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Features

11 Translation Quality
By Shuckran Kamal
The translator, the translation manager, and the user of the translation: all have roles to play to ensure that a translated text is a quality text.

14 The Case That Went Wrong! A Mental Health Clinician Works with an Interpreter
By Zarita Araujo-Lane and Edited by Vonessa A. Phillips
Interpreters and providers need to share a common understanding of their respective roles and expectations before they meet with the client.

19 Medical Back Translation: Strategies for Making it Work
By Mike Collins
Mentioning the term “back translation” among translators can have the same effect as raking your fingernails across a blackboard.

21 Coronary Heart Disease—Death American Style
By Rafael A. Rivera
A discussion of various types of procedural and surgical interventions designed to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

25 Source Language, Source of Trouble
By Elena B. Sgarbossa
Could our focus on proficiency in target languages be detracting us from paying enough attention to the requisite proficiency in our source languages?

Columns and Departments

6 About Our Authors
7 From the Treasurer
10 From the Executive Director
42 Officers, Directors, Committee Chairs, and Division Administrators
43 ATA Certification Exam Information
43 New ATA-Certified Members
44 The Onionskin
47 Dictionary Reviews
50 The Translation Inquirer
52 Humor and Translation
54 ATA Chapters, Affiliated Groups, and Other Groups
57 Guide to Continuing Education Points
65 Directory of Language Services

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29 Reviewing Translated Literature—Through a Glass Darkly?
By Anne Milano Appel
How does the reviewer understand, analyze, and judge the translator’s accomplishment? The proper object of the reviewer’s gaze is not the original work itself, but the original work as rendered by the translator.

By Nancy Schweda Nicholson
The first segment of a two-part series presenting a 25-year overview of developments at the federal and state levels since the passage of the Court Interpreters Act in 1978.

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Display Advertising Index

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2 | Atril  
  www.atril.com |
| 9 | California State University, Northridge  
  www.csun.edu |
| 9 | Monterey Institute  
  www.miis.edu |
| 67 | National Security Agency (NSA)  
  www.nsa.gov |
| 68 | TRADOS/ProZ.com  
  www.translationzone.com |
| 53 | WordFinder Software International AB  
  www.wordfinder.com |

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Upcoming Seminars and Conferences

**ATA Professional Development Seminar**
“*The Business of Translating and Interpreting*”
September 24, 2005
Salt Lake City, Utah
[www.atanet.org/pd/business](http://www.atanet.org/pd/business)
(See page 56 for details!)

**ATA 46th Annual Conference**
November 9-12, 2005
Seattle, Washington
(See pages 62-64 for details!)

Guide to ATA

**Continuing Education Points**

Check it out at [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org) (click on certification) or see page 57!
am pleased to report that the ATA Board of Directors approved the association’s annual budget at its spring meeting, held April 22-23 in Alexandria, Virginia. The new budget covers the period from July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006, and projects revenues and expenses balanced at $2,189,650, which is a slight increase compared to the 2004-05 budget.

On the revenues side, membership dues remain the largest item at $1,144,350 (52%), followed by conference revenues of $478,300 (22%) and division revenues of $172,400 (8%). On the expenses side, production and shipping of the Chronicle account for $472,309 (22%), followed by conference-related expenses of $433,707 (20%) and certification expenses of $346,075 (16%). See the accompanying graph for further details.

In preparing the budget, we made the following projections:

- membership increase to a total of 9,300 members;
- unchanged number of certification exams and practice tests;
- increase in certification expenses to cover a certification trainer and an investigation of the possibility of computerized tests and of getting the certification program accredited;
- increase in revenues from Chronicle advertisements;
- 1,200 attendees at the Seattle conference;
- increase in the conference fee (early bird member rate will change from $245 to $295);
- new line item for customer care (assessment survey of members’ needs); and

*Figures adjusted to include estimated overhead.
• new line item for building up our reserve funds.

The last item, increase of the reserve funds, was briefly mentioned in my report in the July issue of the *Chronicle* and is in keeping with the auditor’s recommendation to build up reserves to approximately one half of our annual operational budget. We are budgeting for an annual contribution of $24,000, which accounts for the difference between the revenue and expense totals in the accompanying graph. This is a long-term endeavor, which will require careful strategic planning. ATA’s investment policy follows a conservative asset allocation model, which was also recommended by our auditor.

For the most part, the increase in conference fees was necessitated by the rising costs of food and beverage and audio-visual equipment rental. For comparison, the early bird fee for the four-day Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs Congress, held in August 2005, was €400. Also, the cost of the four-day conference of the Society for Technical Communication, held in May 2005, was $495. The last increase to ATA conference fees occurred in 2001.

This is the last report I am writing as ATA’s Treasurer. In bidding farewell, I would like to express my appreciation for the outstanding performance of Kirk Lawson, ATA’s accounting manager, who acclimated himself to his new position with amazing speed and who already has made significant improvements to ATA’s account allocation method. Also, during my tenure as treasurer, I had the privilege of getting to know the members of the ATA Headquarters’ staff, ably directed by Walter Bacak, and would like to take this opportunity to declare my admiration for what they do. Getting to know my fellow ATA Board members and officers was also a great treat and an eye-opener into the complexity of the nonprofit association world. Finally, I am very thankful to all ATA members for allowing me to serve for two consecutive terms in this office, and I am hoping to continue serving our organization in other capacities in the future.

---

**Third Annual Conference of the Tennessee Association of Professional Interpreters and Translators**

*September 9-11, 2005 • Belmont University*  
*Nashville, Tennessee*

For more information, call or e-mail Claire Peterson, (615) 292-1074, richard.a.peterson@vanderbilt.edu; or call the TAPIT office at (615) 824-7878. You can also visit us online at www.tapit.org. This event is co-sponsored by the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators. TAPIT is a professional organization for interpreters and translators of written, spoken, and signed languages in Tennessee.

**28th Annual American Literary Translators Association Conference**

*November 2-5, 2005*  
*Hotel Omni Mont-Royal*  
*Montreal, Canada*  
[www.literarytranslators.org/conference.html](http://www.literarytranslators.org/conference.html)
New MA Degree to Start in Fall 2005
Master of Arts in Translation and Localization Management (MATLM)
The MATLM degree will be a combination of translation, localization technology, and business management. The program will be offered as both a two-year (four semesters) and a one-year degree (Advanced Entry – two semesters with 30-32 credits required).

New Summer 2005 Medical Interpreting Course
Certificate Course in Medical Interpreting: August 18 to 21, 2005 in Monterey, CA
This course is offered to German and Spanish Interpreters interested in medical interpreting.

New Fall 2005 T&I Training Conference
Professional Translator and Interpreter Education in the 21st Century
An international conference to be held in Monterey from September 9 to 11, 2005.

Please log on to www.miis.edu for detailed information about the new MATLM degree program, the Summer 2005 medical course and the Fall 2005 T&I training conference.
The ATA Board of Directors met in Denver, Colorado, July 23-24. In conjunction with the meeting, ATA President Scott Brennan gave a presentation, “The American Translators Association: A Snapshot,” to local ATA members as well as to members of the Colorado Translators Association and the Colorado Association of Professional Interpreters. In addition, nearly 40 local members attended the Board reception that was held following the presentation.

Here are some highlights from the Board meeting:

Slate of candidates announced. The Board received the slate of candidates for the 2005 election of officers and directors from the Nominating Committee: For president-elect (a two-year term): Tony Beckwith and Jiri Stejskal; for secretary (a two-year term): Arlene Kelly and Alan Melby; for treasurer (a two-year term): Peter Krawutschke; and for director (three positions for three-year terms): Ines Bojlesen, Tereza Braga, Laurie Gerber, Jacki Noh, Richard Paegelow, Boris Silversteyn, and Liliana Valenzuela. For more information, please see “Candidates Announced” (below).

New Business Practices Education Committee established. The Board approved the establishment of the Business Practices Education Committee. The new committee’s purposes are: to inform all ATA members about sound business practices relevant to the translation and interpretation professions; respond to ATA members’ questions and concerns about such business practices; and to develop documents and procedures usable in various circumstances by both providers and purchasers of translation and interpretation services. Dorothee Racette and Nicholas Hartmann were named as co-chairs of this new committee. Look for more information on this committee and its work in upcoming issues of the Chronicle and on ATA’s website.

2010 conference site selected. The Board approved the selection of Denver, Colorado as the site for the 2010 ATA Annual Conference. This will be the first time that ATA has held the Annual Conference in Denver. For your reference, here are the other future conference sites: Seattle (2005); New Orleans (2006); Miami (2007); San Francisco (2008); and New York City (2009—ATA’s 50th Anniversary!).

Continued on p.52

Candidates Announced

ATA Election • 2005 ATA Annual Conference
Seattle, Washington

ATA will hold its regularly scheduled election at the upcoming 2005 ATA Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, to elect a president-elect, secretary, treasurer, and three directors. The candidates’ statements will be published in the September ATA Chronicle.

Further nominations, supported by acceptance statements in writing by each additional nominee and a written petition signed by no less than 35 voting members, must be received by the Nominating Committee within 30 days of publication by the ATA Board of Directors of the names of nominees proposed by the Nominating Committee. Acceptance statements and petitions may be faxed to the chair of the Nominating Committee, Robert Sette, in care of ATA Headquarters at (703) 683-6122.

Candidate statements and photos of the candidates will appear in the September issue of the ATA Chronicle. Official ballots will be mailed to all eligible voters prior to the conference. Votes may be cast: 1) in person at the conference; 2) by proxy given to a voting member attending the conference; or 3) by proxy sent to ATA Headquarters by the date indicated in the instructions enclosed with the ballots. The candidates proposed by the Nominating Committee are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President-elect</th>
<th>Secretary</th>
<th>Treasurer</th>
<th>Director (three positions, three-year terms)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tony Beckwith</td>
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<td>Jiri Stejskal</td>
<td>Alan Melby</td>
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<td>Tereza Braga</td>
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</tbody>
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|                   |           |           | Laurie Gerber |
|                   |           |           | Jacki Noh     |
|                   |           |           | Richard Paegelow |
|                   |           |           | Boris Silversteyn |
|                   |           |           | Liliana Valenzuela |
Translation Quality

By Shuckran Kamal

The author delivered the following remarks at the plenary meeting of the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR), “The Year of Languages in the Federal Government,” held on May 20, 2005. For more information on other ILR initiatives, please visit www.govtrlr.org. The views and opinions expressed are strictly those of the author, and do not necessarily represent those of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of State, or ATA.

adies and gentlemen, “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” Standing before you right now is a fool who rushed to accept your generous invitation to speak about translation quality. After the enormity of this daunting task sank in, I heard a voice in my head ask, “Who are you? What makes you think you can or are qualified to talk about translation quality? Don’t you remember that when you first started in this business you did not have a clue about translation quality?” Well, I do remember, and it is because my own notion of quality has been evolving that I eventually convinced myself that I might have something to contribute to this discussion. So here it goes.

What is quality in a translation? What is that elusive feature, and who is responsible for it? Let me propose that quality in a translated text is a combination of textual characteristics that make a text readable, informative, complete, and accurate when compared to the source text.

article was entitled “The Ridiculous [Component of] the Nuclear Game and Brussels Pastry.” Because the key to my heart is anything with sugar in it, I thought I’d find out about this new pastry that I had never heard of before—never mind the nuclear game. I soon concluded from the anecdote cited in the first paragraph of the article, just as I am sure other readers of Arabic who are living or who have lived in the West did, that the Brussels pastry, tantalizingly referred to in the title, had turned out to be Brussels sprouts! Then, a subsequent cursory comparison of the translated text with the source text in English (The New York Times, May 11, 2005) revealed two omissions from the source text. The first omission was part of a sentence in the second paragraph, and the second was the entire seventh paragraph of Friedman’s text. Although the translated text used grammatically accurate, readable Arabic to convey to the reader most of the information that Mr. Friedman intended to convey to his audience, it is my opinion that this opinion-editorial piece failed to meet reasonable quality standards for the following reasons: the translator failed to complete the professional requirements of his or her job; the newspaper editor who commissioned the translation failed to take appropriate quality control measures; and users or readers of this article, whether or not they know better, will probably not express dissatisfaction with an article that provides inaccurate and incomplete information. In other words, there was a failure in each step of this proposed, or what we might call virtual trilateral, system of quality assurance.

In my humble opinion, this anecdote symbolizes in a nutshell where quality assurance in translation stands at the present time. It is failing. That is why what I would like to do today is briefly discuss the responsibilities of the translator, the translation bureau, and the requester or ultimate user of a translation.

Although the translator remains the main pillar of quality in a translation, the translation bureau and the user of a translation play vital roles in ensuring the quality of a translation. I will attempt to lay out the situation as I see it today, along with what is being done to improve it, and propose a course of action that, if taken, could very well speed us along towards our shared and common goal of having consistently high quality translations in all languages.

A significant quantity of literature about translation quality is now available in books and professional journals. Despite this, translation
quality remains somewhat elusive to practitioners of translation, to their employers, and to users of translation. It seems to me that the reason why the concept of quality continues to be elusive to some can be attributed to facts and conditions that continue to exist in the business and practice of translation.

First, to some practitioners of translation, the concept of quality appears to be irrelevant. Some might think that all they have to do to provide their clients with a quality translation is to turn it in to the requester a clean, attractive, or camera-ready copy of a text in the target language on or before the deadline. Such practitioners frequently do not understand that basic research, checking and double-checking essential facts, and self-review are important parts of their job. It is unfortunate, but many users of translated texts, and even a significant number of translation project managers, continue to share that view.

Second, some employers of translators agree with those practitioners of translation I’ve just described. They happily believe that a translation that looks good and arrives on or before the deadline is a quality translation. Such employers usually do not have contractors or employees who can check the factual and linguistic accuracy and readability of a target text in a foreign language. Other employers of translators may have access to skillful editors who can check the linguistic accuracy and readability of a target text in English. However, in many cases, these individuals are unable to check the translation for factual accuracy because they do not read the foreign source-language text. And we all know that skillful editors and reviewers in any language other than English are even harder to find. Consequently, many employers of translators settle for checking the accuracy of what they can check: dates, numbers, and proper names, if any. Others resort to the useless and unreliable approach of hiring another person to back translate a text, usually back into English.

Third, most translation users who seek the services of a freelance translator or a translation bureau usually do not know enough about the business or profession of translation. They do not realize that they must play a vital, albeit small, role in ensuring the quality of a translated text. They do not realize that their role goes beyond setting a deadline for the translation and paying for it. Today, many translation users remain passive participants in the quality equation. Unfortunately, many of them are satisfied with a translation if it meets their deadline, if it looks good, and if they can, or think they can, get from it some of the information that meets some, if not all, of their needs.

Judging from my comments so far, I think we can all agree that we still have a long way to go in our efforts to ensure quality control in the translation business. Today, ATA is working hard with many professional translators to change this situation. Its Certification Program, which focuses primarily on the quality of the translator’s work, has evolved significantly for the better since its inception more than two decades ago. Efforts to standardize evaluation standards for certification tests across all the languages of the program continue to be pursued energetically and enthusiastically. Workshops and training sessions are held regularly to refine the process of identifying and classifying translation errors, as well as to quantify their impact on translation quality. As these efforts continue, other efforts have begun and are now underway to establish standard criteria for selecting test passages that would present comparably equal challenges to all candidates regardless of their language combination. All this is part of an ongoing effort to give the practicing professional translator a better handle on quality and to assist him or her with the task of providing a quality product to clients.

The Interagency Language Roundtable Skill Level Descriptions for Translation, the final draft of which was released to the community in February of this year, is another major successful attempt to bring the concept of quality translation closer to the employers of translators in the U.S. government. It is my hope that major government contractors as well as translation bureaus will be able to use this valuable document to provide our government with better quality services in the near future. It is also my sincere hope that this document will continue to evolve, and that it will be used by more and more major government contractors and translation bureaus to persuade the government that unless their translators meet certain strict criteria for quality, no amount of quality assurance they may have in place after a text is translated will guarantee their ultimate client a quality product.

Efforts to educate users of translated texts continue to be made on an ad hoc basis by individual professional translators. In recent years, those efforts received a shot in the arm from ATA’s Public Relations Committee when it launched its ambitious program of educating the public and the media about our profession. We all have a role to play to persuade translation users that they do indeed have to take some responsibility for...
the quality of a translated text. They must spell out their expectations and their needs. Translation users must be persuaded to share with translators and project managers any reference materials, as well as information about how the translated text is to be used. They must also be willing to consider the translator’s and/or the project manager’s advice regarding appropriate content or style modifications that may be required in the target-language text to make it more suitable for its intended audience. In short, translation users must take a more active role in the translation process.

All of us have heard arguments about the subjective nature of determining the quality of any given translated text. All of us have also heard it said that the criteria of quality will vary depending on the nature of the text or document to be translated. All of us have also heard the argument that some employers of translators and some users of translation are satisfied with a translation that conveys 90%-to-95% of the information or meaning of the source text. Putting all these arguments aside, I am here today to propose that determining quality in a translated text is something that can be measured quite objectively. It is not subjective at all, and I further propose to you that those who advance such arguments care little about the profession or do not understand it at all.

I think that all of us here can agree that a quality translation is one that must be free of spelling errors, grammatical errors, omitted units of meaning, added units of meaning, or terms that are inappropriate for the context. There is nothing subjective in the nature of such errors and translation inadequacies or in the task of identifying them. Nor is there anything subjective about weighting or assigning them a numerical value that measures their overall impact on the translated text. The error-coding chart adopted by ATA for its certification exam does exactly that, and many translation bureaus and employers of translators have their own error coding charts to determine quality and to evaluate candidates and potential hires.

Let me repeat that I believe there is nothing subjective about requiring a translation to convey accurately all the information contained in the original source text, and to do so in a well-written, grammatically accurate, and idiomatic text. Some people might think that the tone of a source text and its implicit units of meaning are matters of subjective judgment. However, experienced and knowledgeable translators can understand, describe, and convey into the target-language text both tone and implicit units of meaning by performing a careful analysis of the source text to identify those features that set the tone of the text and embed meaning into it. They can then use the appropriate linguistic devices to convey the equivalent informational content and tone of the source-text language in the target-language text.

I’ve talked briefly about criteria for a quality translation and the crucial role of translators in ensuring quality, as well as about the supporting role that translation bureaus or translation managers and translation users play in the quality equation. What I would like to mention now to conclude my remarks has to do with some of the specific skills that, in my humble opinion, a translator must have to provide quality translations.

