



Information Economics, the Translation Profession & Translator Certification

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Translators are...?

- ◆ Overworked?



Translators are...?



OVERWORKED
AND
UNDERPAID

- ◆ Overworked and Underpaid?



Are most translators underpaid?

- ◆ 55 freelancers all over the world surveyed
- ◆ 62.3% of respondents believe translators are underpaid
- ◆ 15% feel that translators are “extremely underpaid”

What is Information Economics?

- ◆ Akerlof 1970, Spence 1973
- ◆ A branch of economics that studies how **information** affects human behaviors
- ◆ Key concepts:
 1. Information asymmetry
 2. Adverse selection
 3. Signaling

Adverse Selection

- ◆ Due to *information asymmetry* between buyers and sellers, poorer products are more likely to be selected in some markets
- ◆ Resulting in the total volume of transactions and *a fall in the average quality* of goods exchanged



Signalling

- ◆ a possible **solution** to information asymmetry and adverse selection
- ◆ e.g. education can act as a signal to employers about the ability of a potential employee



Translation Market

- ◆ 26.4% of the respondents believe that translators are reasonably paid
- ◆ 11.3% feel that translators are “quite well paid” or “well paid”



Segmentation and Heterogeneity of the Translation Market

- ◆ Some respondents found it difficult to answer the question about translators' pay and work conditions
- ◆ The pay of translators "varies enormously"

Three Segments of the Translation Market (Pym 1999)

- ◆ Highly competent language professionals
- ◆ Contracted literary translators, established freelancers and salaried language professionals in non-technical fields
- ◆ Inexperienced and non-professional “translators” (university students and incompetent part-timers)

A picture taken outside a
conference centre in Shanghai...





Shanghai Daily (11 December 2004)

- ◆ Estimate: 60,000 professional translators or interpreters in China
- ◆ Total number of people who practise translation: 500,000

Certification and accreditation

- ◆ Certification: A voluntary process by which an organisation grants recognition to an *individual* who has met certain predetermined qualification standards
- ◆ Accreditation: A process by which an entity grants public recognition to an *organisation* such as a school, institute or company that has met predetermined standard

ITI – Qualified membership

- ◆ A first degree or postgraduate qualification in a relevant subject
- ◆ References from at least 3 persons
- ◆ Recent professional experience
- ◆ CPD (voluntary)



Scale effect of professional associations



- ◆ ATA – non-US residents can become correspondent members
- ◆ CIoL – regional groups in countries such as Spain, Germany and HK
- ◆ NAATI – tests available to overseas candidates



Scale effect of professional associations

- ◆ For auditors, members of internationally renowned accounting associations can command higher auditing fees than those of lesser-known accounting groups (DeAngelo 1981; Communale and Sexton 2003)

Some problems...

- ◆ A lack of mutual recognition between different certification systems





Certification on dossier

- ◆ CTINB (Corporation of Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters of New Brunswick)
- ◆ STIBC (Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia)



CTINB



- ◆ Each applicant presents a dossier giving details of their qualifications and professional achievements
- ◆ Each dossier is assessed by a peer committee which reports to the CTINB

The dossier should contain:

- ◆ An application form
- ◆ The dossier examination fee (CAD\$160)
- ◆ A CV
- ◆ The names of three referees
- ◆ Certified copies of diplomas, certificates and transcripts
- ◆ Confirmation of the period of employment from employers / clients



The dossier should also contain:

- ◆ Substantial and varied samples of work
- ◆ Proofs and testimonials from clients or employers showing the candidate is indeed the author of the work submitted for evaluation
- ◆ Proof of success in professional examinations



CPD (continuing professional development)



- ◆ CPD: The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skill and the development of personal qualities necessary for the execution of professional and technical duties throughout the practitioner's working life (Vaughan 1991: 29)



effective certification process + continuing professional development

- ◆ Enhance the signalling effect of certification systems
- ◆ Help to improve the working conditions of translators