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Ah summer...

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ATA’s 44th Annual Conference
November 5-8, 2003
Phoenix, Arizona

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An Easy Reference To ATA Member Benefits

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Verónica Albin is a freelance medical translator and lecturer in Spanish at the Center for the Study of Languages at Rice University in Houston, Texas, where she teaches advanced translation, cross-cultural communication, and medical Spanish. Her articles on language, comparative grammar and stylistics, and translation have been featured in the ATA Scholarly Monograph Series, the ATA Chronicle, the Translation Journal, Apuntes, and Rice University’s Orbis Linguæ, among others. She joined ATA in 1982 and is accredited in English→Spanish. She has served the association on the Ethics, Accreditation, and Conference Planning Committees. In 1991, she was invited to join ATA’s English→Spanish grading team, and has since served as language chair, co-chair, and deputy chair. Contact: valbin@pdq.net.

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Chris Durban is a freelance French→English translator based in Paris, France. She has coordinated seven training days for financial translators in conjunction with the Paris Bourse (now Euronext Paris), and was program coordinator for the first SFT/RTF Université d’été de la traduction financière held in July 2002 in La Rochelle. She writes a client education column called “The Onionskin” (ITI Bulletin and ATA Chronicle), and is co-author, with Eugene Seidel, of the “Fire Ant & Worker Bee” advice column in Translation Journal (www.accurapid.com/journal). In 2001, she was awarded ATA’s Gode Medal. She is co-chair of ATA’s Public Relations Committee. Contact: chrisdurban@compuserve.com.

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Carmen Graizbord was born and raised in Mexico City and has lived in the U.S. for more than 20 years. She has a background in English literature and linguistics. She began working as a translator more than 20 years ago. She currently works as an English→Spanish translator and interpreter for San Diego City schools. Contact: cgrazbo@mail.sandi.net.

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Alexandra Russell-Bitting has been a staff translator-reviser at a Washington-based international organization for 15 years, working from French, Spanish, and Portuguese into English. She has worked freelance for other international organizations such as UNESCO, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Organization of American States, as well as for the U.S. Department of State. She has taught translation at Georgetown University and the Université de Paris VIII. She is an active member of ATA, a regular contributor to the ATA Chronicle, and serves on ATA’s Public Relations Committee. Contact: alexandrarb@iadb.org.

John P. Shaklee is a full-time telephone interpreter (Spanish→English) for Language Line Services. He earned his M.A. in translation from the Institute for Applied Linguistics at Kent State University. He is a regular contributor to the Northeast Ohio Translators Association, and is the co-chair of ATA’s Mentoring Task Force. Contact: jshaklee@neo.rr.com.

Kim Vitray has been operations manager at Ralph McElroy Translation Company (RMTC) in Austin, Texas, since February 1999. She is also currently the assistant administrator of ATA’s Translation Company Division. Prior to joining RMTC, she was the production manager of a niche medical and scientific publishing company, also in Austin, for 12 years. Contact: vitray@mcelroytranslation.com.
From the President  Thomas L. West III
president@atanet.org

The New Education and Experience Requirements

This column will be devoted to answering some of your questions about the new education and experience prerequisites for all candidates who wish to take an accreditation exam starting in January of 2004. For background on these programmatic changes, please see the From the President column in the April 2003 ATA Chronicle.

Q: If I am currently accredited by ATA, do I need to provide proof of my education and experience before I can take the test in another language pair?
A: No, if your ATA membership and accreditation are current, you do not need to provide this additional documentation and the verification fee is waived.

Q: I didn’t think that there were any requirements to take the ATA accreditation examination, aside from ATA membership and the exam fee. When did these requirements start?
A: The ATA Board and the Accreditation Committee have been studying ways to strengthen the accreditation credential for several years. In the spring of 2001, they approved a plan to establish eligibility requirements related to education and experience. In March of 2003, they implemented the requirements to begin with the first exam sittings in 2004.

Q: Why are these requirements necessary?
A: The ATA exam is intended for experienced translators with a high level of education, but our previous policies made the test available to all. That mismatch was not fair to candidates. Appropriate education and experience requirements establish a realistic expectation about the level of the examination.

Q: How early will I need to submit these documents?
A: Organizing and verifying these documents will take longer than our current process. You should submit everything at least four weeks prior to an exam sitting.

Q: Can I send in individual pieces of the required information as I gather them?
A: No, a candidate must organize all required materials and submit them with the exam registration. Incomplete documentation will be returned.

Q: Why must the proof of education and experience be translated into English?
A: ATA does not employ translators or have translators on staff. In order for us to verify your information in a timely manner, all material must be in English or the original documents must be accompanied by an English translation.

Q: I have a master’s degree, but it is not in a translation- or interpretation-related field. Does it count?
A: If you have a master’s degree, a doctorate, or other equivalent

In Memoriam
Kenneth Katzner, Russian Language Expert

The following appeared in The Washington Post (Wednesday, May 28, 2003; Page B-5).

Kenneth Katzner, 72, an authority on the Russian language and a former Soviet expert for the CIA and Defense Department, died of lung cancer May 25 at Sibley Memorial Hospital. He was a resident of Washington.

Mr. Katzner worked for the CIA in the 1970s and the Defense Department in the 1980s and 1990s. He was the author of A Russian Review Text (1962), Languages of the World (1975), and the English-Russian, Russian-English Dictionary (1984). His books were used as reference guides by journalists, and he wrote newspaper op-ed columns about Russian affairs.

Mr. Katzner was born in Washington and raised in Forest Hills, New York. He was a 1952 graduate of Cornell University, where he began studying Russian. He served in the Air Force in England as an intelligence officer. In the 1960s, he was a writer and editor in New York, where he contributed to encyclopedias and The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language.

His avocations included photography, and he was a life master bridge player. Survivors include his wife of 36 years, Betty Lenson Katzner of Washington.
professional degree, you are eligible to take the exam. The advanced degree need not be in translating or interpreting.

Q: What constitutes a year of experience?
A: A year of experience is defined as a full year of full-time work or the equivalent in part-time work.

Q: Is there a fee for processing eligibility documentation?
A: Yes, there is a nonrefundable $35 verification fee.

Q: What is the actual process?
A: Candidates submit their membership application (if needed), their exam registration form, the nonrefundable $35 verification fee, and the exam fee at the same time. The membership will be processed but the exam registration fee will be held in “pending” and not processed or deposited until the candidate meets the prerequisites fully. If the candidate fails to meet these standards, the exam fee will be returned, but the verification fee will not.

Q: Can I establish eligibility now and take the exam at a later date?
A: Yes, you can submit your documentation with the verification fee early, but you must include a letter stating those intentions. Your submission, if verified, will be saved on our database for five years.

Q: If my eligibility is verified, but I fail the examination, will I have to resubmit the documentation before taking the examination again?
A: No, we will keep the information you submitted for verification on file.

Q: If I was once accredited, but I let it lapse with my membership, do I need to meet these requirements?
A: ATA accreditation is valid as long as membership is maintained and continuing education requirements are met. If you let your membership lapse for more than three years, you will need to apply for Active Membership Review and then have your accreditation restored. If your membership lapsed for less than three years, you just need to rejoin ATA in order to have your accreditation restored.

Q: If I have been approved for Active or Corresponding membership through Membership Review, does that mean I am eligible to take the examination?
A: No, the documentation and requirements for Active Membership Review differ from the prerequisites to take the examination.

Q: Where can I find this list of approved T&I programs?
A: The most up-to-date list will be on ATA’s website.

Q: What if my T&I program is not on the approved list?
A: We have compiled as complete a list of approved T&I programs as possible. However, we recognize that new programs will be developed over time while other programs will be discontinued. Any program not currently on the list would have to be reviewed and approved by ATA’s Education and Training Committee. Please understand that this work is done by volunteers and takes time. You must plan ahead and allow at least four weeks when applying for approval of a program.

To request the addition of a T&I program to the ATA-approved list, you must submit the following information:
- Name of program;
- Address for institution offering program;
- Contact person for the program;
- Phone number for contact person; and
- E-mail address for contact person.

I encourage you to send additional questions on this topic. I will work with the Accreditation Committee, the ATA Board of Directors, and ATA Headquarters to answer them in either my column or the Accreditation Forum column. More information will also be posted on ATA’s website. Please send your questions to terry@atanet.org.

Thank you for your interest.

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From the Executive Director

Walter Bacak, CAE
Walter@atanet.org

New Member Benefit: Membership Directory Online

The ATA Membership Directory is now online in the Members Only section of the website (www.atanet.org). The online directory features a searchable, up-to-date database of ATA members available only to ATA members.

The print version of the ATA Membership Directory should be mailed this month. As a reminder, the purpose of the Membership Directory is to facilitate communication among members; it is not meant or designed to be for commercial use. The online Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services and the Directory of Language Services Companies (the Services Directories), which are available to all, were designed to promote and market your services.

I make this distinction because, from time to time, it has been confusing to some members. The Membership Directory lists all members while the Services Directories list only those members—individuals and companies—who want to promote their services and choose to participate in them.

Please take a moment to check out the new Membership Directory online and send me your comments. We will work to incorporate member feedback into the Directory as we continue to do with the wildly successful Services Directories.

Accreditation Program Update

Thank you for all your comments and feedback regarding the new Eligibility and Continuing Education Requirements. Please see “From the President” in this issue (page 7) for answers to most of the questions that have been raised. We will also be posting more information on the website.

There is no question that the changes the Board and Accreditation Committee have mulled over, reviewed, and researched for the past year or more are for the better. As ATA President-elect Scott Brennan said, “If you want a credential that commands respect, these are the steps you need to take.”

A few points to underscore:

1. For those currently accredited, you do not need to—and, in fact, cannot—start tracking and accumulating continuing education credits until January 2004. (See “From the President” in the April ATA Chronicle for the chart on continuing education credits and requirements.)

2. Related, if you attend the Annual Conference two out of three years, you have met the continuing education requirement. I cite this because a significant number of accredited members do attend the conference each year.

3. As I wrote last month, the membership will have to vote in November on changing the name of the credential in the ATA bylaws from accreditation to certification. This vote is completely separate from the new requirements. The vote is purely to correct outdated

Resolution honoring Maggie Rowe

for 10 years of service to the Association

Whereas, Maggie Rowe has served 10 years with the American Translators Association as of June 23, 2003; and Whereas, Maggie’s efforts with the development of the membership and the enhancement of member services as well as her integral support in many other areas in the administration of the Association have contributed directly to ATA’s success and growth; Therefore, be it resolved that the American Translators Association thanks and honors Maggie Rowe.

Continued on p. 61
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Letters to the Editor

From the Next Generation

Lately, our association has been discussing the need to increase the profession’s exposure to the global community in general and to the next generation of translators in particular. From the conference in Atlanta, to articles in the ATA Chronicle, to an e-mail I received regarding a public relations initiative, this seems to be quite a “hot” topic. As a representative of this next generation, everyone is so concerned about attracting, I feel I should point out a few things.

Now, I know the association as a whole is aware of the difficulties in training qualified translators in this country, what with the inadequate public school language courses and a lack of universities offering translation programs. However, I would also like to point out that even with drastic improvements in these areas, there would still be serious deficiencies in the number of employable translators.

The languages taught in American schools today are the same ones that have been taught for generations: European. This is to say that, with the exception of Spanish, none of the languages currently sought by employers and clients, be they international business or governments, are being taught in this country. In my extensive online searches for employment, I have seen postings seeking Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic translators, and a nice variety of ads for African-language speakers, too. Only rarely does there seem to be a call for the more “common” languages. It would seem, then, that American students are not even being given the option to succeed in order to provide needed language services in the future.

We all know that translators, especially beginners, should never translate into a nonnative language. Unfortunately, since my graduation from Laurentian University (Ontario, Canada) in May 2002, I have yet to find a translation job into English. This leads me to believe that there are very few opportunities for native English-speaking translators. Perhaps the problems lies in my inexperience within the professional realm, but it seems to me that the few translations available are from English.

I have begun to question my career choices. While there is no doubt that I love translation, I do wonder if it would have been better to relegate it to “hobby” status and pursue a more “practical” profession. I may not be alone in this, as I have noticed that most of the listings in translation reference material and on job boards are from translators seeking contracts, not employers. Does this indicate that the market is saturated? According to the Translation and Terrorism panel in Atlanta, this is far from the case. Hmm...

I do not want to whine, but it is important to consider these issues as ATA moves forward into this new world we are facing. As we decide how to promote translation in the 21st century and how to improve the quality of the profession, we must remember that all obstacles need to be recognized before they can be overcome.

Denise Spurgeon
denisespurgeon@earthlink.net

Stay the Course

Ms. Spurgeon has put before the association the matter of supply and demand. It has been well established that Sputnik I was launched, October 4, 1957, that the U.S. has been grievously low in language capability outside English. Inasmuch as trained translators can compensate for low language capability in the general population, it can be argued that the translation capability of the U.S. is grievously low as well.

This does not mean, however, that training more translators will alleviate the situation. Longtime ATA members like me (since 1972) can confirm that the list of critical languages varies. Longtime ATA members can also confirm that machine-aided translation is unlikely to solve the problem either. We shall simply have to live with the problem, doing the best we can.

There are, however, facts about the membership, confirmed by recurrent surveys, that perhaps can be stated for the record. Newcomers might also find this information encouraging.

1. ATA members generally present a formidable range of postsecondary education. ABDs (all but the dissertation) and Ph.D.s are not uncommon, not just in languages other than English but also, perhaps especially, in the subjects translated. Nor are MDs and JDs uncommon among the membership.

2. This frequently indicates that ATA members, like the general population, have made career changes. ATA members have changed to become translators, and in many instances they will change again. If one randomly interviews members, one will find former teachers, technicians, editors, computer programmers, and so on.

3. Indeed, many members are doing something besides translating right now. The association is quite open about this in its surveys.

4. The field as a whole during the past 30 years has seemed to be steady. Replenishment has kept up with attrition. (Translator training tends to be quite vulnerable, i.e., linked to the teaching careers of certain educators, but even here—sometimes it seems miraculous—replenishment balances attrition.)
What does this mean for newcomers?

First of all, they should not worry if they must take a job that merely requires fluency in a language besides English. As long as they keep translating and keep a portfolio, they will be employable. And if they take a job that is English-only, they should not worry, because a translator needs to know as much as possible about everything to be known.

Second, if unemployed, they should consider returning to school. The field they choose should be one that engages them, and if translation is an option, all the better.

Third, they should expect to see their own career goals change as they live more and learn more.

As a member who has enjoyed the friendships made possible only through the fellowship of the association, I recommend staying in the network.

Marilyn Gaddis Rose
mgrose@binghamton.edu

(Dr. Gaddis Rose received the Gode Medal in 1988 and founded the Binghamton University translation program. She is Distinguished Service Professor of Comparative Literature and a notary public of the State of New York.)
The International Certification Study: The United States

By Jiri Stejskal

The International Certification Study was launched in the pages of the ATA Chronicle exactly two years ago. Many countries have been covered since then, and even though there are other countries with credentialing procedures in place that have not been described in this study, the author believes the column has provided a comprehensive and insightful review of credentialing procedures worldwide. Based on the feedback received from readers, it seems sensible to conclude the study with an exploration of the credentialing possibilities in the U.S.

After we reviewed the certification procedures in the Arab countries in the last issue, we now turn our focus to procedures employed by various government and professional organizations within the U.S.

The following contributors were kind enough to share their expertise on the subject:

Marijke van der Heide, interpreter program specialist, District Court Administration Division of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (marijke_van_der_heide@ao.uscourts.gov);

Ann Macfarlane, past ATA president and current executive director of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, (headquarters@najit.org);

Mirta Vidal, president emerita, Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (mirtavidal@att.net);

Janis Palma, president, Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (janispalma@att.net);

Michael Bunch, Ph.D., vice-president, Measurement Incorporated (mbunch@measinc.com);

Donna L. Merritt, senior project director, Measurement Incorporated (dmerritt@measinc.com);

Dorothy Bryant, program specialist, Research Division, National Center for State Courts (dbryant@ncsc.dni.us); and

Wanda Romberger, manager, Court Interpreting Services, National Center for State Courts (wromberger@ncsc.dni.us).

Contrary to popular belief, there are many credentialing possibilities for both translators and interpreters in the United States. We will not describe the T&I academic programs as we have done with some other countries, but rather explore what is available in the U.S. at the nonacademic level. As was mentioned above, credentials can be granted by the U.S. government or by a professional organization.

At the government level, there is a rigorous federal examination for judiciary interpreters in Spanish, Navajo, and Haitian-Creole. Other credentials can be granted to applicants by various federal agencies upon successful completion of qualification requirements; however, in such cases, the credentials attained apply only to the specific agency granting such a qualification. For example, the Department of State tests its own translators and interpreters. On the state level, the National Center for State Courts, with 29 member states currently constituting the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification, offers certification. Some individual state agencies also have their own programs. For example, the Department of Social & Health Services in Washington State provides a low-level screening program for translators and interpreters in social services.

Credentials that can be obtained through professional associations also vary in their scope and credibility. Among the narrowly specialized is the certification recently developed by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), which currently certifies judiciary translators and interpreters in Spanish. The Translators and Interpreters Guild, essentially a trade union, also uses its own certification program, based on recommendations and review, for its referral service. Finally, the most widely recognized credential for translators in the U.S. is ATA's accreditation program. We will now take a closer look at selected credentials administered both by the government and professional organizations. Given the significance and the very recent developments within ATA's accreditation program, we will devote a full article to this topic in the next issue.

Federal Court Interpreter Certification Program

The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam (FCICE) is administered under contract from the Administrative Office of the United States Courts with the National Center for State Courts, in cooperation with CPS Human Resource Services (www.cps.ca.gov) and Second Language Testing, Inc.
(www.2lti.com), respectively. The information below was taken directly from the Federal Court Interpreter Program website: www.uscourts.gov/interpretprog/interp_prog.html. A detailed description of the FCICE for the Spanish language, as well as the test dates and locations, is available at www.cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish/eh.htm. Finally, for those who are curious about the earnings of federal interpreters, see www.uscourts.gov/interpretprog/rates.html.