In addition to familiarity with the subject matter, translators must have research skills and know how and where to look for the information they need to complete the task. They must be well-read individuals with a curious mind who can read and understand texts dealing with a variety of subjects. Most importantly, they must have a thorough and profound functional understanding of the source and target languages in which they work. In practice, that means they must be able to distill the meaning encoded in the source text, reshape it according to the rules of the target-language text, and then encode it in that language. They must also be able to understand what they are doing, and they must be able to explain to others why they are doing it.

Language is a skill that develops over an extended period of time. Unfortunately, neither our schools nor our academic institutions are paying attention to the task of helping their students develop the skill and ability they need in order to understand their language and utilize it with skill and intelligence. This means that greater emphasis must be placed throughout the education process on the fundamentals of grammar and good reading and writing skills. Those fundamentals must not be sacrificed in favor of technology and its dizzying advancements. We must all insist that educational institutions do a better job in that area to improve students’ language and writing skills. Unless we do so, and unless we continue our ad hoc efforts to upgrade the language and writing skills of professionals who are in the workforce today, I fear that the daunting and Herculean task of gaining and expanding our understanding and appreciation of the concept of quality translation will continue to be a Sisyphean one.

Continued on p.18
The Case That Went Wrong! A Mental Health Clinician Works with an Interpreter

By Zarita Araújo-Lane and Edited by Vonessa A. Phillips

I am a clinician who has worked with interpreters. I am also an interpreter who has worked with clinicians. Trainers often educate interpreters from an interpreter’s perspective. In an attempt to introduce a different viewpoint, which I like to call the clinician’s lens, this article outlines a case study in an outpatient community mental health clinic and explains the clinical intervention. The interpreter’s role is examined closely, and tips for successful interpretation in mental health treatment settings are offered.

Each clinician is an individual, and each mental health profession utilizes a different approach to clinical work, but all use the same type of thinking when evaluating and diagnosing a client. The presence of an interpreter is a mixed blessing to the majority of clinicians. These individuals are thankful for the opportunity to communicate with their clients, but are soon beset by an onslaught of worries, including: “Is my message being interpreted accurately?” “How am I going to work with a third person who is not a family member or a co-therapist?” The presence of a third person in a mental health session changes the clinical dynamic. Interpreters and providers need to share a common understanding of their respective roles and expectations before they meet with the client.

In group therapy, clinicians generally avoid having three clients in any given session, since one will invariably be left out. In the triadic encounter with an interpreter, the one “left out” will either be the therapist or the patient. The interpreter has the gift of speaking both languages and likely shares both cultures, so the tendency for the interpreter to ally, consciously or unconsciously, with one party against the other is strong.

The following discusses a real clinical case involving a volatile situation encountered in a mental health session in which a clinician worked with an interpreter. This interpreter was experienced and highly regarded. Most of her work involved interpreting for the medication clinic and in family meetings where the children spoke English, but their parents did not. Her job description also included handling over-the-phone intakes when clients called the clinic.

“…The presence of an interpreter is a mixed blessing to the majority of clinicians…”

Background Case Information: Presenting the Problem

The clinician was called by a local school to handle a case involving a colleague’s client. Early that morning, the client, a boy, had spoken of wanting to burn someone with diesel fuel, but he had not specified a target, date, or time. Upon further questioning, he revealed that he had no access to the fuel and that his comments were borne of a generalized anger. In short, the boy was presenting homicidal ideation with a vague plan that was serious enough to warrant an immediate call to the clinic.

Today, in the aftermath of Columbine and subsequent school massacres, the clinical intervention would have followed a different pattern. For example, the police would have been contacted immediately. But intervention methods were different when this scenario occurred. In this case, the clinician drove to the school to evaluate the child. Although the boy denied feeling homicidal or suicidal, or having any weapons or even the money to buy fuel, his situation posed a threat and his parents had to be called in.

Prior Treatment History

A year prior to the clinician’s involvement in this emergency, she had done the initial evaluation of this case. At that time, the youngster appeared to be suffering from a reactive depression due to his immigration and to difficulties with his parents. He subsequently developed an appropriate rapport with the assigned therapist, and even looked forward to his weekly sessions. The therapist became the liaison between the school, the clinic, and the child and his family.

The boy’s parents did not speak English, and interpreter services were utilized each month at the family meeting. The parents had a difficult time empathizing with their son’s need to socialize with his peers. This youngster was always well groomed, but showed poor eye contact and seemed disengaged from life. Treatment goals were behavior-oriented in order to address the boy’s lack of self-esteem and anger. However, his parents refused to consult with the clinic’s psychiatrist.

Mental Status: Day of the Intervention

On the day of the emergency call, the clinician noticed some changes in the youngster. This information was gathered through meeting with the child and the school staff, and by reviewing the individual treatment notes left by the child’s therapist. In the month prior to the incident, new academic issues had arisen, such as incomplete homework and a drop in grade average. The child had also stopped seeking out his favorite
teacher to express his frustrations as he had done so often in the past. He seemed to be withdrawing from his peers and from the authority figures he cared for.

The boy’s affect was flat. He described waking up in the middle of the night, losing the desire to socialize with friends, and experiencing bursts of anger that at times scared even him. He had made the remark about burning someone in an impulsive response to teasing by a schoolmate. In the clinical interview, he emphasized that he really did not want to hurt anyone. However, he spoke of some past incidents in which he had grabbed a peer by the shirt after being teased about his clothing. The boy showed remorse for this impulsive behavior.

Children present suicidal/homicidal feelings differently than adults. Children may not say that they are sad, but clinicians look for potential signs such as disciplinary crisis, isolation, a flat or sad affect, or hostility towards others.

The youngster was oriented in time, place, and person. He denied having delusions or hallucinations. His thoughts seemed congruent with his affect. He showed appropriate judgment when reflecting on the seriousness of his threat. He denied experimenting with drugs. He also denied being a victim of any form of abuse by peers, family members, or teachers.

In the absence of actual suicidal or homicidal planning, where there is just a feeling or ideation, the client may be able to resist acting on those feelings. The therapist can then develop with the client a set of concrete steps detailing what to do and whom to call when the feelings resurface. Inversely, if homicidal ideation is towards a specific person, the clinician may have to report it to that person and to the proper authorities in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

Questions to rule out depression and suicidal/homicidal ideation
1. Tell me more about how you have been feeling.
2. How long have you been feeling this way?
3. Any changes in your life or health?
4. When do you feel like hurting yourself or others?
5. What do you do about it?
6. Do you have plan?
7. Who knows about these feelings?
8. Have you ever acted on them?
9. What has stopped you from doing it?
10. Are you hearing voices?
11. What would you do about these feelings?
12. Did you feel like this before?
13. What did you do?
14. What are you going to do when you leave this session?

Mental status assessment with some examples:
1. General behavior (appearance: how one looks; attitude: how one reacts; behavior comportment: how one carries oneself)
2. Emotional state (mood and affect or expression of one’s feelings)
3. Speech (clients can speak very fast, very slow, become mute, or speak so fast that their speech is incomprehensible)
4. Thought processes (two considerations: what one is thinking and how one expresses it)
5. Sensorium and mental capacity (orientation to time and place; ability to recall information based on immediate, short- and long-term memory capacity; the ability to concentrate; general knowledge; and common understanding of idiomatic expressions or proverbs)
6. Insight and judgment (Can the client reflect upon issues and set appropriate goals?)

Depression
• Self-esteem (how one feels about oneself)
• Sleep disturbances (insomnia, waking up in the middle of the night, waking up early)
• Appetite disturbances (no desire to eat, overeating)
• Fatigue or loss of energy (always tired, difficulty completing basic tasks)
• Cognitive impairment (inability to recall basic information, difficulty with basic calculations and abstract thinking that requires some problem solving)
• Content of thought (general feeling of hopelessness or worthlessness)
• Delusions and hallucinations (thoughts and feelings that are not based on reality, including hearing voices)

Homicidal and Suicidal Ideation: How Serious?

The school was about to close and the clinician was not comfortable sending the boy home without having him evaluated in a hospital. The clinician contacted the interpreter and during a three-way phone conversation informed the parents that their son was feeling very sad and that he would have to be seen by the hospital staff as soon as possible. The parents asked that the son be taken to the clinic instead of the hospital, and gave the clinician permission to transport him.

After bringing the boy to the clinic, the clinician again went over safety issues. The youngster denied having homicidal or suicidal ideation. The clinician went over some safe rules, assuring the boy that if he did not feel safe while

The ATA Chronicle | August 2005
meeting with the clinician and his family, he could ask to leave the room and another clinician would then stay with him, but that he was not allowed to run out of the clinic or to hurt anyone in the process. The boy agreed and his affect changed. He seemed relieved.

The clinician and client then went over sleep disturbances, whereupon the boy suddenly disclosed that at times he would wake up and want to kill his father. The clinician told the boy that he needed help and that together they would have to inform his parents of both his sadness and his homicidal ideation towards his father. The youngster asked that the clinician start the conversation with the father.

**Pre-Session with the Interpreter Alone**

The father arrived alone, since the mother could not leave work. The clinician met with the interpreter before the session, informing her of the client’s homicidal ideation. The interpreter was told that the meeting with the father was for the purpose of convincing him to authorize a voluntary hospitalization for his son at a local hospital. If the father refused to support hospitalization, the clinician might have to involve a psychiatrist and ask for a pink slip, or involuntary hospitalization.

The clinician also told the interpreter that they would first meet with the father and only bring the son into the session if it felt like a safe move for everyone. The clinician did not discuss safety issues and seating arrangements with the interpreter, and the interpreter ended up seated in a corner with the father, next to the door.

**Triadic Encounter: Meeting with the Father**

The clinician informed the father that his son seemed very sad and was having thoughts of hurting others as a result. She then paused while the interpreter relayed the information in the consecutive mode, and both waited for the father’s reaction. The clinician continued by sharing the boy’s recent disclosure of being afraid of hurting his father. She paused, the interpreter again interpreted, and the clinician started again by letting the father know that his son had shared thoughts of wanting to kill him in the middle of the night. The clinician paused while the interpreter relayed the information to the father.

The clinician asked if the father agreed to the hospitalization. He replied that his son wanted to go to a hospital outside the community to preserve the family’s confidentiality. As a standard procedure, the clinician told the father that when the son entered the room, she would go over this information again with both of them. She reminded the father that although he might feel upset, he was not allowed to hurt his son or anyone else in the clinic.

The clinician asked if the father was concerned. He replied that his son wanted to go out with friends and that this was the reason he was acting out. The clinician responded that young people can have bursts of anger as expressions of major depression, and that this was an opportunity to help his son and the family. The clinician then asked the father how he felt about this news. The father answered that he did not believe his son could hurt him, but that if the therapist felt the boy needed help, he would agree to the hospitalization.

**A Group Encounter: Client, Father, Clinician, and Interpreter**

The boy came back in the room and sat next to the clinician, across from his father. The interpreter used the simultaneous mode to interpret to the father the conversation between the clinician and the boy. The clinician started the session by thanking the father and son for agreeing to meet and by acknowledging that this could be a difficult time for both of them. She told them that at times people ask for help in different ways, and that this is what the boy was doing now. She reassured them that the clinic’s staff was there to support them.

As the clinician started to introduce the client’s homicidal ideation and desire to hurt his father, the father suddenly got up from his chair, challenging the son to “do it now” as he crossed the room and started to hit the son on the head. The boy quickly got up and hid behind the clinician.

The clinician firmly instructed the father to leave the room, but the father kept coming towards the son and hitting him. The clinician turned around to ask the boy to leave the room. The clinician noticed a different expression on the boy’s face, like an animal foaming at the mouth. Suddenly, the boy was holding a knife to the clinician’s neck.

The interpreter, worried for the clinician’s safety, inserted herself between the therapist and the boy, and got stuck there. Now both women were trapped in between the client and his father. Finally, the clinician was able to get the interpreter out of this sandwich and instructed her to call the police and ask for help from other colleagues.

Maintaining eye contact with the client, the clinician told the boy that he was going to be safe, but that he could not hurt her and that he needed to drop the knife on the file cabinet right next to them. The therapist was able to take the boy out of the room while holding on to his hand. The boy
was still gripping the knife, and the therapist locked herself in a room with him so that the father could not reach them.

It should be noted that most mental health interventions do not result in violence. In fact, mentally ill patients are responsible for a very small percentage of violence in treatment settings. The highest incidence of violence against clinicians occurs during family sessions at the time of disclosure of sexual abuse or other family secrets.

After police questioning, it became evident that the father had indeed been abusing the son. It was decided that the boy needed to be hospitalized. Subsequently, the Department of Social Services became involved and began to investigate removing the boy from the home.

Looking Back

When the case was initially reviewed, the clinic examined the clinical intervention and judged it to be solid. At the time, the interpretation was not questioned. Looking back, it is clear that this volatile situation was not the interpreter’s fault. But could the interpreter have inadvertently contributed to the escalation of violence by misunderstanding the meaning of the clinician’s pauses between each message? And could the clinician have done more to make the interpreter aware of this intended meaning?

Each of the clinician’s pauses had the dual purpose of soliciting a reaction from the father and allowing him to assimilate all the information. However, in the above-mentioned session, the clinical pauses, which would have equaled moments of silence in a monolingual session, were filled by the interpreter’s rendition of the original message.

Had the clinician been fully aware of the importance of this dynamic, she would have paused for effect after the interpreter’s rendition of each message. The importance of the clinician’s pauses would also have been discussed in the pre-session. The clinician and interpreter might even have agreed on a simple hand signal or gesture indicating the need for a pause.

Understanding Tools for Clinical Intervention

Echoing. In order to develop clinical rapport, the clinician first empathizes with the situation or the individual by repeating words or phrases used by the client. This echoing allows the client to feel that he or she is being heard. It also allows clients to hear their own thoughts repeated back to them through another voice, as if the clinician were the client’s mirror. The clinician can then evaluate the client’s insight and ability to reflect on and question his or her own thinking.

The interpreter’s omission of the clinician’s assuring words, like “good” or “I see,” or the interpreter’s failure to convey the clinician’s repetition of the client’s last words, may interfere with the development of the therapeutic alliance between patient and clinician. It may also cause the clinician to perceive the client as a poor listener.

Silence. Clinicians are more active with their questioning when assessing an emergency situation. However, a client’s comfort level will increase in an environment where trust is built. This is essential when a patient is about to disclose intimate information. Thus, during an ongoing treatment session, clinicians are less active with questioning and pause more often. Interpreters should respect and replicate these moments of silence in their target-language rendition of the message.

Repetition. During an emergency intervention for cases of homicidal ideation, astute clinicians predict behaviors and reactions of family members and provide them with alternatives and safe avenues, as did this clinician. Clinicians will repeat these options several times during the session, first with the client and then with the family or group. But is this repetition always interpreted? Or do interpreters omit the clinician’s repetitions, perhaps feeling that once or twice is enough?

Tone. Clinicians working with emergencies maintain clear, precise communication in a calm and firm manner. As physical violence erupted in the above-mentioned session, was the interpreter interpreting firmly with the same tone of voice that the therapist used? Would this have made a difference?

Seating. Where should an interpreter sit in the session: in a corner next to the door or in an open space? If the father were the one sitting in the corner, would he have felt boxed in and reacted with greater violence towards his son? These are all questions that clinicians and interpreters must consider in pre-session meetings.

Cooperation. Should the interpreter have left the room when violence erupted during the session? Did the interpreter act appropriately when she inserted herself in the middle of the skirmish? This issue is often addressed among clinicians doing cotherapy with potentially violent families. Most clinical literature refers to just one leader in times of crisis, and this leader should be the primary therapist in the session. So if the therapist tells the interpreter to leave the room, the interpreter should follow this direction, no questions asked.
In Summary
We learn something new every day. Perhaps what we can learn from this case is that clinicians and interpreters need to communicate at different levels. We can see the importance of clinical thinking and a clinician’s interventions. We know now that the way a clinician’s message is relayed can affect the client’s reaction, for better or for worse.

The Mode of Interpreting
Although the consecutive mode would have been appropriate for some parts of this session, perhaps the interpreter should have been interpreting simultaneously when the therapist was speaking in short sentences with pauses, and also when the physical confrontation erupted. In times like these, words and timing are crucial and should be conveyed as quickly as possible.

References:

Translation Quality Continued from p. 13
Suggested Readings on Translation Quality

First Ohio Valley Regional Interpreter Conference
October 28–30, 2005
Kent State University • Kent, Ohio
www.ccio.org

The Community and Court Interpreters of the Ohio Valley invites you to the First Ohio Valley Regional Interpreter Conference! Many wonderful speakers, CEUs, and networking with court and medical interpreters from Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee! See the CCIO website for more details: www.ccio.org.
Medical Back Translation: Strategies for Making it Work

By Mike Collins

The following was originally printed in the Winter 2004-2005 issue of the CATI Quarterly, the newsletter of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters, an ATA chapter (www.catiweb.org).

Mentioning the term “back translation” among translators can have the same effect as raking your fingernails across a blackboard.

And why not? Although translators who work outside of the medical field rarely encounter back translation, others have been burned by it, and maybe more than once. It is a concept that seems to run counter to everything we know and understand about our profession at the most basic level.

However, for various reasons, the number of requests for back translation is steadily increasing. We will address three questions in this brief article: 1) What is back translation and why is it being used? 2) What are some of the problems inherent with it? and 3) What are some strategies for approaching it?

What is back translation?

Back translation is the practice of taking a translated document and then translating it back into the original language to check the accuracy of the translation. For instance, you may be asked to translate a set of instructions into French. You deliver your translation to the client, who then gives it to another translator for translation back into English. The client then compares the back translation to the original and checks for inaccuracies.

This desire on the part of clients to be able to verify translations for themselves is perfectly natural. With most services, they know right away if something is wrong. Translation is different, however: we are providing clients with something that they cannot objectively assess.

While customer internal review would seem to be the best solution, there are several reasons why this may not be practical, especially where medical translation is concerned. Internal reviewers (if available) sometimes fail to understand that they must limit themselves to reviewing the accuracy of the translation, and often insist on changing content that has already been approved and vetted. At times, internal reviewers are also more difficult to hold to deadlines than vendors.

Most translation professionals deal with this problem with a variety of quality assurance (QA) steps. These include using an editor, having someone spot-check, or re-reading the text carefully after letting it cool off for a bit. But even with all of these steps, our customers are at our mercy. They must trust that we will apply these QA measures diligently and conscientiously.

