

Chapter 8. The Training of Trainers for Legal Interpreting and Translation

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8.1 Introduction

The availability of competent trainers to deliver training for candidate legal interpreters and translators (LITs) is a prerequisite for the successful development of common standards in LIT training and delivery across EU Member States. It is, however, an area of activity that has received insufficient attention in the planning of legal interpreting and translation provision. This may be down to a range of causes: the relatively specialised nature of the profession, which requires an uncommon set of linguistic skills, the lack of funding to cover the high initial costs of LIT trainer courses and the relatively low financial returns on investment for self-funding LIT trainer trainees. None of these factors can be easily resolved, but if robust standards of legal interpreting and translation practice are to be promoted, then provision must be made for the preparation of trainers able to deliver training for LITs to the standards required.

8.2 Core competencies for LIT trainers

The following table sets out the suggested core competencies for LIT trainers. These are foundation competencies for the delivery of LIT training. Further specialised competencies could be added to cater for training of LIT trainers in specific domains, such as legal interpreting and translation.

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| Pre-requisite competencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ability to train in the use of short consecutive mode interpreting for the interpretation of dialogic communication (liaison interpreting, public service settings etc) ii. Ability to train in the use of ‘whispered’ simultaneous mode interpreting for the interpretation of monologic communication (speeches, presentations, judgements etc) iii. Ability to train in the performance of oral sight translation of short informational texts (both directions) iv. Ability to design training curricula aligned to learning outcomes v. Ability to design training activities to deliver the above vi. Competency in class management and course leadership, interaction with host institutions and liaison with external partners |
| Declarative knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Knowledge and understanding of the main ‘process models’ of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting ii. Knowledge and understanding of curriculum design and learning outcomes iii. Knowledge and understanding of models of teaching and learning iv. Knowledge of the professional domain v. Knowledge of current academic and professional debates in the field vi. Knowledge of key professional institutions, professional organisations and policy makers vii. Knowledge of the main stakeholders in the profession |
| Process knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ability to develop and/or use a range of training activities to develop practical understanding of the process of inter-lingual transfer ii. Ability to develop and/or use training activities to develop competency in the use of short consecutive mode interpretation (e.g. intra- and inter-lingual shadowing exercises, role play, memory training, note taking, video recording and analysis, language laboratory work) iii. Ability to develop and/or use training activities to develop competency in the use of simultaneous mode interpretation (e.g. intra and inter-lingual shadowing exercises, video recording and analysis, language laboratory work) iv. Ability to select and analyse appropriate texts for use as sight translation source texts v. Ability to develop and/or use training activities to develop competency in the on-sight oral translation of short informational texts vi. Ability to manage the classroom environment and to encourage learning and development vii. Ability to set entry and exit criteria for courses and design appropriate selection materials viii. Ability to work effectively with institutions hosting the training programmes (academic and/or professional) ix. Ability to engage external professional input to training to add value to the training course |

8.3 The selection of prospective LIT trainers

Ann Corsellis (2001: 140) has made the following observations on the recruitment of candidates for LIT trainer courses:

It would be unfair to potential trainers, and to their future students, to select those who are unsuitable for the task. Not every experienced practitioner, in any field, is equipped with the personality and attributes to pass on their skills to others and there are many whose talents lie in other directions. [...]

Carefully structured selection interviews, which allow exchanges of information both ways, are clearly important but it is also recommended that objective evidence of the following are obtained and confirmed:

- qualifications in legal service interpreting and translation at postgraduate level
- satisfactory experience of practice over a specified time
- potential training skills
- appropriate psychological profile.

