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ABSTRACT

A disjuncture between Ontario high schools and universities in the aims of their German language programs has become apparent in the last few years. In the high schools, the methods used in language classes have been fundamentally audiolingual, whereas in the universities, the emphasis has been on reading literature, with classroom analysis conducted in English. As a result, students entering the universities are unprepared for the level of reading demanded, and unsatisfied with the lack of conversational German courses offered. This problem could be solved by the development of a Canadian School for Translating and Interpreting, which would satisfy those students seeking a practical use of language, and would also help to diversify the career market for Canadian language students. Trade between Germany and Canada is growing, which will create a greater need for German translators and, to a lesser extent, interpreters. At this time, most are recruited from abroad, because local training facilities are not available. Heretofore, Canadian programs to train translators and interpreters have been concerned almost exclusively with French and English. Translation is a demanding profession with exacting qualifications, but it is not at present organized or legally recognized in Canada. One of the tasks of the proposed school will be to remedy this situation. (LG)

R. H. Farquharson

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

A NEW CAREER FOR STUDENTS OF GERMAN IN ONTARIO?

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UNDER AGREEMENT WITH THE NATIONAL
STATE OF...
PORTION...
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R. H. Farquharson

First let me say how very pleased I am to have been invited to address you today.* There is some feeling of doom abroad among modern language teachers, whether at the secondary or university level, and it's pretty obvious that we must work and worry together in order to keep our discipline flourishing. For example, there have been rumours that French enrolment in the high schools of Ontario has dropped about fifty per cent in the past year. German is not in the severely threatened state that French is in; for one thing, we have never had the political protection of French studios in Canada, nor the obligatory study clause. We have always felt threatened, we have always had a Hecht in our Karpfenteich to keep us vigorous.

A very recent study on the state of German studies in American high schools concludes that German is increasing in the high schools of 16 states, stable in 17 states, and declining in only 4.¹ And this is in the face of quite pessimistic figures for French. The reasons given for the health of German are significant: "The type of German teacher employed is what makes the difference. They are above average in enthusiasm and dedication." Or again, from Idaho: "I attribute the growth of German to the overall enthusiasm and professionalism of our state's German teachers." So it goes, right down the line: active, enthusiastic teachers who get their students involved in activities on the local, national, and regional level. On the whole, these

¹ Frank M. Grittner, "Focus on High Schools: German studies in the American High School: A Status Report," Die Unterrichtspraxis, 1973, No. 2, 1-8.

*This paper is essentially the text of an address to the Germanic Section of the Ontario Modern Language Teachers Association, April 20, 1974.

reasons probably prevail in Ontario as well, the teachers are doing a good job.

More specifically, I am glad to be here today because my topic is really one that concerns both university and high school teachers of German. In Ontario in the last few years a disjuncture in aims of the high school and university programmes has become apparent. While the high schools have turned to audiolingual methods with an emphasis on oral fluency, the universities, or at least most of them, have stuck to their literature bias. For my part, I do not think this is wrong. It probably is the way things should be: but it does create two problems. First, a problem of transition so that university professors are disgusted that students from the schools cannot read as well as they could ten years ago. But perhaps we do wrong to start first year students off with Tieck's Blonde Eckbert. The second problem is one of divergent aims, and it manifests itself in students' loud and insistent demands that we use German in the classroom even for discussion of literary texts. They want language practice and we claim we must use English to develop literary awareness at the proper level. This is where my topic today touches upon both high school and university teaching, for what is behind the rhetorical question is the notion of a Canadian School for Translating and Interpreting. If it comes to fruition, then at least part of the universities' work will be directed along the same lines as that of the high schools, that is, along the lines of greater ability in the practical use of the language.