For many clients and for many reasons, simple trust is often not good enough. This is particularly true in the medical/pharmaceutical industry, and the result has been a surge in medical back translation.

The world of medical research was rocked several years ago when it was revealed that researchers at Johns Hopkins University had conducted medical trials with subjects who had not given their informed consent. This “informed consent” is usually obtained in the form of a document that explains the risks and procedures that a particular study entails. All volunteers must read and sign one of these to show that they understand the risks and agree to participate of their own free will.

Test subjects must be given this form in the language they prefer, and have it explained in that language, if necessary. Partly as a result of the Hopkins scandal, institutions conducting research have come under intense scrutiny and pressure to ensure that every subject gives his or her informed consent before joining a study.

Institutions that conduct research studies or allow them to be conducted in their facilities have an oversight committee called an institutional review board, or IRB (sometimes also referred to as an ethics committee). This board is composed of people from various areas of the field of medicine and pharmaceuticals, and has the responsibility of ensuring that studies are conducted safely and ethically. This includes reviewing all the documentation (including draft versions of informed consents) associated with the studies.

So what is the IRB to do if it is responsible for ensuring that all subjects give informed consent, but it cannot read or objectively assess documents in foreign languages? The answer for many of them is back translation.

And this solution is catching on. Pharmaceutical companies and clinical research organizations (CROs) have also adopted this approach, both because the IRBs they work with are asking for it, and because it gives them an objective QA step that can be checked off in the process.

What are some of the problems?

But does it work? What are the potential problems in this process, and how do we avoid them?
Some of the answers depend on who is in control of the process, and on how much trust there is between the translator and client. Much also depends on the client’s understanding of the many shades of gray that exist in translation.

Every translator knows that producing a back translation that exactly matches the original is virtually impossible. The original says “(research) subject,” the Spanish translation says *participante* or *paciente*, and so the back translation likely says “participant” or “patient.” Does this constitute a translation error? Most Spanish translators would not use the term *su jeto* for a research subject.

Then there’s the problem of register. Consider this example from Spanish:

**Source text:** ...how we plan to keep your baby’s research information confidential...

**Spanish Translation:** ...la manera en que planeamos mantener confidencial la información de su bebé de la inves- tigación...

**Back translation:** ...the way in which we intend to maintain the confidentiality of the information about your baby from the study...

In this example, a slight increase in register in the Spanish has been amplified in the back translation. Strictly speaking, there is no serious translation error; the meaning is there, no concepts have been left out. However, the back translation has few words in common with the original. Client reaction may range from a quick comment to check the register of the Spanish to a stern demand to explain these “major” differences between the source and the back translation. The client’s level of concern will be compounded if the translator or agency does or says anything that seems evasive.

Back translation can conceal errors as well. For example:

**Source text:** During the screening visit, you may stay in the hospital overnight, if all of the screening tests cannot be scheduled on the same day.

**French Translation:** Pendant la visite de triage, il est possible que vous deviez passer la nuit à l’hôpital si tous les tests de triage ne peuvent pas avoir lieu le même jour.

**Source text:** During the screening visit, you may have to spend the night in the hospital, if all the screening tests cannot take place on the same day.

In this example, the translator has, based on the context, translated “triage” as “screening.” However, the correct French for screening is *sélection*. The back translation would not reveal this error.

**What are some strategies?**

So what are some strategies for dealing with these issues and the confidence issues described above?

Our agency has seen all manner of approaches in connection with back translation, ranging from intelligent, flexible, and understanding to hysterically unrealistic.

On the successful side, discussions with many of our clients have resulted in some very effective arrangements. Two of these are presented here.

**Method 1:** The client asks for a translation and a back translation, agreeing to wait for delivery until the back translation is complete. The understanding is that we will translate and back translate with two different teams, and then do a source-to-back translation comparison ourselves, and correct any discrepancies in the translation. Both documents are then delivered to the client.

**Method 2:** The client asks for a translation and a back translation, but asks for delivery of the translation first. Then, when the back translation is complete, it is our responsibility to compare the back translation, the translation, and the source document, and to correct any errors in the translation. When finished, we deliver the back translation and a revised copy of the translation, along with a list of the corrections made to the translation, and why they were made. The client then resubmits the translation to the IRB with our list of corrections.

These two methods have proven very satisfactory. The client gets the extra quality check and a real back translation for the files, while leaving problems of linguistic interpretation to the experts. In turn, we supply our agency certification describing the process and people used, thus effectively standing behind our work. The level of trust and accountability with these processes greatly reduces stress and eliminates many potential friction points in the process. We arrived at these methods after talking with our clients and making an effort to understand their needs and requirements, and by explaining the concepts and problems inherent in translation and back translation. And we do indeed find errors that were overlooked in the editing and review.

But what if we don’t have this degree of control over the process?
Coronary Heart Disease—Death American Style

By Rafael A. Rivera

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the most common form of heart disease and the leading cause of death for Americans. Approximately 1.1 million Americans suffer a heart attack each year, and about 515,000 of these are fatal. Fortunately, CHD is preventable (hard to believe that the most common cause of death in America is, in fact, preventable). The underlying process of atherosclerosis, the build up of plaque that ultimately blocks coronary vessels, is already silently present early in life. What are the risk factors for overt heart disease? How early can the disease be detected? What are the symptoms and how do they differ in men and women? What is the rationale for treatment, and, most importantly, how effective is it in preventing future problems? The following will discuss various types of procedural and surgical interventions. Curious instances of a higher and a lower incidence of CHD will also be mentioned, as well as the most recent attempts at reducing already established plaque.

What is CHD?

The human heart is an extraordinary organ. It starts beating in utero and continues incessantly throughout a person’s entire life. To do so, it needs a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients which are normally delivered through its coronary arteries (so called because they encircle the heart like a crown or wreath). The most common cause of interference or reduction in coronary blood flow is a process called atherosclerosis, in which plaques or growths of fatty substances called atheromas build up in the lining of coronary vessels. This process leads to a hardening process called sclerosis (thus, atherosclerosis) and progressive obstruction. The fatty build-ups or plaques can break apart and bleed, which can cause clots to form that further reduce the already compromised flow of blood. When too little blood reaches any living human tissue, this is called ischemia, meaning reduced or insufficient blood flow in the heart muscle (thus, cardiac ischemia or ischemic heart disease). Poor circulation leads to poor functioning of the heart muscle, which, if not improved or restored, leads to further damage and to the death of tissue. Cardiac cells do not self-regenerate, so cell loss is permanent.

“…It is hard to believe that the most common cause of death in America is, in fact, preventable…”

What are the symptoms of CHD?

When ischemia occurs, normal functioning fails and results in a shortness of breath or chest pain, called angina. Angina is usually brought on by exertion and relieved by rest. If an angina attack results from a significant obstruction and is associated with the actual death of heart muscle tissue, then we call it a myocardial (heart muscle) infarction (death from loss of blood supply), or a typical heart attack. Pain arising from the heart can remain localized to the precordium (the anterior to or over the heart), or spread to the left jaw, left neck, or left arm. Women may get a less typical form of angina that feels like a shortness of breath or indigestion, can linger or occur in a different place than behind the breastbone, and might not be caused by exercise. In fact, such an attack may only occur during rest. The regularity and predictability of the sequence of events (pain upon exertion relieved by rest) is the most typical feature of cardiac ischemia.

What are the risk factors for CHD?

Risk factors are behaviors or medical conditions that increase the likelihood of developing a disease. For CHD, there are certain factors that can’t be modified, such as age (45 and older for men; 55 and older for women) and a family history of heart disease.

The majority of well known associated factors that can be modified include: cigarette smoking; high blood pressure; high blood cholesterol; excess weight/obesity; physical inactivity; and diabetes. Whereas these factors have been recognized and treated as separate entities, the current thinking is that at least four of them (high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes) seem to be interrelated in most instances. Obesity leads to diabetes and vice-versa, and can also lead to hypertension and high cholesterol. The aggregation of these basic measurable risk factors (recently coined the “metabolic syndrome”) pulls them together as follows: higher than normal cholesterol; higher than normal fasting blood sugar; higher than normal blood pressure; and a larger than expected waist circumference.

Cholesterol deserves a separate mention. The Framingham Heart Study (FHS), the longest, most comprehensive study of heart disease in the world (ongoing since 1948 in the town of Framingham, Massachusetts, under the direction of the National Heart Institute), as well as other well-known studies worldwide, have established the link between high cholesterol and CHD. The FHS has established the rarity of CHD at cholesterol levels of 150 mg/dL or below. Moreover, the use of cholesterol lowering medications like statins...
has shown conclusively that a lowering of total cholesterol reduces the risks of CHD, the need for bypass surgery or angioplasty, and of dying of CHD-related causes.

Today, excess weight and obesity are the number one health risk in the U.S. Two-thirds of American are overweight and 50% are obese. Alarmingly, 15% of children are already overweight. This is the substrate for diabetes and hypertension which leads to CHD.

**Stress and anger** are also well-known risk actors for CHD. An angry temperament per se more than doubles the likelihood of CHD.

**How is the diagnosis of CHD confirmed?**

A history of chest pain brought on by exertion and relieved by rest leads to one or more of the following:

**Chest x-rays.** Show variations in size and shape of the heart. It will also show the presence of pulmonary problems that could also explain the shortness of breath.

**Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG).** The graphic recording of the electrical activity of the heart that can show disturbances of heart rhythm, the size of heart chambers, and the areas of damage to the heart muscle.

**Stress test.** Also known as a treadmill test, shows the heart at work against progressive resistance induced by changes in speed and incline of a moving treadmill. Blood pressure and EKG are monitored constantly during the test. It is the most informative test since it shows the actual functioning of the heart during effort.

**Nuclear scan.** Also called a thallium stress test. While a regular stress test is being performed, radioactive thallium injected in an arm vein shows its presence throughout the heart, identifying areas that lack blood flow or are damaged.

**Coronary angiography (or arteriography).** A catheter (fine tube) is threaded through an arm or a leg into the heart and positioned at the coronary vessels where a dye is injected that will show the coronaries on a video as the heart pumps. The film is called an angiogram or an arteriogram.

**Intracoronary ultrasound.** This test uses a catheter that can measure blood flow. It creates a picture of the coronaries that shows the thickness and character of the artery wall.

**Pertinent Blood Tests**

**Cholesterol, triglycerides, blood glucose, general panel of serum chemistries**

**CRP.** C-reactive protein in blood, a nonspecific indicator of inflammation, is currently thought to play a significant role in the process of atherosclerosis. It is elevated in other inflammatory processes. Normally there is no CRP in the blood.

**Homocysteine.** Elevated blood levels of this aminoacid have been associated with an increased incidence of CHD, stroke, and occlusive disease of other arteries. A genetic defect called homocystinuria, in which large quantities of homocysteine are excreted in the urine, leads to early death from generalized occlusive disease. Folic acid, B6, and Vitamin B12 significantly reduce homocysteine levels.

**How is CHD treated?**

There are three main types of treatment: lifestyle changes; medications; and, for advanced atherosclerosis, a special procedure to open obstructed coronaries.

**Lifestyle**

It follows from the risk factors mentioned above that six key steps can help prevent or control CHD: stop smoking cigarettes; lose weight; become physically active; lower high blood pressure; lower elevated cholesterol; and manage diabetes.

**Cigarette smoking.** There is no safe way to smoke. Low tar and low nicotine may reduce the risk for lung cancer, but not for CHD. The risk increases with the number of cigarettes smoked daily. Quitting sharply lowers the risk so significantly that insurance companies tend to restore the premiums of nonsmokers after a year of cessation. The Food and Drug Administration has approved four different medications to help curb nicotine addiction: Buproprion SR (by prescription) has no nicotine and reduces cravings for cigarette nicotine supplements; a nicotine patch; a nicotine inhaler; and a nicotine nasal spray are all available by prescription.

**High blood pressure.** Also known as hypertension, high blood pressure usually has no symptoms. Once developed, it typically lasts a lifetime. If uncon-trolled, it may lead to heart disease, kidney disease, and stroke. A healthy blood pressure level is around 120/80. The higher the blood pressure, the higher the risk for heart disease.

**High blood cholesterol.** Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance involved in normal cell function. The body normally makes all the cholesterol it needs. Excess saturated fats and cholesterol in the diet causes fatty build-ups in blood vessels that contribute to
atherosclerosis.

Cholesterol travels in packages called lipoproteins. There are two main types of lipoproteins that affect the risk for CHD. Low-density lipoprotein (LDL), also called “bad cholesterol,” causes fatty deposits in blood vessels. High-density lipoproteins (HDL), also called “good cholesterol,” helps remove cholesterol from the blood. Therefore, it is important to have a low level of LDL and a high level of HDL.

Healthy adults, age 20 and older, should have their cholesterol and other blood fats checked every five years. Healthy eating, physical activity, and weight control are essential for maintaining healthy and safe cholesterol levels.

Overweight and obesity. Currently, at epidemic proportions in the U.S., being overweight or obese not only increases the chances of CHD, but gallbladder disease, stroke, arthritis, breast and colon cancer, and accidents. Medical interventions, surgery, and the risk of anesthesia are definitely more hazardous the heavier the patient is. A simple tip: the risk of heart disease increases if weight circumference is greater than 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men.

There are no quick fixes to losing weight permanently and maintaining a normal weight. Being vigilant of excess eating in general and of reducing the amount of fats in the diet in particular, and engaging in daily physical activity (at least 30 minutes a day) are essential. If evidence of diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease is already present, then weight control and physical activity are even more important.

Physical activity. Already mentioned and now reinforced, physical activity is one of the best ways to help prevent and control heart disease. It can lower bad cholesterol and raise good cholesterol, lower blood pressure, increase energy, and elevate mood.

Diabetes. Diabetes occurs when the body is unable to use sugar appropriately for growth and energy. The hormone insulin, normally made in the pancreas, is either not available in sufficient quantities or the insulin that is available is not used effectively. Typical symptoms include increased thirst, urination, weight loss, blurred vision, hunger, fatigue, frequent infections, and slow healing wounds or sores.

Stress management. Most cardiac rehabilitation programs have a stress management component that includes yoga and meditation.

Medications

Statin (pravastatin, lovastatin, simvastatin, and others) have demonstrated the capacity to significantly reduce cholesterol levels, resulting in reduced morbidity and mortality from CHD. They are the only medications that can be said to have a primary influence on the cause of CHD, the atherosclerotic plaque, by reducing cholesterol formation in the liver. Increased therapeutic aggressiveness in the prescription of statins in order to further reduce blood levels of bad cholesterol (LDL) is the latest stance of the cardiologic community. It is possible that the beneficial effect of using statins is due to other mechanisms besides the well-established reduction of cholesterol.

Nitroglycerin tablets are taken during an attack of angina because of their immediate vasodilating action on the coronaries. Other longer acting nitrates are also used.

Aspirin is prescribed to be taken on a daily basis by CHD patients because of its mild anticoagulant effect that is secondary to a reduction in platelet adhesiveness and clot formation. Aspirin is given immediately to anybody arriving at the hospital with a suspected heart attack.

Digitalis helps the heart contract better, and is used when the heart’s pumping action has been weakened. It also slows some fast heart rhythms.

ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor) medications stop the production of a chemical produced by the body that narrows blood vessels. It is also used for hypertension and damaged heart muscle.

Beta blockers slow the heart and make it beat with less force, lowering blood pressure and making the heart work less hard. Beta blockers are used for high blood pressure, chest pain, and to prevent a repeat heart attack.

Calcium channel blockers relax blood vessels, and are used for high blood pressure and angina.

Diuretics, also known as “fluid pills” or “water pills,” decrease excess fluid in the body and are used for high blood pressure.

Thrombolytic agents, also known as clot busting drugs, are given during a heart attack to dissolve a blood clot in a coronary artery and restore blood flow. These agents must be administered promptly after symptoms begin, usually within one hour after the onset of symptoms.

Invasive Therapeutic Procedures

Coronary angioplasty and placement of stent. In this procedure, a catheter is threaded into the narrowed portion of the coronary vessel.
The catheter has a tiny balloon at its tip that can be inflated and deflated to stretch and open the artery and improve the blood flow. The balloon is then deflated and the catheter removed. Following the stretching and opening procedure, doctors now insert a permanent stent to maintain patency in the previously narrowed area. The stent is an expandable wire mesh coated with a slick material to prevent the new growth of atheromatous plaque over it.

_Atherectomy_. A specially equipped catheter is threaded into the narrowed coronary where thin strips of plaque are shaved and removed. Balloon angioplasty and stent placement could also be done.

_Laser angioplasty_. A catheter with a laser tip can be threaded into the artery and the plaque vaporized. The procedure may be used alone or along with balloon angioplasty.

**Surgery**

_Coronal artery bypass graft (CABG)._ Also known as “bypass surgery,” is a procedure in which a segment of vein from the leg is attached above and below the blocked area, thus creating a “bypass” around the blocked portion of the vessel. Usually two to four bypasses are performed in one operation. A mammary artery is often disconnected from its normal course and brought to the distal (far) end of the blocked coronary or coronaries. A bypass can close again in about 10% of cases. Technical advances now make it possible to have “beating heart” coronary surgery without the need for extracorporeal cardiopulmonary assistance.

It is important to understand that these procedures relieve CHD symptoms by relieving the coronary obstructions, but do not cure the disease. Lifestyle changes must still be followed and medications must be continued.

**References**

www.nhlbi.nih.gov…
Facts about coronary heart disease are available on multiple Internet sites

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Source Language, Source of Trouble

By Elena B. Sgarbossa

There is much emphasis on translators and editors being highly proficient in their target language(s). The ATA Code of Professional Conduct and Business Practices, for example, states that excellence in translation requires a "mastery of the target language equivalent to that of an educated native speaker." But what is expected regarding source languages? ATA endorses an "up-to-date knowledge of the subject material and its terminology in both languages." The relevance of this statement in regards to the source language cannot be overemphasized. Thoroughly understanding the message in the source text is a complex cognitive process. It requires excellent knowledge (and good recall) of both cultural contexts and field-specific lexicons. This is why our level of proficiency in our source language(s) should be similar to that of our target language(s), at least within our specialties (refs. 1, 2, 3). Otherwise, comprehension problems may arise, especially if the text’s grammar or style is suboptimal.

The following examples of online queries and responses regarding medical terminology emphasize the types of problems that can occur without a complete understanding of the source language.

Unfamiliarity with Term Definitions

Being unfamiliar with definitions and context-specific usage is probably at the root of most comprehension problems.

