

# Translating for the UN

Leeds University,  
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# Why the UN?

- Role
  - international security
  - friendly relations
  - resolving problems
  - respect for rights and freedom
- Downside!



# Working for the UN

- Staff member
- Working at home (contractual)
- Freelancing “on the circuit”
  - getting your foot in
  - local vs. non-local
- Me!



# Duty stations

- Main duty stations:
  - New York
  - Geneva
  - Vienna
  - Nairobi
- Regional commissions:
  - Santiago
  - Addis Ababa
  - Bangkok



# Translating: Five golden rules

- into your mother tongue
- read like an original
- sensible deadline
- keep the deadline
- always proofread



# Translation and revision

- Translators, self-revising translators/revisers and senior revisers
- Grade system
- Purpose of revision
  - quality
  - feedback and training



# Other language careers

- Editing
- Verbatim reporting (New York)
- Referencing and terminology
- Precis-writing
- Interpreting



# Editing

- Housekeeping
  - review document
    - masthead, symbol, agenda item etc. etc.
    - get a sense of the content
    - decide on level of editing needed
  - mark headings format, check para. numbering





# Editing

- Edit text:
  - correct facts, figures, footnotes, references
  - check terminology: consistent with un usage
  - check grammar, spelling, punctuation
  - style: factual, clear, direct, unambiguous
  - structure: logical and coherent



# On-screen editing

- Trend towards paperless office
- Electronic workflow
- Advanced word-processing skills
  - find and replace
  - macros and templates
  - keyboard shortcuts
- Automating housekeeping
- Focus on “real” editing



# Useful websites

- AIIC: <http://www.aiic.net/>
- AITC: <http://www.aitc.ch/index.php?newlang=english>
- ITI: <http://www.iti.org.uk/indexMain.html>



# Translators and interpreters

- Temperament
- Work satisfaction
- Conditions
- Pay
- Stress



# Precis-writing

- Mainly by English translators
- Freelance circuit
- One of the hardest jobs
  - analytical skills
  - pressurized
  - interesting



# Productivity vs. quality

- Finding the balance
- Productivity standards
- Other tasks
- What does quality mean?
  - accuracy and consistency
  - style and register



# CAT tools

- Pilots
- Multitrans and SDLX
- UN system
- Productivity and quality
- Workflow and new functions



# The “Concours”

- Four papers:
  - general text i
  - general text ii (different language)
  - precis-writing
  - specialized text/general text III (third language)
- Some word-processing
- Interview





# The next English exam

- Website:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm>

No exam foreseen right now. The last one was  
February 2006.



# Precis-writing paper

- Summary of a French speech (in English!)
- Past tense (pluperfect)
- Reduce to one third
- When in doubt, leave it out
- Main line of the argument



# How to prepare

- Read, read, read
- Read analytically
- Practise by editing your work
- Look at websites
- Look at documents
  - Official Document System
  - <http://documents.un.org/>



# Other organizations

- United Nations system:
  - <http://www.unsystem.org/>
- Job opportunities:
  - [http://www.unsystem.org/jobs/job\\_opportunities.htm](http://www.unsystem.org/jobs/job_opportunities.htm)