The Court Interpreters Act, 28 U.S.C. §1827, requires the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts to prescribe, determine, and certify the qualifications of persons who serve as certified interpreters in federal courts when the Director considers such certification to be merited for either persons who are hearing impaired (whether or not they also are speech impaired) or persons who speak only or primarily a language other than English. The use of competent federal court interpreters in proceedings involving speakers of languages other than English is critical to ensure that justice is carried out fairly for defendants and other stakeholders.

The single greatest operational requirement in the federal courts is for Spanish-language interpreters. However, there is also a need for interpreters in other languages, including Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese, and Foochow), Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, and Arabic. The need for specific language interpreters is determined by the court detailing education, training, current telephone number, and mailing address, and, when applicable, membership accreditations as described above. The local federal court will determine on a case-by-case basis whether the prospective interpreter is either “professionally qualified” or “language skilled.”

1. Certified interpreters. Certified interpreters have passed the Administrative Office certification examination. To date, certification programs have been developed for Spanish, Navajo, and Haitian-Creole. In these languages, the courts will only select from available interpreters those who have met the Administrative Office’s criteria for certification. The Administrative Office’s certification examination is administered in two phases and includes written and oral tests that, among other things, measure a candidate’s ability to accurately perform simultaneous as well as consecutive interpretation and sight translations as encountered in the federal courts.

In languages other than Spanish, Navajo, and Haitian-Creole, interpreters are designated as “professionally qualified” or “language skilled.”

2. “Professionally qualified” interpreters. There are two ways in which one can be designated as “professionally qualified.” An individual with previous employment as a conference or seminar interpreter with any United States agency or with the United Nations or a similar entity may be deemed “professionally qualified” if the condition for employment includes successfully passing an interpreter examination. Another way to be deemed “professionally qualified” is to be a member in good standing in a professional interpreter association that requires a minimum of 50 hours of conference interpreting experience in the language(s) of expertise and the sponsorship of three active members of the same association, who have been members for at least two years and whose language(s) are the same as the applicant’s, and who will attest to having witnessed the applicant’s performance and to the accuracy of the statements on the application. Individuals who can demonstrate to the local court that they are eligible in either of these two ways can be classified as “professionally qualified.”

3. Language-skilled interpreters. Interpreters who are not certified (Spanish, Navajo, or Haitian-Creole) or considered “professionally qualified,” as described above, but who can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the court their ability to effectively interpret from the foreign language into English and vice versa in court proceedings, can be classified as “language skilled” interpreters.

Certified and “professionally qualified” interpreters are paid at a higher rate than “language-skilled” interpreters. Individuals who are interested in becoming federal court interpreters in Spanish, Navajo, or Haitian-Creole must successfully pass the federal court interpreter test battery. For other languages, individuals may contact local federal courts to determine if that court has a need for their language of expertise. To be considered a “professionally qualified” interpreter, an individual must submit a resume to the court detailing education, training experience, current telephone number and mailing address, and, when applicable, membership accreditations as described above. The local federal court will determine on a case-by-case basis whether the prospective interpreter is either “professionally qualified” or “language skilled.”
There are currently no continuing education requirements for the Federal Court Interpreter Certification. The written portion of the examination serves as an eligibility requirement for candidates in Spanish. The passing score for the oral examination is 80% (compared to 70% for state certifications). The federal examination also differs from the state examination (described below) because the needs of the court are different at the state and federal levels.

**Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification**

Because of the number of member states involved, the State Court Interpreter Certification program is not nearly as clear-cut as the Federal Certification. The information in this section relies on the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) website.

The scope of this article does not allow for a description of the certification in each member state, and readers are advised to visit the NCSC website for detailed information for individual states and links to member state websites.

The Consortium was officially founded in July 1995, by Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington. The certification program is administered by the NCSC in Williamsburg, Virginia, on behalf of the state court systems in the U.S. It was created as a way to develop court interpreter proficiency tests, make them available to member states, and regulate the use of the tests. It is a mechanism through which funds from several sources can be combined under a single administrative umbrella to achieve economies of scale across jurisdictional and organizational boundaries. There are currently 29 member states. The certification requirements differ from state to state. However, the use of standardized testing instruments, administration, and test rating procedures makes it possible for Consortium members to establish certification reciprocity. This means that interpreters tested in other member states need not be retested in the home member state. The NCSC maintains a central database of interpreters who have been tested using Consortium tests. The Consortium recommends that applicants have the following qualifications before taking the test:

- A native-like mastery of both English and a second language;
- A wide general knowledge characteristic of what a minimum of two years of general education at a college or university would provide; and
- An ability to perform the three major types of court interpreting:
  - sight interpreting,
  - consecutive interpreting, and
  - simultaneous interpreting.

While the above entry qualifications are voluntary, most states require candidates to attend a preparatory workshop prior to taking the examination, to participate in a written examination, and to agree to some level of continuing education. Strict continuing education requirements are enforced in the state of California. The tests currently available include the following languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Haitian-Creole, Hmong, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

**National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification**

Unlike the governmental credentials, the National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification (NJITC) is a credential bestowed by NAJIT, a professional organization representing judiciary interpreters and translators throughout the U.S. The certification is currently available in Spanish only, and while the oral portion focuses on interpreter skills, the written portion of the exam also tests translation skills. The information on NAJIT certification presented below relies largely on the information available on the association’s website (www.najit.org/exams-faqs.html).

The credential of Nationally Certified Judiciary Interpreter and Translator (NCJIT) is awarded to those individuals who pass a rigorous examination covering overall language skills and the common body of knowledge relevant to judiciary and related areas, and who have shown an understanding of and willingness to comply with a professional Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities (www.najit.org/ethics.html). The NJITC program was created at the request of NAJIT’s membership in response to a survey conducted by its board of directors. It is designed to elevate professional standards, enhance individual performance, and offer a credential to those with the knowledge and skills required for the practice of the profession. Its purpose is to create a uniform standard for interpreters and translators working in a wide variety of legal settings, both civil and penal, throughout the U.S.

While there are currently no eligibility requirements, those who successfully pass the qualifying examination are required to accumulate 30 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every three years. The three years commence on the date on which certification is obtained, or as of...
the date of the last recertification. The NJITC examination consists of a written and oral component. Candidates must pass the written examination before taking the oral one. Upon notification of a passing score on the written examination, candidates are notified that they are eligible to register for the oral component. Upon successfully completing both the written and oral examinations, a candidate earns the NJITC credential.

The questions in the written portion of the examination are at a level of difficulty equal to the Graduate Record Examination. Candidates are allowed to use their own dictionaries for the written translation section of the examination, which consists of two passages, one in English and one in Spanish. Written translation sources: medical/penal, legal (financial/civil).

The oral portion consists of the following components:

- Sight Translation
- Consecutive Interpretation
- Simultaneous Interpretation

For sight translation, which is currently tested in the English-to-Spanish and Spanish-to-English language combinations, formal language (high register) is required. One text containing approximately 250 words is used for each language direction, with a 10-minute limit. Sight translation sources: legal documents, insurance forms, letters, confessions, transcriptions, and arrest forms. For the consecutive interpretation component, with questions in the English and answers in Spanish, the testing time is 15-20 minutes for a single recording. Consecutive interpretation sources: civil, financial, medical, and criminal. Simultaneous interpretation is also tested in the English-to-Spanish and Spanish-to-English language combinations, with one recording each and a testing time of eight minutes. Simultaneous interpretation sources: medical, legal, and financial.

The pass-fail cut score is determined using a criterion-referenced method. This is a method whereby candidates are evaluated against a predetermined standard. The passing score is based on an expected level of knowledge. Each candidate is measured against a standard of knowledge and not the performance of other individuals taking the examination. There is no limit on the number of candidates who may pass or fail the examination.

The credentialing efforts in the field of translation and interpretation in the U.S. are on the rise, which will undoubtedly benefit the T&I profession. The most dramatic changes are currently seen in our own credential, ATA accreditation, which will be the subject of our next article. As the editor of this series, I encourage readers to submit any relevant information concerning certification or similar programs, as well as comments on the information published in this series, to my e-mail address at jiri@cetra.com.

Notes


2. Currently only the Spanish examination is administered.

3. This information is also available in Ted Crump’s Translating and Interpreting in the Federal Government, published in 2001 by ATA. The Federal Program is described in the last chapter of the book, authored by Marijke van der Heide.

4. No less than 102 different languages were used in 2002, and 88 in 2001.

5. Marijke van der Heide reports that the Administrative Office is planning to change these definitions and categories in the near future.


7. See www.ncsconline.org/wc/publications/Res_CtInte_ConsortCertFAQsPub.pdf. The member states are (with the date of joining in parentheses): Arkansas (1999); California (2000); Colorado (1998); Connecticut (2001); Delaware (1996); Florida (1997); Georgia (1999); Hawaii (1997); Idaho (1998); Illinois/Cook County (1998); Indiana (2002); Kentucky (2001); Maryland (1995); Massachusetts (2000); Michigan (1999); Minnesota (1995); Missouri (1999); Nebraska (1999); Nevada (2001); New Jersey (1995); New Mexico (1995); North Carolina (1999); Oregon (1995); Tennessee (2000); Texas (2001); Utah (1995); Virginia (1995); Washington (1995); and Wisconsin (1998).


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Go West, Young Translator:
Why You Need to Be in Phoenix

By John P. Shaklee

There are three reasons to attend the 2003 ATA Annual Conference in Phoenix: 1) To address top government officials on the importance of translation; 2) To relearn basic professional skills from other seasoned language mediators; and 3) Pure and simple fun. As Montesquieu once said, “Great lords have their pleasures, but the people have fun.”

1.) Address Top Officials on the Importance of Translation

Imagine an open forum where impassioned colleagues meet with senior government officials to address the current translation shortage. This is exactly what happened at the 2002 ATA Annual Conference in Atlanta. CNN reporters and over 700 conference participants jammed into a Hyatt ballroom to attend “Translation and Terrorism: A Town Hall Meeting.” This was the first time senior representatives of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies appeared before the professional translator and interpreter community to discuss issues of language and national security and to elaborate on current programs and propose solutions. Members of the panel included the chief of the FBI’s Language Services Section and the assistant director of Language Services from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. At issue were the following questions: Could 9/11 have been prevented? How serious is the translator shortage? What is the potential impact on national security?

According to facts presented at the meeting, it remains unclear whether 9/11 could have been prevented. The National Security Agency obtained information that alleged something significant would transpire on September 11. Because of translation delays, the information did not surface until after the attacks. Is there a translation shortage in the U.S.? Yes, intelligence and law enforcement communities lack qualified interpreters and translators in Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Farsi, Uzbek, and other critical languages. “There are over 200 million speakers of Arabic in 25 countries, and 40 million speakers of Pashto, Dari, Farsi, and Uzbek, yet there are only 614 students studying these latter languages anywhere in U.S. high schools, colleges, or universities. Less than 1% of all foreign-language students study critical languages.”

“…By attending the conference, you will get the chance to gain valuable insight and skills from colleagues at more than 100 sessions…”

What is the potential impact on national security? There is clearly a translation backlog. Perhaps you were one of the brave ones who stepped up to the mike at the forum to express your concern over the government’s failure to support the teaching of languages of lesser dispersion. It’s an open secret that government translators and interpreters are paid far less than others in the private sector. One after another, fellow ATA members questioned, cajoled, and pleaded with the panel—what a target audience, held in rapt attention to their every word!

2.) Learn from Colleagues

By attending the conference, you will get the chance to gain valuable insight and skills from colleagues at more than 100 educational sessions. I attended a helpful session entitled “Professionalism 101” by Betty Howell and William Skinner, two successful translators. The presenters explained the business practices necessary to present a consistent and professional image to clients, the community, and fellow wordsmiths.

Howell urged the audience to translate first, then examine the problems afterwards, in order to increase translation speed. Skinner places “/!” around unknown words, continues with the text, and then researches the words he has marked afterwards. This strategy helps you view the document as a whole, rather than as isolated words. Both presenters advised the audience to negotiate a translation deadline before agreeing to one. For example, you might ask if a Monday 8:00 a.m. deadline would work instead of one on Friday at 5:00 p.m. This frees up an additional 48 hours to review and revise your work. When you have to refuse a job, say, “I’m sorry, my production schedule won’t allow me to meet your deadline. May I suggest (name of colleague)? I will be open for work on XXX dates.” Notify clients by e-mail if you go out of town and refer them to a colleague who can help in your absence. Dealing with clients in this manner keeps your options open. This also lets them know you may be available the next time, even if you can’t take the job right now.

3.) Just for the Fun of It!

Attending the conference can actually be a lot of fun. My friend Jill Sommer and I visited “The World of Coca-Cola,” a pantheon dedicated to the world’s most popular soft drink. At the “Tastes of the World” display, we tested dozens of horrid and yummy soft drink flavors.

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Your Own Space: Separating Your Personal and Professional Lives

By Amanda Ennis

Note: The following appeared in Nota Bene (Sept. 2001), newsletter of the Northeast Ohio Translators Association Chapter of ATA, and in the Capital Translator (Spring 2002, Vol. 24, No. 1), newsletter of the National Capital Area Chapter of ATA.

A few weeks ago, I got a call from a small agency I know and like asking me to do a translation. In and of itself, this is a perfectly ordinary event that happens to all of us on a regular basis. What was extraordinary was the timing of the call: Sunday, 10:20 a.m.

“Hello, Amanda,” the caller begins, “did you get the e-mail I sent you?”

“No, I didn’t. What e-mail? When did you send it?” I reply, with an irritated glance at the clock.

“Yesterday.” [Saturday. As if I were a 24/7 office. My irritation grows by the second.] “It’s this teeny little translation I need for Monday morning, less than a page…”

I tell him in no uncertain terms that I am expecting guests, frantically trying to throw my house into some semblance of order, and I don’t care if it’s three words, I’m not doing it. I hang up and realize that it is time to draw a line in the sand.

Most freelance translators work out of their homes, making it difficult to truly “leave the office” at the end of a day or week of hard work. Likewise, some clients feel it is perfectly all right to disturb you at all hours of the day and night, including weekends. What can you or should you do about this situation? Exactly how do you balance your personal and professional personas without angering your clients or giving up every moment of what should be your free time?

Surprisingly, the most effective rule for teaching your clients to respect your personal space also applies to raising children or training dogs: Set clear limits and be consistent in enforcing those limits.

First, if you do not already have set office hours, sit down and decide on some. If you’re an early riser and/or do a lot of work with European clients, you might decide on a 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. schedule. If, on the other hand, you like sleeping in, have other early morning commitments, or do a lot of work with California clients, you could go for an 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. schedule. If you are a part-time translator, you can set shorter office hours or be available for calls only on certain days of the week. Think carefully about just how available you would like to be to your clients. Would you like to have weekend hours as well, or just work Monday to Friday? Or perhaps you’re only available on weekends due to a full-time job in another field. Tailor your hours to your situation.

Second, once you have decided on your office hours, make them known to clients and stick to them. Record your office hours as part of your voice mail or answering machine message so clients will know when they are “out of bounds.” And if you must be away from your desk during your stated office hours, try to give callers an alternate way to reach you: “Thank you for calling Smith Translations. Our office hours are from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. If you receive this message during business hours, please try my cell phone at 555-1212. If you are calling after hours, please leave a message after the tone and I will return your call in the morning. Thank you!” This will show clients that you are serious about being available to them during your stated business hours.

Third, don’t undermine your own efforts by making constant exceptions to the limits you have set. If you have decided your office hours end at 6:00 p.m., turn on your answering machine at 6:00 p.m. If you do answer a late call for some reason, be sure to say something like, “You’re lucky to have caught me—the office normally closes at six.” Don’t respond to late-night client e-mails, either, unless you want to send the message that you are available at all hours of the day and night.

Finally, when it is time to close the office for the day, close it down completely. Turn your computer off, flip the answering machine on or let voice mail pick up calls, and create a physical barrier between you and your office. Close the door if your office has one. Close the cabinet doors and fold everything away if you have a “computer armoire.” Even if you have your equipment set up on a desk or table in your bedroom, dining room, or kitchen, you can throw an attractive blanket or sheet over your work area to help you bring an end to your workday.

As independent contractors, we pride ourselves on providing excellent service and a quick response time to our clientele. We often accept assignments that will require evening and/or weekend work to complete on time without a second thought. These are admirable traits, and a certain amount of overtime is required of us all at one time or another, but unless you also carve out some time for your personal life, you may soon find that you no longer have one.
To understand how to effectively communicate in the workplace, you have to first understand some basic psychological truths about how we, as people, tend to communicate.

If we communicate to a person in the manner they understand best, that communication will be accepted and team members will respond faster and with more motivation. There are three types of communicators.

**Visual Communicators**

Visual communicators take in and process information through their eyes. They also prefer to think, or rather visualize, with their mind’s eye. To be effective with them, you need to use key words such as “look, see, picture,” etc. It is also valuable to give them printed or written materials to go along with what it is you are communicating. They prefer words that enable them to picture things.

**Auditory Communicators**

Auditory communicators use their hearing to develop understanding. They talk to themselves in words that their minds can listen to. They like words that help them hear things. When talking with them, use key words like “hearing, listening, sound,” etc. These people tend to process information quickly and are sometimes likely to respond before you have finished talking.

**Kinesthetic Communicators**

Kinesthetic communicators are feeling people. It doesn’t matter how things look or sound to them, it also needs to feel right (not necessarily good). Others imagine things in terms of movement, feeling, and action. Einstein used this kinesthetic type of thinking when he formulated his famous theory of relativity.

Listen to how your team members communicate. People often use key words in conversation that will help you classify what type of communicator they are. After you have discovered how team members communicate, speak with them in the same manner. It will greatly enhance your interactions.