Street Drugs. Medications and Street Drugs was the title of an educational booklet on medications, and a Spanish rendition for street drugs was requested. Street drugs can be translated as "drogas ilegales/ilícitas" (literally, "illegal/unlawful drugs"), or, more widely (to include controlled drugs that are sold on the black market), as "drogas callejeras." One proposed solution that received support from some online forum participants was "medicinas que no necesitan prescripción médica." However, this literally means "non-prescription medicines" (i.e., "over-the-counter [OTC] medications"). After reading this, I envisioned a Spanish-speaking patient in a physician’s office waiting room browsing through educational materials on medications and finding street drugs, quarter pound. A colleague offered the translation “250 gramos” (i.e., 250 grams, or 0.55 pounds), and provided an Internet reference that described a normal daily fecal output for newborns as being between 150 to 200 grams. A third translator correctly indicated that "quarter" in the source text was a comparative size measurement that alluded to the 25-cent U.S. coin.

Was resolving. In a medical record, the sentence "The event was resolving at the time of report" elicited a translator’s doubts regarding the best Spanish rendition for was resolving. Here, “to resolve” corresponds to the dictionary meaning “to bring to a usually successful conclusion,” or “to cause reduction of (an inflammation, for example).” The translator asked whether "se estaba resolviendo/solucionando" was an appropriate Spanish phrasing. Instead, another translator proposed "estaba tomando forma" (i.e., "[it] was taking shape"). This rendition attributes to the word resolve the seventh meaning listed in the American Heritage Dictionary, i.e., “To render parts of (an image) visible and distinct,” which is incorrect for the context. A possible translation for was resolving would be "estaba en vías de resolución/curación.”

To arrest. A translator requested a Spanish rendition for the term arrest(ed), which appeared in the sentence “The compound arrested cells in the G1 phase of the cell cycle.” The verb "to arrest" (meaning “to seize and hold under the authority of law”) is similar to the Spanish “arrestar” in both spelling and definition. In English, however, “to arrest” also means “to stop,” but there is no such meaning in Spanish. In Spanish, one can convey “to stop/to halt” with the verb "detener" (i.e., “to detain”).

"...Thoroughly understanding the message in the source text is a complex cognitive process, requiring excellent knowledge (and good recall) of both cultural contexts and field-specific lexicons…”
False Friends

**Intoxicants.** A translator requested online advice to render intoxicants into Spanish. The context was the contract clause: Intoxicants: 1- The Contractor shall not allow its employees while on duty to possess, sell, consume, or be under the influence of intoxicants, drugs or substances which produce similar effects. 1.1) Consumption of Alcohol. The drinking of alcoholic beverages while on duty... The translator specified that she was unsatisfied with the rendition “sustancias intoxicantes,” since “intoxicante” is not in the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (an authoritative Spanish source). She also pointed out that “sustancias embriagadoras” referred only to alcohol, which was mentioned separately in the contract.

Intoxicant is, according to the American Heritage Dictionary, “an agent that intoxicates, especially an alcoholic beverage.” “To intoxicate” is: 1) to stupefy or excite by the action of a chemical substance such as alcohol; 2) to stimulate or excite; and 3) to poison. The first definition is the one usually intended in both medical and legal provisions. “To poison,” however, is most closely related to the main meaning of “intoxicar” and “intoxicación” in Spanish. These terms allude to “toxin-related,” as in food poisoning from bacterial endotoxins. “Intoxicación” can also refer to “medication excess/overdose.” Thus, a person who is “intoxicado” suffers from food or plant poisoning or from medication overdose, not from alcohol excess (unless specifically stated, as in “alcohol intoxication”).

The online translations proposed for intoxicant, however, included: “sustancias tóxicas” (toxic substances); “bebidas intoxicantes” (toxic beverages); and “productos tóxicos” (toxic products). Yet, the appropriate rendition must diverge from the root “toxin[a].” The solution for the contract clause that was eventually agreed upon was “sustancias estupefacientes y embriagadoras/alcohol” (i.e., narcotics and alcoholic beverages).

**Batteri.** The Italian word batteri was posted in an online consultation within the context “Le endospore germinano massivamente nelle forme batteri vegetative nel citoplasma, quindi i batteri vegetativi si moltiplicano e producono le tossine...” (i.e., Endospores grow massively as vegetative batteri within the cytoplasm, thus the vegetative batteri multiply...). The poster of this online query asked whether the English translation for batteri was “batteries.” Batteri, however, is not related to “battery/batteries,” but to the plural for “batterio” (i.e., bacteria).

**Fondo de ojo.** In Spanish, the word “fondo” means “the back, the opposite extreme,” “bottom,” or “background” (as opposed to foreground). Medical translators working from Spanish often stumble over the term fondo de ojo. This is the name of a field in ophthalmology, used in various medical contexts: the back (deep inner part) of the eye. This is the name of a specific ocular exam conducted with an ophthalmoscope, which allows visualization and photographing of the back (deep inner part) of the eyeball. In English, it can be called a “fundus examination,” “ocular fundus examination,” “fundoscopy,” or a “fundoscopic examination.” Fondo de ojo is also the name of the anatomical view of the retina and optic disc obtained with the ophthalmoscope, or “fundus” in English. However, in a recent online consultation and in similar previous queries, I have seen fondo de ojo translated as “back of the eye” and “bottom of the eye.”

**Captante.** Online assistance is also regularly requested by translators for another Spanish term from imaging reports: captante. As context for the term, one translator offered: Informe médico sobre una paciente con tumoración retroperitoneal. En la descripción de la zona dice que hay “áreas no captantes,” y una “tumoración menor de aspecto sólido captante...” (i.e., a medical report on a patient with a retroperitoneal tumor. The description reads...). Another translator suggested “[non] capturing.” Captante, however, describes a live tissue incorporating a radiomarker, and is translated as “uptake” (i.e., “areas with no uptake,” in this case).

Undecoded Syntax

Unrecognized or misinterpreted terms in the source text may result in a seemingly obscure syntax, which leads to puzzling peer consultations.

**Merging Phrases**

**Included to address.** An online consultation resulted from the merger of two phrasal units: included to address. The expression appeared in a text on conference logistics that read: “Between presentation 4 and 5, an
exhibitor can be included to address the question why smart cards should still be considered.” “Is the exhibitor going to be asked something, or does he have to ask something?” inquired the translator. The fact that “included to address” needed to be read as “X can be included” and “to address the question” was pointed out to the translator.

**Trough cuff.** Another case of grammar disruption was observed in an online consultation regarding a Spanish rendering for the term *trough cuff*, which appeared within the context “administration of a medicine.” The sentence in question: “xxx administered as 50 mg twice per day produced greater trough cuff (43 mm Hg) and ABPM blood pressure reductions than 100 mg given daily.” (ABPM stands for ambulatory blood pressure monitoring). In this example, the source phrasal units are: 1) “greater trough” (which refers to a larger dip); and 2) “[greater] cuff (43 mm Hg); and ABPM blood pressure reductions,” which refers to blood pressure that is recorded using the cuff or sphygmomanometer, or else to blood pressure that is recorded with an ambulatory monitor.

**Membrana o liberata.** A translator working with an Italian text on biomedicine requested the English translation for the term *membrana o liberata*. The context referred to a molecular receptor and its interaction with the cell membrane. The Italian sentence read: “Questa molecola, associata alla membrana o liberata, agisce come trappola molecolare per IL-1, costituendo un sistema unico in biologia.” In this sentence, the complete phrasal unit is *associata alla membrana o liberata*, which is translated as “membrane-bound or released” or, more commonly, “membrane-bound or free” (which corresponds in Italian to “associata alla membrana o liberata). The sentence could be rendered as “This molecule, membrane-bound or free, acts as a molecular trap....”

**Os.** In another Italian document, the word *os* was unclear to a medical translator. She expressed doubts that the proper translation could be “bone” (“bone” in Italian is “osso,” from Latin *osseus*, from *os* [gen. *ossis*]). “Os” appeared in the Italian phrase *alcuni farmaci antinfiammatori non steroidei per os*. In Italian, “per” means “for,” but in this case “per” is part of the Latin term “per os.” “Per os” remains unchanged in English and is abbreviated “PO.” It means “by mouth” or “oral,” which is the preferred word for the context provided: “some oral non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs.”

**Misinterpreting “Compressed Syntax”**

Scientific texts and patient documents often include compound names or stock phrases in a “compressed syntax” structure (ref. 4). These structures may appear to feature (within themselves or in relation to the rest of the sentence) dangling, misplaced, or squinting modifiers. Yet, these modifiers’ roles become patent when the compound names or stock phrases are recognized as such.

**Mean dependent variable.** This term was recently posted on an online translators list. The translator apparently did not recognize the statistical term *dependent variable*, and wanted to know if the term should be rendered in Spanish either as “media de la variable dependiente” or as “variable dependiente de la media.” The first Spanish rendition is the accurate translation, since the English term should be read as “[mean] [dependent variable].” The alternative translation interprets the English term incorrectly as “[mean dependent] [variable].” or “variable dependent on the mean.”

**Wise treatment comparisons.** A translator requested online assistance for this phrase, which appeared in the sentence: *Two primary pair wise treatment comparisons will be performed comparing regimen I vs II.* The complete term phrase, however, must include the word “pair.” “Pairwise (or pairwise) comparison” is an expression used in statistics to indicate paired testing.

**Line treatment.** Another medical translator requested help to render this phrase into Spanish. The context was: “It is important that the tendency to production line treatment, an increasing feature of our NHS in the UK, does not become common in CF care and that Centre staff... continue to be always accessible whenever advice is required.” This sentence, which includes the compound term “production line,” was dismissed by a translator answering the query because she assumed that the original poster had reversed the words. As such, she proposed “línea de tratamiento,” which is the translation for “treatment line.” This is a common medical term in both languages. In the English source text, however, the phrasal unit in question was not “treatment line,” but production line treatment (as in “production line/assembly line treatment”). An appropriate translation would be “tratamiento masificado/tratamiento en serie.”

**Conclusion**

The examples above suggest the problems that can occur when
common terms or phrases in the source text are not completely understood. In all these cases, obtaining multiple online input from colleagues may have allowed for timely prevention of error in the translated text. The online consultations we happen to witness, however, may only be the “tip of the iceberg.” Many source-text misinterpretations may never be detected, resulting in flawed renditions of sensitive medical text.

Most consultations are posed by translators who are natives of their target language, which is a requirement commonly made by outsourcers. Could our focus on proficiency in target languages be detracting us from paying enough attention to the requisite proficiency in our source languages? It can be argued that poor language comprehension is a problem restricted to non-certified translators. Yet, does becoming a certified translator guarantee excellent reading comprehension? In certification exams, cognizance of the source language is not always assessed as a standardized, separate item, but is often combined with the translation (i.e., transfer) process and assessed by evaluators only through inference.

More importantly, most online consultations (and answers) revealing comprehension difficulties are posted by active, working translators, both certified and non-certified, in all fields. These language providers are part of the global pool of translators who currently respond to the demand of myriad medical translation consumers. Their status as target-language natives projects authoritativeness, and their renditions may be used to make important medical decisions. This is why, ideally, medical translators must strive to understand the source language to the point of not being misled by coded terms, false friends, pseudo-squinting modifiers, or even by suboptimal grammar.

How can this ideal be attained? Perhaps the best way is to work (“hands-on,” if possible) in a medical environment, or to shadow someone who does. As complementary approaches, I recommend:

- Be curious: read continuously in your source language(s), not only about your specialty field(s), but about everything you can.
- Research. Conduct all the language research pertinent to your current working topics.
- Keep your source language(s) active by interacting and working with the people who live in the areas where your source language is spoken.
- Help other translators or editors whenever you can. You may be surprised at how much you learn about your source language(s).

Note: All the online consultation examples in this article represent true instances of questions and answers by medical translators. The specific URL for each example is available by request to the author at Elena@TranslatingMedicine.net.

References

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Reviewing Translated Literature—Through a Glass Darkly?

By Anne Milano Appel

On a recent Sunday, I was sipping my French roast and enjoying the book review section of my local paper when I gradually became aware of a disconcerting trend: though four of the books reviewed that particular day were translations, in each case, there was no mention of the fact that the book under review was a translation. Of course, this was not the first time I had noticed a reviewer wearing blinders when it came to treating a translated work, but it started me thinking seriously about the issue of how a translation is reviewed.

To be sure, a distinction should be drawn between literary analysis based on critical theory and reviews aimed at the general public—us! While the former represents an attempt to intellectualize the process of translation (despite the lack of a critical tradition specifically aimed at reviewing translations), reviews intended for the ordinary reader are inclined to focus (appropriately?) on the product rather than the process. As I see it, reviewers fall within a range of categories: those who are translation-blind, either intentionally or by default; those whose comments tend to be of a general or banal nature; those who seem to take pleasure in blaming the translator; and those who are, fortunately, more translation-sensitive.

I first became interested in how reviewers treat works in translation when I came across two separate book reviews in The New York Times Book Review of November 16, 2003, in which the reviewers (Brent Staples reviewing Edith Grossman’s translation of Gabriel García Márquez’s Living to Tell the Tale, and Richard Lourie reviewing Paul Vincent’s translation of Harry Mulisch’s Siegfried) referred to the works they were examining as “gracefully translated by…” Does “gracefully” really tell us anything about the quality of a translation? Or is it just a cliché, something for the reviewer to say, as when a would-be art critic uncritically refers to a painting as “interesting”? Thereafter, I started keeping a file of comments found in various reviews, thinking they might prove helpful to an eventual understanding of the critical approach (or lack thereof) toward translated works. My questions were (are) fundamental: How does the reviewer understand, analyze, and judge the translator’s accomplishment? I soon came to realize that the reviewer’s task is perhaps as impossible as that of Borge’s fictional Menard, who set out to “write” (not “rewrite” or “recreate!”) parts of Don Quijote. This turned out to be an impossible task that was never realized (we are told that not a single page survived the bonfires to which Menard subjected his notebooks).

Indeed, most reviewers take the easy way out, and simply avoid mentioning the fact that the work under review is a translation! This might be a positive commentary on the part of the reviewer if he were, in fact, reading the translation as a translation, that is, as a work in its own right. Instead, what it usually signifies is that the object he chooses to look at is the original work, lying beyond the glass whose existence he ignores. To be fair, the reviewer cannot possibly read a translation with a complete sense of how fully the foreign work draws on its native culture and is unavoidably steeped in it. Most reviewers (and readers) do not, and cannot, undertake a thorough comparison of the translation to the foreign text. According to Lawrence Venuti, who offers five rules for “How to Read a Translation” (Words Without Borders, July 2004), “a translation ought to be read differently from an original composition precisely because it is not an original.” It is indeed undeniably difficult for reviewers who most likely have not read the original work: what they end up reviewing, then, is a work “filtered” through the translator’s “lens.”

A recent article regarding Michael Henry Heim’s new translation of Thomas Mann’s novella Death in Venice (“A Hero Found in Translation,” Los Angeles Times Book Review, June 6, 2004) raises the $64,000 question, adjusted for inflation, regarding the critical evaluation of a translation. To be sure, the article’s author, Michael Cunningham, is concerned with different translations of the same book when he asks: “How can we possibly decide, unless we’re fluent in both languages, which is more faithful to the author’s intent?” The question is equally valid, however, when applied to any review of a translated text. How can the reviewer possibly know whether the translation is faithful to the author’s intent, unless he is fluent in both the source and the target language and has read both versions of the book? And what does “faithful” mean anyway? Is the proper object of the reviewer’s gaze a “gracefully” translated recreation, or the original work seen “through a glass darkly”? A practical approach to the lack of
Translation-blind, intentionally or by default

I mentioned earlier that the path of least resistance for a number of reviewers is to don blinders when it comes to writing about a translated work. Such translation-blind reviewers adopt a tactic of avoidance (sometimes for marketing reasons) by never mentioning the fact that the work they are reviewing is a translation. In addition to the four reviews that diminished my coffee pleasure that particular Sunday morning, numerous other instances of “translation-blind” reviews can readily be found. The December 21, 2003 issue of the San Francisco Chronicle, to name just one example, contained a review of Sepharad, written by Antonio Muñoz Molina and translated by Margaret Sayers Peden. As in other instances, the reviewer, Theodore Roszak, made no reference to the fact that he was reviewing a translation, thereby tacitly underscoring the all too commonly held notion of the translator’s invisibility.

In a recent editorial in Translation Review (no. 67, 2004), Rainer Schulte characterized this translation-blindness as “a yawning absence.” Referring to a special centennial issue of The New York Times Book Review published on October 6, 1996, containing reprints of 76 reviews from the years 1896 to 1991, Schulte wrote: “Any reader who approaches these reviews would have to assume that all of the books listed in this retrospective were written by English-speaking authors. There is no indication anywhere that some of these books were originally written in a foreign language. Not one of the titles carries the name of a translator, and in only one of the reviews is the translator mentioned.” He added: “In that respect, the practice of reviewing or not reviewing translations has not changed much during the last two decades.”

Translation-blindness can have a positive or negative slant depending on how and why it is employed. A more positive perspective on this approach was offered by Steven Wasserman, editor-in-chief of the Los Angeles Times Book Review, speaking at the 2004 annual conference of the American Literary Translators Association. At a session entitled “Spreading the Word: The Art and Importance of Reviewing Literature in Translation,” Wasserman reported that his bias is to read the translation under review as if it were a work in the English language, that is, to experience it as he would any other work written originally in English. His reasoning is unassailable and represents a proactive rationale: because that is how the reader (you and I!) will experience it. He perceives his job as that of advising the reader on the work that is before him, “not to grapple with the midwifery or alchemy or magic” of how that work came to be, or enter into comparisons with the original. Gregory McNamee, writer and frequent reviewer for Kirkus and other journals, reported a similar tendency, citing the editor of a book review journal as saying: “I am reviewing the English version, I am not making comparisons.”

Indeed, consider the typical reader, generally monolingual, who might read the Sunday book review section of his local newspaper. To say that this person will only read books written in his native language is to state the obvious. For him, in fact, the enjoyment of a book will have little or nothing to do with whether or not the work is a translation. Such a reader will regard a translated work as exactly the same as any other book he may read in his mother tongue; that is to say, as not any different at all. In this sense, one might say that, in the best of cases, the reader assumes without thinking about it that the translation is “perfect” (without fully comprehending what that may mean), and in the worst of cases, doesn’t care to know that the book was translated in the first place. All he knows is that he is reading a book in his own language (in this case, English), no matter what its origins may have been. His expectations, plainly and simply, are that it read like “good” English.

