Kent State University Ph.D. in Translation Studies

By Françoise Massardier-Kenney

We all know how important translation and translation-related activities are in our information-hungry global world. So, it is no surprise that the Department of Labor's *Occupational Projections and Training Data, 2004-05 Edition* projected that employment in the fields of translation and interpreting would grow by 22% over the 2002-12 period, which represents a ranking of "very high." This same document noted, however, that the most significant source of post-secondary education or training remains "long-term on-the-job training." Those of us who have worked in the stressful environment of tight deadlines and no feedback know how hard it is to get this "on-the-job" training. We also know that the disparity between supply and demand is exacerbated by the current state of foreign language education in the U.S., in which holistic approaches and languages across the curriculum remain the exception. In fact, the language resource situation has become so alarming that in the spring of 2003, the U.S. House and Senate approved the creation of the National Flagship Language Initiative (NFLI) to address severe deficiencies in the way advanced and professional language competency is developed in the U.S. The growing demand for translators in the world of international business and the growing recognition by the federal government that language pro-fessionals, like other professionals, need access to specialized curricula taught by trained faculty, were the arguments that convinced the State of Ohio of the need to create a Ph.D. program in translation studies at Kent State University in 2007.

Creating an Environment for Success

The faculty of the Institute for Applied Linguistics at Kent State University has long recognized that in order to harness information technology to solve language problems and to increase the effectiveness of the translation cycle, we need an environment where we can analyze processes (be they translation, localization, or project management processes), create new tools, and disseminate this knowledge so that it can become available to practitioners. We need to develop new research faculty who understand the fundamental problems of the application domain (foreign language translation) and the new information technologies required to resolve them. However, faculty members with expertise in training students to use their languages for applied purposes in nonacademic professional careers are very difficult to recruit because there are no U.S. doctoral programs producing such individuals. The structural imbalance between the supply and demand for appropriately trained language professionals requires a structural solution, namely the cre-

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ation of doctoral programs in translation emphasizing research, translation informatics and technology, and translation pedagogy. By creating a cadre of professionally trained teachers and researchers, such doctoral programs will help meet the growing need for translation and interpreting faculty as more colleges and universities add such programs.

If You Build It…

Since 1989, the Institute for Applied Linguistics has developed and implemented advanced training programs that focus on "language for professional purposes." Areas of focus include specialized translation (literary, commercial, legal, medical, scientific, and technical); terminology studies; translation technology (computer tools for translators, including computer-assisted translation); software and website internationalization and localization (translating software applications, interfaces, and websites); and project management for the language industry. Undergraduate and graduate courses emphasize the professional use of specialized foreign language skills in careers in the commercial and government sectors, or prepare students for advanced study in doctoral programs in translation in other countries or in other disciplines.

Study Tracks

The goal of the Ph.D. program at Kent State University is to produce researchers and teachers dedicated to applying information and computer science to the language-related problems of global communication, international business, and government, and to carrying out research about specific translation issues. In order to meet these goals, Kent State's doctoral program has two tracks.

The first track, Translation Studies, encompasses the entire spectrum of research and pedagogy: translation theory, discourse analysis, and translator training and assessment. Within this track, students may undertake the study of existing translations using approaches rooted in descriptive translation studies, including corpus analysis; product-oriented translation studies, which analyze the function of a translation in its specific context; and applied translation studies, which include translator training, translator tools, and translation criticism. Graduates of this track will become part of the country's first cadre of professionally trained educators and scholars in translation studies.

The second track, Translation Tools and Language Informatics, focuses on: language-oriented information systems (both multi- and monolingual);

terminology studies; computational approaches to translation and terminology (computer-assisted translation, computer-assisted terminology management); internationalization; software localization; multilingual document and content management; and targeted applications in machine translation. Unlike computational linguistics, which provides computational models of various kinds of linguistic phenomena, language informatics focuses on the pragmatic utilization of computerized tools for the enhancement of human translation.

The 10 existing faculty members of the Institute for Applied Linguistics who teach in the program include award-winning translators and widely published scholars who sit on international boards of journals, are editors of major translation series or translation journals, and have an international reputation. Two new faculty members in computational linguistics and translation studies have been hired to support this new program. Given the extreme difficulty involved in finding U.S.-trained faculty in this field, the Institute for Applied Linguistics had to go to Germany and Spain to find researchers and teachers with the required training and skills.

Student Profile

Applicants to the Ph.D. program must provide the same kinds of documentation required in doctoral programs in other disciplines, including written and oral samples of their work, as well as recommendation letters, transcripts, and standardized scores. Prospective students' performance and post-graduate professional achievement are expected to be of a very high quality. Classes officially began in September, and the first group of students includes professionals with graduate degrees in translation ➡

and significant work experience as translators, project managers, or localizers, as well as students from translation programs abroad. Kent State wants to keep the program small, with no more than four or five students starting each year, because the program is labor intensive and, unlike doctoral programs abroad where students conduct research independently without having to take very many courses, this program follows the American model of requiring specialized seminars before the students engage in independent research. Typically, students will take one and a half to two years of courses before devoting themselves to the major research project presented in their dissertation.

Students taking the general Translation Studies cluster of related courses will enroll in a minimum of four courses among the following: *Advanced Translation Research; Contemporary and Interdisciplinary Translation Studies; Translation Evaluation; Translation Pedagogy; Translation and Cognition;* or *Seminar in Translation Studies.*

Students taking the Translation Tools (language informatics) cluster of courses must complete a minimum of four of the following courses: *Language Informatics in the Document Cycle; Informatics of Translation and Localization; Internationalization; Computational Terminology and Lexicography; Meta-Markup for Multilingual Resources;* or *Seminar in Language Informatics.* In addition, the program offers a seminar in corpus linguistics (i.e., the study of language using real world samples) taught by a multilingual corpus specialist. A research group focusing on development issues in modeling terminology management software has also been established.

Suggested links
for more information:

Kent State Language Programs
http://appling.kent.edu/ial-programs.htm

National Flagship Language Initiative
www.nflc.org/projects/recent_projects/nfli

U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections
www.bls.gov/emp/optd/home.htm

Students have access to a state-of-the-art computing lab—which has been enhanced with donations from major software publishers, including Idiom Technologies, Microsoft, SDL International, Star, and across—providing students with access to a wide array of highly specialized, industry-leading translation and localization software. In addition, the program has been building up the comprehensive translation-related library holdings that a doctoral program requires.

Advancing the Profession
Kent State is very excited to be starting such a program. It has taken several years to put it in place, to gather the necessary resources, and to convince the State of Ohio of the necessity to provide high level training in translation studies and language informatics. But perhaps more than anything else, the faculty and staff are happy to finally be able to bring to the profession the kind of "dignification of translation," to use a term coined by translator and translation scholar Antoine Berman, that a doctoral level program brings to a discipline as undervalued and as critically important as translation studies and language informatics.