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3 DSL/IFA

TITLE: The Dragoman Challenge. Interpreting (and translating) workshop.

Note: This is an English-Polish/Polish-English translating and interpreting workshop. Proficiency in Polish (native knowledge or close) is required.

Introducing course idea

The Dragoman Challenge is inspired by a chapter in the history of interpreting.

A dragoman was an interpreter-clerk in the Ottoman empire. Dragomans were generally Christians – with a prominent share of Greeks – and they capitalized on the paradox of being second-class subjects: living as Christians in an Islamic caliphate, they used their culture and outside connections to provide wanted services. Over centuries, the imperial Dragoman at the Sultan's court grew in importance, becoming Sultan's unofficial minister for foreign affairs. At times, the dragoman would have effective powers over how the Ottomans developed relations with Italy (Venice), France, England and more.

Translation and interpretation practice has come a long way since the times when interpreters and translators were the prized few managing information flows at a monarch's chancery (risking their well-being, and not infrequently their heads). We live in a world where there are many more translators/interpreters, doing many more jobs in significantly more domains. What's more, in our world translating itself has become increasingly detached from human translators, as technology accounts for a significant chunk of translating turnover – and it is not going away.

And yet, we still need dragomans – even if we call them by a different name – because we need people who understand how acts of communication achieve things in human affairs where communication is grounded.

That sounds like good news to students of translation and interpreting, but it's also a challenge: when push comes to shove, a dragoman is worth as much as she or he can deliver... without technological props, but with eye contact.

Course description

The proposed course is an interpretation workshop. The work languages are both English and Polish.

While the planned activities are not uncommon in professional interpreter training, in this setting they will have additional, joint objectives:

- to boost your **communication skills** at the point of contact between Polish and English (comprehension, paraphrasing, managing terminology, translating and interpreting);
- to integrate your grasp of key **officialdom** concepts and EN/PL terminology (democratic process, law, finance, investment, the markets, public administration, business, company law etc.);
- to help you grow as an interlingual expert with solid **public speaking** skills (concentration, memory, stress management).

Important notes

The students will engage in practical interpretation and translation activities in each class. All students signing up for this course enter an intensive – and hopefully rewarding – training module in which they have to speak publicly in front of the class.

The nature of the proposed Dragoman Challenge (see the introduction and the objectives above) requires that **all students** switch off their smartphones and all electronic devices for the duration of each class.

This class is a part of a research initiative, and students taking part give permission for fragments of their interpretations to be recorded and stored and processed (transcribed) in anonymized versions for translation and interpretation research purposes.

FAQs

- *Is this only for students who want to be interpreters?*

No. Interpretation training benefits communication skills in general, and it's worth trying even if you think interpreting is not your destiny. You may expect to become a better writer, a better speaker and a better analyst if you take up the challenge. Not to mention a better teacher – of English, or any other subject.

- *Do I have to know legal English or business English, or do I have to be the kind of student who reads finance pages of major broadsheets?*

Not at all. But you have to be open to the reality that there's a lot, a lot that can be learned that you haven't learnt yet about civilization – past, present, and future. The subjects covered in class are something that an informed citizen, I believe, should be familiar with. I will select material to challenge you, but not to erode your self-confidence. Yet, because of the nature of civilization, you may expect our going at a tangent from the future of the finance to Bible parables within minutes.

- *Would this require that I prepare at home?*

Yes. To make progress you need to consume energy. The challenge is for those who are interested in communication, but also in history of civilization. You'd be researching themes and terminology that is likely to have been off limits for you so far. Remember, this is 4 ECTS points.

- *Are you serious about this technology ban in the classroom? Surely, I can switch my smartphone to Airplane mode, or type offline on my keyboard and that will suffice?*

No, you can't. All electronic devices must be switched off at all times in this class. If you don't accept this requirement, you can't join this class.

- *Can I join as a kind of observer, since I'm shy? Can I just translate, leaving interpreting performance to others?*

If you're in, you have to perform. We can help you shake off shyness, but this is a one team classroom. When you sign up, you take up the challenge with everyone else.

- *What's the ground for grading?*

One written translation (in-class) and one 5-minute interpretation, both based on terminology used in class. For absences, the general rules apply. If you miss more than forty per cent of class time, regardless of reasons, you need to re-take the course.