Translation-aware, for better or worse

Other reviewers, whom I categorize as translation-aware, seem to feel an obligation to say something about the translation they are writing about, but not knowing what to say or how to approach the task, they resort to generalization, usually saying something nice enough, but banal. Going back to Michael Henry Heim’s translation of Thomas Mann’s Death in Venice, consider some of the comments made by reader-reviewers on the amazon.com site: “A wonderful translation that lets us forget that it is not Mann’s own words and is, in fact, a translation.” This is clearly a vote in favor of the invisible hand of the translator! And then there are the generalities that are less discriminating just
because of their lack of specificity: “Mr. Heim’s translation of Death in Venice is excellent” (Why so? Can you elaborate?); “Heim’s translation ranks as one of the best I’ve encountered” (According to what criteria?); “His command of the language is evident and the story is fresh and appealing” (In what way is it “fresh”? Linguistically? And does that necessarily mean that it’s a good translation?). One reviewer admits that necessarily mean that it “appealing” (What is certain is that the translator seems unjustified unless it was indeed based on an examination of the German text.

A further example of a gratuitous “thrust” at the translator is found in Lenora Todaro’s review (The New York Times Book Review, November 7, 2004) of Lawrence Venuti’s translation of 100 Strokes of the Brush Before Bed. Writing about the runaway Italian bestseller by Melissa Panarello Todaro had this to say: “Books written by teenagers and billed as the next big thing often suffer from grand ambition hampered by immature writing. A first-timer’s literary allusions infiltrate the prose—Dante, ‘The Bell Jar,’ and Dante again. Cringe-inducing euphemisms abound here: lance, stake, scepter, Secret, River Letha, erupting volcano. (Perhaps these words are more euphonic in Italian than in Lawrence Venuti’s translation.)” I wonder why Todaro assumed that the words in question might be more “euphonious” in the Italian original than in the translation? At the very least, she might have provided the words in the Italian so that the reader could judge for himself how agreeable they sound to the ear, even without knowing their meaning.

Another unusual window on how one reviewer perceives his task (translation-aware with an Anglocentric twist?) is offered by a piece in The Atlantic Monthly (in the January/February 2004 issue) by book review editor Benjamin Schwarz. In his article, entitled “Why We Review the Books We Do,” Schwarz states that The Atlantic rarely reviews translations because it is difficult to focus on “prose style” when dealing with translated works. As he puts it:

Some readers think they detect an Anglocentrism in our books coverage, especially in our fiction...
reviews. This charge of parochialism is half right. We tend to focus on prose style in our assessment of fiction. It’s obviously far more difficult to do so when reviewing literature in translation, because both the reviewer and the reader of a work encounter not the author’s writing, but the translator’s rendering of it. Hence, we run fewer pieces on translated works than do comparable book review sections (although the essays on Proust and Cervantes in this issue testify to our attentiveness to major new translations of essential works). And we’re therefore particularly interested in books written originally in English.

As might be expected, such a red flag generated considerable consternation and comment among members of the translation community. Indeed, Schwarz’s mention of the essay on Cervantes was in reference to Terry Castle’s review of Edith Grossman’s translation of Don Quixote in the same issue of The Atlantic, and Ms. Grossman herself (in a letter that The Atlantic did not publish) took Schwarz to task for his “groundless assumption that the work of literary translators, who somehow lack ‘prose style,’ is generally not worthy of serious review in The Atlantic.” Moreover, she expressed concern over the fact that Schwarz’s misconceptions regarding translation meant that both he and his readers would be denied “the deep pleasure and esthetic value of books originally written in languages he [and they] may not know.” Steven Wasserman takes a different approach than that of Schwarz. Speaking at the aforementioned conference of the American Literary Translators Association, the Los Angeles Times book review editor stated that he commissions reviews based on whether or not a book interests him (admittedly subjective), regardless of whether it is a translation or not. Unlike Schwarz, who regards his role as that of a critic rather than a news source, Wasserman seems to consider reviewing works in translation as “giving readers the news from elsewhere,” a way to break through the provincialism that persists in our country despite the hype of globalization.

Translation-sensitive, the glass and what lies beyond

Despite the Menardian nature of the reviewer’s task and the odds against it, some reviewers do succeed in perceptively, if at times telegraphically, capturing the essence of the translation they are examining. For example, in Ken Kalfus’ review (The New York Times Book Review, August 8, 2004) of Vladimir Voinovich’s novel Monumental Propaganda, the reviewer writes: “In his translation, Andrew Bromfield deftly shifts his tone and tools as required, remaining true to Voinovich’s Vonnegut-like playfulness and appreciation of the absurd.” And Diane Anderson-Minshall, reviewing Maryellen Toman Mori’s translation of Lonely Woman by Takako Takahashi (San Francisco Chronicle, March 14, 2004), focuses on the translator’s attention to the task: “In each of these stories—translated with great care by Maryellen Toman Mori—there is an almost surreal glorification of female criminality and madness.” Sometimes a single sentence from the reviewer can be enough to set the reader on the right track, making him aware that this is a translation while at the same time commenting on the original author’s narrative method and style. For example, Pietro Cheli, reviewing Luca Conti’s translation of James Sallis’ Cypress Grove Blues in Diario (June 11, 2004), writes: “[James Sallis] knows how to carry the reader along, thanks to the fine translation by Luca Conti, who for years has been engaged in making this narrative genre known in Italy, even in its darkest moments.” In all of these cases, of course, the qualifications of the reviewer come into play. For a translation-sensitive review to be meaningful, the reviewer must be linguistically and otherwise credentialed to be able to draw discerning comparisons and make meaningful pronouncements, positive or negative.

One reviewer who addressed the issues associated with reviewing a translation head-on is Peter Brooks. Writing about new translations of two works by Marcel Proust (The New York Times Book Review, January 25, 2004), Brooks points out the differences in reception wrought by time, as different issues have come to occupy the readers in our culture. Following a general statement (“A new translation of Proust is a major event, since it promises to make his novel more readable”), Brooks goes on to examine not only the new translations (of Lydia Davis’ Swann’s Way and James Grieve’s In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower), but the original translation of In Search of Lost Time as well, noting that C. K. Scott Moncrieff might be forgiven for thinking of the early parts of the novel as a series of tone poems, since he began his work before the final two volumes were in print and, therefore, “couldn’t know…the rigorous architecture of the novel as a whole.” Of Lydia Davis’ translation of Swann’s Way, Brooks has this to say:

Lydia Davis, an experienced translator of much difficult French...
fiction, gets Proust nouveau off to a fine start, from the famous first sentence: “Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure.” She translates: “For a long time, I went to bed early,” capturing some of the intentional awkwardness of the original. You can see on Proust’s manuscripts how he crossed out a more conventional lead-in, choosing to start with that floating, unanchored “for a long time.” Scott Moncrieff regularized the sentence by putting the verb in the tense of habitual action: “I used to go to bed early.” But Proust chose the “passé composé,” the tense compounded of past and present, which both produces an abruptness inconsistent with literary “stylishness” and points to the crucial issue of temporal structure.

Barboni, writing in (November 12, 1999), refers to this wonderful translation that lets us read Barba’s observation that Davis’ use of the past tense modified the phrase “for a long time,” thereby “capturing some of the intentional awkwardness of the original,” perceptively calls attention to the question of what might be termed a “seamless” versus a more awkward or “imperfect” approach to translation. Earlier, I alluded to the invisible hand of the translator implicit in the praise “A wonderful translation that lets us forget that it is not Mann’s own words and is, in fact, a translation.” Thilde Barboni, writing in Le Monde (November 12, 1999), refers to this invisibility or anonymity of the translator as a “paradoxical existence,” in that the better a translation is, the less one thinks about the translator, while the more defective it is, the more the translator is criticized. Indeed translators, myself included, usually consider the attribution of an invisible hand high praise. Is this because we have been conditioned to mistake invisibility for perfection? Lawrence Venuti (“How to Read a Translation”) thinks it is: “Publishers, copy editors, reviewers have trained us, in effect, to value translations with the utmost fluency, an easy readability that makes them appear untranslated, giving the illusory impression that we are reading the original. We typically become aware of the translation only when we run across a bump on its surface, an unfamiliar word, an error in usage, a confused meaning that may seem unintentionally comical.”

Although the awkwardness made up of those “bumps on the surface” is no guarantee of perfection any more than seamlessness is, there is a cultural imperative that couples the visibility of the translator’s hand with respect for the dignity and autonomy of the foreign text and its culture. I quote from the theme of a recent conference on the role of contemporary literature in English translation (University of Oxford, April 17, 2004): “The idea that the act of translation should be visible in the finished work has come to dominate academic discussions of translated literature. This imperative arises from largely ethical considerations: the English language should not subsume the original, the reader should be made to confront the otherness of the foreign culture.”

In contrast to Peter Brooks, who appears to be familiar with both the source and target language (as well as intermediary versions of the text), Allen Barra, reviewing a new Dostoevsky translation by Pevear-Volokhonsky (Salon, May 27, 2004), admits to not knowing any Russian, but says that “even as a freshman in college, I knew something about bad English.” The subheading of his review reads: “Forget Constance Garnett—the Pevear-Volokhonsky translation makes the most cryptic of existential cult classics stranger, funnier and more alive than ever,” and indeed Barra goes on to describe earlier translations by Englishwomen Constance Garnett and Jessie Coulson. About Garnett he says: “she made Russians sound like Edwardian Englishmen.” He continues: “Dostoevsky’s Underground Man is one of the first characters in literature infected with the modern disease of alienation, but rendered in such stilted English prose, it’s amazing that he seemed modern at all to us.”

Reading Barra’s review, one wonders which of Dostoevsky’s translators hit the “real” mark better. The new translation may certainly be more appealing because it seems to “flow” better, but does it “flow better” only to readers familiar with an American versus British way of speaking? We may like it better, but is it a better translation? How do we know what the original really says, if we don’t know the source language?

Barra’s remark about Garnett’s Edwardian English reminds me of what dramaturg Paul Walsh had to say about re-translation when he spoke at a general meeting of the Northern California Translators Association in February 2004. The director of humanities for the Bay Area’s American Conservatory Theater (A.C.T.), Walsh was commissioned by A.C.T. to re-translate Ibsen’s A Doll’s House. The obvious question, he said, was “why re-translate a play?” His response was equally direct: because the markers by which we read behavior have changed, and because the experiences the audience brings to the play have changed. Michael Cunningham, writing about Death in Venice in the aforementioned article “A Hero Found in Translation,” put it this way: “When I’d finished reading the Heim translation, I couldn’t tell whether the difference resided in the new version or in
my own mind. There is this, too, about the mutability of literature—the books we read at 20 are not the books we read at 50, because we are not the same people.” Walsh noted that people think of Ibsen’s play as a Victorian drama because the people who translated it were British; the original Norwegian wasn’t “Victorian” at all, but direct and straightforward. Walsh wanted to make the language fresh and neutral...contemporary. This seems to be what Barra was getting at in his review of the new Dostoevsky translation. In its purest form, re-translation is translation as translation in the sense that Shakespeare used the word in A Midsummer-Night’s Dream (“Bottom thou art translated”).

Terry Castle’s above-mentioned review of Edith Grossman’s translation of Don Quixote (The Atlantic Monthly, January/February 2004) is a fine example of a translation-sensitive review because the reviewer never loses sight of the fact that she is dealing with a work in translation, while at the same time managing to look at the original and its author along with numerous issues that informed the specific work and the culture of its day. Grossman is mentioned at various points along the way (for example, “Edith Grossman actually makes it easy for [the reader]...because she has produced the most knowledgeable Don Quixote ever.”), and her work is referred to as a “superb new English version.” There are also more specific comments, such as the one reminding us that Grossman doesn’t often use “bits of antiquated translatorese like ‘pate.’ That this version of Don Quixote is virtually twee-free is one of its signal strengths.” (For those as curious about the word as I was, “tweet” a child’s way of pronouncing “sweet.”) But Castle looks beyond the translation to a broader view of the work, taking up such diverse themes as: the history of the novel, with Cervantes at its source; the passage of Western civilization from a world inhabited by gods to one deprived of them (“one might call Don Quixote the first great Western story without gods”); the desolation of the modern world reflected in the bleak, “almost post-nuclear emptiness of the fictional landscape”; the physical mismatching of the protagonists and how this “Cervantine innovation...extends down through the centuries”; the author’s respect for other people and his challenge to Western xenophobia; the book’s moral vision, “inextricably bound up with its warmth and humor” and with “Cervantes’ friendliness as a narrator”; the device of shared authorship by which Cervantes pretends that he is not the real author, but has simply had the work translated; and so on. In short, the review paints a complete world in which the author, his work, and the culture of his times co-exist with the translator and her work.

Finally, to round out this smorgasbord of translation-sensitive reviews, some of the reader-reviewer comments (on the amazon.com site) in reference to Michael Henry Heim’s translation of Thomas Mann’s Death in Venice were more reflective and therefore more sensitive and discerning than those noted earlier as being “generalizing.” For example: “The new translation is well done; while not making the style of the author less terse, it adds back much of the original emotional intensity in a way that previous translations made seem much too academic.” Or this one that addresses how the reader thought the translator felt that Mann might have wanted his reader to view the character Aschenbach: “In past translations, he [Aschenbach] was viewed as tight fisted and as being wound tight as a watch. Mr. Heim has given him a vulnerability that was very enjoyable.” From a professional standpoint, Michael Cunningham, in the above-cited review in the Los Angeles Times, echoes this reader’s view, observing that Heim “subtly but clearly extends and alters previous translations,” and noting a change in how Ashenbach is characterized: “I remembered Aschenbach as a figure of pure pathos... Although the Aschenbach of Heim’s translation ends up every bit as gaudily dressed and made up, and every bit as alone, he felt to me this time less clownish and more tragic; more like a man whose desperation and delusion are not only sad, but also heroic.”

So What’s a Reviewer to Do?

I stated at the outset that my intention in this piece was to approach an understanding of translation criticism by taking a close look at reviews written for popular publications and aimed at ordinary readers, as distinct from a more intellectualized type of critical literary analysis. Though the approach taken by translation-sensitive reviewers is far from the rigorous critical methodology espoused by theorists such as Walter Benjamin, Antoine Berman, or Henri Meschonnic, to name a few, it does afford a range of discerning views by individuals who, in some cases, are familiar with both the target and source texts, and who are able to draw judicious comparisons. Their work attests to the fact that the reviewer of a translation has an enormous responsibility, not just to the reading public, but to the work being reviewed and to the author of that work. For one thing, the reviewer’s critique may very well...
determine the way in which the work is received by the target culture, and this reception may differ significantly from that received by the original work in the home country. Indeed, this “transformational” role is a function that critical reviews share with translation itself, since in both cases shifts in perception and reception may be brought about. Just as the translator can transform features of the original text by highlighting, reinterpreting, recontextualizing, and rewriting them, so, too, the reviewer can shape perceptions about that text. In this sense, both acts may be considered powerful manipulative tools that can create new or revised images of the work in question.

As anticipated, most of the reviews I looked at were more concerned with the product of translation rather than with the process that produced it. Even limiting the scope of the reviewer’s task, however, surely we cannot expect every reviewer to be familiar with both the source and target languages and cultures and to have read both the original and the translation—much less any prior translations that may exist, in the case of a re-translated work. The bar would have to be set awfully high. So what is the less-than-perfect reviewer to do? How can he know if the translation is true to the intention of the original if he cannot know that intention except through the translation? It seems to me that the earlier questions I posed (How should a reviewer treat a work in translation? Should the proper object of the reviewer’s gaze be the original or the translation, or both? What should our expectations as readers of reviews reasonably be?) may be considered, if not fully resolved, within the context of translation-sensitivity.

In the end, there may be no sure, perfect way to review a translation, or at least no one, single formula that will work in all cases, since each reviewer will bring a different set of abilities to the task. Perhaps we as readers may have to set our expectations lower, developing a greater tolerance for imperfection and going along with the notion of impossibility while, unlike the fictional Menard, refraining from setting bonfires and tossing book reviews into them. Perhaps in the final analysis all we can ask for is a heightened awareness on the part of the reviewer. That he not ignore the fact that he is reviewing a translation (an alternate work that has its own autonomy) and that he be conscious of the fact that he is encountering, if I may alter Benjamin Schwarz’s phrasing in the aforementioned article, “not only the author’s writing, but the translator’s rendering of it.” (The “only” is my addition and significantly alters Schwarz’s meaning.) This heightened consciousness (translation sensitivity, if you will) may be all we can expect because the reviewer cannot know what the author intended (any more than the translator can).

Pouring yet another cup of French roast, I decided I liked the way Matt King resolved the issue in his review of Mo Yan’s Big Breasts & Wide Hips (Arcade, 2005): “And as rendered by translator Howard Goldblatt, Mo’s prose is often pastoral and guttural, evoking a Manichean world of human ugliness and redemptive natural beauty…” (San Francisco Chronicle, January 9, 2005). King is not saying that Mo’s prose is pastoral and guttural, but that Mo’s prose, as rendered by the translator, is pastoral and guttural. Unless he reads Chinese, he has no way of knowing if Mo’s prose is pastoral and guttural. As Cunningham, writing about the change in the character Aschenbach, put it: “That may or may not be exactly what Mann had in mind. There’s no way of knowing.” Indeed. My only conviction is that the proper object of the reviewer’s gaze is the original work seen not “through a glass darkly,” but “face to face” through the clear glass of a translation that possesses what Emilio Mattioli (“Per una critica della traduzione,” 1996) calls “the dignity of an autonomous text,” and whose existence informs the reviewer’s vision.

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The Court Interpreters Act of 1978: A 25-Year Retrospective: Part I

By Nancy Schweda Nicholson

Statistics show that the requirements for interpreters in the American judicial system continue to grow. (See, for example, Annual Reports, 1980-2004.) Over the past 25 years, new issues have arisen for interpreters, including collective bargaining, telephone interpreting, and team interpreting. As a result, many states have formed investigative bodies (i.e., The Indiana Supreme Court Task Force on Race and Gender Fairness) to study interpreter use and to suggest ways to meet the burgeoning need. More and more state and local bar associations are offering continuing legal education seminars to their members in order to educate them about the interpreting process and to facilitate their work with interpreters, both in court and during out-of-court hearings, as well as in meetings with clients.

