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The ATA Chronicle  ■  July 2012
53rd Annual Conference
Hilton San Diego Bayfront • October 24 – 27, 2012
San Diego, California

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Special ATA Room Rates (exclusive of tax)
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These special rates are available until October 1, 2012, or as space allows. Make your reservations online at www.atanet.org/conf/2012/hotel.htm. Or call +1-800-HILTONS and ask for the special ATA rate.

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From the President
Dorothee Racette
dracette@hughes.net

Interpreters: An Integral Part of ATA

The third annual Interpret America North American Summit on Interpreting was held in Monterey, California, in mid-June as an event to bring together interpreting professionals from a wide range of fields. As one of the event sponsors, ATA took the opportunity to take stock of its own activities to promote the recognition of both the interpreting and translation professions, as expressed in its additional logotype—“The Voice of Interpreters and Translators”—that accompanies the ATA logo on our website and elsewhere. As you will see in the Preliminary Program for ATA’s Annual Conference mailed with this month’s issue, the conference program clearly reflects this commitment as well.

Interpreters are a vital part of ATA, with more than 40% of ATA members working as interpreters. Currently, 6 of the 13 members of ATA’s Board of Directors are practicing interpreters. The Board has been working to increase the visibility of interpreters both within the Association and to the outside world. Over the past year, these efforts have resulted in specific actions in the areas of client education, business education tools specifically for interpreters, and a renewed effort to investigate general ATA interpreter certification. Of note, the client education brochure Interpreting: Getting It Right, A Guide to Buying Interpreting Services was published last fall and is available as a booklet and online (www.atanet.org/publications/getting_it_right.php). In addition to offering many full-length articles on interpreting, The ATA Chronicle features the “Interpreters Forum” as part of its regular lineup of columns. While business education tools such as the Business Practices listerv are open to all ATA members, work is underway to develop specialized business tools for interpreters. These include an annotated Guide to an Interpreting Services Agreement, to explain what to look for when signing work agreements with clients, and a tool to help calculate tax liabilities and overhead costs of interpreters who work as independent contractors. These tools should be available to all members within the year.

Perhaps most importantly, ATA’s Board of Directors has charged the Interpretation Policy Advisory Committee with investigating the market feasibility of establishing ATA interpreter certification. ATA representatives attending the Interpret America Summit presented a poster outlining this research.

In direct response to the call for more cooperation between different professional associations representing interpreters, ATA is one of several national organizations that have formed a loose collaboration to share information and to advocate jointly for the profession. These organizations hold regular monthly meetings by phone and are exploring future joint advocacy activities to benefit interpreters.

The Board is committed to increasing the visibility of ATA interpreters to the outside world and boosting the active participation of interpreters in the activities and governance of the Association. To that end, the following actions have been recommended and will be pursued:

- Allow interpreters to list credentials earned from other interpreter associations and credentialing bodies, such as the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators and the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters, in ATA’s online Directory of Translation and Interpreting Services;
- Encourage interpreters to apply for active/corresponding membership status using these same credentials;
- Revise ATA’s membership structure to increase voting membership in ATA, especially among professional interpreters; and
- Work with the Interpreters Division Leadership Council on strengthening the division.

As always, your suggestions and comments are welcome and much appreciated. Enjoy your summer, and see you in San Diego in the fall!
Bundled with this issue of The ATA Chronicle, you will find a copy of the Preliminary Program for ATA’s 53rd Annual Conference, October 24-27 at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront, in San Diego, California. This slim tome, which should whet your appetite further for the conference, represents the combined efforts of many people, some of whom will never see their names in the program or on a name badge—think patient spouses and helpful colleagues.

The weeks-long process of reading, weighing, and winnowing down sessions to include in the program has been difficult, to be sure. But those submitting proposals made the task even more challenging by sending content of exceptional quality—so many great ideas! A small army of peer reviewers (to whom I am eternally grateful), gallons of coffee, and dozens of passes through the categories, and here you have it—the remarkable multi-colored grid of nearly 200 sessions that represent the rich educational tapestry of the conference.

There are, of course, many familiar threads, such as language-specific sessions and oodles of sessions dedicated to segment-related knowledge and best practices, all designed to help you meet your professional goals. Perhaps you need to hone certain technical skills or acquire knowledge related to a market sector you want to enter. Polishing your writing skills? Stepping up your interpreting game? It is all here, along with social opportunities galore.