To gain maximum interest in what you are saying, remember that people tend to get the most interested when the conversation involves them. This isn’t egotistical, it’s natural. Once you understand this, you can tailor your communications so that you receive maximum interest.

**Be Aware of Nonverbal Communications**

Our senses shape our thinking. We remember and think about things as we saw, heard, or felt them. Some individuals and cultures stress one kind of thinking more than others, though all cultures use all the communication modes described above at one time or another.

You may not be sending the message you intend when dealing across cultures. You may be misinterpreting the sender’s message because of cultural differences. It is important to be aware of mixed messages and to not make assumptions about the meaning of nonverbal communications.

Many people believe that when they speak, their words are the primary transporters of their thoughts. That’s just not the case. Become aware of nonverbal messages to harness your communication power.

**Don’t Lose It**

This final tip is one of the most powerful things you should NOT do. If you get angry, you lose. When you “lose it” in front of team members, their confidence is shaken and your credibility is undermined. If you start to get overexcited, take 20 minutes to cool off and then reconvene your meeting. It may help you to remember this quote by Thomas Jefferson: “Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain cool and unruffled under all circumstances.”

If you would like more information, I have an in-depth set of tapes and a workbook that accompanies my full-day workshop on “Effective Business Communication.” If you are interested in the materials, you can find them on my website at www.bartongoldsmith.com under the product tab. If you are interested in a workshop or training for your team, please contact our offices at 866-522-7866.

For complete membership information, visit www.atanet.org today!
Notes from Miami: ATA/Florida Chapter of ATA Medical Translation Seminar

By Verónica Albin

The day opened brilliantly with the exacting professionalism of María Cornelio, director of the Hispanic Research and Recruitment Center at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City, and closed with the warmth and knowledge of Zarita Araújo-Lane, president, Cross Cultural Communication Systems, and Vanessa A. Phillips, director, Cross Cultural Communications Institute in Winchester, Massachusetts.

In How to Translate for the Health Care Consumer, María Cornelio, in her capacity as director and translation reviewer of the Hispanic Research and Recruitment Center, opened by making a distinction between healthcare and medical translation. She defined the former as communicating with the lay public, and the latter as communication between physicians. After mentioning the different types of documents in healthcare translation (i.e., patient education materials, surveys, instruction sheets, questionnaires, inter alia), she then concentrated on explaining the most highly codified of these: informed consent forms for clinical trials.

Cornelio posits that training in translation is mandatory; intuition is simply not good enough. Likewise, she warns about translators relying too much on dictionaries. As an example, she distributed a highly technical electrical engineering paragraph that contained the terms “clásico strings.” A dictionary would likely walk us through violins, cellos, and other sweet-voiced instruments; a lovely but, for this particular text, useless ride in the surrey of language. Rather than relying on dictionaries, she recommends not only rigorous discipline, training, and thorough familiarity with the subject matter, but also extensive knowledge of any and all government regulations that might govern certain types of texts such as informed consent forms.

As legal documents, consent forms—when they arrive on the translator’s desk—have already been subjected to scrutiny by the Food and Drug Administration, legal departments, institutional review boards, committees on the ethical treatment of human subjects, and experts on literacy, Plain English, legibility, and readability, among others. Cornelio stated that the English of consent forms is highly codified and that its translation and editing should be entrusted exclusively to highly qualified professionals.

Cornelio stressed that writing in Plain English, or in its counterpart—español llano—is not a guessing game. There are guidelines available that make the task easier. In particular, she recommended the National Institutes of Health website on Plain Language at http://execsec.od.nih.gov/plainlang/guidelines/. When deciding on the register for the translation after taking into consideration the literacy level of the intended readership, Cornelio reminded the audience of the need to give special attention to coded words. For example, “participant” and “subject” in a clinical trial, or “adverse event” and “adverse reaction,” which are neither interchangeable nor modifiable.

During the second half of her presentation, Cornelio cited several articles in medical and pharmacy journals on patient literacy in the U.S., including a 1995 JAMA article that reported that 35% of English speakers and 61% of Spanish speakers cannot read prescription bottles or appointment cards. What this means is that a significant number of patients cannot tell a medicine bottle from one containing poison. Cornelio then led the participants in well-designed, hands-on exercises on lowering register in accordance with the readability, legibility, and literacy standards.

During the Q&A session following this workshop, participants asked for explanations or clarification regarding readability issues. These included: using left-justified text for target languages, like Portuguese, where such a practice would be deemed unschooled; space allotment and restrictions during desktop publishing; and the use of blank space. Cornelio expertly addressed these concerns. Another participant commented on back translation, stating that it is financially rewarding, but that he wasn’t at all happy with the practice professionally. Cornelio agreed with this statement and added that a translator, once notified that his or her work would be subjected to back translation, might change target language terminology in inappropriate ways (such as relying on cognates) in order for the target language text to back-translate well into the source language and be deemed acceptable by a reviewer. It is unfortunate that time ran out in this workshop before we could complete the excellent exercises included in the handouts. I look forward to attending María
Cornelio’s presentations in the future.

In Beyond Conduit: Finding Your Cultural Center as a Medical Interpreter, Zarita Araújo-Lane and Vanessa Phillips immediately engaged the audience with a metaphor for a life journey. They asked participants to pass a dime from one to the other, and, once it reached the back of the room, to then return it along the same path. A seemingly simple task, but on the return journey the dime did not come back along the exact same route. The lesson from this is that we don’t always remember where we come from or what steps we’ve taken to get to where we are now. As medical interpreters, according to Araújo and Phillips, we must first find out who we are in terms of our own personal journey from our respective cultural backgrounds. Only then can we be culture brokers for the non-English-speaking patients we serve.

The presenters then delved into the acculturation process, which they termed “immigration stages,” narrowing it down to three stages: honeymoon, anger/loss, and negotiation/acceptance. By means of videotaped interpretation sessions and by presenting scenarios, the presenters invited the audience to determine the different stages for each of the characters in these diverse vignettes.

Later in their presentation, Araújo and Phillips explained the application of what they termed “the three cultural patterns,” regarding the conception of authority, time, and community. They also explored core cultural values such as honor, respect, generosity, and trust. They then asked the audience to identify these patterns in a set of hypothetical cases.

Regarding impartiality and transparency, they believe that the interpreter can never be truly impartial, but that feelings should not become a burden during the interpretation session. They stressed that it was important for interpreters to recognize the fact that patients often see them as part of the dominant group, not as peers. As such, Araújo and Phillips stated that the interpreter should provide proper tools to healthcare professionals so that these providers become the interventionists when there is a need for culture brokerage. Even then, interpreters must “find their centers” so they won’t impose their values during the interpretation session.

They closed their presentation with a series of recommendations for coaching providers on cultural competency, citing Harvard psychiatrist and medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman’s work. Kleinman advocates the use of “narrative,” which the presenters called “storytelling,” in order to understand the illness from the patient’s cultural perspective.

Several participants stated during the presentation that Araújo and Phillips seem to have much more freedom of movement in the clinical settings where they work than most other medical interpreters in the U.S. One of the concerns raised was that often the in-house medical interpreter’s first responsibility is to protect the institution that employs him or her. And, furthermore, that the interpreter is not allowed to intervene as a culture broker except when the physician is not getting the answers sought. To these concerns, the speakers replied that educating providers in cross-cultural communication is of key importance. They closed by expressing hope that this culture-based approach to medical interpretation would take root across the U.S.
Grassroots: Getting the Word Out

This new column, initiated by ATA’s Public Relations Committee, reports on translation providers who have identified PR opportunities in their own communities and moved to raise awareness of the key role played by professional translators and interpreters. Contributions are welcome!

Translators Take a Stand at Chamber of Commerce Event

By Chris Durban, co-chair, ATA Public Relations Committee

A shorter version of this article was originally published in Au Courant, the newsletter of the ITI French Network (Issue 1/2003 February).

Norwich, population 300,000, (East Anglia, United Kingdom) resembles many a U.S. city its size, with a bustling business community, a university, and tourist draws that include two cathedrals and a national park (the latter with a distinctly non-U.S. name: “Broads of Norfolk”).

In spring 2002, local English-to-German freelancer Beate Knights teamed up with Corinne Blésius-Robins, who works from English into French, to promote their professional translation services at a twice-yearly exhibition sponsored by the Norwich Chamber of Commerce.

For both women, the Chamber event was just the ticket, targeting as it did local businesses of all sizes and from all sectors—financial services and banking, brewing, construction, agriculture, and more.

“We saw it as an opportunity to market our products and services, promote our ideas, and network with other businesses,” says Blésius-Robins.

The first challenge facing the two, who had never before pitched their services at a business fair, was to design an eye-catching stand that would bring home to even casual visitors just what it was they sold.

“We did not have any of the smoke/wind machines, strobe lights, or other special effects that some exhibitors use,” notes Beate Knights. “Nor did we have any striking pictures or glossy brochures. So after mulling it over, we decided to stick to basics.”

They rented a blue velvet backdrop from the fair organizers and used it to create an attractive display area by adding a long table with a blue cloth. On the table they set out copies of their CVs, business cards, advice and guidelines for choosing a translator, plus a blue bowl brimming with candy.

A multicolored banner reading “Translation Services” ran across the backdrop, along with two large flags—German and French. Between the flags were some laminated examples of bad translations, anecdotes of pitfalls, and market statistics. Some of the materials were inspired by the brochure, Translation, Getting it Right, published by the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (U.K.).

“We were very pleased with the result,” says Blésius-Robins, who rated their stand “one of the best looking ones at the fair.”

But what about visitors?

“People were very curious about our stand, which was definitely one of a kind,” Knights reports. “Many stopped to ask precisely what services we provided. And we were delighted to discover that the majority of visitors found our presence at the fair an excellent idea. In fact, they all welcomed the notion of incorporating translations of written material in their line of business, but, with one or two exceptions, none had really thought about it before, and no one knew how to go about it. So this was also an opportunity to introduce and promote not just our services but our professional associations: the ITI [www.it.org.uk] and the IoL [Institute of Linguists, www.iol.org.uk].”

Corinne Blésius-Robins agrees: “It was an eye-opener to explain to people who knew nothing about translation—and very little about languages!—what it is we do for a living.”

A standard question was “How many languages do you speak?” The women set many visitors straight on the difference between interpreting and translating.

Most important of all, says Knights, they were able to emphasize that professional translation is a business and not a hobby. “We explained that you cannot translate several thousand words of text overnight, that we were not ‘born with it,’ and that translating the highly specialized documents we work on—sometimes with very tight deadlines—requires years of experience.”

Both agreed that the day was well worth it.

“Fun and exciting!” reports Corinne Blésius-Robins. “It was both inspiring and rewarding to promote my own work and the profession to this group of potential clients.” She notes an unexpected benefit as well: “It felt good to be away from my desk for a whole day!”

Knights agreed that the experience was enjoyable. And there were some definite high points: “We felt honored that the Norwegian ambassador visited our stand and left his business card.”

All in all, she says, “It’s a great way to meet prospective new clients and find out about their potential needs.”

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Between these two sessions, Steven Weinreb, M.D., presented on AIDS and HIV for Medical Translators. Dr. Weinreb is board certified in internal medicine and nephrology, and an adjunct professor in the Department of Translation and Interpretation of Modern Languages at Florida International University. This was a highly detailed two-hour lecture that covered the etiology and epidemiology of HIV infection and AIDS. Topics included: statistical information on morbidity and mortality on ethnic and minority groups; structure and life cycle of the virus; sub-groups of the HIV-1 and 2 viruses and their geographical distribution worldwide; diagnosis and opportunistic infections; treatment modalities; and lab reports on viral loads and CD4 lymphocytes. This presentation, although highly informative, was difficult to follow closely because there were no handouts to help participants organize and internalize the information.

I commend ATA Professional Development Committee Chair Marian Greenfield and her committee for selecting not only speakers with a great deal of experience, but most important, for selecting two papers on healthcare that showcased that communicating with patients, whether orally or in writing, is governed by the type of message conveyed and the institution or organization where one works. María Cornelio emphasized the importance of compliance with government standards and observance of good clinical practice precepts in the translation of consent and assent forms, while Zarita Araújo-Lane and Vanessa Phillips focused on the human side of medical interpretation. A nice view of two sides of the coin.
Whether or not you have children of your own, giving a presentation about translation to a school is an important outreach activity. Schools at all levels of education—from grade school through college—welcome participation by the adults in the community. Such presentations help raise the industry’s profile, because both the students and their teachers will talk about the presentation to those around them, and older children might start to consider a career in translation. And the best thing about this community service you provide is that it will be a lot of fun.

To make sure your presentation goes as smoothly as possible, simply follow these two guidelines: 1) come prepared; and 2) use age-appropriate materials. Being prepared means having a written list of talking points and all the materials you need to illustrate them. “Age-appropriate” means that both your points and the props you use are things the students can grasp, remember, and use.

A good way to do both is to coordinate your talk with the classroom teacher. First of all, you’ll need to know how much time you have with the class, usually roughly an hour, and what time to arrive. Second, you can find out what materials might already be available, such as maps. And third, you may be able to tie in your presentation to the curriculum. You can also check with the teacher about any questions as to age-appropriateness.

Following these two simple guidelines will help ensure that you don’t lose your audience. Here are a few pointers about what to do.

1. Take Charge

When you come into the classroom, remember that you are providing an important community service. Better yet, you are giving the students a break from their routine and they are likely to be excited about it. You should have their full attention, so when you walk in the door, remember: you’re in charge. The classroom teacher will usually give you free rein and only step in if you need help.

2. Keep the Pace Moving

Have a clear idea of what you’re going to talk about and how you’re going to talk about it. Decide in advance on a few key points you want to make and jot them down on a sheet of paper or note cards. Remember that the younger the audience, the shorter and simpler you want to keep your message.

I’m going to talk to you about….”

…”Have a clear idea of what you’re going to talk about and how you’re going to talk about it…”

Start by briefly introducing yourself, mentioning how you happen to be visiting the school (“I’m Rachel’s mom” or “Professor So-and-So invited me to speak to your class”). Explain what language or languages you work with and where those languages are spoken. As you speak, you may want to write key words on the blackboard.

For younger children, you may want to just focus on awareness of a particular foreign language. In the case of Spanish, for instance, you should provide some background on history and linguistics to explain where the language is spoken. If the children come away with an understanding of the difference between “Spanish” and “Latin American,” you will have made a valuable contribution.

Secondary school and college students, on the other hand, are ready to hear more about the career of a translator: where you studied, what foreign countries you may have lived in, how you got into the field, how you got your first translation jobs, what type of documents you translate, and what type of tools you use (dictionaries, glossaries, computer, etc.).

Be flexible enough to allow time for spontaneous questions and answers, but firm enough to move on if you think the conversation is veering dangerously off-topic. Be polite but decisive, for example, by saying “Okay, let’s save the rest of the questions for later, because right now I’m going to talk to you about….”

Also, don’t get flustered if you don’t know the answer to a student’s question. Try to suggest how the student might find that information. For instance: “I don’t know what the population of Bolivia is, but you could probably find it online on the Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank, or United Nations Development Programme websites.”

3. Involve the Students

Plan to let them ask questions, but feel free to question them as well throughout your talk. Make sure to call on as many different students as possible, not just the talkative ones.

Sample openers could include: “How many of you speak another language at home?” “Have any of you ever traveled to a country where they speak another language?” When discussing your foreign language, ask the students to list the countries where it is spoken.

For younger students, have small jobs for them to help you with, like passing out materials, holding up maps, even just pressing “Play” on a CD player to play some music, for example.
4. Show and Tell

No matter what age group you’re addressing, plan to bring lots of materials to share with the students, and try to include some they can keep. For example:

- **Maps:** It’s hard to talk about language without mentioning geography. Check with the classroom teacher to see if he or she has any maps you could use (most classrooms have a world map, for instance). If you’re focusing on a particular country, you may want to bring your own map. Better yet, bring Xerox copies of the maps for students to keep.

- **Currency:** Younger children especially may never have seen foreign money. You may want to put some sample bills in a clear folder and pass it around the class (or assign a student to walk it around). If you have enough small change, you could even let the children keep a coin.

- **Flyers, photographs, postcards, crafts, memorabilia:** A flyer about your job or your employer for the students to keep will help them remember you and your talk. Photographs and other memorabilia, such as crafts, in an album or inside a protective cover, can be passed around the classroom. For instance, the sixth-graders in my son’s class enjoyed seeing and touching a hand-woven poncho from Peru.

- **Sample translations:** For younger students, bring sample translations, if possible, of things they may be familiar with. For instance, tell them their names in a foreign language; show them bilingual labels on Goya food packaging; display children’s books that have been published in translation, like *The Cat in the Hat* (some might be available from your local library). For junior high, senior high, and college students, bring copies of sample translations with the originals (nonconfidential materials only, of course), if at all possible, for them to keep and for the teacher to possibly use later.

- **Sample difficulties:** Here’s where you can have fun showing examples of mistranslations. Signs and bizarre menu items would work well for younger children. Just be careful to steer clear of any hint of the xenophobic “foreigners are dumb, they can’t even talk right.” For older students, especially college-age, give samples of difficult terms you yourself have had to research, such as “microenterprise” (“When we first starting seeing this term 10 years ago, we wondered just how much smaller than a ‘small enterprise’ could a ‘microenterprise’ be?”)

5. Be Flexible

While you don’t want the discussion to get too sidetracked, if the students seem to be responding well to a particular topic, don’t feel compelled to rush through it. However, if a point is only getting blank stares, do move on.

Be prepared for some nice surprises, too. Once, while giving a presentation to college students, I was handing out some sample loan proposals, and as I read out the names of the different countries, the students spontaneously identified the member of the group with some connection to each one (“El Salvador? Carlos is from El Salvador!” “Peru! Jennifer went to Peru last summer!”). So I took the hint and handed the proposal to the student in question instead of giving them all to the teacher as I had planned.