At present a committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers of German is investigating the possibility of such a school in Canada. I will confess that the idea for a school of translating and interpreting comes in part from the

need to find a more diversified career market for German graduates. Previously we at the university taught students who, it was tacitly accepted though never acknowledged, would go out to the schools to teach students who would come to the university to prepare to go out to the schools to teach students who would come to the university to prepare to go . . . well, you take my point. Just as an aside, let me say here that we did not, and probably still do not, do our part very well in this closed cycle system, inasmuch as we put half our emphasis on literature and even require a course in MHG, both of which must be of minimal use in the high school class room. Our reason or excuse was that we pretended we were training minds not teachers. And I do not think we were being or are being altogether insincere or sophistic in that pretense. I would be prepared to defend the value of literary studies for classroom teaching.

But the question is no longer as debatable as it once was, for we are no longer in the business of training teachers or at least not to the extent we once were. As you know well, there is not much demand. One of our reasons for thinking about a school of translating and interpreting was to supply alternate career opportunities for German graduates to whom a teaching career was now closed.

But it was not the only reason. In the world at large the rapid extension of international secretariats and bureaucracies, the jet-speeded explosion of commerce and travel open new possibilities to those who are equipped to communicate across the Babel-barrier. Here in Canada we take particular note of the greatly increased trade between Germany and our own country and the possibility of stronger cultural ties between the two nations. Today's banner headline in the Toronto Star: "Our Salesmen Make Their Mark in Europe," is not only fortuitous for my argument, but a sign of the times as well. Let me quote a bit from the article by George Bain that follows:

Customers in Munich's largest shopping complex, a sprawling multi-leveled affair, walk on carpets the management rents from a laundry which in turn gets them from a firm in Toronto.

The Luftwaffe pilot in the F-104 making contrails in the sky overhead took some of his training in a flight simulator that is the product of a Montreal-based company--as, in fact, did the F-104 pilots of the air forces of Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium.

. . . .

More and more Canadian sellers of goods . . . are overcoming their -- notorious hesitation to venture into the unknown parts of the world where English is not the first language and are here with their order books or actually setting up shop.

All this suggests that a need hitherto scarcely felt would soon become a strong demand. The demand of course could be met by the importation of translators and interpreters from Europe where the skills of these professions have long been taught. But a bit of national pique comes into play here. Why should -- Canada import translators? Should not something be done to combat the irony of a bilingual nation two-thirds of whose inhabitants are convinced they cannot learn a second language? We are cowed of course by the Europeans who, by propinquity, acquire 3 or 5 languages. But perhaps we are being cowed by a myth-- I remember one polyglot European claiming: "I speak sex lengewidges of which Engenglish is the goodest." If the need is there, I see no reason why it should not be met by home-grown linguists.

The question is, is the need really there or are we being pressured by -- circumstances into wishful thinking? In answering this question we can simplify our problem by treating translation and interpretation from and into French separately from other languages. Obviously the occasions for French-English bilingualism are much greater in Canada than for English and any other language, but, given a population that is almost 30% French speaking, one would assume that the need is well served. The assumption does not hold. The Report of the Royal

Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, published in 1969, makes a disquieting revelation: "An informal survey of the judiciaries and bars of all provinces and territories confirmed that in actual practice the Canadian system of interpretation is weak, improvised, and likely to lead to miscarriages of justice." (Report 1, p. 60) Later the Report assesses the qualifications of translators in the Bureau of Translation: "Candidates for employment have to take an examination; a bachelor's degree is supposed to be a minimum qualification for sitting the examination, but, of the 314 translators, 140 had no university degree, 127 had Bachelor's degrees, and only 47 had higher degrees (including 10 doctorates). Very few translators had specific training in their work." (Report 3a, p. 156) These are serious revelations and one hopes that something has been done to improve the situation since the Commission reported. There are now French-English translating and interpreting schools in at least three universities, Université de Montreal, Université d'Ottawa, and Laurentian University. Nevertheless the Toronto Globe and Mail carried an article in its November 2, 1973 edition headlined: "No Canadians are available; interpreters trained abroad." The article went on to relate that Canada recruits interpreters from France, England, Belgium, Switzerland, and the United States, largely "because training facilities are not available in Canada. Of the 33 people who interpret from English to French, 18 are immigrants, while 15 grew up in Canada."