The following offers a general overview of the developments at the federal and state levels within the legal interpreting field since the passage of the Court Interpreters Act of 1978. This segment offers background information on Constitutional provisions and the rules that were in effect before the 1978 law was enacted. In addition, many new initiatives for judiciary interpreters are discussed, including the Administrative Office of the United States Courts’ Federal Court Interpreter Program, the National Center for State Courts’ Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification Program, and the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators’ National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification.

Constitutional Provisions
The basis for the appointment of an interpreter lies in the U.S. Constitution, the most fundamental guarantor of individual liberties and protections. More specifically, the Sixth Amendment states:

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury...and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor; and to have assistance of counsel for his defense (italics mine).

“...Viewed as a milestone federal statute, the Court Interpreters Act of 1978 continues to exert a strong influence on every aspect of court interpretation...”

The Fourteenth Amendment is also relevant, as it cites “due process” and “equal protection of the laws.” In essence, these elemental due process rights guarantee that the defendant will be able to participate in his or her own defense and be “present” (both physically and cognitively) in the courtroom.

Pre-1978 Conditions in the Courts

A. Provisions for the Appointment of an Interpreter: Federal and State Rules
Prior to 1978, the U.S. District Courts (as well as most states) relied on two very short federal rules that addressed interpreter use in both the criminal and civil arenas: Rule 28(b) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, and Rule 43(f) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. States frequently used these two rules as a model when drafting their own regulations. Rule 28(b) states: “The Court may appoint an interpreter of its own selection....” (italics mine). The use of the word “may” leaves the appointment of an interpreter to the presiding judicial officer’s discretion. The phrase “of its own selection” is frequently maligned, since many American judges tend to be monolingual English-speakers who are not qualified to select a competent interpreter. The aforementioned wording is also the basis for Federal Rule 43(f). Also relevant here is Rule 604 of the Federal Rules of Evidence, which qualifies the interpreter as an expert witness. (See Schweda Nicholson, 1986, for additional discussion of these federal rules.)

B. Ad hoc Interpreter Use
Before the U.S. Congress decided to pass a more complete and detailed law related to interpreter usage, the courtroom reality for interpreters was a frightening one. There are numerous documented cases in which friends, relatives, police officers, bailiffs, court clerks, defense attorneys, co-defendants, courtroom spectators, volunteers, and other witnesses were used as interpreters (Schweda Nicholson, 1989; Sherr, 2000).

C. Interpreter Appeals
In a Delaware Supreme Court appeal that was decided approximately 35 years ago, Green v. State 260 A.2nd 706 (Del. 1969), the official interpreter for the victim’s testimony was also called as a witness for the prosecution! The appellate court affirmed the lower court’s decision. Judge Hermann, however, wrote an eloquent dissenting opinion stating that it was “…prejudicial error to
permit the interpreter...to testify...as to the facts of the case. [The interpreter is]...part of the Court’s ‘team’...and is cloaked with officialdom in the eyes of the jury....”

Although some cases have been overturned on appeal (Schweda Nicholson, 2004), the majority of lower court decisions still stand. In many instances, the appellate courts have acknowledged that an uncertified interpreter was used or that a summary was sometimes provided instead of a running, complete simultaneous interpretation (SI) for a non-English-speaking (NES) or a limited-English-proficient (LEP) defendant. Even when there have been, in my opinion, seemingly compelling reasons supporting reversal and remand for a new trial, the appellate courts often admit that mistakes were made, but that these mistakes neither constituted “reversible error” nor rendered the trial “fundamentally unfair.” Moreover, the opinions rendered frequently state that there was “no abuse of discretion” by the trial judge. (See Benmaman, 2000, for an excellent summary article on appeals related to interpreters.)

1978 and Beyond

A. The Court Interpreters Act of 1978

In the 1970s, it was clear that courts at all levels were struggling with a burgeoning NES/LEP population due to both legal and illegal immigration. The largest group came from Mexico and Central America. The tide of Spanish-speakers became increasingly visible in numerous societal institutions, and the judicial system was no exception. As a result, the Court Interpreters Act [Public Law 95-539; 28 USCS § 1827] was passed in 1978. (It celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2003.) Viewed as a milestone federal statute, it continues to exert a strong influence on every aspect of court interpretation at the federal level (Schweda Nicholson, 1986). It has also been used as a model for states that have enacted interpreter statutes and/or related rules/directives. The 1978 Act provides for the establishment of a certification program for interpreters who work in “bilingual proceedings” [§ 1827(b)]. It includes the appointment of interpreters for NES and LEP individuals as well as for deaf or hard-of-hearing persons who communicate via signed languages. The Act also states that the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts is responsible for setting interpreters’ fees. Public Law 95-539 also provides for the creation of a program to furnish “special interpretation services,” including “capacity for simultaneous interpretation services in multi-defendant criminal …and civil actions” [§ 1828(a)].

The 1978 Act serves as the primary federal law with respect to legal interpreters, although it is not flawless in its construction. To wit, I refer to the much-discussed wording “The presiding judicial officer...shall utilize the services of the most available certified interpreter, or when no certified interpreter is reasonably available, ...the services of an otherwise competent interpreter” [§ 1827(d)]. Many have questioned what “reasonably available” really means. (Down the hall? On another floor of the courthouse? In the same city? In the same county? In the same state?) The Act leaves the interpretation of this wording up to the presiding judicial officer. “Otherwise competent interpreter” is also a stickler. Can someone be considered “otherwise competent” if he or she is not certified? How is someone’s competence, then, to be determined if success on the Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination and/or another recognized certification instrument is not involved? The word “competent” was actually stricken in the Court Interpreter Amendments Act of 1988. In its place, “qualified” was substituted [§ 710(a)(1)]. Nevertheless, this issue has been the subject of much analysis and argument over the years.

B. The Federal Court Interpreters Advisory Board

In order to address some of the shortcomings of the 1978 Act and deal with ongoing challenges, the Federal Court Interpreters Advisory Board (FCIAB) was appointed in 1986 by the Chief Justice of the United States and the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AOUSC) (Schweda Nicholson, 1992; 1987). The AOUSC gave the FCIAB five charges: 1) develop pay scales for federally certified interpreters; 2) offer suggestions about the content of training and/or orientation sessions for newly certified interpreters; 3) create guidelines and criteria for “otherwise qualified interpreters” in the areas of classification and compensation purposes (These categories ultimately became “certified,” “professionally qualified” [PQ], and “language-skilled” [LS]; 4) draft a code of ethics; and 5) provide recommendations regarding the triggering criteria to be used in selecting additional languages for certification exam development.

C. The Court Interpreter Amendments Act of 1988

The Court Interpreter Amendments Act of 1988 follows up on the 1978 Act and addresses some of the issues raised by the FCIAB. These...
The Court Interpreters Act of 1978: A 25-Year Retrospective: Part I Continued

matters include, for example: 1) the courts’ use of AOUSC-provided guidelines for choosing “otherwise qualified” interpreters (for languages in which there are certification exams and for those in which there are not) [§ 703(2)]; 2) the AOUSC Director’s authority to certify interpreters for any language based on need for the entire federal system or for just one “circuit” [§ 703(b)(1)]; 3) the specification that a “criterion-referenced” examination be used for certification purposes [§ 703(b)(1)]; 4) the possibility of granting an attorney’s motion to make an “electronic sound recording” of the proceedings for which an interpreter is required (to be at the discretion of the presiding judge) [§ 705(2)]; and 5) the delineation of the situations in which simultaneous interpretation (SI) and consecutive interpretation (CI) are normally used [§ 709(k)]. With respect to Point 5, however, the presiding judicial officer has the power to decide on the mode of interpretation to be used at any stage of the trial in order to “aid in the efficient administration of justice” [§ 709(k)]. Also relevant is that the option for the use of “summary” interpretation, which was mentioned in the Act in § 1827(k), no longer appears.

The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination

Shortly after passage of the 1978 Act, the personnel office of the AOUSC (with the assistance of highly qualified consultants) developed the first Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (FCICE) for Spanish/English. The AOUSC also gathered information from more than 70 leaders in the field prior to the creation of the test.

The FCICE consists of written and oral parts. The first Spanish FCICE appeared in 1979-1980. In 1985, the University of Arizona was awarded a contract for exam development. Federal certification exams were also created for Haitian Creole and Navajo.

The first round of tests for these two languages was held in the summer of 1990 (Schweda Nicholson, 1992). In the late 1990s, the AOUSC decided to have an open competitive bidding process for ongoing Spanish FCICE development and refinement. After reviewing all of the proposals, the AOUSC awarded the contract to a partnership of three entities: the National Center for State Courts (NCSC); Cooperative Personnel Services (CPS); and Second Language Testing, Inc. (SLTI).

This NCSC-led group moved ahead to revise the Spanish FCICE, introducing new written exam sections and increasing the amount of Spanish-to-English scoring units on the consecutive portion (Hewitt et al, 2003a). To be more specific, the written exam includes exercises on reading comprehension, grammar, idiomatic expressions, and general as well as specialized legal vocabulary. The new federal written exam (as of 2001) differs from prior exams in that “…at least 60% of the exam reflects the language of the courtroom” (Hewitt et al, 2003a). Much of the language of prior exams focused on very academic subject matter like engineering, natural science, economics, and philosophy (Hewitt et al, 2003b). Currently, in addition to legal terminology, various registers (including colloquial language and typical expert witness jargon) are also represented. A new section on “error detection” replaces one on “antonyms,” which appeared in prior tests (Hewitt et al, 2003b). In order to make the exam as realistic as possible, actual federal case transcripts have been consulted. A failing score (less than 75%) on the written part eliminates the candidate from the testing process (van der Heide, 2004).

The oral section is a performance examination that accurately represents the type of work a court interpreter is called to do. Unlike the written test, the components of the new oral exam have not changed since its inception. It is comprised of consecutive interpreting (CI), simultaneous interpreting (SI), and sight translation (ST). The passing score is 80%.

Overall, the combined pass rate from 1980 to 1999 (written exam = 17.5%; oral exam = 20%) was 4.5% (van der Heide, 2004). The revised written exam was first pilot-tested in December 2001 (pass rate: 21%). The new version of the oral test was administered in April 2002 (pass rate: 22%). There are a number of reasons that would lead one to expect that the pass rate would be higher by this point in time. First, there are currently many more training opportunities available than there were 20-25 years ago, including university courses, intensive workshops, and widely marketed self-study tapes and books. Second, most potential test-takers are also aware that the FCICE is a very challenging exam. As a result, one could hypothesize that fewer unqualified people (who have a remote chance of success) are taking the test. Also related to the second point is the cost of the exam. The fee for the written portion is $125, and the oral exam costs $175 (Hewitt et al, 2003b). It seems logical that those without the requisite competence would hesitate to commit funds to take an exam they have little chance of passing. Finally, another reason to expect improved scores is the availability of a preparation manual, the Examinee Handbook, produced by the test developers themselves, which includes sample written test items (along with the correct answers) and
a CD-ROM with representative oral passages. This mock exam is a very welcome addition to the federal testing scene (van der Heide, 2003). Go to www.cps.ca.gov/fcice-spanish for more information. For additional information on the FCICE and the Federal Court Interpreter Program in general, see Hewitt et al (2003a) and van der Heide (2003).

To give the reader an idea of the overwhelming need for Spanish interpreters at the federal level, let’s look at some statistics. For the 1992 Fiscal Year, 87% of the federal cases that required interpreters used the Spanish language. In 2002, AOUSC data showed that 93.6% of cases needed Spanish (Annual Reports 1992, 2002). Although this represents only a 6.6% increase over a 10-year period, this figure demonstrates the strong and continuing dominance of Spanish, with growth even where there is little room for it. For example, if we look at interpreter usage at the federal level for the year 2003 (see Table 1), there were 189,044 court interpreting events, and 177,704 of those required Spanish interpreters. However, in 2004, there were 223,996 total events, 212,223 of which required Spanish interpreters (95% of all events). These statistics show an overall increase in 2004 of approximately 18.5% compared to 2003, and an increase of about 19.5% in cases requiring Spanish interpretation during this same period (Annual Report 2004; van der Heide, 2004).

### The National Center for State Courts Testing Consortium

The NCSC Testing Consortium (“the Consortium”) was created in 1995. The founding member states were Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington. These states had already been deeply involved in a variety of efforts to improve court interpreting services in their own jurisdictions. For example, New Jersey began its work in the early 1980s. Robert Joe Lee, the architect of the New Jersey program, has toiled tirelessly to continuously strengthen court interpreter standards in the Garden State. In February 2004, New Jersey’s Judicial Council approved the Standards for Delivering Interpreting Services in the New Jersey Judiciary (Standards, 2004). This document offers guidance on the use of interpreters for both LEP and hard-of-hearing persons. Other topics include: 1) who may act as an interpreter; 2) payment procedures; 3) telephone interpreting; 4) how to report interpreter policy violations; and 5) team interpreting.

When the aforementioned four states banded together to form the Consortium, its primary goals were: 1) to obviate the need for every state court to “reinvent the wheel” in terms of test development and administration; and 2) to establish high proficiency.
standards for court interpreters through an NCSC-coordinated testing program (Herman and Hewitt, 2001). The proposal was for states (which pay a fee to join) to share the expenses of test creation, and then to use the exams to credential interpreters in their own venues. Test development is a costly venture, especially when multiple languages are involved. This plan was a logical solution from a financial and a “let’s take steps to improve the quality of our interpreters” perspective. As of January 2005, there are 32 member states. The most recent additions are Pennsylvania and Alaska, which both joined in 2004 (www.ncsconline.org). Membership has reached over 60% in just under 10 years. In light of the fact that judicial change is frequently effected at tortoise-like speed, this level of participation is to be commended.

Each member state has much discretion regarding its level of participation in the Consortium. For example, states are free to decide: 1) in which languages they wish to test; 2) how often to test; 3) whether they require the written test or not; 4) the length of the orientation program prior to test administration; 5) the order in which the oral exam components are offered; 6) whether they charge participants to take the orientation and/or the written and oral tests; and 7) the passing scores (to a certain extent). Related to point 7, Delaware has a “Delaware-certified” category (a passing score of 60%). The Consortium passing score is set at 70%.

The Consortium has made much progress during the past decade since its founding. As of this writing, there are tests in 12 languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Haitian Creole (two versions), Hmong, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Polish, Russian (two versions), Somali, Spanish (four versions), and Vietnamese (two versions). Portuguese and Serbian tests are currently in development (see www.ncsconline.org for additional information).

The National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification

The Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI) and the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) have recently developed their own Spanish/English court interpreter certification exam, the National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification (NJITC). One notable difference between this new exam and both the FCICE and the Consortium tests is that the NJITC includes a section on written translation (Frequently Asked Questions, 2001; Orrantia, 2002).

Look for Part II of this series in next month’s ATA Chronicle. It examines new and (sometimes) controversial developments in court interpreting, such as telephone interpreting, continuing legal education (CLE) seminars for legal personnel, team interpreting, and collective bargaining.

References


13. Hewitt, William E., Wanda Romberger, Charles W. Stansfield,


Don’t deposit it—report it!

Report fake check scams to the National Fraud Information Center/Internet Fraud Watch, a service of the nonprofit National Consumers League, at www.fraud.org or (800) 876-7060. That information will be transmitted to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.
American Translators Association

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ATA Certification Exam Information

Upcoming Exams

All candidates applying for ATA certification must provide proof that they meet the certification program eligibility requirements. Please direct all inquiries regarding general certification information to ATA Headquarters at (703) 683-6100. Registration for all certification exams should be made through ATA Headquarters. All sittings have a maximum capacity and admission is based on the order in which registrations are received. Forms are available from the ATA website or from Headquarters.

Colorado
Denver
September 17, 2005
Registration Deadline: September 2, 2005

Florida
Gainesville
September 24, 2005
Registration Deadline: September 2, 2005

New York
New York City
September 17, 2005
Registration Deadline: September 2, 2005

Utah
Salt Lake City
September 25, 2005
Registration deadline: September 9, 2005

Washington
Seattle
November 12, 2005
Registration Deadline: October 28, 2005

Wisconsin
Milwaukee
October 8, 2005
Registration Deadline: September 23, 2005

Mexico
Guadalajara
September 24, 2005
Registration Deadline: September 9, 2005

Attention Korean Language Translators and Interpreters!

A special interest group has been formed to explore the possibility of establishing a Korean Language Division within the American Translators Association. If you are interested, please subscribe to the discussion listserv by sending an e-mail to ata-Korean-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

Note: You must be an ATA member to belong to any of its divisions.

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Congratulations! The following people have successfully passed ATA’s certification exam.

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American Translators Association
46th Annual Conference
November 9-12, 2005
Seattle, Washington

Check out ATA’s Guide to Continuing Education Points
See page 57 for details.
City Sites: Reaching Out to the Masses

It’s hard to argue with an elected official out to “tear down barriers to government and empower citizens to allow democracy to flourish.” And when the focus is language—specifically, an outreach effort to make information on a municipal website available to non-English-proficient residents—we know which side we’re on.

Or do we?

This story began in May, when New York City councilman Eric Gioia introduced a bill requiring all content on the city’s official website to be made available in at least six of the most commonly spoken languages in the city, in addition to English. A whopping 46% of households in New York speak a language in addition to or instead of English at home, says Gioia, and bringing them into city life is simply good sense. The hitch: due to budget constraints, the translations would be produced by computer software. In a statement accompanying his proposal, Mr. Gioia cited nearby Philadelphia, which has translated its site into 12 languages for a meager $3,400 using “21st-Century technology and private-sector know-how.”

Off we went to see what a few thousand dollars will buy.

Philadelphia’s “e-government director” (webmaster) James Cartwright says his team considered a variety of solutions before plunging for computer-generated translations in a multilingual format that got off the ground in October 2003.

Price was definitely a consideration. A professional human translation would have set the city back $300,000, while even $40,000 a year to hire an in-house translator was deemed too expensive—and, just as important, too slow. “A reasonable delay in deploying a multilingual site is okay, but we’ve got 10,000 pages up there,” notes Mr. Cartwright. Ultimately, his team opted for instant automated translation by Wordlingo, fast and cheap at $3,400 a year.

“Our thinking was simple,” Cartwright told The Onionskin. “None of these systems are perfect, and much of what we’ve got up there is silly, even inaccurate. Yet a relative 60-70% accuracy is better than nothing at all.”