For elementary school students, I like to do a short, multiple-choice “pop-quiz” designed to be easy and fun while reinforcing the key points of the talk. A sample question might be “Which of the following countries is not Spanish-speaking? a) Mexico; b) Venezuela; c) Uruguay; or d) Mesopotamia.” After having the students trade papers to grade them (so the teacher doesn’t have to do it), I go over the questions out loud. Then I get to enjoy the gratifying sight of students shooting their hands up and waving eagerly.
Tips for Presentations to Businesses

By Chris Durban

1. Focus, focus, focus. If you are invited to talk about “translation” (a vast subject!), ask the organizers to help identify the language combination(s), document types, legal requirements, etc., that will be of particular interest to your target audience, and make these your focus.

   Select three or four key points; these, plus examples, will usually be enough.

2. Do your homework. Know when and where the presentation will take place (address, building and room number, how to get there, contact info/cell phone for an on-site coordinator, exact time). Check with organizers to see what equipment is available, and have a plan B up your sleeve (e.g., if you plan a PowerPoint presentation, bring overhead transparencies of same and have an overhead projector on standby just in case).

   Practice your presentation in front of a mirror or friends, especially if you are not used to speaking in public. And get to the venue at least 30 minutes ahead of time to get the feel of the place and the audience, especially if you have never been there before.

3. Watch the clock (discreetly). The length of your presentation will depend on the organizers and on your own aims—up to half a day for corporate communications teams facing a specific challenge, 20 or 30 minutes if you are a warm-up act for a keynote speaker at a chamber of commerce event.

   Do not overrun your slot. Save some time for Q&A and/or announce “I’ll be glad to answer questions during the coffee break/lunch.” (Even successful business people can be shy about showing their ignorance in front of the whole room.)

4. Prepare a handout. It should be easy to read and professionally produced.

   If you have several pages, consider using a different color for each; this can make it easier for your audience to follow (“Now look at the example at the top of the yellow sheet….”).

   “…Keep your finger on the audience’s pulse and modulate your delivery…”

   Include contact details for your professional association, the organizing team, yourself, and useful resources.

5. Content (A). If your audience is monolingual, you must find a “bing!-lightbulb-goes-on” example that brings home to them how language can help project the image they want in their chosen market. A striking visual or anecdote may do the trick.

   If you use a skewed example into their language, be sure to follow up with an odd into-foreign one. Remember, your message gets through only when the audience is able to put themselves in the shoes of foreign readers of their documents, however briefly!

6. Content (B). If your audience is multilingual, they may find it easier to take your information on board. (But not always: nodding heads are no guarantee that the penny has dropped.). Try to put yourself in their place as you are writing your speech. Why is your audience there? What will be of use to them? Set the stage with a few key statistics, then review basic steps in quality assurance/how to get organized. A nuts-and-bolts approach is often best (checklists, how to buy translation, how to find a translator, etc.). Empowerment is also a good argument. Remember, everybody finds language fascinating—it’s the linguists themselves who can get strident and/or boring!

7. Content (C). During your presentation, keep your finger on the audience’s pulse and modulate your delivery. Skip over material that’s tanking. Keep an eye on people who look quizzical or bored, and see if you can get them to smile and concentrate. Striking visual aids are a good way to start, end, and sustain audience interest en route.

8. Avoid at all costs: rambling tales of stupid clients’ poor decisions. If you plan to use particularly scathing examples, at the very least make sure the offenders are not in the room, or have a good sense of humor; check with organizers if in doubt.

   Likewise, do not present translators as underdogs or noble struggling losers that nobody listens to. Your audience may take you at your word.

9. Make a list of questions your audience is likely to ask. Develop short answers, with visuals—which you will “just happen to have handy”—should
that issue arise in Q&A. If a questioner starts rambling and shows no sign of relinquishing the mike, break in (pleasantly) to say you have a particularly appropriate example to show him/her during the coffee break and move on.

10. If you have organized the meeting yourself, consider producing proceedings (by taping speeches/Q&A and editing the transcript, for example). Arrange to have this report—or your handout, slides, or summary—published in sponsors’ newsletters or on their websites to cash in on the ripple effect.

11. If nobody invites you, create your own event for the businesses/industries you serve. Team up with translators in the same field and offer to organize a short session for buyers of the documents you specialize in. This can be an attractive option in fields where buyers are particularly clueless or, better yet, face an outside constraint (looming legislation on bilingual healthcare delivery; criticism from ethnic groups; export drive ahead; new markets opening up).

Ask a key buyer/industry body to host the event (this will make it easier to attract speakers and participants; it may also get you well-appointed premises for free). In your promotional materials, speak your target audience’s language. Focus, focus, focus. Make it clear that attendees will leave with at least three practical insights/solutions that they will be able to implement immediately. Bring in additional speakers with related subject-matter expertise to round out your offering (make sure they are good speakers). For your audience, look for quality not quantity: five attendees can be enough to make a meeting work, provided they are the right people (key industry representatives, for example—see “ripple effect” above).

12. Follow up: thank the organizers/hosts/partners in writing within the week, and ask if they have received any feedback. You might even orchestrate a positive feedback campaign from translators or other language-aware people attending the meeting. In all subsequent public discussions of the event, lavish praise upon the hosts/sponsors for their foresight in identifying the need for this meeting and organizing it (yes, even if you and your team organized it). This will make them more willing to host a second event.

Notes


3. Bill Skinner (info@williamskinner.com), Betty Howell (betty@tbhinc.com).

Ten Hot Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor and Translation-Related Journalism

By Neil Inglis

1. Don’t be shy! Speak out! Why let others have all the fun?

2. When writing for publication, tailor your efforts to your target audience, as you would in translation. But beware: While translation and creative writing may seem superficially similar, they require different instincts and reflexes. Know how and when to change gears!

3. When cultivating the acquaintance of media folk, be mindful of the realities of the journalistic world. Journalists rely on contacts, and in writing about translation they are liable to repeat the party line of the self-assertive few, namely, large global translation bureaus and MT vendors. You must also battle popular misconceptions about “universal translator” devices (emphasize that professional translators convey concepts, rather than stringing words together in a mindless mechanical process). When being interviewed by press people, be prepared to offer pithy examples, and give referrals to other talking heads, if necessary.

4. Be realistic about what you need to do in order to get your letters selected for publication. Editors face space constraints; professional special interest lobbyists will jump to the front of the queue when writing letters to the editor. These factors are not insurmountable—treat them as an enjoyable challenge!

“…Hand-wringing and self-pity are huge turnoffs…”

5. Don’t be overawed by the reputation of major-league magazines and newspapers! They are especially prone to misconceptions about T&I! Leave no stone unturned, and use the power of the Internet and e-mail to challenge erroneous press coverage around the world!

6. Do be: Witty and to the point. Tie in your letters to actual recent events and press coverage. Prune your drafts ruthlessly and eliminate cherished insights that aren’t strictly relevant to the matter at hand.

7. Avoid: Quaintness and anything that could be misinterpreted as eccentricity. Lengthy recitations of your professional qualifications are a bad idea. Explain your connection to the T&I world adroitly and in passing, if at all. Above all, beware the Rodney Dangerfield syndrome; hand-wringing and self-pity are huge turnoffs. Take pride in your (immensely challenging) work and get that message across! Your insightful translations give your clients a huge edge in the global marketplace! Think positively.

8. Steer clear of: Internecine ATA issues (accreditation, definition of active membership, etc.) that hold no interest for outsiders.

9. Remember: The boundaries between translation and other forms of professional writing are blurring. Preparing financial reports, advertising copy, and speeches are tasks we already perform as a matter of course. Journalism, though a distinct discipline, forms part of this continuum, and should be welcomed. Embrace the challenges of tomorrow!

10. Start now!

The Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society’s Directory of Translators and Interpreters is now online, enabling translation and interpretation users to find the right professional for the job. Go to www.notisnet.org (click on “Need a Translator or Interpreter?”), and be sure to share the link! The NOTIS website hosts a wealth of client education information, from “beginner” education to payment practice reminders. White papers on our letterhead (in PDF format) are ready to send to your clients as is, or you are welcome to use some of our text to incorporate into a letter to the editor. Just click on “About Translation & Interpretation.”
1. Choose your project carefully to make the work count. A well-known entity and/or a subject that is topical or inherently interesting will make it easier to attract the media and public attention.

2. Make sure that the translator or interpreter involved is a good match for the job. The idea is to draw good attention, so excellence is just as important in a pro bono job as it is with a paying client.

3. Having the right client really helps. Look for contacts who are willing to “pay” with PR and have enough clout either to deliver the PR benefits themselves or to influence decision-makers who can. The ideal contact also has plenty of enthusiasm and at least some sensitivity to the complexities of translation.

4. Ask all the usual questions and then some. Get a clear idea of the scope of the job and the time it will require, and make it clear that your contribution is not unlimited. With no meter running, there is always the danger that a project will turn into a black hole for the translation provider.

5. Be professional but hard-nosed about making the deal, and be explicit about asking for PR in exchange for your services. Many attorneys milk their pro bono work for all it’s worth, and there’s no reason for us not to. Make sure that your name will go next to the photo credits or in some other appropriate place. Ask the client to credit you in a press release or other PR materials, or perhaps they can include an acknowledgment on their website. At the very least, they can give you an endorsement for your own website or promotional material.

6. Give the pro bono client a ballpark estimate of what the work would cost if they were paying for it. This is a useful piece of information when you’re lobbying for a translation-for-PR swap, and it makes both sides mindful of what the linguist is bringing to the table. And it’s healthy for the client to have a clear idea of the value of the work—maybe next time they might actually budget for language services.

7. Set up a contract just as you would for a paying client. With a clear contract, there are no unpleasant surprises: everybody knows up front what will be delivered, when, and how; and everybody’s still friends afterwards.

8. Ask whether the finished translation will be reviewed in-house, and if so, find out how sophisticated the reviewer is. We’ve all heard of the well-meaning but not terribly language-proficient individual on the client’s staff who decides that the translation is substandard because “it’s not close enough to the source language.” The whole point of this exercise is that your name will be on the work, so make sure your contract gives you the final say.

9. Blow your own horn. Can you get your local paper interested in a story on the project (you picked an inherently interesting subject, right)? How about a trade publication in the client’s industry? Your local chapter’s newsletter and the ATA Chronicle are always looking for material. Remember

"…The ideal contact also has plenty of enthusiasm and at least some sensitivity to the complexities of translation…"
Language and National Security Since 9/11

By William P. Rivers

The events of the past two years have thrown America’s language gaps into sharp relief—from the dark days after the attacks of September 11, when Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert Mueller made a public appeal for speakers of Arabic, Dari, Pashto, and other languages critical to the investigation into the attacks, to the campaign in Afghanistan, to the present, when operations in Iraq have drawn heavily on the limited capacity of the U.S. to handle Iraqi Arabic.1 In the interim, the trend of growing attention to foreign language in the U.S., which began well before September 11, has dramatically increased. Congressional action and media coverage have focused on language repeatedly since 9/11, and several legislative and programmatic measures have been undertaken to improve America’s foreign language readiness. However, the attention paid thus far to language post-9/11 is subject to the same risk as past efforts, also sparked by crises, to meet language needs for national security. I will offer examples of how public perception and congressional and federal action in the case of the war against terrorism has sustained an interest in language, and, more importantly, has helped to foster an understanding of the critical role foreign language capacity plays in national security.

The main indicator of the shift in attitude towards language is that public awareness of the criticality of language has increased. Before 9/11, we at the National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) at the University of Maryland used to think language was a “nice” issue, a second-tier issue—that lives were not on the line in the same way as with cancer research, literacy programs, and military readiness. Things have changed. As noted above, the director of the FBI made an unprecedented public plea for assistance in translation and interpretation, calling for volunteers fluent in Arabic, Farsi, and Pashto, among other languages, in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001.2 Since 9/11, the relation between language and national security has been featured on CBS, CNN, NBC, and ABC television news broadcasts and in major newspapers around the country.3

“…We are not yet sufficiently prepared with respect to foreign languages, whether in regards to national security, economic competitiveness, or social well being…”

In addition, we have a better understanding of the challenges posed by language in national security. In terms of economic competitiveness, language is a barrier to efficient transactions. The cost of surmounting this challenge must be assumed by one or another trading partner. In terms of national security, that communication barrier becomes an advantage to our adversaries, since they know we don’t speak their language. The Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Economic Concerns with China (also known as the Cox Commission) cited the intelligence community’s lack of capacity in language as a barrier to effective intelligence gathering and analysis of China’s efforts in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Representative Cox went as far as to state: “It is not unfair to say, if you are in the Ministry of State Security seeking to encrypt your conversation, speak Mandarin.”4 Even our allies understand the value of language as a barrier. In a recent opinion column in the New York Times, Thomas Friedman reminded us that even our ally Saudi Arabia asked for the withdrawal in 1988 of Hume Horan, the last ambassador to the kingdom who spoke Arabic. The Saudis asked for his withdrawal precisely because he spoke their language and had unfiltered access to the Saudi public. Friedman went on to say that as far as the Saudis were concerned, “what we didn’t know wouldn’t hurt us.”

The danger is that we’ve been here before. Although the U.S. government has consistently recognized that foreign language readiness is an element of national security and has correspondingly made such readiness, at least in part, a federal responsibility, that attention has waxed and waned over the past 60 years as one crisis or another provoked a response. In 1941, the American Council of Learned Societies, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation, initiated a program to teach critical languages in an intensive format at campuses throughout the country. That program garnered support from the U.S. Army, metamorphosing into the Advanced Special Training Program.5 The program was abandoned due to the exigencies of conscription. In 1957, the launch of Sputnik catalyzed the passage (in 1958) of the National Defense Education Act, Title VI of which focused support on language and area studies. The crises in 1979 in Afghanistan and Iran influenced the establishment of the President’s Commission on Language and Area Studies. The newly emerging needs of...
globalization and the opening of the former East bloc in 1988 led to the establishment of the Foreign Language Assistance Program for elementary and secondary schools. At the time, Congress stated that, “[p]roficiency in two or more languages should be promoted for all American students. Multilingualism enhances cognitive and social growth, competitiveness in the global marketplace, national security, and an understanding of diverse people and cultures.” The National Security Education Program, created by the National Security Education Act of 1991, responded to the rapidly expanding needs for language and area expertise brought about by the fall of the Soviet Union and the general collapse of the bilateral world, as well as the retrospective recognition of America’s language gaps in the 1991 Gulf War.

One must ask why 60 years of federal investment has not succeeded in building sufficient language capacity to meet critical needs for national security, to say nothing of economic competitiveness and social services? With each of the foregoing efforts, a burst of public awareness and federal support followed, but the overall impact of these and many other programs must be measured in terms of America’s current language needs. Congress has stated these starkly. For example, in its report on the 2002 Intelligence Authorization Bill, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence stated that language competence, “…is the single greatest limitation in intelligence agency personnel expertise and…is a deficiency throughout the Intelligence Community…CIA, NSA, FBI, DIA, and the military services…have all admitted they do not have the language talents, in breadth or in depth, to fully and effectively accomplish their missions.”

What makes this era different? In part, the support seen in Congress and the federal government for language dates to well before the attacks of September 11. Appropriations for the federal programs primarily responsible for supporting critical languages in higher education—the “Title VI” programs—increased ahead of inflation for several years before 9/11. Language resource centers (LRCs) in specific language groups (African, Slavic, East Asian) were added in the FY2000 grants competition. Hearings were held in September 2000 in the Senate on the level of foreign language readiness in the federal government. In another part, public awareness of language, as evidenced by large-scale social surveys, remains solid. According to the 2000 General Social Survey, again pre-9/11, more than 75% of Americans believe that foreign languages are useful for teachers, businesspeople, and federal employees. More than 65% believe that all high school students should graduate with foreign language proficiency. In terms of the concrete measures currently underway to support language in the U.S., the present day sees more such efforts than at any time in history. Current efforts fall into four categories:

1. Increasing the proficiency of current U.S. government linguists, analysts, and other language professionals;
2. Networking and warehousing current U.S. capacity in foreign languages, within and without the U.S. government;
3. Increasing U.S. capacity in foreign languages, especially at higher proficiency levels; and,
4. Building the broad base of language learners in the U.S.

Under each category, a number of initiatives are underway. These include: several initiatives to increase the proficiency levels of federal foreign language professionals, including directives from the National Security Agency and the State Department to require 3-level proficiency on the part of language professionals; the establishment of the School for Continuing Studies at the Defense Language Institute (DLI); the National Flagship Language Initiative (NFLI) of the National Security Education Program, which is directed at guaranteeing a flow from a select set of universities of graduates with a Superior/3-level proficiency in a critical language and an interest in working for the federal government; and the “LangNet” project currently under development by the NFLC, in collaboration with the DLI, which is designed to provide language learning customized to individual needs anytime and anywhere over the web.

Efforts to better track national language capacity include: the National Language Skills Registry, a system for citizens to volunteer their language expertise; the Civilian Linguist Reserve, a study of which is authorized under the 2003 Intelligence Authorization Act; and the National Virtual Translation Center, established under the 2001 PATRIOT Act and charged with networking federal translators across agencies to maximize capacity.

Capacity-building efforts include: the development of a new Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT-V), which will extend to the highest levels rigorous proficiency testing of military and civilian linguists in the federal government; increased funding for Title VI of the Higher Education Act to focus on critical languages, including the establishment of
LCRs in Central Asian and Middle Eastern languages; and the founding of the Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL), a federally funded University Affiliated Research Center recently established at the University of Maryland. This center is responsible for basic and applied research in language on behalf of the security interests of the nation.

