



MUTRA

Translation can be a tricky and subjective task. Conflicting interpretations of the finer points of tone and style may lead to project delays and serious headaches. There are multiple dimensions to the industry, and business habits vary between countries, languages and cultures. The MuTra project has gone some way towards alleviating the problems via its translation methodology, conferences, training seminars and PhD networking opportunities.

MuTra: a labour of love

While the general public might think that translation as such is uncomplicated and straightforward, those who have delved deeper into the matter know that modern translation scenarios have many dimensions. In the modern world, translations may concern several languages or media, multiple modes or even signs and symbols. Cross-cultural factors have to be taken into account, the switch from the written to the spoken word and – today more than ever – accessibility for different audiences, including the visually and hearing impaired. The Marie Curie MuTra project aimed to investigate these dimensions and ultimately proposed solutions for common problems.

Translation theory and practice offer a fertile ground for research and, more importantly, may be fruitful territory for teaching in an ever-evolving world of communication. This is why a key element of MuTra's efforts was to familiarise young researchers with the latest trends and developments in translation studies and hand them the tools to use the appropriate research methods.

The MuTra conferences were essential in this: the first MuTra conference in Saarbrücken, Germany, focused on the challenges of multidimensional translation. The second, dedicated to audio-visual translation scenarios, took place in Copenhagen, Denmark. The third conference, on the subject of Language for Special Purposes (LSP) Translation Scenarios, was held in Vienna, Austria.

Beyond organising training conferences, the MuTra project addressed the impact of new technologies on the form, content, structure and modes of translated products, established a network of PhD Fellows across Europe, and designed translation concepts and methodologies in subtitling, audio-description and written interpretation.

In fact, the MuTra approach was so successful that it led to the setting up of the international MuTra Advanced Training and PhD School. This offers a unique series of advanced training events in translation and interpreting (T&I) and is supported by the Foundation for the Promotion of Translation and Interpreting Research.

Research into a teachable art

'The project has not only led to the establishment of the MuTra PhD School, but also to a series of advanced translation seminars and an application for an Erasmus Mundus PhD programme,' explains Professor Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast, lead partner at the University of Saarland. 'And it has allowed for intensified cooperation between translation scholars around the world and led to a series of sub-initiatives and contacts with the translation and interpreting schools of Bologna/Forli, Prague, Copenhagen and Barcelona universities. *The project has also reflected European endeavours to create a European Master's and PhD programme in multidimensional translation.*'

To date, 253 translation experts and Fellows from over 20 countries have participated in MuTra. Their countries of origin include almost all EU Member States as well as Canada, China, Korea, Russia, Turkey and the United States.

And a range of PhD theses inspired by MuTra continue to spread the word. Three have been submitted, and many others are nearing completion. Recent topics include discourse interpreting, knowledge management in simultaneous interpretation, audio-description and translation, equivalence in subtitling, and interpreting and cognitive load – an eye-tracking experiment.

Sharing information on the Tower of Babel

One MuTra Fellow is Luxembourg's Kerstin Reverchon who says the project is a 'brilliant incentive' for both those starting out in translation and those with more experience. 'The carrot and the stick have proved effective,' she says. 'The project involves profitable and intense individual thesis discussions, status presentations and solution-oriented analytical group discussions. There is *an impressive interchange of ideas between congenial people of all cultures, embedded in a pleasant and inspiring atmosphere.* In short, it is a brilliant promotion recipe on both a professional and personal level, blended with care by our doctoral advisor Professor Gerzymisch-Arbogast – and you can be sure that no one goes home hungry!'

'Each MuTra training seminar offers a synopsis of translating and interpreting phenomena, their theoretical status and research potential. Taken together, the series is a structured format for PhD preparatory training,' says Professor Gerzymisch-Arbogast. 'The project also offers person-to-person instruction in English by leading university professors and experts in the field of PhD preparation, multidimensional translation, interpreting, subtitling and audio-description. MuTra seminars are organised during weekends at European higher education institutions and high-quality professional

sites in Berlin, Munich, Zürich, Saarbrücken and Fosano in Switzerland.'

The professor also believes that the project has done much to decrease the fragmentation in the translation discipline by creating a new multidimensional translation concept and the MuTra translation methodology. It has also established a group of young scholars who all attended several Marie Curie initiatives and are supported and promoted by the Gerzymisch Stiftung, Saarland University and the Advanced Translation Research Center (ATRC). Incidentally, ATRC has formed a separate entity as an association as a result of MuTra. Its research focuses on the general, language-independent concepts and methodology of translation and interpreting.

Love what you do

It may seem a little strange to those who 'work to live', but loving what you do is, according to Professor Gerzymisch-Arbogast, crucial for Marie Curie success. She also believes that completing the application form stringently is vital to actually obtaining a fellowship place. Once accepted, applicants should, she feels, strive to build up their own networks of people with the same mindset, objectives and complementary expertise

within Europe. And this is exactly what the professor has done. 'The MuTra partners include universities in Copenhagen, Vienna, Budapest and Berlin,' she says.

Someone once said 'all you need is love'. Next time you watch a subtitled film, listen to interpretation at a conference or watch the news in a foreign language, take a moment to think about the love that the professor and her Fellows have put into setting the standards of translation across Europe and beyond

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