only learning, but also and above all to provide *education*, i.e. to equip them intellectually by enhancing their capacity for critical analysis, reasoning, autonomous judgement and informed decision-making (cf. Merlini 2017: 139).

In French-speaking Belgium, as no doubt elsewhere in the world, the main challenges were as follows: to gain access to the target audience, in this case interpreters in LLD; to design a curriculum that closely meets the needs of the stakeholders in the field; to give access to higher education to people who may not have had the opportunity to complete their school education; to support them in their learning while taking into account their personal situation (the majority of them are adults with families who have to earn a living while studying); to develop interpreting skills in multilingual classrooms. To meet these challenges, the University of Mons has established close links with community associations, developed modular programmes that evolve according to their needs, valued experience as much as a diploma to access higher education, implemented a four-level training out-of-school-hours programme that allows progressive learning at different paces, and introduced non-language-specific learning methods (cf. Balogh et al. 2016), such as specific role-play writing, peer co-construction of knowledge, and peer feedback using a criterion-based assessment grid.

This chapter details the challenges, solutions, educational content, certification system, assessment grid and main learning methods of this programme and outlines future developments. The region has stepped up its efforts since the 2000s and now has a pool of trained PS interpreters, who can further their professional development by taking part in a tailor-made process of continuing education at university level.

Keywords: French-speaking Belgium; Public Service interpreting; training and education; interpreters' professionalization.

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