The final category of investment is the building of a broad base of language study for sustained national capacity. Here, the record is less impressive, with no direct federal action, and only a handful of nascent efforts to build language capacity in the nation’s formal educational system and its ethnic community schools. The National Coalition for Asian and International Studies in the Schools, under the leadership of the Asia Society in New York, is a national effort under the chairmanship of Governor Hunt which focuses on language and international studies at the K-12 level. The American Alliance for Heritage Languages, a joint effort supported by the NFLC and the Center for Applied Linguistics, seeks to support the development of networks of ethnic community language schools and their integration within the formal educational system. However noteworthy these efforts are, the investment in broadening the base for foreign language study in the U.S. lags far behind the attention paid to the other three areas: investing in current U.S. government personnel; cataloging and warehousing resources; and investing in higher proficiency levels.

To all of these initiatives one must pose a challenge: that the investments made thus far, and the underlying interest in improving national capacity in foreign languages, not meet the same fate as the efforts born in 1942, 1958, 1979, or 1991. While the survival to this day of each provides testimony to the staying power of language as an interest of the federal government, the cumulative effect of sporadic attention and investment is clear—we are not yet sufficiently prepared with respect to foreign languages, whether in regards to national security, economic competitiveness, or social well being. The signal danger of any of the measures underway is the tendency to treat them as solutions to a language problem, when each measure addresses only one part of an ongoing challenge.

Notes
3. The panel on Language and National Security at the 43rd Annual ATA Conference was covered by the Associated Press and The Washington Post.
8. For example, the International Security, Proliferation, and Federal Services Subcommittee of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee held two days of hearings on U.S. foreign language needs and capacities on September 14 and September 19, 2000.
10. I am indebted to Richard Brecht, director of the Center for Advanced Study of Language, for this analysis.
Operational Philosophies and Strategies That Work

By Kim Vitray

Company owners and managers rightfully spend most of their time and effort on satisfying client demands. But developing and implementing philosophies and strategies in areas such as processes and procedures, human resources, customer service, and communication are critical to long-term health, stability, and growth. The following discusses philosophies and strategies that will ensure quality work, on-time delivery, happy clients, and motivated employees, which all leads to a positive impact on your bottom line.

Processes and Procedures
“The man who gets the most satisfactory results is not always the man with the most brilliant single mind, but rather the man who can best coordinate the brains and talents of his associates.”
— W. Alton Jones

One of the most important—because it is extremely effective—processes to implement is to set goals. Goal setting, when taken seriously, handled well, and followed through, enables individual and corporate focus, growth, and improvement. At Ralph McElroy Translation Company (RMTC), each employee, in conjunction with his or her manager, sets new goals for the coming year during the annual performance evaluation, and both the employee and the manager are held accountable for the completion of those goals. Employee goals often include such items as learning a new software program, expanding skills to handle a different type of project, or cross-training to provide backup for another department. Each manager also sets departmental goals at the beginning of each calendar year, many of them based on input from his or her staff.

There are three keys to a successful goal-setting process: 1) limit the number of goals (three is a good number); 2) make the goals specific and achievable; and 3) monitor and report each goal’s accomplishment. Setting too many goals reduces the likelihood that all of them will be achieved, and having unfinished goals at the end of the year—regardless of the many that may have been accomplished—can “feel” negative. This is also the reason for making the goals specific and achievable. Vague goals, such as “improve our quality,” and overly optimistic goals, such as “increase sales 50%;” are not nearly as effective as those that are specific (“reduce our customer complaint rate from 3% to 2% by adding a final quality control check”) and achievable (“increase sales 15% by doing three new promotions”). And your follow-up, as the top manager, is critical. The simple fact that you take the process seriously and expect its outcome is its single best motivator. Knowing that you will ask for a verbal update quarterly in staff meetings and that you will publish quarterly or semiannual progress and annual results in the company newsletter ensures results.

Investing time and effort in making sure staff members know what to do and how to do it is another effective operational process. Of course! But staff members are often left to their own devices in these areas, and while such individual creativity can be an asset, it does not foster a reliable, efficient, and productive workflow. Define procedures so that your staff will not only understand and perform their own tasks and responsibilities well, but will also train others accurately and quickly and cover for each other when the workflow is unbalanced due to absences or a high workload. Defining procedures also minimizes errors, facilitates a consistent product, and gives staff members a common language and knowledge base with which to discuss projects and problems. RMTC has developed procedures for every step in the workflow (from job intake, to patent formatting, to FTP delivery), and these procedures are documented in both paper and online manuals in each department.

Procedures are best developed by consensus of the staff members who will use them, and should be put in writing and widely distributed, accompanied by training. Procedures can take many forms, such as checklists, step-by-step instructions, or flowcharts, and must be reviewed and updated regularly in order to remain useful and meaningful. When RMTC needed a procedure for into-foreign-language projects, our middle managers formulated it in our weekly staff meeting and decided a flowchart would best illustrate its workflow steps. Then one of our project coordinators and I provided companywide training via a simple Microsoft
PowerPoint presentation to groups of 10 staff persons at a time. This particular procedure was reviewed and revised several weeks after implementation, based on feedback from the staff and problems that surfaced during the trial period, and then again more recently as the nature and circumstances of our work and our clients’ needs changed over time. Of course, not all projects will “fit” the established procedure, and your staff should recognize and understand this and remain open to modifying or bypassing a procedure when necessary or more effective.

Another process that will be well worth your investment is to cross-train. What if your shipping coordinator (or receptionist, or bookkeeper, or QuarkXPress expert) becomes ill and cannot work for several days or weeks? How will you handle a sudden and unexpected (but welcome!) spike in your workload? Can you afford the high cost (in dollars, time, quality, and customer dissatisfaction) of temporary personnel or inexperienced existing staff? Cross-training to duplicate functions for emergency or extra coverage protects you against all these costs. It also creates opportunity and adds value for your employees, and fosters their cooperation with each other and their understanding of corporate issues. At RTMC, staff members at all levels have been cross-trained, not only within their own department but across other departments as well. For example, our production manager has cross-trained most of her staff to assist in at least one other department—from downloading jobs from translators, to preparing customer estimates, to performing computer-related tasks delegated by our systems administrator. So we are well prepared for a variety of events, both planned and unplanned, because our staff has been cross-trained so that they can quickly and easily step in to perform a second function, even one that may be unrelated to their primary role.

Your operation will also benefit if you learn (and teach and model) how to hold effective meetings. A meeting should never last longer than an hour—if you can’t deal with an issue in an hour or less, then you have some other, larger, operational or personnel problem that needs addressing. RTMC holds a weekly meeting of key operational staff; and when an hour’s time has passed we stop meeting and postpone any unfinished or untended business to the next week. Most of our weekly meetings last less than a half an hour, as staff members have learned to place on the agenda only those items that require input and consensus from others, and to present them in a concise and straightforward fashion. Speaking of agendas, an effective meeting always has one, even if it’s just a simple bulleted list of topics to be addressed; and distributing it in advance enables attendees to come prepared with ideas and discussion points. An effective meeting also always starts on time—this demonstrates to staff that their time is, and should be, respected and valued. A good meeting leader keeps to the agenda and facilitates communication and consensus decision making. Within 24 hours of the meeting, the leader should also distribute a summary of the meeting that includes the action items (who, what, and when) that were agreed upon.

A process that will demonstrate just how well (or not) your procedures and activities are working is to measure results. The act of measuring something will virtually ensure that it improves, even if you don’t set goals or reward results. But be careful what you do and don’t measure—for instance, if you measure speed and don’t measure quality, then a fast but sloppy work product may be the result. RMTC currently measures on-time delivery, employee productivity, a customer complaint rate, and staff turnover. We have developed an electronic time and job tracking system that automatically calculates and reports the first two measurements, on-time delivery and employee productivity. However, simple manual tracking can also be effective—our customer complaints are monitored by entering into a Microsoft Word table the date, the client and job numbers, the complaint, the resolution, the word count, and the category of the complaint (careless or typographical error, failure to follow instructions, communication, shipping/delivery error, or quality problem). This information is distributed companywide regularly.

Finally, have a disaster contingency and recovery plan. Its most essential component is to backup your data and keep a backup copy off-site. If you do nothing else to prepare for a disaster, do this, and stop reading this article in order to do it now. (We backup our financial, job tracking, timekeeping, and work product data nightly, and update our offsite copy weekly.) Then, if a disaster occurs, your first priority is your employees’ safety, and you can give that your undivided attention, knowing that when you and they are ready and able to return to work, your information resources will have been preserved. To help ensure your employees’ safety during a disaster, prepare, distribute, and practice a building evacuation plan. You may have to endure some teasing and laughter when implementing this, but the more important consideration is that it may save your employees’
lives or prevent injury. You should also have an emergency communication plan and operational contingency and recovery plan. Questions to consider in the drafting of these plans include: What will the communications to employees and clients be, who will prepare them, who will deliver them, and how? Who are the key employees who will need to be involved in getting the operation running again, where and when will they meet, and what are the issues in priority order that they will need to address? What are the minimum space and equipment requirements for a temporary or substitute operation, how will those be acquired, what vendor alternatives are available, what and where are emergency financial resources, and how will they be obtained? Many good books can help you address this process, and your insurance companies and workers’ compensation organization may also be of assistance.

Human Resources

“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudice and motivated by pride and vanity.”

— Dale Carnegie

If you take the time and trouble to hire the right, best person for each position, many common human resources problems can be avoided. The two techniques that will have the most impact on your ability to do this are to: 1) create (or update) a job description, and 2) employ behavioral interviewing with prepared questions. A good job description will outline in detail and comprehensively the position’s essential duties, required and desired qualifications, and general working conditions and physical requirements. You will need to thoughtfully consider exactly what you want the employee to be responsible for and accomplish, and what skills, education, experience, and natural personality traits will best enable success in those activities and tasks in your company’s environment. And by using behavioral interviewing, you can determine whether a candidate actually possesses those skills, experiences, and traits and knows how to use them.

Behavioral interviewing is based on the axiom that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. From behavioral examples gained through pre-interview question preparation and certain interviewing techniques, you can discover facts about a job candidate’s history that demonstrate whether he or she has the necessary skills. Behavioral examples describe actual events, and they are best elicited by open-ended questions that begin with: Tell me about a time when…? Give me an example of…? Describe for me how you would…? How did you handle a situation where…? What did you do when…? Why do you enjoy…? Interviewees generally do not spontaneously refer to such actual events, so you will need to actively and specifically solicit these examples and be prepared to tolerate periods of silence as you wait for the candidate to think of them. The more behavioral examples you can obtain, the more real information you will have upon which to base a hiring decision.

Another human resources fundamental is to have an employee handbook, which should contain your company’s stated employment policies. The following topics are typically included in an employee handbook, and many books and software programs are available to help create one: 1) general information (introduction to and history of the company, mission statement, customer service philosophy, equal opportunity statement, confidentiality and nondisclosure expectations); 2) employment (types of employment, introductory period, performance evaluations, telecommuting); 3) compensation (work hours and record keeping, pay periods and procedures); 4) benefits (insurance, 401(k) plan, time off); 5) employee conduct (attendance, smoking, problem resolution, termination, personal business and phone calls); and 6) rules and policies (workplace harassment, computer use, security and safety, solicitation, theft, substance abuse, concealed weapons, workplace violence). Your employee handbook should be reviewed, updated, and redistributed annually, and with each distribution you should obtain a signed acknowledgment of receipt from each employee. Once the handbook is implemented, be absolutely fair and consistent in the application of its policies. If you choose to bend or break a rule, be sure you know why and are aware of the precedent you set by doing so.

A third essential human resources function is to do performance evaluations. How else will employees know how they are doing, what’s going well, what needs improvement, what you expect, where they can grow, what opportunities are available, and how they can succeed? At least once a year, every employee deserves an investment of your time, effort, and personal attention in an honest and formal evaluation of their performance. At RMTC, our performance evaluation process consists of an annual written evaluation by the manager and self-evaluation by the employee, pre-
pared independently of each other and exchanged the day before a discussion meeting. If the manager has been doing his or her job properly throughout the year, then there should be no great surprises in either the evaluation or self-evaluation—the two evaluations should generally agree with each other—and the discussion can focus on the future instead of the past. Your evaluation should be specific, accurate, complete, and supported by examples. A good rule of thumb (in spite of its negative connotations!) is to consider that anything you write may be read in open court one day. The evaluation should also be timely and the discussion uninterrupted—otherwise you send a message to the employee that their performance isn’t important. Be as polite, respectful, and positive as possible, particularly when discussing constructive feedback, and be very aware of your body language and tone. Ask the employee what you can do differently, better, or more of, to help him do his job better, and also ask if he needs anything or has any questions, concerns, complaints, or comments. Actively encourage the employee’s input—it may not be enough to simply ask once and then move on if he doesn’t respond—and listen without interrupting. And be sure to close with a sincerely and clearly expressed thank-you.

Finally, treat your employees as well as you can. Provide all the supplies, tools, resources, support, coaching, and training they need and a clean, safe, pleasant working environment. Offer the best pay and benefits you can. Recognize good work or extra effort with a simple acknowledgment. Empower and even challenge your staff with responsibility and authority, trust them, and expect that they will perform well and partici-pate in solving their own problems. Be flexible and open, promote balance, and watch for and address burnout. Your employees will repay you with their best performance, their loyalty and dependability and responsiveness, their creativity, and their good will.

**Customer Service**

“Anybody can do anything they want to, if they want to badly enough.”
— Chuck Whaley (my dad)

We know to make sure the customer comes first, but what does that really mean? First, deliver what you promised, when you promised it. Accomplishing this alone will set you apart and win and keep your customers. Then, meet your clients’ needs, and graciously. Are you delivering what they want, rather than what might be easier for you to provide? If you must say no to their request, always offer an alternative. Does your customer service staff understand the importance of patience and good humor, regardless of the client’s state of mind? Next, communicate, communicate, communicate! Too much communication with your client is far better than too little. If you communicate too much, they will tell you; if too little, they will simply leave you. And honesty still is the best policy, even when you must disappoint them. Also, educate, educate, educate! An educated client will become a valued partner who is able to communicate with you clearly, plan and organize projects, allow for reasonable due dates when possible, and have clear expectations of the deliverable. And finally, minimize client “bashing” among your employees. Expressions of frustration with clients can be healthy venting when infrequent, short, and done with good humor. However, our clients—not our managers or company owners or bookkeepers—pay our wages and salaries, and this understanding and context should frame every action and word, decision and choice we make.

Enable customer service at all levels of your organization. Make sure that every employee understands that they are allowed and even encouraged to make any decision they think necessary to satisfy a customer, without repercussions, even if it costs you time, effort, or money elsewhere. Every person who might pick up the phone and find themselves answering a client call, even your cleaning staff after hours, should know how to greet the client professionally, how to transfer the call and who to transfer it to based on the client’s need, and what the options are if the right person isn’t available to take care of them. These behaviors can be modeled, practiced, and reinforced daily if you also coach your employees to identify their internal customers and treat them like external customers. Imagine if each person in each department delivered to the next person in the next department what they promised when they promised it, with clear and honest communication and helpful information, in good humor and graciously!

**Communication**

“One’s effectiveness is determined by one’s ability to reach others through the spoken or written word...perhaps the most important of all skills.”
— Peter Drucker

Communication seems to be society’s greatest challenge—another of my favorite quotations is “Nine-tenths of the serious controversies which result in life result
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from misunderstanding” (Louis D. Brandeis). A simple lack of communication is one problem, so...share information, through meetings, publications, bulletin boards, your website, informal chats, and e-mail. Employees who are well informed about all operational matters, whether or not they are directly involved or affected, make better decisions, cooperate more with their colleagues, serve customers better, and produce a higher quality product. They feel included and important, and are motivated to act in the best interests of their department and the company, not just themselves. When employees don’t have enough information, they tend to assume rather than ask, and such assumptions are often incorrect and detrimental.

A widespread and common communication problem is lack of communication skills; these are usually not modeled or taught by our parents or in our schools, higher education institutions, or workplaces. So, develop communication skills, both written and verbal, in yourself and your employees. This will involve learning about and accepting different communication styles, and modifying your style to accommodate and facilitate good communication with another. Regardless of your communication style, always try to be direct, clear, explicit, specific, precise, and polite. And develop your awareness of non-verbal communication in yourself and others. Those who receive your communication will “hear” your tone and body language more than your words, particularly if they are not all in agreement. Their body language will instinctively and subtly reflect back to you what was “heard.” Developing communication skills in your employees also means not intervening and resolving their communication problems. Instead, you should encourage, facilitate, coach, and expect employees to repair and rebuild their own communication situations directly with each other, and express confidence in their ability to do so.

Another key factor in communication is to listen, patiently, openly, attentively, and especially without interrupting. If you can be available to listen to your employees, give them your undivided attention for as long as they need it, and not react badly to anything they might have to say, you will find that they are more likely to be receptive to, and act on, any advice you might give and to solve their own problems. And listen closely to the company “grapevine.” You will learn a lot, particularly if you simply absorb what you hear without judging or responding to it. The well-known practice of MBWA (management by walking around) is also an effective listening tool. I try to be up and down the halls and stairs several times a day at RMTC, listening and observing, and at least every other day I make a point to spend time greeting everyone and asking what’s going on and how they’re doing.

It’s important to have the tough conversations by learning how to give constructive feedback and resolve conflict. Most people will endure prolonged anger, frustration, or problems rather than have the short—but difficult—conversation that will resolve the situation, usually because they don’t know how. When giving constructive feedback, carefully consider in advance what you will say and how you will say it, what situations and behaviors you will use as examples, how you would like for the employee to behave differently in the future, and how the employee might respond and how you might handle a variety of responses. Location and timing are critical to both your success in delivering the feedback and the employee’s receptivity to it. The feedback will be virtually useless if given in the presence of others, which is embarrassing to the employee, or while either you or the employee is angry, frustrated, upset or hurt, busy, preoccupied or anxious, or otherwise having a difficult day for any reason. Instead, choose a private place and a time when both of you have the time, focus, and resilience for the task, and begin by asking the employee’s permission to discuss the issue at hand. Always ask questions, confirm the facts, and solicit the employee’s point of view before offering your feedback, and be prepared to explain why the feedback is important. Choose your words thoughtfully, describing the behaviors and actions rather than characterizing the person or her motives, and begin your sentences with “I” or “we” instead of “you.” Guide the discussion from a focus on the past to a focus on the future as quickly as possible, and be sure to ask the employee how you can help. Finally, close the conversation with a strong and positive expression of your confidence in the employee’s ability to act productively on the feedback, and lighten the ending mood with just a tiny bit of humor.