But is it? Such statistics may sound convincing at first, but they also mean that the resulting translations are 30-40% inaccurate—a figure that can rise to 100% for monolingual readers who have no way of judging which of the words are right or wrong.

Image also loses out: Latino advocacy groups in some cities—although not, apparently, in Philadelphia—have complained that machine-generated Spanish translations are gibberish and insulting. And even when the meaning can be teased out, this is no way to impress. At www.phila.gov, Mayor John F. Street appears in French, Spanish, and German as John F. Rue, Juan F. Calle, and John F. Strasse, respectively (computers don’t know about proper names), while the “Lead Story” label heading a review of mayoral initiatives becomes Histoire de fil (“String/Cable Story”) in French, Historia Del Plomo (“History of Lead”) in Spanish, and Leitung Geschichte (your pick of “Management/Direction/Pipe(line)/Conduction/Wiring of History,” or perhaps even “Head of the History Department”) in German. And it’s all downhill from there.

Not surprisingly, readers slogging through machine-generated translations tend to give up quickly. It is simply too much work. Which undermines Councilman Gioia’s claim that “This bill will put vital information in the hands of the people and empower citizens to solve problems on their own.”

According to Mr. Cartwright, feedback in Philly is currently running 50/50 positive/negative. “Some people have written to say that it is demeaning, that it doesn’t make sense, that it is embarrassing. Others say it is inaccurate, confusing, even baffling…” And yet, this monolingual webmaster claims, still others say “I don’t speak much English, but I understand better [with the translation], I get the general gist.”

Like Mr. Cartwright, Councilman Gioia’s team is monolingual, which, in our opinion, explains their earnest but ill-informed confidence in computer translation. (Another conviction: ultimately, multilingual sites translated by computer software are just for show, an “aren’t we international” tip of the hat to monolingual English-speaking voters).

Philadelphia’s decision to opt for computer translation followed discussions within the Public Technology Institute (PTI), a Washington, DC-based not-for-profit group of municipal and county webmasters from across the United States. When we called, PTI’s Dale Bowen welcomed information on best practice in translation, noting, too, that an important part of the challenge is simply getting speakers of foreign languages to use the sites. Acknowledging that different cities have taken different routes, he steered us towards Orlando, Florida, home to a large Latino population.

To serve these residents (and voters), a Spanish version of the municipal website was deemed essential. But this time, community members, including an active Hispanic Chamber
of Commerce, gave computer-generated translations the thumbs-down. Simply inappropriate, they insisted. Instead, a native speaker of Spanish was hired to translate selected pages. While the candidate’s writing skills fall short of the crisp, informative style found on the best websites, our Spanish reviewer noted “no monumental disasters in the translation, only a lot of fairly labored, one-step-above literal translations, that communicate the intended message, just barely.” In other words, E for earnest effort, room for improvement, but definitely a few cuts above computer translation.

Like most of the webmasters we spoke with, Orlando’s Michael McCarthy also welcomed comments. His team actively encourages community interaction and is reviewing the site structure and content as this article goes to press. Feedback received to date includes comments on varieties of language—“too Cuban,” “too Puerto Rican”…), a reminder that even “single-language” immigrant communities are more diverse than many people think. Surveys by a local newspaper had been instrumental in defining demographics and language focus, he said.

Outside the U.S., a quick review revealed several different strategies at work.

Until recently, the City of Paris website, currently being revamped, featured only a few pages of non-French text in (surprise, surprise) English. Content was primarily aimed at tourists, with clunky style and skewed grammar underscoring its source—a non-native speaker of English. A basic rule of thumb in professional translation is that translators work only into their native language. Interestingly, on the Paris site this rule is applied in a special section devoted to the city’s bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. Here, a native English speaker has clearly been at work—perhaps a sign of this text’s perceived strategic importance?

“We have no plans to use computer translation,” the Paris webmaster confirmed when we phoned. “It is simply not good enough; our reputation and image are too important to us.” Along with other Parisians, he judged examples of the French on the Philadelphia site “entertaining.”

Second in our whirlwind review, in London, Mayor Ken Livingstone’s team has embraced what is, in our opinion, the best option. The translations on the Greater London Authority’s (GLA) website were published pursuant to the GLA’s Accessible Communications Policy, a spokeswoman told us. This specifies that for print documents, summaries should be produced in Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek, Turkish, Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi—all languages specified by the Public Liaison Unit and Consultation teams. For the website, the list has been extended to Arabic, French, German, Gujarati, and Spanish.

Thus, rather than translate the entire site, one-page summaries of information useful to non-English-proficient residents. Translators, translating a website...
work. Run examples in foreign languages past trusted partners who are literate, native speakers of those languages. Students, however cheap and cheerful, are generally not a good idea.

• Above all, don’t let the vendors blind you with statistics. If we’re talking about 60-70% accuracy, that means 30-40% is wrong. What do parents think if their kids get 30-40% of all the letters in a spelling test wrong? What do readers think of a journalist who gets 30-40% of all the words in an article wrong—wrong words in wrong places? What’s the value of safety instructions if 30-40% are wrong or unintelligible? And what does it mean to attempt to create a positive image if 30-40% of the image reminds your readers that you are culturally insensitive and linguistically handicapped?

• You’ve already got a computer-translated website up and running and have no money for anything else? Run, don’t walk to a qualified professional (human) translation supplier and commission a friendly alert in each of your website’s languages. We suggest: “We’ve got good news and bad. First, our site is now available in eight languages. Second, the texts have been translated by a computer program, so you’re getting it, warts and all. Our apologies for the silly stuff, and we’ll put up something better with next year’s budget. Please bear with us.”

This one doesn’t fly
A journalist who recently tried to register online for accreditation at the Paris Air Show received the following e-mail reply: “Votre accreditation a bien été soumise/Your accreditation was indeed subjected.” The English was generated by Google’s coyly labeled “language tools.” Proof that it is not only municipal websites that misuse computer translation.

With thanks to Bob Blake, Paul Boothroyd, John Davidson, Steve Dyson, Terence Lewis, Bill Maslen, Kristina Möller, Alexandra Russell-Bitting, Bettina Winterfeld.
This is the second enlarged edition of the original 1999 publication written by Dr. Samuel A. Tsur (Mansoor), of Akko, Israel. Over 10,000 abbreviations have been added to this volume. Unlike the other two Elsevier multi-language technical dictionaries I own, this is an English-language dictionary, smaller in size and with semi-gloss paper. However, after one trip in my tote bag in the car the bindings of the front and last pages separated (most of my dictionaries are duct-taped anyway).

The entries are in two columns, with the acronym/abbreviation in bold type in an easily readable font. The English abbreviations cover the fields of anatomy, bacteriology, biology, chemistry, human and veterinary medicine, pathology, and pharmacology. For this review, I went through my 30 years of marginal notes of added entries to my Russian-to-English medical dictionaries and acronyms dictionaries, in addition to checking entries in Dorland’s Medical Dictionary (English).

This is an excellent acronyms dictionary with extensive listings of institutional organizations, universities, journals, and publications in the U.S., U.K., Canada, France, Italy, Switzerland, and the United Nations and English-speaking third world countries, to mention a few. It is based on compilations from medical journals, scientific dictionaries, and encyclopedias.

This is not a dictionary intended to define biomedical terminology per se. It does present detailed explanations of vitamins, their role in the body, and definitions of types of aneurysms. There are numerous supplemental explanations. For example, in the incisions section, we find “Gibson-Foley type incision (groin incision in lower ureter surgery).” If necessary, the entries have cross references: for example, “INB, Infranodal block (see HB),” and “NBPK, Narcotic-based painkiller (see NPR).”

Hormones, insulins, aneurysms, kidney, and pulmonary function tests are listed under the first entry (‘‘PFT, Pulmonary function test’’), followed by the individual tests. In contrast, reactions, arteries, and syndromes are not similarly grouped under a single heading, but must be found under their acronym listing: “WPW, Wolff-Parkinson-White (syndrome);” “WPS (Wasting Pig syndrome)” (not included in Dorland’s). There is a discrepancy between the syndromes listed in Dorland’s and those omitted in Dr. Tsur’s dictionary. The entries are not as extensive, and I could only find one entry for penicillin.

Greek symbols and those used in biology, mathematics, and chemistry are included. Different names for drugs are also covered: “heroin (Diamorph HCl).”

There are extensive entries on vitamins, atomic numbers, elements, phobias, and aneurysms. Charts are also given for the geological timetable, signs of the zodiac, and the course of certain diseases.

Some of my marginal additions that are included in this dictionary are:

- ICC: inadequate cerebral circulation
- CTR: cardiothoracic ratio
- ESD: end-systolic dimension
- LPO: lipid peroxidation
- LPS: lipopolysaccharide
- ELISA: enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay

Some of my marginal additions that are not included in this dictionary are:

- MP: motor pattern
- SIF: stress intensity factor
- EC: emulsion concentrate
- STA: superior tympanic artery
- IGH: intragastric hemorrhage
- RM: radiation monitoring

I would highly recommend this detailed dictionary for any translator or interpreter working in the...
medical field. As Dr. Tsur notes in his preface, with the continuing influx of new terms, new maladies, and drugs, this will not be the last edition (Hurray!).

Mira S. Beerbaum is a scientific and technical translator from Russian into English. She specializes in medicine, nuclear engineering, aerospace, and earth sciences. Contact: hansb01@ev1.net.

Elsevier’s Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery
(Second, Enlarged Edition)
Language: English
Authors: Ad de Vries (Revised and updated by Arthur de Vries)
Publisher: Elsevier B.V.
Publication date: 2004
ISBN: 0-444-51345-0
Price: £150, €100
Available from: Elsevier B.V. www.elsevier.com
Europe, Middle East, & Africa: Linacre House, Jordan Hill Oxford OX2 8DP, U.K.
U.S. & Canada: 11830 Westline Industrial Drive St. Louis, MO 63146
Number of pages: 627
Specialty/field: Literature, Folklore, Art

Reviewed by: Lynn Visson

As stated in the brief preface to the first edition, the dictionary is designed to explain the various meanings associated with symbols and images in “Western civilization,” and to provide “background information” from various fields regarding such symbols. The intended users are “students of many disciplines, as well as...writers and artists.” In the preface to the second edition following this introduction, the author’s son explains that he made use of the many volumes his father left behind after his death in 1981 to try to update this dictionary, which was first published in 1974.

For both father and son, the project was clearly a labor of love, and the intensive effort made to produce a comprehensive dictionary of symbols is certainly commendable. Entries include information on the symbolic associations of such topics as colors, animals (including mythological creatures, such as the griffin), plants (flea-bane, raggwort), herbs (rue, thyme), gems (good entries on gemstones), among others. While the reader may come away with interesting new pieces of information, the dictionary contains serious shortcomings in several major areas, most of them due to the fact that the research for these entries is many decades old. A proper updating would have involved far more than the inclusion of the late author’s already dated volumes of notes.

The criteria for selecting entries for the dictionary are also open to question. In the preface to the first edition (included in this volume), Ad de Vries wrote that “no fine distinctions have been made between symbols (in the limited sense), allegories, metaphors, signs, types, images, etc...since such subtle distinctions, however sensible from a scientific point of view, are useless to a person struggling with the deeper comprehension (and thus appreciation) of a particular ‘symbol.’” This assertion, is to say the least, highly debatable. In today’s “post-semiotic” era, an undifferentiated listing of symbols, signs, and metaphors presents intrinsic difficulties to the researcher. Nor does the author indicate how “images” and “imagery” are defined. What is the reader to make of an entry such as “abandonment?” Is this a symbol or an image? Etymological origins are given only for some entries, while others are left out.

While the author is naturally not at fault for failing to refer to works by writers whom he could physically not have read, the absence of de Saussure, Barthes, Bakhtin, Campbell, and Doniger, as well as any allusion whatsoever in the entries to James Frazer, considerably lessens the value of this work. De Vries’ primary sources come from ancient Babylonian, Greek, Roman, and Egyptian, as well as French, Spanish, and English literature (especially Shakespeare and Marlowe). There are occasional, but inconsistent references to Freud and Jung. Entries on “archetype” and “dream” omit any reference to Jung, though the latter entry includes a reference to Freud. Allusions to symbols and “images” (however these may be defined) derived from Slavic or Native American mythological and literary sources are lacking. Moreover, the author’s decision to limit the dictionary to “Western civilization” means that this dictionary is highly restricted in scope. A full discussion of the range of symbolic associations evoked by such a fundamental and
powerful symbol as the serpent is not complete without reference to the snake’s vitally important symbolic role in the cultures of Asia and in Buddhism in particular.

Several of the biblical references seem rather selective. Why is the reference to the Apostle Judas a “bag of money” rather than 30 pieces of silver? Would a “Cain-colored beard” be a more common and widely recognized symbol than the “mark of Cain,” which is omitted within the entry for Cain? The definitions for some of the mythological and historical entries also seem somewhat subjective: “Camelot” contains a quotation from Tennyson, but makes no reference to King Arthur’s court. The symbolism associated with chess pieces (e.g., castle, queen) is not included under those respective entries. “Icarus” and “banquet” rate entries, but for some reason “Daedalus” and “feast” do not.

While one would hope that a modern-day, up-to-date dictionary of symbols would not fall into the trap of excessive political correctness, the de Vries dictionary suffers from a musty odor of antiseptic library shelves somewhat divorced from the reality outside the windows. Symbolic associations to Africa (“the continent from which always something new [e.g., a monster] is to be expected”), to the Hebrew language (“a language with negative connotations for some” or “an unintelligible language”), and to homosexuality (“delusion of persecution”) are so outdated that they are of little use to the reader aside from serving as historical curiosities. And citations of such symbolic associations with “Jews” as “avarice: forced to constant wandering, by oppressive expulsions as well as by restrictions on property and professions, they could only cling to their hoard,” and with “Solomon” as “the name in popular stories for the submissive, clever little Jew” hardly merit comment. This reviewer was puzzled by the sole entry under “muscles” (“exaggerated interest in extremely muscular men may point to homosexual tendencies, e.g., Michelangelo’s athletes in the Sistine Chapel.”)

The reader seeking symbolic associations with natural phenomena, animals, minerals, plants, herbs, flowers, and geographical features, such as mountains and rivers, may indeed find interesting entries on these subjects in this dictionary. However, the limited scope of the work’s coverage, the lack of modern sources, and the compiler’s biases that hark back to another era may make many researchers reluctant to purchase such an expensive reference work.

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The Translation Inquirer  

By John Decker

Address your queries and responses to The Translation Inquirer, 112 Ardmoor Avenue, Danville, Pennsylvania 17821, or fax them to (570) 275-1477. E-mail address: jdecker@uplink.net. Please make your submissions by the 25th of each month to be included in the next issue. Generous assistance from Per Dohler, proofreader, is gratefully acknowledged.

The linguistic part of a translator is, I think, always active during waking hours, like a computer program running in the background, no matter what activity he or she is engaged in. For example, while viewing a baseball broadcast, I found my mind snagging on Yadier, the name of a certain Hispanic player in the major leagues. The player’s team affiliation and surname are unimportant. What matters is that my mind immediately made the leap to Javier, familiar instead of the (already strange enough) Kayla? This seemed every bit as important to me at the time as balls and strikes, outs and batting averages.

[Abbreviations used with this column: E-English; F-French; G-German; Gr-Greek; H-Hebrew; I-Italian; Pt-Portuguese; R-Russian; Sp-Spanish.]

New Queries

(E-F 8-05/1) A user of Lantra-L surprised himself, upon reflection, that he did not know everyday jargon in the world of computers. This is a four-item cluster: (1.a) process a file; (1.b) parse a file; (1.c) support a file (format); and (1.d) character set. Where’s the computer whiz who can help with this?

(E-G 8-05/2) Railways have sensors mounted on the wheels of their rolling stock that measure speed. In particular, a ProZ denizen found hardware described in English in the following way: Hardware interface used for signal acquisition of speed sensor… Tension, current or open drain inputs are possible. In spite of the fact that open drain has found its way into German as a term, the translator would like to get a grip on what this means in order to do an adequate job of translating it into German.

(E-Gr 8-05/3) Here’s a chance for Greek translators to try their skills on something really esoteric: the hedger, a device used in the business of soil conditioning (in this case, soil loosening). Evidently, deep tillage is the goal. Separate, independent devices exist on the market to do such soil processing, and a ProZ user needs a Greek equivalent for hedger or soil conditioning cultivator.

(E-I 8-05/4) What on earth are Anode bags? In this case, a ProZ user needed to render the term in Italian and found this context: Buffing, abrading, polishing, and finishing cloth and fabrics, mill and dip treated cloth for buffing, abrading, polishing and finishing, and anode bags.

(G-E 8-05/5) This has to do with an ingredient in a (surely non-kosher) recipe, “Schweinemett,” for which a ProZ user needs good Portuguese. English is also acceptable.

(G-E 8-05/6) “Weitwinkel” was not a problem for this ProZer, being “grand’angolare” in Italian, but he could not wrap himself around the compound word “Weitwinkelsensorik,” as applied to air navigation. What is it in English and in Italian?

(I-E 8-05/7) The context for this query has to do with actions taken by a court of appeals. A ProZ user wants Romanian for the following text, but English will do: “…la Corte di Appello di … accoglieva la richiesta dell’odierna attrice con la quale chiedeva un rinvio…” What about the two words in bold print?

(I-E 8-05/8) In the field of construction and civil engineering, what could “controvolte” mean? Here is a bit of context: “…volt e controvolte di sostegno di un padiglione.”

(R-E 8-05/9) Here are Russian abbreviations from an excerpt of a transcript a graduate majoring in accounting received from a technical school of highway transport in Ivanov-Frankovsk. Warning: the abbreviations might be Ukrainian. They are given this way: Особенности учета в AP3, AC, TEII. The ProZ user surmises that the first abbreviation is антиропальный взгляд, but what about the latter two?

(Sp-E 8-05/10) In the world of biology-related measuring instruments, what is “detector UV/V diodo array de doble canal de detección?”

Replies to Old Queries

(E-H 1-05/1) (“vice president for financial affairs, treasurer”): John Kinory states that “nasi” and “sgan nasi” are relatively new (15 years or more) American imports that are direct translations of president and vice president, now found on countless Israeli business cards and business documents. But “menahel klali” might also mean the manager of a business entity. “Man’kal” means chief executive officer purely because it is an acronym of “menahel klali.”