The observation that not all practitioners make good trainers is borne out by practical experience. In addition to the insight into the linguistic processes of interpreting and translation and the knowledge of interpreting and translation in the judicial context that first hand experience offers, trainers of LITs need also to be able to teach, an ability that underpins the effective delivery of training. Training requires a different set of skills from those required in interpreting and translation, such as an understanding of the design and delivery of a goal-orientated training curriculum, an insight into different styles of learning and the ability to adapt to different learners' responses to the training process. Perhaps most of all, a trainer needs to understand learning as a collaborative process, where the trainer enables trainees to discover and develop their skills. There is little place in the LIT classroom for a 'top-down' approach where the students listen passively while a practitioner-trainer imparts the benefit of their experience. Interpreting is, at least partially, an art form and trainees learn by practice and by analysis of their own and others' interpreting performance. Training therefore has to be activity-based, allowing trainees to feel their way forward into the linguistic and cognitive 'zone' where

successful interpretation takes place. Only by practice, reflection and internalisation of experience can a trainee make meaningful progress. They do this, of course, with the support of their trainers. It is not, however, the trainer who transforms a trainee from a competent linguist into an LIT, but the trainee's own learning, reflection and practice.ⁱ

The careful selection of candidates for training as LIT trainers is therefore essential for the success of the training course. This chapter offers an analysis of the knowledge and competencies that the *Aequitas* criteria presuppose (Hertog, 2001). This analysis is followed by a template Person Specification for LIT trainer trainees, and an outline course structure for an LIT training of trainers course.ⁱⁱ In keeping with the spirit of the Building Mutual Trust project, it is hoped that these resources will provide course designers in EU Member States with initial guidance on where to start with the training of LIT trainers.

8.4 The *Aequitas* criteria

8.4.i Postgraduate-level qualifications in legal interpreting and translation

The necessity of an academic background in linguistics or interpreting and translation studies is often questioned, given the professional and vocational nature of interpreting as an activity. Interpreting is, after all, a performance activity, more akin to a craft than a theoretical body of knowledge. Given this fact, it is argued that a purely professional background is sufficient for an interpreter to undertake the training of other prospective interpreters. Possession of academic qualifications in interpreting and/or translation presupposes, however, an understanding of the foundational concepts and theories regarding the transfer of meaning across barriers of language and culture. Although a trainer with this background may not feel the need to impart that theoretical insight to their trainees in the same form that they acquired it, they do need to possess it, as it will inform their understanding of the cognitive and linguistic challenges that their students face as they work to develop their language transfer skills. In short, it will inform the design of the materials and training practices they employ.

8.4.ii Satisfactory experience of practice over a specified time

Satisfactory experience of language transfer activities (interpreting or written translation) can

be gained in a number of different settings. However, for the delivery of LIT training, this experience needs to be gained in the judicial settings of the EU member state concerned. There is no substitute for the first hand knowledge of the institutions and their staff that experience gained in that context can impart. A minimum of 200 hours of legal interpreting and translation, acquired over at least one year, is a suggested guideline.

8.4.iii Potential training skills

The skills and techniques of training specific to the profession of legal interpreting and translation will be taught in the training of trainers course itself. The task for a selector is to be able to identify in a candidate abilities in a latent form that will support the further development of specific training skills and techniques. The observation of successful trainers at work indicates the presence of certain common traits, such as:

- an ‘enabling mentality’ that seeks to encourage the self-development of the trainee
- a commitment to experiential learning
- a willingness to learn as well as to teach
- natural ‘platform skills’, such as a clear speaking voice and good presentation skills
- good co-coordinating and leadership skills
- the ability to elicit learning by asking questions and leading a process of thought.

Therefore, indicators for the presence of these traits need to be built into the selection process. Identifying these traits and qualities in a candidate requires the use of selection tools that will enable such an identification to take place. Although an exact methodology cannot be prescribed for all situations, some general suggestions can be made.