Many of the above suggestions for giving constructive feedback also apply to resolving conflict. In addition, deciding that you will accept at least half of the responsibility for the conflict is the most effective step you can take toward resolution, and the more responsibility you accept and the sooner you accept it, the more readily your partner in conflict
will do the same. Consider that you may be contributing to the conflict in ways that you don’t even realize, and solicit (and be willing and prepared to listen and hear) the other person’s viewpoints. Getting started is often the most difficult step. Try this: “It seems to me that we aren’t communicating and cooperating well enough to get our jobs done right with a minimum of aggravation. Would you like to sit down with me for a few minutes to talk about it and see if we can figure out some things to try to change that?” Agreeing to remain polite, refrain from sarcasm, and focus on the facts will then go a long way toward fostering a productive discussion. The more listening and question-asking and the less talking you do, the more quickly you will reach a breakthrough point in the conflict from which resolution becomes possible. There is a win-win solution to virtually every conflict, and working—stretching—until you find it together will ensure a real and lasting resolution. Using these techniques to help others resolve their conflicts is called mediation, and much good information and training are available on that topic.

Conclusion

“Plant a thought, harvest an act. Plant an act, harvest a habit. Plant a habit, harvest a character. Plant a character, harvest a destiny.”
— Indian proverb

Do these philosophies and strategies really work? At RMTC, the workflow runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, regardless of who is or isn’t working on any given day, and we spend minimal time “fighting fires.” Our employees, visitors, clients, and vendors remark on our pleasant environment, and our clients regularly take the time to compliment in writing an employee by name on the customer service they received. In 2002, 94% of our jobs were delivered on time or early, our customer complaint rate was between 1% and 1.5%, and our staff turnover was only 7.1% compared to a national average of 22% to 25%. Our expenses were reduced from 2001, our capabilities and service offerings expanded, and our sales increased in a down market. What do you think?

Suggested Resources

Coaching for Improved Work Performance, by Ferdinand Fournies

Customer Service for Dummies, by Karen Leland & Keith Bailey

The Mediator’s Handbook, by Jennifer Beer with Eileen Stief

The Power of Positive Criticism, by Hendrie Weisinger

Contingency Planning and Disaster Recovery, by Donna Childs and Stefan Dietrich

Doing Well By Doing Good: Using Pro Bono Work to Market the Profession and Yourself

that you may have to write the first story yourself (or talk someone else into writing it) in order to get a journalist interested.

10. Don’t get stuck on the wrong end of the gravy train. Make it clear, gracefully but firmly, that this was a one-shot deal. One possible approach might be a follow-up letter to the pro bono client providing your card or brochure and ending with something like, “Please don’t hesitate to contact me for a quote on any new material you may need. We found the project very rewarding and would be delighted to work with you again.”

If you find yourself on the phone with someone who’s seen the publicity and has come to the erroneous conclusion that you’re a full-time charity, you could try something along the lines of, “Oh, thank you, I’m glad you liked our work. That’s one of our main areas of expertise, and the X project was very rewarding for us. Unfortunately, our pro bono budget for this year is fully committed, so we couldn’t handle this project on the same basis. If you can send me your text, I’d be happy to prepare a quote.”

11. What you can do. Follow up on any projects you’re willing and able to take. If you can’t take the job yourself, contact ATA’s Public Relations Committee or ATA Headquarters and pass on the lead.
Phonic Awareness in Spanish Translations:
A Matter of Good Style

By Carmen Graizbord

P lato used to say that the sounds of words were significant in themselves. Socrates said that certain phonic elements were appropriate to express certain concepts. Among Romans, Cicero rejected the sound of the letter r as “littera canina” (a dog-like letter). In more recent times, theories about the natural expressiveness of linguistic sounds were taken to the extreme. Poets and theoreticians went so far as to attribute a color to each vowel, establishing an almost aesthetic-literary dogma. Later on, the principle of the “colored audition” fell into disrepute, but recently Gudula List, a German psycholinguist, admits as a fact the existence of a phonic symbolism. I believe these individuals may have a point.

In our work as professional translators, it is a given that we have an excellent command of the source language and a native-speaker command of the target language. It should also go without saying that, as accredited language experts, we are well versed in the intricacies of the grammar of our native language. But then, why do some English-to-Spanish translations read so poorly, even when they may convey the right message? I contend that translators are also writers, and as such they should have a writer’s awareness of the sound of what they write. Little does it matter that we are dealing with a technical or a literary translation. It is only fair to give our readers the consideration they deserve.

While it’s true that translators have deadlines, and that it may be hard to find competent proofreaders who are also good writers, it does not take much time, and it does do a great deal of good, to read our translations aloud as a matter of routine. Language is like music: when it’s out of key, it sounds awful! When a reader has to stop at every other translated sentence to read it again in order to grasp the meaning, it is reasonable to say that we are not doing a very good job as translators. Our job is to convey the message in the most effortless way so that the reader can focus on the meaning rather than on a clumsily structured sentence. The translator should not be an obstacle between the original text and the translated version. The translator should be invisible to the reader. While English and Spanish both have Indo-European roots and bear some resemblance, they differ greatly in sound, structure, function, and usage. It is critical to remember that translators do not translate words but meaning, and that each particular language has its very own music.

Let’s first touch on a few phonological differences between English and Spanish. To start with, English and Spanish vowels have very little in common in terms of their sound. There are about 12 different vowel sounds in English, while there are only 5 basic sounds in Spanish, with some very insignificant variations stemming from them. There are a few consonants that sound exactly alike in both languages (ch, f, g, m, n, s), but only when followed by a vowel sound. English words are full of consonant clusters (strong, breakfast, crippled, scripted, etc.) and consist of stressed and unstressed syllables. Spanish pretty much follows a pattern of vowel-consonant-vowel, with some consonant combinations which involve mostly “l” and “r” (bla, ble, bli, blo, blu; bra, bre, bri, bro, bru; cla, cle, cli; etc.). Syllables receive the same stress value. These differences are directly responsible for two distinct rhythmic types: 1) the stress-timed rhythm of English, which is based on stress groups; and 2) the syllable-timed rhythm of Spanish, which is based on even syllables, each syllable receiving one quick beat.

Alliteration in titles, headlines, and popular terms is very much used in English for its catchy mnemonic value (The Wind in the Willows; Tyson Tired and Troubled; Kit and Kaboodle). In Spanish poetry we may find alliteration, but in everyday Spanish our ears don’t much like the sound of it.

Sentences in English tend to be brief (The meeting will be held at 3:00 p.m. Pizza will be served.). Spanish sentences are ordinarily longer and connected. Short sentences in Spanish sound too choppy (La junta se llevará a cabo a las tres de la tarde y en ella se servirá pizza a los concurrentes).

In English, it is good practice to repeat the same nouns throughout a text to avoid confusion. (Parents should read to their children. Children should be exposed to the written language early by their parents. To make sure that their children understand what is being read, parents should ask children some key questions, etc.) Spanish does not tolerate such repetitions lest a text becomes extremely tiring.

So marked are the different sounds of English and Spanish that using the wrong rhythm can hinder the reader’s understanding and processing of the material being read. Hispanic music and English music have very different rhythms. Music paces, sprays, or gallops just like its language. The same thing happens in poetry.
The readers will appreciate the effect by reading aloud an excerpt of a poem by the Spanish poet Jorge Manrique (1440-1479) along with a translation by Longfellow (see Figure 1). Needless to say, what Longfellow rendered is not a transliteration of the Manrique text. It is a true translation which conveys the meaning. It does not attempt to keep the same terms, the same sentence length, or the same order into which words are arranged in the original. A poem is a tall order to tackle, so let’s look at an easier text and see how it’s done.

The workload in this project must be shared by the staff. It should be divided in such a way that all tasks are well defined at a level sufficiently detailed to be readily understood and manageable.

En este proyecto la carga de trabajo deberá dividirse entre el personal, de tal manera que todas las tareas queden bien definidas y suficientemente detalladas con el fin de que logren entenderse y manejarse con facilidad.

In the Spanish version, the first two sentences were combined to form one longer sentence, avoiding the translation of share, which in Spanish would be too close to divide. The passive voice in to be readily understood was avoided and changed in the Spanish for the subjunctive que logren, which sounds more natural.

Although syntax is a component of language that deals with the order in which we arrange words into sentences, it is inextricably linked to phonology in that it contributes to the particular rhythm of a language. The syntax of English and the syntax of Spanish vary greatly. Let’s consider a few differences.

In English, sentences usually start with a noun phrase followed by a verb phrase and a predicate element (I want an apple.). In reported speech, our sentences normally begin with the subject of our attention; a noun phrase (A motion was made to approve the minutes as read), hence the frequent use of the passive voice. In Spanish, we don’t have to begin our sentences with a noun phrase because the verb agreement points to an understood subject. We have the option to begin our sentences with a noun phrase or with a verb phrase (Quiero una manzana.). Spanish does not accept the passive voice so readily as English, except in very specific cases. In Spanish, verbs are favored over nouns (Se hizo una moción para aprobar las actas tal como se leyeron).

In English, it is common to write the date, time, and place at the end of a sentence (A meeting will be held tomorrow in the school auditorium at 3:00 p.m.). In Spanish, we prefer to express it differently (Mañana a las 3:00 p.m habrá una junta en el auditorio de la escuela.). If we use a Spanish construction that is very close to that of English, our sentences can’t be read naturally because they don’t sound right.

So then why do I keep reading Spanish translations that keep virtually the same syntax as the original English text? Why do we keep on trying to make Spanish sound so much like English, even if by doing this we end up producing a hybrid Spanish that sounds so unpleasant to the ear? It seems to me that some translators are tempted to take the shortest, easiest way. In other words, they take advantage of the apparent resemblance between some words (composition – composición). Because there are some similarities between the languages, sometimes it is even possible to provide a one-to-one equivalence (The dog is dead – El perro está muerto), but it’s also very easy to make mistakes, including semantic mistakes like these: eventually – eventualment; relevant – relevante; effective – efectivo; consistent – consistente. In our search for the quickest way to finish a translation, we may sacrifice a lot in the process.

The sound of a language is the sound of music. Have you ever tried to translate an American song into Spanish? Try to translate Rodgers and Hart’s “My Funny Valentine.” Not only is it hard to come up with a decent version of the lyric, but try to fit the Spanish lyric into the song!! This is exactly what happens when we try to fit Spanish words into an English structure.

As long as we are aware of the sound of our words, our work will be the better for it.

Figure 1: A Comparison of Spanish and English

| Recuerde el alma dormida | O, let the soul her slumbers break |
| Avive el seso y despierte | Let thought be quickened, and awake; |
| Contemplando | Awake to see |
| Cómo se pasa la vida | How soon this life is past and gone |
| Cómo se viene la muerte | And death comes softly stealing on, |
| Tan callando. | How silently! |
The Onionskin  
By Chris Durban

The Onionskin is a client education column launched by the ITI Bulletin (a publication of the U.K.’s Institute of Translation and Interpreting) in 1996. Comments and leads for future columns are very welcome; please include full contact details. Contact: chrisdurban@compuserve.com or fax +33 1 43 87 70 45.

Nobel Prize Winner to Translators: Keep Those Questions Coming

No less an authority than José Saramago, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for literature, came out in favor of inquisitive translators in May.

Speaking in Buenos Aires at the Fourth Latin American Conference on Translation and Interpretation, Saramago, who writes in his native Portuguese, insisted that he expects translators of his books to raise questions, highlight uncertainties, and elucidate intent and meaning where these are not immediately clear.

“Good translators,” he said, “are the ones that ask questions.” Since writing gives the mistaken impression that everything is clear, translation “is an opportunity to reexamine what the author really means,” he explained. (The Onionskin was ecstatic: as we regularly point out, the same applies to scientific, technical, and commercial translation.)

Addressing an audience of 1,400, Saramago stressed the cross-cultural role of translators. “Writers create national literature,” he said, “but it is translators who create international literature.”

José Saramago’s own works have been translated into 45 languages and are available around the world. His awareness of cross-border language issues reflects not only his writing but also his personal experience as a translator: from 1955 to 1981 he produced (in his “free time”) Portuguese translations of Colette, Pär Lagerkvist, Jean Cassou, Guy de Maupassant, André Bonnard, Tolstoy, Baudelaire, Étienne Balibar, Nikos Poulantzas, Henri Focillon, Jacques Roumain, Hegel, and Raymond Bayer.

Saramago is married to Pilar del Río, a journalist who is also his Spanish translator, and who in a separate presentation discussed the challenges his books pose to translators.

She had harsh words for “cultures which believe they are self-sufficient and do not need other languages,” noting that only 3% of all books published in the U.K. were originally written in languages other than English. But she had warm praise for the sensitivity and “craftsmanship” of Saramago’s many translators. And no doubt she asks him a lot of questions.

Lloyds TSB Puts Foot in Mouth in Britain

Photos in a recent brochure from U.K. bank Lloyds TSB show a 40ish couple in holiday attire sipping cocktails in an exotic venue, with a text reminding readers just how handy credit cards are for foreign travel and vacations.

The scene appears authentic—the British holidaymakers are suitably pink and the man is wearing a Hawaiian shirt. But as an Onionskin reader points out, the chit waved by a waiter in the foreground of one restaurant shot is distinctly less genuine.

To emphasize “foreign location,” the slip of paper is helpfully but laboriously headed la Cuenta (“The Bill”). On closer examination, readers discover that our couple dined on Los principios (x2), a mistranslation of “starter” in U.K. English (principio means “beginning/beginnings” or “principle” in Spanish). They then moved on to El curso principal (x2), a mistranslation of “main course”—curso in Spanish refers to a course of study, not a meal.

A call to the Lloyds TSB marketing department confirmed that amateur linguists had been at work.

The bank had relied on a marketing agency with no record in language services to produce the brochure. “If we’d realized it hadn’t been checked, we’d have done it ourselves!” lamented our contact, noting that the bank tries very hard to ensure that the documents it publishes are accurate.

Is this nitpicking or a more serious image issue? We let our readers judge. But it recalls French daily Le Monde’s proud announcement of a link-up with The New York Times” in half-page, full-color display ads. The ad ran just once before the paper’s highbrow readers complained about the missing “s”; “How parochial can you get?” sniffed one. Depending on your target audience, accuracy in language use—even in foreign languages!—does set the tone for service expectations.

So was Lloyd’s stumble a dictionary look-up? Not necessarily, says another source—more likely a British art director back from a vacation in Spain where he ordered “courses of study” and was served tasty local specialties by good-natured waiters.

A reminder, in any event, that while a smattering of a foreign language may make for an enjoyable holiday abroad, it is not enough for a print run, especially for a would-be premium product.

Language Slip Fuels Nuclear Row

As diplomatic tensions mounted over a suspected nuclear weapons program in North Korea, U.S. officials attributed at least one incident to a flawed translation.

On April 20, a statement published by North Korea’s state-run Korea Central News Agency indicated
that the country was in the final stages of reprocessing spent nuclear fuel rods. Technicians were “successfully reprocessing more than 8,000 spent fuel rods at the final phase.”

The statement, issued shortly before talks were scheduled to begin between U.S., Chinese, and North Korean officials in Beijing, led the Bush administration to reconsider that meeting.

But a retranslation produced from the original KCNA Korean-language press release by the Federal Broadcast Information Service gave a different message altogether: “We are successfully completing the final phase to the point of the reprocessing operation for some 8,000 spent fuel rods.”

In other words, the North Koreans had stopped just short of the reprocessing operation and “the talks will go on,” a senior administration source declared.

The incident underscored the critical importance of language in the shades-of-gray world of international diplomacy. The more critical the situation, the more carefully documents will be scrutinized by all parties, making accurate translation essential. And while awkward phrasing will occasionally sound a red alert, reminding parties that they are negotiating through the veil of a different language, many mistakes are not immediately visible.

The same applies to spoken language. Diplomats regularly rely on interpreters for not only the words but also insights into the positions and priorities of their opposite numbers.

Even multilingual officials often insist on working through an interpreter. The official reason may be protocol, but interpreters also act as a buffer, giving negotiators more time to reply—not to mention a scapegoat in the event of a VIP misstatement. “But that goes with the territory,” smiles one State Department veteran. “And if your ego can’t handle it, you’re in the wrong profession.”

**IKEA Caught With Pants Down**

Sexual innuendo and downright obscenity introduced by botched translations are a sure-fire route to press coverage, and this month was no exception.

Swedish furniture and housewares giant Ikea slipped when a children’s bunkbed called “Gutvik” was rolled out on markets across Europe. The word is the name of a small town in Sweden, said a company spokeswoman, but unfortunately translates—when pronounced phonetically—as “good fuck” in German. Journalists had a field day.

The company apologized immediately and withdrew advertisements from store windows and papers.

“At one level your heart goes out to Ikea,” says Salford Translation’s Nick Rosenthal. “They sell in so many countries that their product names are almost bound to go awry in at least one from time to time.”

Indeed—The Onionskin has already commented on several (e.g., *Svalka* glasses; “refresh” in Swedish, “landfill” or “dumpster” in Russian). And with 10,000 articles in the Ikea catalogue, all with the same names the world over, there are certainly plenty of opportunities for a stumble.

But preemptive action is possible. One option is to implement a corporate language policy and vet proposed product names upstream. Translator Ian Hinchliffe, who worked in-house at Ikea from 1984 to 1986, notes that rules for formulating product names were developed and applied at that time. In the late 1980s, a student intern was even assigned to draw up lists of four-letter words and offensive formulations to avoid, at least in English.