It is only fair to say that the above is in response to David Goldman’s assertions on page 58 of the June ATA Chronicle. David says that “nasi” and “sgan nasi” are not yet used everywhere, and he has not encountered them in documents or on business cards. Also, he says that general manager might also mean the manager of...
a store, as opposed to corporations, although in American English it is not the custom to refer to the director-general of a company.

More on this issue next month, when it gets fully sorted out.

(F-E 5-05/7a) (“les automatismes”): These, says Leonid Gornik, are automatic controls or automatic functions. Also from Leonid, (7.b), “les courants forts” are high currents, and (7.c) “les courants faibles” are low currents.

(G-E 6-05/6) (“das laufende Gut”): In the world of sailing, says Philip Tomlinson, this refers to the running rigging, as opposed to the rest of the rigging, which is standard rigging. In the query sentence, the crew is asked to handle the mast, the mainsheet, and halyards and running back stays.

A synonym for this, according to Reinhold Seizinger, is “bewegliches Tauwerk,” meaning any lines on a sailboat that run through blocks, disks, etc., and are manipulated by hand or with the aid of some device. In contrast, “stehendes Gut” means any lines, wires, etc., which are fixed. These lines usually stabilize the mast or other rigid fixtures on a boat. The individual referred to in the original query on page 58 of the June ATA Chronicle is going to be one busy crewman, because he will have to be in charge of the main sail and keep an eye on all the other running lines.

(G-I 6-05/7) (“Brötchenhalterung”): Hans Liepert says that he does not know the terminus technicus in English or in Italian, but that it is a device that is put above the toaster to enable rolls to be toasted or warmed up.

(Pt-E 5-05/11) (“bula”): In Britain, says Dee Shields, these are called patient information leaflets (PIL). Paul Sadur says that these are called a “prospecto” in Spain.

Thanks again for adding your bit to this column! I won’t deny I could use more responses!

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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, 1409 E. Gaylord Street, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858-3626. 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.

Nazi Speak

“Where are you marching?”
“To war.”
“Why?” “Aggression.”
“Whose?” “Mine.”

The above refreshingly non-Orwellian interchange comes from a parody of Hamlet written and performed by students when I was an undergraduate. In real life, politicians are rarely so straightforward, and often seek to distort and control language so as to mask their true intentions and even control the very thoughts of the populace. Nowhere was this more evident than under the Nazi regime in Germany, as demonstrated by the book NS-Deutsch, Karl-Heinz Brackmann’s and Renate Birkenhauer’s monolingual dictionary of the language of the Nazis published by Straelener Manuskripte Verlag in 1988. Perhaps the book should be considered an anti-dictionary. Once the horror is overcome, the words can seem almost funny.

First, of course, are the euphemisms, such as those for “murder.” Examples are “betreuen” (“to attend to, to care for”); “abspritzen” (“to hose down a car, to spray a coat of paint, to use a syringe on plants”), which, in Nazi speak, means the murder of concentration camp prisoners by an injection of phenol into the heart; and, of course, “die Endlösung” (“the final solution”).

Then there are the new meanings given to words used in association with Jews or others despised by the Nazis. “Belaster” (“burdened, laden”) indicated a connection, or suspected connection, with Jews. “Artfremd” (“alien, foreign”) meant anything the Nazis didn’t like. It was the opposite of “deutschblütig” (“German-blooded”) and referred to everything from persons with 25% or more “non-Aryan” blood, to atonal music and its terrible proponent, the Jew Arnold Schoenberg. “Asiatisch” (“Asiatic”) referred to everything from Jews to the invading Soviet army.

Words that previously had good connotations were given bad ones, a notable example being “Demokratie” (“democracy”) and all related words. Finally, some words were imbued with mythic significance. “Charakter” (“character”) became one of the three most important race-dependent traits of the ideal human type. The other two were instinct and strength of will. “Reich” (“empire, kingdom, world, domain”) became a mystical key concept for Nazi self-perception.

In the beginning was the Word. Perhaps words like those reviewed here will mark the end.

From the Executive Director

Continued from p. 10

Special thanks. The Denver meeting marked the last ATA Board meeting for several longtime members: ATA President Scott Brennan has served for six years (two as president, two as president-elect, and two as director); Directors Kirk Anderson and Timothy Yuan have served for six years each (two three-year terms as directors); and Director Beatriz Bonnet has served for four years as a director. I have truly appreciated working with them and for them. ATA is a better organization thanks to their leadership and efforts.

The minutes of the meeting will be posted in the Members Only section of ATA’s website (www.atanet.org/membersonly). Past meeting minutes are also posted on the site. The next Board meeting is set for November 12-13 in Seattle. As always, the meeting is open to all ATA members.

Internet Scams Update

An ATA member has alerted me that Internet scams have moved to the telephone. The call followed the same story lines of the Internet scam (family members are coming to sightsee and shop and need an interpreter, etc.). The caller said the payment would be sent prior to the family members arriving. Keep your guard up. Ask for references. Do your due diligence like you would for any new client.

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Register today for ATA’s 46th Annual Conference in Seattle, November 9-12. Visit ATA’s website at www.atanet.org/conf2005 for the most up-to-date listing of educational sessions, exhibitors, and sponsors. You can register online or you can print out the form, complete it, and fax or mail it to ATA. You can also use the registration form provided in this issue (page 64).

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Other Groups
This list gives contact information for translation and interpretation groups as a service to ATA members. Inclusion does not imply affiliation with or endorsement by ATA.

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Note: For more information on chapters or to start a chapter, please contact ATA Headquarters. Send updates to Mary David, ATA Chronicle, 225 Reinke Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314; Tel: (703) 683-6100; Fax: (703) 683-6122; Mary@atanet.org.
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Keep track of your continuing education points and supporting documentation: this is your responsibility. Use the forms on pages 59 and 60 to request approval, if required, either before or after the event. ATA Headquarters will notify you and provide materials for reporting your continuing education points, when due.

You must earn 1 continuing education point on the ethics of translation and interpreting during your first 3-year reporting period. You may choose between attending an ethics workshop at the ATA Annual Conference or taking a self-directed course available online and in print. The self-directed course is available online at www.atanet.org/acc/ce_online_ethics_component.htm The Continuing Education Requirements Committee may approve other ethics classes.

If you are now certified, your first 3-year reporting period ends on January 1, 2007. If you become ATA-certified after January 1, 2004, your first reporting period ends 3 years after the certification date.

You can begin accruing continuing education points on January 1, 2004, or as soon as you become certified. ATA-certified translators who will be 60 and older on the date their reporting period ends are exempt from continuing education requirements. All others must provide evidence of their continuing education activities as described here.

Keep track of your continuing education points and supporting documentation: this is your responsibility. Use the forms on pages 59 and 60 to request approval, if required, either before or after the event. ATA Headquarters will notify you and provide materials for reporting your continuing education points, when due.

You must earn 1 continuing education point on the ethics of translation and interpreting during your first 3-year reporting period. You may choose between attending an ethics workshop at the ATA Annual Conference or taking a self-directed course available online and in print. The self-directed course is available online at www.atanet.org/acc/ce_online_ethics_component.htm The Continuing Education Requirements Committee may approve other ethics classes.
C. Memberships in professional associations

Points: 1 point for each current membership in a professional association of each type: translation/interpreting or specialization-specific.

Maximum: Up to 2 points per 3-year period.

No approval required: Membership in a translation/interpreting professional association.

Approval required: Membership in a specialization-specific professional association.

Approval process: You will be asked to provide evidence of membership at reporting time. For specialization-specific professional associations, you will be asked to provide a description of the association and how it relates to your translation work.

Examples: ATA and ATA local chapters; National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators; International Association of Conference Interpreters; Austin Area Translators and Interpreters Association; Société Française des Traducteurs; Society for Technical Communication; Society of Automotive Engineers; European Society of Clinical Pharmacy.

D. Mentors, mentees, and ATA Certification Program graders

Points: 1 point for each activity per year.

Maximum: Up to 6 points per 3-year period.

Approval required: ATA certification exam grading. ATA certification exam passage selection. Participating as a mentor or mentee in the ATA Mentoring Program.

Approval process: ATA Certification Program graders must have graded exams or selected passages during the year for which they claim points. Mentors and mentees must provide a statement from the Mentoring Committee Chair at reporting time.

E. New certifications and accreditations

Points: 1 point for each new certification or accreditation acquired from an approved professional organization or government agency.

Maximum: Up to 3 points per 3-year period.

No approval required: National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, Federal Court, and foreign sworn translator credentials.

Approval required: Other credentials.

Approval process: National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, Federal Court, and foreign sworn translator credentials are pre-approved, but proof must be provided. For other credentials, a description of the criteria for conferring the credential must be submitted to the Certification Program Manager at ATA Headquarters for approval. Attach a copy of the certificate awarded to your approval request.

F. Authoring articles or books

Points: 4 points for each new book published; 2 points for each new article published.

Maximum: Up to 4 points during the 3-year period.

Approval required: Published book on translation/interpreting. Published article on translation/interpreting in a professional journal/publication. (Translating a book or article is not counted as authoring a book or article.)

Approval process: Submit a copy of the title page of the book or article with the author’s name.
**Approval Request Form**

**ATA Continuing Education Points (Individuals)**

American Translators Association  
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590 • Alexandria VA 22314  
Tel: (703) 683-6100 • Fax (703) 683-6122 • E-mail: Certification@atanet.org • Website: www.atanet.org

Refer to CE Guidelines in print or online at www.atanet.org for further information!

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<td>5. Speaker’s name &amp; title:</td>
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<td>7. Time of activity:</td>
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<td>8. Number of continuing education points requested:</td>
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<td>9. Signature of requesting individual:</td>
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**For ATA Use Only**

| Points approved: | Comments: |
| Reviewed by: |  |
| Date: |  |
## Approval Request Form
### ATA Continuing Education Points (Groups)

Refer to CE Guidelines in print or online at www.atanet.org for further information!

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<td>□ Other*:</td>
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<td>Contact Person:</td>
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| 2. Event/presentation: |  |
| 3. Brief description of content: |  |

| 4. Speaker’s name & title: |  |
| For conference or multi-day events, please list names and titles of speakers on a separate sheet |  |

| 5. Date(s) of activity: | 6. Time of activity: (from) (to) |

| 7. Number of continuing education points requested: |  |
| 1 point per hour credit for seminars, workshops, and conferences, with a max. 10 points/event; 5 points max./university course |  |

| 8. Signature of requesting individual: | Title: | Date: |

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### For ATA Use Only

| Points approved: | Comments: |
| Reviewed by: |  |
| Date: |  |
Instructions for Completing ATA Continuing Education Approval Request Forms

General Information:
• ATA maintains a database of approved events at which ATA-certified members may earn continuing education points (CEPs).
• For events not listed, an ATA approval request form must be completed and submitted to ATA Headquarters.
• Approval may be requested either prior to an event or after an event, with the understanding that the approval may be denied if documentation is insufficient or if the educational content does not meet ATA criteria.
• Individuals and groups requesting CEPs will be notified by ATA Headquarters that the event has been approved for a particular number of CEPs or that approval is denied.
• Individuals must keep track of their earned CEPs and report them to ATA Headquarters every three years upon request.

Select one of the following forms to complete:
1. If you represent a chapter, regional group, organization, institution, or other sponsor of activities, complete the Approval Request Form for Groups (page 60).
2. If you are an individual, complete the Approval Request Form for Individuals (page 59).

CEP Request Form for Groups
1) Provide the name and contact information for the group sponsoring the event.
   a) Check the appropriate box for your group and provide the group's name.
   b) “Other” can include affiliated groups, international translation organizations, and universities.

   All ATA chapter educational events are automatically eligible for continuing education points. Events not sponsored by ATA or ATA chapters must be approved individually. Approval may be denied if documentation is insufficient or if the educational content does not meet ATA criteria.

2) Provide the name of the event or presentation.
3) Provide a brief description of the content of the event or presentation—two or three sentences should be sufficient.
4) Provide the speaker’s name and title.
   a) If this is a single session, one name and descriptive title are sufficient.
   b) If this is a conference or multi-day event, provide all names and titles on a separate page.
5) Provide the date(s) of the event.
6) Provide the starting and ending times.
   a) If this is a conference or multi-day event, provide the number of session hours for each day of the event. Session hours do not include breaks or meals.
7) Provide the number of CEPs you are requesting for your attendees—one hour of creditworthy activity equals one CEP—no partial hours can be counted.
8) The form must be signed and dated by the individual recommending the presentation or event for CEP approval.

CEP Request Form for Individuals
1) The individual requesting the CEPs must provide his/her ATA membership number and sign and date the form.
2) Provide the name and contact information for the group sponsoring the event.

   All ATA chapter educational events are automatically eligible for continuing education points. Events not sponsored by ATA or ATA chapters must be approved individually. Approval may be denied if documentation is insufficient or if the educational content does not meet ATA criteria.

3) Provide the name of the event or presentation.
4) Provide a brief description of the content of the event or presentation—two or three sentences should be sufficient.
5) Provide the speaker’s name and title.
   a) If this is a single session, one name and descriptive title are sufficient.
   b) If this is a conference or multi-day event, provide all names and titles on a separate page.
6) Provide the date(s) of the event.
7) Provide the starting and ending times.
   a) If this is a conference or multi-day event, provide the number of session-hours for each day of the event—session hours do not include breaks or meals.
8) Provide the number of CEPs you are requesting—one hour of creditworthy activity equals one CEP.

REMINDER
• ATA offers 1 CEP per hour for approved seminars, workshops, conferences, and presentations based on full hours (not including meals and breaks), up to a maximum of 10 CEPs per event. No partial hours will be counted.
• ATA offers a maximum of 5 CEPs for an approved college, university, or other course regardless of its length.
• The requesting group or individual will be notified if ATA does not approve the number of points requested.
• When reporting points, an ATA member is allowed a maximum of 10 CEPs for any given year.
American Translators Association
46th Annual Conference

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Contact Matthew Hicks at mhicks@mcneill-group.com or (215) 321-9662, ext. 19.

46th Annual Conference Exhibitors
As of August 1, 2005

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www.1stoptr.com

Accent on Languages
www.accentonlanguages.com

Adler’s Foreign Books
wwwafb-adlers.com

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

Association of Language Companies
www.alcus.org

Atril
www.atril.com

Beetext Productivity Solutions
www.beetext.com

CLS Communication, Inc.
www.cls-communication.com

Defense Language Institute, Foreign Language Center
www.dliic.edu

Dynamic Language Center
www.dlc-usa.com

Federal Bureau of Investigation
www.fbijobs.com

InTrans Book Service
www.intransbooks.com

John Benjamins Publishing Co.
www.benjamins.com

Kent State University, Institute for Applied Linguistics
apling.kent.edu

LanguageWorks, Inc.
www.languageworks.com

Language Line Services
www languageline.com

Lexis-Nexis/Martindale-Hubbell
Law Directory
www.martindale.com/resources

Monterey Institute of International Studies, Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation
www.miis.edu/
gsti-about-dean.html

Multicorpora R&D
www.multicorpora.com

MultiLing Corporation
www.multiling.com

National Center for Interpretation,
University of Arizona
nci.arizona.edu

NetworkOmni Multilingual Communications
www.networkomni.com

New York University
www.scps.nyu.edu

Northwest Interpreters, Inc.
www.nwiservices.com

Schreiber Publishing
www.schreibernet.com

SDL International
www.sdl.com/products

Sinometrics
www.sinometrics.com

Telelanguage Inc.
www.telelanguage.com

Terminotix Inc.
www.terminotix.com

Translation Bureau/
Bureau de la traduction
www.terumium.com

TransPerfect Translations
www.transperfect.com

TripleInk
www.tripleink.com

U.S. Department of State,
Office of Language Services
www.state.gov

WordFinder Software International
www.wordfinder.com
46th Annual Conference
of the American Translators Association

The Westin Seattle  |  Seattle, Washington  |  November 9-12, 2005

Features
Over 175 educational sessions that cover topics in a variety of languages and specialties, offering something for everyone

A multitude of networking events that allow you to connect with over 1,200 translators and interpreters from throughout the U.S. and around the world

Opportunities to promote your services and interview with language services companies at the Job Marketplace

An exhibit hall that brings companies together for you to see the latest software, publications, and products available that fit your unique needs

Register
Register today to take advantage of special Early-Bird rates, available until October 3. See the following page for the Conference Registration Form or register online at www.atanet.org/conf2005.

Join ATA to register at the discounted ATA Member rate. For an application, contact ATA or join online at www.atanet.org/membapp.htm.

Don’t miss this opportunity to network, meet newcomers and seasoned professionals, market yourself and your skills, reunite with friends and colleagues, and have fun!

Hotel
The Westin Seattle is located in downtown Seattle, 15 miles from the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and within walking distance to Pike Place Market and the Space Needle.

Special Room Rates for ATA Conference Attendees (exclusive of tax)
Single: $179  |  Double: $194  |  Triple: $204  |  Quad: $214

Take advantage of this special rate, available only until October 19. Call (800) WESTIN-1 (937-8461) and tell them you’re attending the ATA Conference.

The Westin Seattle, 1900 Fifth Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98101
Phone: (206) 728-1000, Fax: (206) 728-2007; www.westin.com/seattle
### Conference Registration Form

**Join ATA & Save**
Receive discounted registration fees as well as 3 months free membership when you register for the conference and join ATA at the same time!
To take advantage of this special offer, register online at www.atanet.org/conf2005.

**Cancellation Policy**
Cancellation requests received in writing by Oct. 21, 2005 are eligible for a refund, subject to a $25 administrative fee. Refunds will not be honored after Oct. 21.

**3 Ways to Register**
- Register online at www.atanet.org/conf2005
- Fax registration form to (703) 683-6122
- Mail registration form to ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

**Don’t Forget**
- Include payment with your form
- Make your hotel reservations
- Tell a friend about this event

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<th>ATA Student</th>
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<td>German Language Division Happy Hour, Thursday 7-8pm</td>
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<td>Medical Division Reception, Thursday 8-9pm</td>
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<td>Round Robin Tennis Tournament, Thursday 4-6:30pm</td>
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(Please indicate: Casual Player or Avid Player)

### Preconference Fees

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### Registration Fees = $ [Blank]

### Total Payment = $ [Blank]

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- Check/Money Order: Please make payable, through a U.S. bank in U.S. funds, to the American Translators Association
- Credit Card: VISA MasterCard AMEX Discover

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Name on Card ___________________________ Signature ___________________________

- Please indicate if you require special accessibility or assistance and attach a sheet with your requirements.
- Yes, I would like to take part in the Job Marketplace. (see page 10 for details)
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