The point here is not only the need for more training facilities, but the even greater need to persuade English-speaking students that they can learn a second language--French, German or what you will--sufficiently to translate and interpret. As Mr. Robichaud, the chief interpreter for Parliament says in the Globe and Mail article: "A factor in the large number of Europeans working in

Ottawa as interpreters is their verbal fluency as compared with that of Canadians."

This, then, is one view of the need for French-English interpreters and translators. But what about German? To begin with we should distinguish between translating and interpreting and examine separately the need in each area.

Interpreting is the transfer of spoken material from one language into the target language. If you are at the airport one day and help a traveller from Germany who knows no English locate his lost luggage, you are acting as an ad hoc translator. The same ad hoc need could occur when a German business man calls on his Canadian counterpart. The need for ad hoc translators will undoubtedly grow in the next few years. The trouble is that Canadian business, with its traditional insensitivity to the value of linguistic talent, still will prefer to call in a German-speaking employee from the stockroom than hire a trained translator. Here is where the multicultural mosaic of the Canadian population seems to work against our professional interests. We will have to convince Canadian industries and business that it cannot penetrate far into, let us say, the European Common Market, without the expertise of a trained linguist who knows the people, their culture, and their language thoroughly.

The elite of the interpreting profession are the conference translators or simultaneous interpreters. Those who are successful in this field must be razor-sharp, quick to understand new ideas, endowed with intellectual and physical stamina and of course, perfectly fluent in their languages. As Thérèse Nilski put it in her brief to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism: "Interpreting is a 'tool', a tool that must restore instant communication wherever languages place a barrier to direct understanding. Like any expensive and delicate

instrument, it must be handled proficiently. To be at all good it has to be very good! Anything short of understanding can only amount to misunderstanding." Not only is this excellence rare, but the opportunities for exercising it are rare as well. A.T. Pilley in a very pessimistic--or perhaps realistic--article in The Incorporated Linguist (II,3, July, 1972) says: "There is room for some 60 new interpreters, conference interpreters that is, each year spread over the whole world." And he goes on to point out that there are some 20,000 students in the Interpreters' schools of Europe alone. Obviously not many are going to make it into this "tight, tough, exacting and ruthless profession." If and when our Canadian School of Translating and Interpreting becomes a reality, the training of conference interpreters will not be its major role, despite the fact that the entry of the two Germanies into the UN and the entry of Britain into the Common Market will increase the need. In Canada, because of our multi-ethnic population there is some need for judicial interpreters, but this is limited, especially since the Crown pays for interpreters only in criminal cases. In civil cases the accused must provide his own interpreter.

With translating, that is, converting the written word from source language to target language, the situation is different and probably better. The translator too, must have a quick inquisitive mind, an ability to grasp new ideas easily, a very wide general knowledge, and quite often a specialized knowledge in particular fields. He is not, of course, under the same pressure as the conference interpreter, indeed, he can often go off and work alone, in his own good time. But what he or she needs and in far greater measure than the interpreter does is a sensitive awareness of the subtlety and nuance of his own language. The translator naturally works always from the second language into his own language. We are all aware of the hilarious results of offending this rule.

The need for a sense of style is particularly important for the literary translator, one who translates poetry or fiction. But this sort of thing is very often a labour of love and not usually performed by a trained linguist as a full-time occupation. At the same time, it is worthwhile noting here that the Humanities Research Council has difficulty finding translators for many of the historical and literary critical texts that it wishes to have translated.