Ikea now appears to have abandoned that approach, although Hinchliffe claims that in the mid-90s lists of verboten terms were still displayed on the walls of the Product Council room, where new products were approved and products were officially baptized.

In the meantime, at least one other piece of Ikea children’s furniture deserves a new moniker. The name of a desk for youngsters is an innovative coinage that means, roughly, “brimming over with vitality” in Swedish. In English it is a less appealing *Fartfull*.

**Phonic Awareness in Spanish Translations: A Matter of Good Style Continued from page 40**

**References**


I find this to be an odd dictionary. It took me many months to figure out how to use it because I found it confusing to have headwords in seemingly random languages. The authors apparently focused on defining as many economics- and finance-related words as possible, regardless of whether the headword is English, Spanish, or possibly even German or French. I would find a good monolingual dictionary a much better source for such definitions. There are some good definitions in this dictionary, yet some miss the target.

One example is the entry for “covenant.” According to the authors, the English term is generally used in Spanish texts, although in most translations I’ve done from Spanish, I’ve seen either pacto or convenio. The definition itself misses the usage often found in contracts, that is, per Barron’s Dictionary of Finance and Investment Terms: “promise…that certain acts will be performed and others refrained from….” The definition provided is: “Palabra inglesa, … que se utiliza para hacer referencia a un acuerdo, entre dos o más personas, para el desarrollo de un propósito concreto y que también puede aplicarse a los sucesivos puntos de un pacto….”

This work includes lots of abbreviations and acronyms, although, again, the list is a jumble of Spanish and English. There are many appendices (accounting for nearly half the pages of the dictionary), although the logic behind them escapes me. There is a Spanish-to-English index of terms, but some translations into English are missing and many are unreliable. “Chicharros” is translated as ankle bitter; “cronograma” as chronogram; “Daños y prejuicios” as damage and lost; “deflactor del producto bruto” as GDP or GNP deflactor; “delito fiscal” as fiscal offence; “desamortización” as disentailment; “paraiso fiscal” as tax heaven.

There are many errata: Standar and Poor; investment portafolio. There are few filler words (dehesa; ganza; rancho). In addition to normal dictionary entries, the authors seem to have some encyclopedic aspirations. They list as headwords the names of many economists, whose background they give in detail, another feature I find odd in a dictionary. Table 1 presents the results of an expected-term search.

In conclusion, I would say that I found this dictionary frustrating to consult. It is somewhat useful as an additional source of definitions of financial and economic terms. I would never trust the translations it provides.

Table 1: A Comparison of Tamames and Alcaraz Varo/Hughes’s *Diccionario de términos económicos, financieros y comerciales*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headword</th>
<th>Terms found in Tamames</th>
<th>Terms found in Alcaraz Varo/Hughes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a fondo perdido</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caja chica</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capital (de) riesgo</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>captación de fondos</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exigible</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flujo de caja</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nivel general de precios</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obligacionista</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pasivo circulante</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pliego</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plusvalía</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>producto interno/interior bruto</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dictionary Reviews Continued

**Diccionario de Terminología Jurídica Mexicana**—Dictionary of Mexican Legal Terminology

**Author:**
Javier F. Becerra (with the assistance of George E. Humphrey)

**Publisher:**
Escuela Libre de Derecho, Mexico

**Publication date:**
1999

**ISBN:**
968-6236-08-02

**Price:**
$75

**Available from:**
i.b.d Ltd.
24 Hudson St.
Kinderhook, NY 12106
(518) 758-1755
www.ibdltd.com

**Number of pages:**
800

**Number of entries:**
18,000

**Specialty:**
Law (Mexico)

**Language:**
Spanish → English

**Type and quality of binding:**
Softbound (cloth), very good

**Reviewed by:**
Gabriela Melij-Romero

As the author explains in the preface, this dictionary is limited to Mexican legal terminology, Spanish-to-English only. Nevertheless, it is so comprehensive that I find it useful for the translation of most legal and business documents written in Latin America. The Spanish terms are compared to U.S. common-law terminology in general, with some references to the laws of Louisiana (ex. autoridad de cosa juzgada; condición resolutoria; sociedad conyugal), the only state that has a civil-law tradition similar to Mexico and the rest of the Latin American countries. I also found a reference to British English under the entry billón, to show the difference in meaning.

The dictionary is very good in the areas of readability and look-up convenience, although I prefer the traditional white color to the cream chosen for the paper. Each page is arranged in two columns; the headwords and related phrases are printed in large boldface type, which makes them stand out very clearly, while the English equivalents and definitions are in roman type. It is very thorough, with long sequences of headwords for variants or related concepts. It provides functional equivalents, definitions, and explanations, as appropriate. There is such a wealth of contextual information that one can learn quite a bit about Mexican law and government by just leafing through the pages, though the author rightly claims that, “it is not a treatise of Mexican law translated into English.”

Grammatical functions such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions are indicated for all headwords; colloquial usage is pointed out, as well. All the English terms use U.S. spelling. There is no pronunciation guide and no appendix of abbreviations or acronyms; however, some abbreviations are included in the corpus. Here are some examples: S.A.; S.A. de C.V.; S.A.R.; S. de R.L. de C.V.; S. en C.; S. en C. de C.V.—all spelled out in boldface type.

The bilingual preface is followed by two and a half pages of bibliography, which includes other bilingual legal dictionaries as well as monolingual legal texts and lexicons, both in English and Spanish. I find this reference most helpful for translators and students who need to do further research.

The grouping of phrases around a headword is very convenient, since one can readily find the term searched:

**Example:**
amortización:
— de acciones
— de deuda pública
— de pérdidas
— de partes sociales

**Entries expected to be found in this type of work:**

**Terms found:**
célula; al calce; fé ministerial; perdón; resultando; representación social; caseta; fuero común; sufragio efectivo, no reelección; fracción; cacheo; gafete de identificación.

The author notes in the preface that an effort has been made to provide compound lexical units both as a main entry and duplicated as “secondary entries,” at the risk of wasting time and space. I found the following compound units both as main entries: a buena fé guardada; a nombre propio pero por cuenta ajena; poner...
en conocimiento; por cuerda separada; por ministerio de la ley; con arreglo a; de conformidad; a mi leal saber y entender; se hace constar.

Other compound lexical units, such as testigo de asistencia; pasada ante la fè; por sus generales; verdad histórica; consulta de incompetencia, were found under separate entries, even though, as far as I know, their usage as a lexical unit is common in legal documents in Mexico. To be fair, I think compound lexical units are bound to present a problem with regard to methodology, due to the subjectivity of the criteria used to determine whether a term is a compound lexical unit or not. I have found this difficulty in all dictionaries I’ve consulted, with some being more consistent than others.

Terms not found:
Indiciado; “Cufin,” found under the spelled-out version: Cuenta de utilidad fiscal neta (usually known as Cufin), but there is no headword for Cufin.

In general, I found very few acronyms and abbreviations, among which are: afore; D.F.; cerezo; CPP; CPT; TV; RFC; PTU; Ing.; L.A.B.; and others related to corporations, as mentioned above.

An appendix of acronyms and abbreviations should be considered in the next revision of the book. I believe this inclusion would contribute to systematize these special entries and enhance look-up convenience.

Special terms not found in other dictionaries in this field:
libro de gobierno; poliandria; sacadólares; presente (meaning “on duty”)

Under the entry América, the author explains: “the American continent and not just for the USA.” Alas! He notes what many Latin Americans have been decrying for years, i.e., the appropriation of this proper name by the United States of America. The same explanation is given for americano, although it includes an additional English equivalent: “U.S. citizen.” The following anecdote highlights the difference between usage in Spain and Latin America: I have a friend from Spain who keeps referring to U.S. nationals as “americanos,” to which her Colombian husband invariably and mockingly retorts: “¿American? ¿es de Guatemala, de México o de Uruguay…?”

Percent “filler” words:
Words such as primer día de clases; alumno; arnés; apóstrofe; madera; pesa; bueno; teléfono; mayúscula; mecanógrafa; among many others, have no place in a legal dictionary. I cannot ascertain a percentage of filler words. It may be proportionately low, but nevertheless, I don’t see the use for general vocabulary in this type of work.

Other weaknesses I found in this otherwise excellent dictionary are the following: I consider redundant the use of separate entries for nouns susceptible of both masculine and feminine forms, such as “maestra/maestro” and “amiga/amigo,” especially since these are common words that could even be considered superfluous. Moreover, there seems to be a bias in favor of the masculine forms, which get a disproportionately higher number of English equivalents, when compared to their feminine counterparts: 17 different English terms for maestro (given as a noun and adjective), as opposed to 2 for maestra (given only as a noun); and 22 for amigo, leaving our amigas with only 3 English equivalent terms! I wonder if that has any cultural connotations.

Another example of redundancy can be seen under the entry irrecusable, which is translated as “irreducible, not subject to being recused…” (followed by six additional English terms provided for the first accesion only).

As a suggestion for future revisions, I believe the excessive use of synonyms and related terms for the English equivalent of the Spanish entries should be avoided, since it creates confusion and has no place in a legal dictionary. For example, humanidad is assigned 24 different English terms, “bitterness” being one that I found a bit far-fetched. In fact, the first two equivalent terms, i.e., “inhumanity” and “cruelty,” would have been enough, according to two monolingual dictionaries I consulted (both in English and Spanish).

On the other hand, under the headword contradictorio, subentry procedimiento, the English translation provided is insufficient: “suit, lawsuit, trial.” Given the dictionary’s propensity to inclusiveness and detail, this was an opportunity to give a more specific equivalent, i.e., “adversary proceeding.”

Having said that, there is no doubt in my mind that Becerra’s dictionary is the definitive lexicon for translators who work out of Mexican Spanish into U.S. English. Furthermore, it is a must for any Spanish legal translator, especially those who translate from Spanish into English. It provides a wealth of contextual information, examples, explanations...
of local usage, and proposals for English translation. It is up-to-date and inclusive of all areas of the law, including related fields such as finance, economics, and business in general. It also provides specific information regarding false cognates, such as the case of the Spanish adjective *material* or the Spanish noun *adjudicación*, which are not equivalent to their English false friends “material” and “adjudication.” This feature is especially useful for translation students and new translators, since it makes them aware of such dangers.

My rating of this dictionary is excellent, based on its thoroughness, quality of content, presentation, and level of expertise. I hope this work is continued, with successive updates and revisions. Bravo, Mr. Becerra!

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**Dizionario Aeronautico Illustrato** *(English ↔ Italian)*

*Publisher:*  
IBN Editore, via Mingazzini 7, 00161 Roma, Italy  
*Publication date:* 2001  
*ISBN:* Not listed  
*Price:* €18.10 (431 pages, about 20,000 terms)

**Dizionario Aeronautico** *(English ↔ Italian)*

*Author:* R. Trebbi  
*Publisher:* AVIABOOKS, c.so Duca degli Abruzzi 12, 10128 Torino, Italy  
(Tel: +011 531341)  
*Publication date:* Not listed  
*ISBN:* Not listed  
*Price:* €21.50 (501 pages, about 30,000 terms)

**Reviewed by:**  
Jacopo Mándaro Moro

Not to be outdone, the IBN illustrated dictionary hides its chief editors (Angelo Bibbo, Sergio Colagrossi, and Angelo Napoleone) on page 6, after the index and within the preface text. No ISBN number can be found in either reference, and only the IBN dictionary has a standard copyright notice, with IBN’s full name (Istituto Bibliografico Napoleone) and address.

This approach is quite vexing in light of the paucity of references in the field. Aeronautics has often been ignored by lexicographers, in Italy and beyond, perhaps due to English’s status as the lingua franca. As far as I can tell, in over a century of aviation progress, only two other multilingual references which include Italian and English have been produced, some 40 and 70 years ago, respectively: *Terminologia aeronautica* (Dutch, English, French, Italian, Spanish*. Registro Aeronautico Italiano, v. del Tritone 169, Roma 00187. 1964/ii), and the *Illustrierte Technische Wörterbücher: Luftfahrt* by Alfred Scholomann (Dutch, English, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish*. München/ Berlin: Verlag von R.Oldenbourg, 1932/1957). Strangely enough, the more recent of the two is the most obsolete, because current blimp technology, the main focus of Scholomann’s venerated work, has not changed much since the Zeppelins sailed over the Atlantic, with the exception of gases and engines (see the contemporary Ansald production).

Even the web offers no succor. There are Italian↔English glossaries and acronym listings aplenty, but they have uneven quality, narrow focus (the most common subjects are models, communications, and weather forecasting), and limited scope, with the largest including only about 200

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lemmata. Among the most useful if not fully reliable web sources, I would suggest the following:

- www.magiweb.com/airdolomiti/virtual/tutorial/glossar.htm
- www.aeroworld.it/aerofilespage.php
- http://digilander.libero.it/vvillas/piccolo_glossario_meteo_aeronaut.htm
- http://digilander.libero.it/vvillas/piccolo_glossario_minimo.htm
- www.taxiway.it/html/glossario.php
- www.urpcomunicazioni.it/consultazioni/glossario_new.htm
- www.nmw.it/glossary/glossario.asp
- www.mediterraneavirtual.com/scuoladivolo/articoli_glossario.htm

In any case, our two references do not have much competition.

Reading them side-by-side, their profound differences are immediately evident. To start, Trebbi is sound-oriented and the IBN is visual. Thus, the former peppers the entries with a significant amount of tonal signs, often complemented by phonetic pronunciation, and the latter offers some 86 black and white illustrations, many full-page and several full-spread.

Trebbi’s dictionary is richer by about 10,000 headwords and secondary listings, but the IBN often has a diverging slant, showing a significant lack of overlap. For example, Trebbi offers 10 usages of *to take*, but not the relevant *to take off o decollare*, which is indicated in the IBN, whereas the noun *takeoff* produces the information displayed in Table 1.

On the same pages, from “tab” to “tap,” Trebbi presents 86 lemmata and the IBN 56, but the items in common are only 33/86 and 40/56, or 38% and 71%, respectively. These values are particularly high, but the average discrepancy seems to be the expected 30+4% for Trebbi and, interestingly enough, about 20% for the IBN.

To further explore this random comparison, Trebbi has *fiber (fibra)* and three variants: *carbon, glass optical*, and *polyester fiber (fibra di carbonio, vetroresina, fibra ottica e fibra poliestere)*, but the IBN is silent on the matter. In exchange, the IBN reminds us that *fighting means combattimento o lotta*, a task ignored by Trebbi. Reversing the roles, the IBN does not include *SAC or Strategic Air Command*, but Trebbi does.

Furthermore, the text of the two dictionaries is organized differently, beyond the similar bicolumnar layout with bolded headwords. Trebbi bolds infinitive, past tense, and past participle of the irregular verbs within the text body. The IBN offers instead a separate listing, including the present participle, without Italian pairings. It appears in an appendix at the end of the volume, after several other sections of acronyms and abbreviations used in technical English, meteorological communications, meteorological aeronautical communications, and flight messages. The weather-related acronyms are preceded by several tables: ICAO air typology (altitude, temperature, speed of sound, etc., both in metric and imperial units); weather graphic symbols; mathematical signs; and ICAO phonetic alphabet and numbers, with their Morse equivalents. The list of irregular verbs already mentioned is followed by a comparison of military ranks (Italy/U.K./U.S.); conversion tables of all the main units of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>Trebbi</th>
<th>IBN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>takeoff</td>
<td>Decollo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takeoff area</td>
<td>area di decollo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takeoff distance</td>
<td>spazio di decollo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takeoff power</td>
<td>potenza di decollo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takeoff run</td>
<td>corsa di decollo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takeoff thrust</td>
<td>spinta al decollo</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>backward takeoff</td>
<td>decollo all’indietro</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(in elicottero)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jet assisted takeoff (JAT)</td>
<td>decollo assistito da razzi</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short takeoff</td>
<td>Decollo corto</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Under Short]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short field takeoff</td>
<td>decollo da campo corto</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft field takeoff</td>
<td>decollo da campo soffice [sic!]</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vertical takeoff</td>
<td>Decollo verticale</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>involo verticale</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>[under Vertical]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
measurement; a badly concocted table of unit multiples and submultiples (U.K./metric equivalencies only); and a list of SI units. In net contrast, Trebbi has only one six-page section in the middle, with about 450 English acronyms without Italian translation, compared to the IBN’s 500+ Italian-to-English abbreviation in five listings.

Lastly, where Trebbi offers sound encyclopedic definitions for about 10% of its headwords, the IBN relies on a wealth of illustrations, both with mixed results. A quick example should suffice here: Trebbi’s description of pirep, or pilot weather report, offers important information on the report itself, but his definition of the U.K. placard o targa, targhetta is, “Any signal or message shown in the cockpit, reminding the pilot of parameters or actions not to be taken [my translation and underscore].” Such wording is both winded and contradicted by the subheading specificazione placard or targhetta di specifica, our specification plate, which does not seem to require any action by the perplexed aviator.

Figures and captions of illustrated dictionaries are easier to evaluate, thanks to Alfred Scholoman’s golden standard. The king of lexicographers does not include a picture or write a caption without clearly indicating all related headwords and subsets. The IBN ignores this sound policy and offers instead only English captions, whereas the obvious absence of fillers and an extremely contained price. What a sad irony that sound references such as these should finally be available after so long a wait, but during the worst crisis of aviation history.

Final Note

Daniela O’Donnell has kindly indicated that a third reference is currently available. Paris Pernazza and Giorgio Lucarelli are the authors of L’inglese aeronautico per naviganti e tecnici, published by Avilibri (via dei Marsi 53, 00185 Roma, year unknown).

Jacopo Màdaro Moro is a technical translator into Italian. He specializes in medicine, bioengineering, and optoelectronics. Contact: jmadoro@verizon.net or www.jmadoro.com.