Candidates can undertake a range of online selection activities before attending a face-to-face interview. These can include not only the completion of online application forms to gather information on educational and background experience and personal data, but also self-assessment exercises, situational response exercises, case studies, general knowledge tests and legal system- specific tests. Online selection activities must, however, be followed by face-to-face interviews, to discuss the information provided in the online application forms and the candidate’s responses to the exercises. The face-to-face interview gives the selector the opportunity to probe more deeply into the candidate’s motivation and understanding, and to form

a clearer picture of their potential for training as an LIT trainer. Inviting candidates to make a presentation to the selection panel is a useful tool for assessing their platform and communication skills. Candidates should be given a choice of topics in advance, with clear guidelines on the length of the presentation. The presentation can then be followed up with questions from the selector(s) that are designed to probe the candidates' understanding, test their ability to engage with an audience and to discuss. This process will also allow selectors to form an impression of the persona that the candidate projects to an audience and to gauge how they might interact with a training group.

8.5 Trainee trainer person specification

A sample person specification for the screening of applications is presented below. This is offered as a template for adaptation and augmentation as required.

Training of Trainers for LIT Person Specification

| Essential | Desirable |
|---|--|
| <p>A. Knowledge and Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the linguistic challenges presented by language transfer activities • Knowledge of current affairs and the ability to discuss and comment upon the same • Knowledge of local affairs and the ability to discuss and comment upon the same • Awareness of the distribution of minority language communities • Knowledge of the cultures and histories of minority language communities • Insight into the demand for interpreting and translating in the public sector • Awareness of domestic organisations dealing with language and interpreting and translating matters • Awareness of international organisations dealing with language and interpreting and translating matters • Education to (minimum) first degree level <p>B. Skills and Experience</p> | <p>A. Knowledge and Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active knowledge of a C language (or languages) • Background in applied linguistics • Knowledge of the judicial sector <p>B. Skills and Experience</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native speaker fluency in mother tongue (A language) and at least one other language (B language)• Ability to interpret two ways using the consecutive mode• Ability to interpret one way using the simultaneous mode• Ability to carry out sight translation in both directions• Ability to lead• Ability to organise and manage• Good communication skills• Experience of interpreting and translating in public service and/or community settings | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prior teaching and/or training experience with adults• Experience of interpreting and translating in all modes in judicial settings (police, courts, tribunals, immigration)• Experience of written translation work, judicial or other sectors• Ability to compare and contrast languages and to comment on linguistic features |
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8.6 Training of trainers courses: a sample curriculum

A model curriculum for a training of trainers course might comprise the following modules:

Module 1: Foundation theory in language transfer activities, including:

- Introduction to interpreting and translation studies
- Process models of interpreting
- Literature review.

(It may be possible to combine this module with theory of translation modules taking place on a parallel translation course running at the same institution.)

Module 2: Interpreter training methodology, including:

- Developing consecutive interpreting competencies
- Developing simultaneous interpreting competencies
- Developing oral sight translation skills
- Developing note-taking techniques for consecutive interpreting
- Use of digital language laboratories for interpreting practice
- Use of computer assisted interpreter training (CAIT)

Module 3: Judicial sector training, including:

- Observation visits to police and court venues
- Talks by legal professionals on different areas of legal activity

Module 4: Teaching practice, including:

- Micro-teaching practice within the training group
- Classroom management skills
- Supervised teaching practice on existing training courses
- Observation visits to existing training courses
- Observation visits to other types of teaching activities e.g. language classes

Module 5: Course management, including:

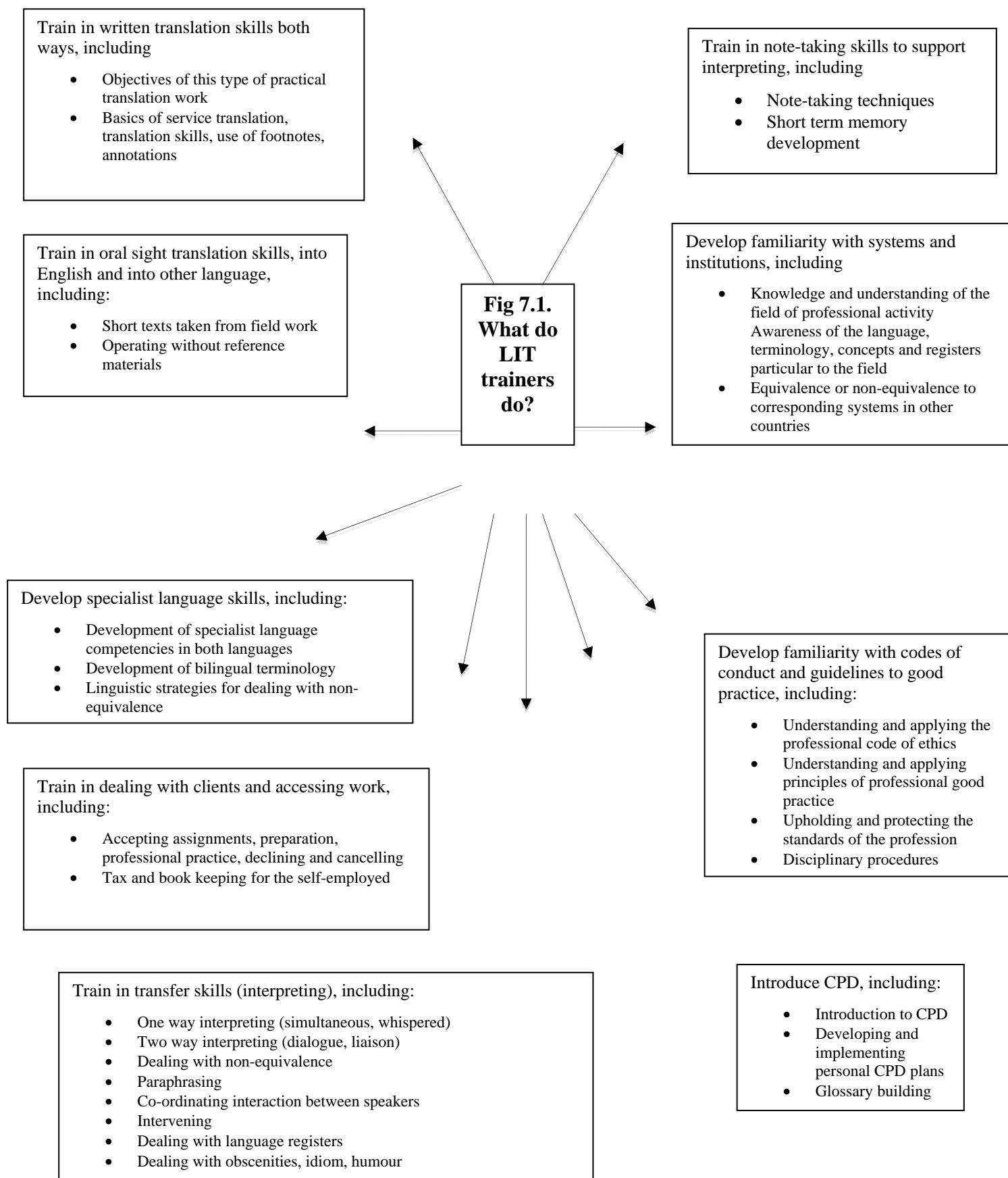
- Advertising and recruitment
- Selection testing
- Building links with key stakeholders (LIT users, professional associations etc)

All of the above should be supported by a reading list of relevant core texts.

8.7 Teaching and learning: an overview of training activities

The following diagram presents the results of a mapping exercise for the activities that a trainer of LIT trainers would usually undertake. This type of mapping exercise can be useful at the initial stages of candidate selection and course planning.

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References

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Notes

ⁱ Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) is a useful paradigm for the learning process of interpreter trainees.

ⁱⁱ This outline is based on the Postgraduate Diploma in Interpreter Training course offered at Middlesex University, London, UK.