You will note innovations as well. Our streamlined divisions policy means shorter annual meetings paired with extra learning opportunities for attendees. We are tickled to be able to add quality Arabic and Farsi sessions to the mix. And because of our co-location with the Conference of the Association for Machine Translation in the Americas (AMTA), October 28-November 1, we have scheduled meaty content related to machine translation so you can explore post-editing and debate quality with some of the leading minds on the subject. Our AMTA colleagues have lined up exciting keynote speakers, including Louis von Ahn (founder and inventor of reCaptcha and Duolingo and noted TED speaker), as well as a technology showcase to tempt you to extend your stay in sunny southern California. (More information on AMTA’s conference can be found at http://amta2012.amtaweb.org.)

I apologize in advance if two sessions that are interesting to you are scheduled at the same time. With so many educational sessions by compelling speakers, this situation is truly unavoidable.

I can heartily recommend the session recordings that will once again be available on DVD and as an eConference. I would also like to suggest that teaming up with a fellow conference attendee is a terrific growth opportunity. Like a study buddy at school, sharing your notes and experiences is a great way to deepen your understanding of the material presented, as well as a great way to build up your professional network.

So, pour a cup of coffee, pick up a pen, and start planning your program. I am sure you will see why so many of your colleagues come back year after year!
From the Executive Director

Walter Bacak, CAE
Walter@atanet.org

ATA’s 53rd Annual Conference and AMTA’s 10th Conference

ATA’s Annual Conference

has been cited in a study by Common Sense Advisory as the top overall conference in the language services market. “So what is ATA doing right? For one, it is staying true to its original purpose of bringing together individual practitioners of translation at its events. ATA attendees know what they will get at the conference and return year after year to network with peers and learn.” (For more information on the survey, please see www.commonsenseadvisory.com/AbstractView.aspx?ArticleID=2112.)

Be a part of this year’s Annual Conference by joining your colleagues in Southern California for one of the largest gatherings of translators and interpreters in the world. ATA’s 53rd Annual Conference will take place at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront in San Diego, California, October 24-27, 2012. This will be the first time ATA has been back to Southern California since the 2001 Annual Conference in Los Angeles, and 20 years since it last met in San Diego.

ATA President-elect and Conference Organizer Caitilin Walsh, in her columns, has shared her observations of this new hotel, with its open meeting areas, spectacular views of San Diego Bay, and contemporary design. Please read her column on page 7 to see how the conference is shaping up. In addition, please take a look at the Preliminary Program mailed with this issue and check out ATA’s conference web page: www.atanet.org/conf/2012.

Echoing Caitilin’s words, we are grateful to the hundreds of volunteers who make the entire conference experience possible. On the staff side, while the conference activities touch each staff member’s responsibilities, special thanks go to ATA Meetings Manager Teresa Kelly for her usual meticulous planning and execution and for the Preliminary Program and conference website design; to ATA Information Services Manager Roshan Pokharel for his work on setting up the “back end” of the website—the programming; to Jeff Sanfacon, editor of The ATA Chronicle, for editing the presentation abstracts and speakers’ bios; to ATA Chapter and Division Relations Manager Jamie Padula for working with the divisions and their invited speakers; and to ATA Public Relations and Marketing Manager Caron Mason for the exhibit, sponsorship, and advertising sales.

Plan now to attend. Register online or by using the registration form included with the Preliminary Program.

Association for Machine Translation in the Americas (AMTA): The Tenth Conference of AMTA will also take place in San Diego, October 28-November 1. This event builds on the success of the 2010 co-location of the ATA and AMTA conferences. By co-locating, the two groups hope to educate machine translation (MT) researchers and developers on the translation industry and human translators, while also giving translators a better understanding of the latest MT technology and advanced translation automation.

ATA members may register for AMTA’s conference at AMTA-member rates. Please note that while both groups are meeting in San Diego, they are in different hotels. (AMTA is meeting at the Catamaran Resort Hotel.) For more information, please visit http://amta2012.amtaweb.org.