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When the Translation Inquirer recently heard of the efforts of someone from the world of academia in Germany who suggested that French loanwords be substituted in German for loanwords that obviously have their origin in the U.S., his reaction was: “Why did he have to wait for a time of great international tension?” I have done German-to-English work, primarily business-related, in which the number of English words mixed into the text was so great that I sometimes wondered which direction I was going in. And more than that: I felt embarrassed for the German language and culture, and for these native speakers of German. Did they really need to bend over backwards to be so trendy? Did their corporate culture make it nearly mandatory for them to use great gobs of English in their professional communications? I suppose I will never know. What I do know, though, is that there was no linguistic deficiency that led to any need for such mongrelized language.

[Abbreviations used with this column:
D–Dutch; E–English; F–French;
G–German; I–Italian; Po–Polish;
P–Portuguese; R–Russian; SC–Serbo-Croatian; Sp–Spanish; Sw–Swedish]

New Queries

(E-F 6-03/1) Here is a ProZ query that comes very close to our own profession. The problem is to find good idiomatic French for All in a day’s work, a phrase that appeared in a bilingual article on using computers in translation. Any snappy suggestions?

(E-R 6-03/2) Whenever we try to borrow terms or phrases from one sphere of existence to be used in another, we risk imprecision and misunderstanding, especially in translation. In the ProZ query presented here, the slangy terminology of swimming has come into aeronautics. A belly flop into a muddy, water-spotted runway is what the English text originally said, speaking of less-than-optimal landings onto less-than-optimal surfaces. Was it good enough to go with something like...требуется сократить тряску (брюхом) в грунтовом поле? The person presenting the query cautioned that this was only a rough draft of the translation.

(E-Sp 6-03/3) As any U.S. income tax preparer knows, filing status in American English has a very specific meaning. Efforts by three respondents to this ProZ query may not have hit the mark, given how narrow this term is. Who wants to try the Spanish for this?

(F-E 6-03/4) The last 19 words (presented here in bold) of this electronics text in French were a problem to a Lantra-L member: “... la formation d’un orifice s’étendant au moins dans le matériau diélectrique interpistes d’au moins un niveau de métallisation et venant dans sa partie inférieure au contact d’une interconnexion métallique (CT2) avec une électrode du transistor de la cellule...” How to render the latter in decent English?

(F-E 6-03/5) In France, where electrified railways are so important, self-propelled scissor flat cars perform maintenance on a catenary above the track. The device in question appeared in a document giving its specifications, and one of them read, “Masse en ordre de marche: environ 7500 kg.” What sort of weight is it?

(G-E 6-03/6) When semiconductors are manufactured, is there any difference between “Aufheizung” and “Abheizung?” Note the presence of these two terms in a text presented by a Lantra-L participant: “Bei anderen Kombinationen Material des Formkörpers—Füllmaterial kann dagegen die Haltezeit bei maximaler Temperatur der Behandlung nahezu Null sein, wenn die Schmelzpunkte oder/und die Erweichungstemperaturen der jeweiligen Hauptphasen sehr weit auseinander liegen und die Auf- und Abheizgeschwindigkeit für ein Ausfließen des Füllmaterials etwa im Bereich der höchsten Temperaturen ausreicht.”

(I-G 6-03/7) In regard to an extruder blower, “pomelli graduati” became a stumbling block for a ProZ participant. A bit more context in the original Italian: “Pomelli graduati accessibili frontalmente, che permettono la regolazione dell’aria di supporto parison.” What are they?

(Pt-E 6-03/8) Glad to have Portuguese back in the column again; the following is the Brazilian variety. A Lantran wanted to know what “trambulador” means in the following contexts. The first: “O trambulador de marchas possui um sistema de tensão para evitar que as marchas escapem durante um salto, buracos, etc.” The second: “O trambulador, que é a interligação entre a alavanca e o câmbio, não conta com sistemas que evitem o repasse da vibração do motor para a alavanca.” What does it mean?

(R-E 6-03/9) Translating some corporate minutes, a Lantra-L subscriber was stumped on how to reproduce in English the difference between όνομα and ονόματι in the context of how meetings of shareholders or board members are held; the former meaning the kind where people attend in person, while the latter refers to situations where recipients of written notice return
their votes, but no tangible meeting occurs. The text speaks of Созвать Внешечередное собрание в одной форме. While no doubt exists as to what is involved here, what is good business English for the distinction involved?

(Sw-E 6-03/10) A ProZ correspondent wants to know whether clamp setting, tension setting, or setting in general are proper equivalents for “uppspänning” in the following sentence: “Tricept erbjuder så får vi en mycket hög flexibilitet i vår produktion och möjligheten att bearbeta hela fem sidor av ett arbetstykke i samma uppspänning.”

Replies to Old Queries

(D-E 4-03/1) (“draikrans”: Zippy sent this query through Google, and learned that it is simply a turntable.

(E-SC 4-03/3) (crisis management): Tanja Abramovic states that “uppravljanje krizom” is an established word, and widely used term for this. If a more explanatory rendering is needed, then she would go with ”niz aktivnosti koje se preduzimaju kako bi se smanjili gubici ili _tete u aktivnosti koje se preduzimaju kako

(E-Sp 8-02/6) (hard to kill): Putting new comments into a discussion centered on page 66 of the November-December ATA Chronicle, and continuing on page 52 of the March 2003 issue, Jaime G. Vargas does not like “duro para matar,” because, as a literal, word-for-word translation, it simply conveys the idea of a creature that is hardy or difficult to knock out of circulation. What is lacking is any regard for the psychological aspects or motives of the party intending to do the killing. His suggestion on page 66 had simply been “duro de matar.”

(E-Sp 10-02/5) (the now venerable set the table): Lorenzo Montoya says that two more possibilities are acceptable and present in thousands of entries if one does a word search: “arreglar la mesa” and “disponer la mesa.”

(E-Sp 4-03/4) (strip malls): Richard McCown asked a Chilean linguist, a Mexican engineer, a Mexican banker, a Colombian language professor, and a Venezuelan architect to present their renderings, and they came up with “una linea de tiendas fuera de la calle.” In Barranquilla, says Carlos Urueta-Arias, it is simply “centro comercial.”

(F-E 11-02/6) (“exploite les films”: Jaime Vargas believes this means simply to commercialize them, and collecting rent would be but one aspect of any such operation.

(F-E 3-03/1) (“normes de déploiement”): Using a new office printer as an example, Marijan Boskovic says that operating rules could work for this. This is not the set of technical instructions that came with the printer, but rather a list of do’s and don’ts for users in that office. They could include: hours of operation; who will turn the printer on and off; duties about ordering and refeeding fresh paper; service personnel to be called; and so forth. Maybe the English word could even be elevated to protocols.

(F-E 4-03/6) (“se désestresser”): To Zippy, it looks like decompress, though his confidence in that solution is not too high. J.V. Guy-Bray likes decompress or chill out.

(G-E 3-03/4) (“Scapulagleiten”): Sibylle Fnoka opines that this text must have been taken from a patient’s chart, and more specifically the written record of a physical exam, thus the sentence fragments. “Physiologisches Scapulagleiten” simply means that the shoulder blade moves (slides) normally. We need to understand that in this kind of medical context, “physiologisch” means normal, healthy. Her suggestion for the phrase: normal sliding motion of scapulae. A less likely possibility is that “Scapulagleiten” describes the examining physician’s sliding motion over the patient’s shoulder blades, which elicits no abnormal response, i.e., pain.

(G-E 4-03/8) (“Klopfung”: Zippy states that this is rapping. In order to empty the collected material (see page 53, April issue), the operator turns on the rapper and bangs it on the side to loosen the stuff. Feed hoppers, he says, also have rappers to keep the cement or beads of resin flowing smoothly.

(G-Po 2-03/6) (“Blauwärme”): The metallurgy of this phenomenon comes from Peter Klose, by way of Chris. If you harden a piece of steel and then polish it with sandpaper to make it shiny, you can then anneal the steel by heating it until it turns first yellow (still hard) and then blue (somewhat hard, like a screw driver), so it represents a temperature leading to a certain hardness in steel. If you were to shake a weldment during cooling, you would go through all the temperatures and concomitant grain growth, leading to undesirable properties such as weakness of the...
Humor and Translation  By Mark Herman

Herman is a librettist and translator. Submit items for future columns via e-mail to hermanapter@earthlink.net or via snail mail to Mark Herman, 5748 W Brooks Rd., Shepherd, MI 48883-9202. Discussions of the translation of humor and examples thereof are preferred, but humorous anecdotes about translators, translations, and mistranslations are also welcome. Include copyright information and permission if relevant.

Too Many Cooks Spoil the Translation

K elly Washbourne, assistant professor of translation at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, has written and submitted the following parable:

NOT WHAT IT CAN BUT WHAT IT MUST

The project was undertaken by a panel of experts to translate alphabet soup into Chinese. Among them were linguists, culinary artists, calligraphers, nutritionists, editors, and others.

“The most important thing is semantics,” said one linguist. “We can’t have people eating incoherent food.”

A fight broke out among the linguists. “And how do you propose we work that morphosyntactically? And what characters will be given preference over others?”

The chefs spoke up. “The translation must be flavorful, first and foremost. We don’t want this to smack of translation.”

“Form is all,” retorted the calligrapher. “People want beauty in their translations. Sell them the illusion. Make them happy.”

“No, no,” objected the nutritionist. “Without quality ingredients, no one will believe it’s as good as the original stuff. Forget the appearance. If the label says it’s good for them, they’ll buy it.”

The philosopher had the floor. “No,” he said. “It must be good unto itself, without needless comparisons.”

“It must reflect the kingdom of Heaven,” said the clergyman.

“It must fit in a can,” said the typesetter.

“It must reach the heart by way of the stomach,” said the Romantic.

“It must be machine-made to insure objectivity,” said the computer scientist.

“It must use simplified characters, not fattening full ones,” said the dietician.

“It must sound good when you slurp it,” said the poet.

“It must account for dialects and regionallects,” said the dialectitian-regionallectition.

“It must be done yesterday, and come in under budget (or maybe I’ll just have my secretary do it),” said the client.

“It must seem like even I could have done it,” said the consumer.

“It must include a bibliography,” said the critic.

“STOP!” cried a hysterical little man, jumping up on the table.

It was the original inventor.

“It must be FAITHFUL to my invention, and ONLY that!”

And the translation was never completed.

The Translation Inquirer Continued

The color to heat or anneal a piece of steel as about 350 degrees.

(R-E 3-03/6) (тихоходный флот): Going beyond the obvious English technical fleet, Viktor Sheveluyov took care to say what this includes: dredges, floating cranes, tugs, transport barges, and the like. Marijan Boskovic proposes exploration vessel(s), research ship(s), pool of exploration, and research vessels. Perhaps, says Marijan, it would be best to avoid the word fleet directly, since they are almost never functioning together on a mission, and so constitute a fleet only in an abstract sense.

It was truly gratifying to see these good responses coming in. Please, please, please keep it up!

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Tel: (403) 243-3477 (Alberta office) or
(780) 434-8384 (Edmonton office)
www.atia.ab.ca

Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario (ATIO)
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Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 7B7
Tel: (613) 241-2846, Toll-free: 1-800-234-5030
Fax: (613) 241-4098
atio@fox.nsn.ca • www.atio.on.ca

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Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 2S9
Tel: (514) 845-4411
Toll-free: (800) 265-4815
Fax: (514) 845-9903
info@ottiaq.org • www.ottiaq.org

Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia (STIBC)
Suite 514, 850 W Hastings Street, Box 34
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6C 1E1
Tel: (604) 684-2940 • Fax: (604) 684-2947
office@stibc.org • www.stibc.org

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Institute of Translation & Interpreting (ITI)
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494 Midsummer Boulevard
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 2EA England
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PERU
Asociación de Traductores Profesionales del Perú (ATPP)
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Lima 18 Perú
Tel: +51 (1) 264-2214 • Fax: +51 (1) 264-5567
postmaster@atpp.org.pe
http://www.atpp.org.pe

For more information on chapters or to start a chapter, please contact ATA Headquarters.
Send updates to Mary David, ATA Chronicle, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314; Tel: (703) 683-6100; Fax: (703) 683-6122; Mary@atanet.org.
This new journal from Multilingual Matters seeks to bridge the gap between creative writing on campus and the worlds of writing and publishing.

Three times a year, New Writing will publish some of the best creative work from university and college creative writing programs worldwide, alongside interviews with writers, articles about creative writing teaching methods, research, debates on the subject, and analyses of the relationship between creative writing on campus and the relevant creative industries.

New Writing offers an international forum for creative writing of the highest quality and a platform for debates about creative writing teaching and practice in universities and colleges.

The editors invite submissions of critical articles and creative work in any of the areas mentioned above, and in all genres. Articles should be between 2,000 and 5,000 words. Creative work should not exceed 5,000 words. All submissions are subject to peer review. Suggestions for future “Special Issues” are welcome. Please contact the editors to discuss possible themes and subjects.

Send submissions to:
Graeme Harper and Richard Kerridge, Editors
New Writing c/o Multilingual Matters,
Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall,
Clevedon, England. BS21 7HH
Tel: +44 (0) 1275 876519
Fax: +44 (0) 1275 871673
E-mail: info@multilingual-matters.com
www.multilingual-matters.com
Plan now to attend ATA’s Annual Conference. Join your colleagues for a rewarding experience in Phoenix, Arizona.

ATA’s 44th Annual Conference will feature:
- Over 150 educational sessions offering something for everyone;
- The Job Exchange where individuals promote their services and companies meet translators and interpreters;
- Over 50 exhibits featuring the latest publications, software, and services available;
- Opportunities to network with over 1,200 translators and interpreters from throughout the U.S. and around the world;
- and much more!

Preliminary information, along with the Registration Form, will be mailed in July to all ATA members. The conference rates are listed below. As always, ATA members receive significant discounts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference Registration Fees</th>
<th>ATA Member</th>
<th>Non-Member</th>
<th>Student Member</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early-Bird (by October 1):</td>
<td>$245</td>
<td>$335</td>
<td>$110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-day:</td>
<td>$125</td>
<td>$170</td>
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<tr>
<td>After October 1:</td>
<td>$305</td>
<td>$420</td>
<td>$130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-day:</td>
<td>$160</td>
<td>$220</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onsite (after October 24):</td>
<td>$380</td>
<td>$525</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-day:</td>
<td>$195</td>
<td>$270</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Students and one-day participants do not receive a copy of the Proceedings. All speakers must register for the conference.

**Hotel Accommodations**

The Pointe South Mountain Resort, the host hotel, is the largest all-suite resort in the Southwest located on 200 acres at the base of South Mountain Park. It is conveniently located at 7777 South Pointe Parkway, just six miles from Sky Harbor International Airport.

Conference attendees can register at the discounted rate of **$155 single/double and $175 triple** plus tax per night. This rate is good until **October 13, 2003**. The availability of guest rooms or the group rate cannot be guaranteed after that date. In addition, take advantage of the special resort rate that is being offered to ATA conference attendees. For a daily charge of $8.00 per suite, attendees may enjoy unlimited local phone calls, unlimited access for credit card, toll free, and collect calls, free incoming and outgoing facsimile service, daily in-suite pot of coffee, weekday delivery of **USA Today**, admittance to the Fitness Centre, unlimited tennis and volleyball, and complimentary shuttle to the Arizona Mills Mall.

To make your hotel reservations, contact the Pointe South Mountain Resort at 1-877-800-4888. Be sure to specify that you are attending the ATA Annual Conference.

Mark Your Calendar Today for November 5-8, 2003!
Strip in UPS Ad
and potentially misleading terminology. Regardless of the outcome of the bylaws vote, the new requirements will take effect January 2004.

4. We will have a session at the Annual Conference to review the changes and field questions.

Maggie Rowe
ATA’s Membership Services Manager Maggie Rowe celebrates her 10th anniversary with ATA on June 23.

Maggie’s main responsibility is overseeing and administering member services. This ranges from processing membership applications, to sending a replacement magazine, to helping someone use the online Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services. She is also the voice of ATA: she answers the phone and greets visitors.

Her efforts over the years have helped ATA membership triple to where we are today. Much of the success is reflected in Maggie’s work ethic; Maggie comes in every day ready and raring to go. Her enthusiasm is contagious!

She also knows how to work the system and go the extra step. Maggie is the one who will successfully “sneak” one more name into the Membership Directory to make a member happy, even though we are way past our internal cut off date and deep into the Directory’s production.

Here in the office we are all incredibly appreciative of Maggie’s work. In recognition of Maggie’s contributions, the Board unanimously passed a resolution thanking her (see page 9). On behalf of ATA, thanks Maggie for all the enthusiasm and dedication.

ATA is here to help you … 24 hours a day!

Connect with ATA five different ways.

Get the information you need, when you need it.

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or contact us by phone, fax, e-mail, or mail.

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Visit ATA’s website for up-to-date news and information.

Phone: 703.683.6100
Call with questions about your membership or services.

E-mail: ata@atanet.org

Fax: 703.683.6122
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225 Reinekers Lane
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American Translators Association (ATA) and Two Radical Technologies, Inc. (2RAD) have teamed up to provide ATA members with an incredible membership benefit. ATA is offering members an opportunity to build their very own customized website by using one of the most advanced online website creation tools - RADTown. RADTown is a powerful, dynamic website creation tool that lets you be in complete control of your website and offers an extraordinary lineup of dynamic features that you can easily add to your site. RADTown will help ATA members harness the power of the Internet and establish an online presence for themselves in just minutes!

Benefits

As a benefit to being an ATA member, you can sign up for a full-featured web page building program that is fast and easy to use for the low cost of $99/year. With RADTown, not only do you get to create your own unique website, but you can also use your own unique domain name (i.e. www.yourname.com), receive free hosting, PLUS your website will be fully integrated with the ATA online directories!

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log on to www.atanet.org/radtown
Email questions to: radtown@atanet.org

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American Translators Association
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Phoenix, Arizona

See page 59 for details about fees and hotel accommodations.

Mark your calendars today for November 5-8, 2003!