New Translation Certificate Program Available at IUPUI

Those who can translate from one language to another are increasingly in demand in the United States. Translation schools at such institutions as the Monterey Institute in California and New York University have seen a rise in recent applications. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the creation of the European Union are said to have brought about the need for government and business to negotiate in more languages than before. Globalization is also responsible for increasing the need for written translations. According to one article, “Global consumers now demand package inserts and manuals in their language. And the Internet has generated the need to translate software and Web pages” (New York Times, 30 May 2001).

The Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis is preparing its students to meet the need for qualified translators. In 2000–2001, IUPUI launched a major undergraduate program within the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures (FLAC), called the Certificate for Translation Studies in French, German, and Spanish. Regarding Spanish, which is spoken by 12 percent of the U.S. population, Enrica Ardemagni, director of the certificate program, notes that this makes the United States the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. In urban areas like Indianapolis with growing multilingual and international populations, translation services are in high demand, for example, in the courts and the social and health care service industries, says Larbi Oukada, chair of FLAC.

The IUPUI certificate program trains students in bidirectional translation, from French, German, and Spanish into English and vice versa, and focuses on nonliterary, practical translation. Students may enter the certificate program as early as their sophomore year but must already have fluency in their chosen language. The interdisciplinary curriculum combines theoretical and applied course work in two departments, Foreign Languages and Cultures and English. For the certificate, students complete 27 credit hours that focus on comparative grammar, professional writing and editing skills, culture and civilization, history and theory of translation, terminology studies, and computer translation skills. Of the 23 students currently enrolled in the certificate program, most concentrate on Spanish.

An interesting component of the program is the course Computers in Translation, where students learn to use a computer-assisted translation (CAT) software package known as TRADOS, considered the industry standard, according to Mike Scott, director of the Multimedia Language Resource Center. Ardemagni reports that students really enjoy the course and have done some interesting projects. She considers CAT programs to be very useful teaching tools in learning the art and craft of translation.

The certificate program also includes some training on the professional aspects of translation, including advice on business practices such as getting certified, bidding for projects, determining charges, and drawing up contracts and accounts. Interpreting, a related though separate profession, is also discussed in introductory classes.

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