Conference Tweets
#ata53

What does this mean? It is the Twitter world at ATA’s 53rd Annual Conference! Join the conversation or just tell colleagues “wish you were here.” Search #ata53 at www.twitter.com or follow ATA at www.twitter.com/atanet.

You might just have so much fun reading the conference tweets that you will want to follow @atanet on Twitter throughout the year. It is never a long-winded conversation or endless discussion—just translation and interpreting news you need as needed. And remember, if it cannot be said in 140 characters, it will never be a tweet on Twitter!
The sentence is a self-contained linguistic unit – but that doesn't make it a self-contained unit of meaning. Translators read sentences in the source text, but can only translate them appropriately if they can see and understand the content in context. That's why TransitNXT employs a reference material-based approach to translation memory – unlike other translation memory systems, which use an exclusively sentence-based database. TransitNXT reference material preserves document intelligence and context. A unique approach that has proven to be successful for over 20 years.

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Context Counts
Quality problems due to lack of context are a thing of the past. The technique used in TransitNXT of linking the source and target documents at the sentence, paragraph, or section level allows translators to consult the context of the fuzzy suggestions, concordance suggestions, and terminology suggestions in a process called Dynamic Linking. This proves all the more valuable when translation results are already being used to create source content. In this case as well, contextual reference in the TransitNXT reference material ensures that the writer chooses appropriate sentences for the specific context. Thus the correctness of the subsequent translation is already ensured at the writing stage.

Corporate Wording with a Click of the Mouse
An integral part of TransitNXT, TermStarNXT, is an ideal tool to help translators and terminologists manage specialized technical terminology: With the click of a mouse or button, terminology entries are compiled into dictionaries. The sophisticated technology of TermStarNXT allows simultaneous searching in decentralized, local dictionaries and databases and in centrally maintained terminology resources via WebTerm.
Switzerland is renowned not only for its strong presence in the banking industry but also for its insurance industry, which, at roughly two-thirds the size of the banking sector, enjoys a quieter image and greater stability. The Swiss are known for their refined sense of security, which is reflected in their almost religious pursuit of insuring their health, pensions, cars, household contents, and even their pets for every conceivable contingency. Insurers have generally done very well as a result, and many companies look back on a rich and solid tradition. They are well established at the state (cantonal) rather than the federal level, with only a few multinational players. In general, insurance companies are more focused on preserving the status quo than on redefining the industry, and their products are divided along the traditional lines of life and non-life insurance. (Figure 1 provides a breakdown of premium volume worldwide.)

Insurers in both the life and non-life sectors offer many of the standard products found in other countries, but the provisions of their contracts are adjusted specifically to Swiss laws and regulations, which is something that poses a considerable challenge for English translators. As the insurance field is very broad, few translators will ever find the time or develop the scope to come to grips with all of the different types of insurance sold in the source-language countries. It is therefore essential for translators in the insurance field to narrow their specialization—possibly to either life insurance or non-life insurance—and to focus on just one source-language country. The following provides a brief overview of some of the nuances and challenges involved for those preparing to enter this very specialized market.

Life Insurance and the Three-Pillar System

The life insurance segment in Switzerland includes the various types of whole life insurance that most of us know from our personal coverage (e.g., term life insurance, universal term life insurance, annual renewable, etc.), but the most important segment in the Swiss life industry is group life insurance. The Swiss version of group life insurance is very specific and

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<td>Life</td>
<td>CHF 29.4</td>
<td>CHF 42.2</td>
<td>CHF 71.6</td>
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<td>Non-Life</td>
<td>CHF 24.2</td>
<td>CHF 46.1</td>
<td>CHF 70.3</td>
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<td>Total Direct Insurance in CHF Billions</td>
<td>CHF 53.6</td>
<td>CHF 88.3</td>
<td>CHF 141.9</td>
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linked closely to the country’s retirement provision system. As such, it is crucial for translators in this market to understand the Swiss concept of pension pillarization. Pillarization, an idea that originated in Switzerland in the 1960s, is the foundation for the mixed pension approach. The Swiss pension system is based on three pillars, each representing a different pension system, such as state pension, employee benefits, and private pension provision. (See Figure 2 below.) The goal is to maintain the accustomed standard of living for the insured and their dependents after retirement or in the event of disability or death. The model has proved to be extremely effective in Switzerland over the past three decades, and has contributed significantly to the stability and affluence for which the country is known. After the establishment of the three-pillar doctrine in Switzerland in the 1970s and 1980s, and the World Bank’s adoption of this concept in 1994, it has become part of the worldwide orthodoxy of pension reform. Switzerland now serves as a global model worthy of emulation for this type of pension system. Here is how it works:

**First Pillar:** The AHV (Swiss social security system) and the IV (state disability insurance) make up the first pillar, or state pension, which is intended to secure a basic livelihood. The first pillar is mandatory for all persons residing in Switzerland and is based on the principle of solidarity. The younger generations finance the current pensioners, and the more affluent members of society finance those who are less fortunate. Cynics, however, call the AHV a hidden tax, as it is not clear with current demographic trends and the graying of the population. It is essential for translators in the insurance field to narrow their specialization—possibly to either life insurance or non-life insurance—and to focus on just one source-language country.

**Figure 2: The Swiss Three-Pillar System Insurance Model** (Courtesy CreditSuisse)
population whether it will still be possible to finance the social security system in its current form a decade or so from now.

**Second Pillar:** The second pillar is the employee benefits insurance. These benefits come from the employee pension fund governed by the Federal Law on Occupational Retirement, Survivors’ and Disability Pension Plans (BVG) and the compulsory accident insurance governed by the Federal Law on Accident Insurance (UVG). Together, these benefits are intended to cover at least 60% of the final salary, allowing employees to maintain the standard of living to which they were accustomed before retirement or the onset of disability. The second pillar is mandatory for employed persons only.

**Third Pillar:** The third pillar, privately financed pension provision, is voluntary. Unlike normal savings, it brings certain tax advantages (e.g., a specified maximum annual contribution to the private pension scheme can be deducted from taxable income). It can be used as a means of closing pension gaps.

The Internet provides a wealth of information on the Swiss pension system, and translators wanting to work in this field can build up a good background by researching this topic online.

The best opportunities for translators lie with the second pillar. Pension funds in Switzerland managed approximately US$661 billion in pension assets by the end of 2010. Every employer in the country is obliged by law to set up a pension fund for its employees. Many insurance companies also run their own “collective foundations” offering pension fund services to small- and medium-sized companies. The number of potential clients is huge, while the number of competent translators in this field is woefully small.

However, translators of pension funds face a myriad of risks. There is no standardized English terminology for this business, and there are very few, if any, authoritative sources for terminology. The Internet provides many online glossaries for the Swiss pension industry, none of which can be entirely relied upon. Different insurance companies insist on different terms, and it is very difficult if not impossible to convince clients that there are better terms that will actu-
ally be understood by the majority of English readers, regardless of their country of origin. The upside, however, is that there are far too few competent translators in this field, which means the industry is constantly on the lookout for qualified individuals. Those who do their homework and are willing and able to do the necessary research will have excellent long-term career prospects.

Non-Life Insurance

As in the case of life insurance, translators venturing into the Swiss non-life sector need to learn the basics of insurance, familiarize themselves with the applicable aspects of the Swiss legal system, and become discerning when evaluating the quality of online content. They would also do well to become part of an informal network of freelancers, most of whom live in the Zurich area.

Insurance texts in this sector often contain woolly jargon that simply cannot be reconstructed in parallel in English, requiring the translator to create an entirely new text. For instance, “... auf den aktuellen Zeitpunkt abgezinst” means something along the lines of “... bearing interest up to the current date.” The following sentence is a further case in point:

Die Versicherung deckt die Haftpflicht für Personen- und Sachschäden bei Schadenersatzansprüchen aufgrund gesetzlicher Bestimmungen

Translation: “Insurance covers liability for personal injury and property damage arising from claims for damages based on statutory provisions.”

Schaden (as in Sachschäden) and Schadenersatzansprüche have two entirely different meanings that need to be understood accurately: Schaden refers to physical damage, and Schadenersatzansprüche refers to claims for damages in a liability context. In another context, Schaden can mean “claim” (e.g., Der Versicherungsnehmer meldete uns einen Schaden, which translates as “the policyholder filed a claim”). The same holds true for product names, which often comprise a string of concepts for which there is no English equivalent. For example, Verkehrsrechtsschutzversicherung refers to noncompulsory insurance for motorists to cover their legal expenses if they get sued for having committed a culpable act. Finding an accurate and satisfying translation will prove a challenge even for seasoned translators because the Internet sites of the insurers offering these products often have different English versions.