There is a greater demand for technical translators, that is, those who work at converting brochures, documents, instructional sheets, scientific and technical reports and such things from one language to another. At the moment in Canada this sort of work is handled in an unorganized and haphazard manner. There are translation bureaus in the larger cities, but there is no governmental control over them as there is in Europe, that is, there is no such animal in Canada as an official, certified translator whose signature and seal carry assurance or have legal status. It seems to be that one of our tasks in setting up a school for translating and interpreting will be to encourage legal recognition of the profession. Even where bureaus exist, they are probably overlooked in favour of a casual request to a friend. At the university, there is a habit of turning to the German department or other modern language department. At the moment I have an article from the computer centre on my desk--though what the computer wants with an English translation of a Spiegel article on parapsychology and spiritualism I am sure I do not know. I am going to translate it because I want the Computer Centre to do me a favour, but I recognize I am taking the bread out of the mouth of some free-lance translator.

If there is any great demand for translators in Canada just now it is in the field of commerce and industry. With the tremendous increase of Canadian-German trade in the past few years export-import firms, legal and financial firms,

manufacturers, forwarding agents, air lines, and all such undertakings are going to find increasing occasion for the services of some one who is fluent and trained--and this training I think is the important part--in a second language, for our considerations, German. We can take heart, by the way, from the fact that, as Ian F. Findlay says in his book Language Service in Industry (Crosby, Lockwood, London, 1973): "German is clearly the most frequently translated language, while Russian and French are roughly equal in second position." In Canada, of course, the Government alone makes French the most important language from the translator's point of view. But I think there is no doubt that the need for German translators in industry and commerce will grow. Canada's trade with Germany far exceeds her trade with France and Italy, so that we in German ought to be in a good position; all we have to do is make use of it.

In Europe schools such as the kind I have been talking about have existed for a long time--at the Sorbonne in Paris, in Zurich and Geneva, and in Germany at Heidelberg, Munich, Germersheim, and Saarbrücken. In England there has been a mushrooming of small institutes connected with universities or technical schools, with Bath, Kent, and the Linguistics Institute in London working their way to prominence. In the United States the old established schools at Monterey in California and Georgetown University in Washington are being joined by institutes in other universities, notably Stanford and Santa Barbara. Here in Canada the four universities engaged to some degree in the training of professional translators and interpreters--Montreal, Laval, Ottawa, and Laurentian--are concerned with French and English only. In fact, Professor Roland Henryd, the Director of the School of Interpreters and Translators at Laurentian recently wrote to me: "We do not at present, offer courses in translation from German." Indeed, very

little need has been expressed for it; and it is generally felt that we should concentrate on English and French." The University of Victoria and the University of British Columbia have both begun investigating the possibility of setting up translating programme within their regular German department structures, but have not as yet gone very far with the idea. Only Brock has developed the beginnings of a German translating and interpreting programme, consisting basically of courses directed toward oral fluency, simultaneous interpreting, and translation, all complemented--and this I think is the important and innovative part of the programme--by summer periods of apprenticeship training in export and correspondence departments of German firms in Germany. Over four years a student could accumulate a total of 12 months work experience in Germany, and get academic credit for it.

To sum up then, we think the need is there and we think it is growing, and we see no reason why this need ought not to be met by Canadian students. You will recognize that what I have said today is very tentative. Indeed, this must be seen as a progress report only. Thus far we have come to these hesitant conclusions: the chief need will be for translators, and this will probably not be a full-time vocation, but one exercised occasionally within a firm, so that the translator ought to have secretarial skills to complement and round out linguistic skills and thus justify full-time employment. Any training scheme will have to take this need for secretarial skill into account. Because education is a provincial matter, it will be difficult to set up a national school of translating and interpreting, the likelihood therefore is that a school will evolve under the aegis of a university, probably attached to a modern language department. There is a danger of a number of small, uncoordinated and incomplete programmes developing at various universities

whose existence would make difficult the setting up of one large school of first-class standing. Our final conclusion is this: we must have firm statistical knowledge of the need for translators and interpreters in Canada. This is the task the Canadian Association of University Teachers of German committee is now tackling. And this is why I am especially glad to have had the opportunity of speaking to you today, for I am hoping that some of you will be able to help us, perhaps by suggesting where or how we could find this information. If you can help us in this, you will be helping yourself as well.