Translators are likely to face additional problems when clients insist on a particular English term. In the case of Verkehrsrechtsschutz, “legal expenses insurance” makes a world of sense compared to “legal protection” for obvious lexical reasons, but the latter, unfortunately, has become the established phrase and may be what the client wants. The situation becomes even more complex when client authors mix in English words (e.g., Verkehrsrechtsschutzversicherung Professional) to meet a marketing objective at the expense of providing something an English reader will actually be able to understand. In this instance, “legal protection Professional” may be an adequate translation in that it satisfies the client by keeping “Professional” in the translation, even though something along the lines of “corporate legal expenses insurance” would be a better choice.

Researching terms, organization names, and laws will provide translators with opportunities to test their mettle, as some of the websites of renowned organizations, including the federal government, contain a wide range of translations, some of questionable quality. (See the list of resources provided on page 12.) For example, the site of the Swiss Federal Office of Energy has “Swiss National Fund for the Promotion of Scientific Research” as the translation for Schweizerischer Nationalfonds für die Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, even though this organization’s official English name is the Swiss National Science Foundation. Translators would therefore be well advised to develop and trust their instincts and ask others in their network in case of lingering uncertainty as to what the best translation could be.

Outlook

These are just some of many examples of the challenges that translators will face. To become effective and fluent in this field, translators will need to adopt a long-term approach, develop expertise gradually, acquire a set of tried-and-tested tools such as...
The ATA Chronicle

August 14, 2012
12 Noon Eastern Time

Documenting Terms, Once and for All
Presenter: Barbara Inge Karsch

Technical communication relies on the use of standardized terms and names of the respective field. As translators, we are required to find the correct equivalents in our target language. Once we have done the research, we do not want to do it over again for the next job. In this webinar, we will cover how to document terms and names so that you can retrieve the information again for your next job, no matter which terminology tool you use. We will cover:

- The most important information to document.
- The best way to document any part of speech.
- One way to document terminological data outside of a specific tool.

This webinar deals with the basic aspects of terminology management. No prior knowledge is required.
Sometimes everything just happens at once. The phone rings non-stop, your e-mail inbox keeps pinging—it is as if everyone has decided to gang up on you to keep you on your toes. As a freelance translator, your actual workload can vary drastically from week to week or even day to day. There is nothing for ages, and then a flurry of orders. Or, out of nowhere, there are burning issues everywhere you look, and, like a superhero, you need to deal with a plethora of ultra-urgent orders all at the same time.

Of course, there are times when you just have to grit your teeth and get on with it. You may say to yourself, “Things will be absolutely chaotic until X date, so I’ll work like a trouper now and give it 110% until then.” If you are lucky enough to be able to master such exceptional situations, they usually make you feel great as well. You deliver top results and get to write a pile of invoices at the end, which is the icing on the cake!

But things are not always that simple. What if you are already quite stressed and this constant asking for “more, more” and “faster, faster” is putting you under immense pressure? What if one of your children gets sick or you are not feeling all that well yourself? What if there is an emergency in your family or circle of friends? What if your PC or new computer-assisted translation tool does not work as it should and demands your full attention? Perhaps you are plagued by anxiety?

Being self-employed, we will normally have to cope with these obstacles alone. Sometimes this means making smart choices and not putting ourselves under too much pressure by trying to manage everything that comes our way. If you find yourself in that situation, it is time to reorganize! The following are some tips that may help.

**Check Your Existing Deadlines with Clients**

A deadline is the date by which the work really must be done. The
more you have on your plate and the more urgent certain projects are, the more important it is to assess what really has to be done and where there is still some room to maneuver. Personally, I like to follow the “What’s done is done” principle and usually take care of orders as promptly as possible. But that is my personal preference; not all assignments need to be done in a hurry.

Even deadlines that were agreed upon previously with the client are usually not set in stone and can therefore still change. Sometimes you know that the client does not really need the document back as urgently as is made out. If you have a good relationship with your clients, you may want to explain that you are currently swamped with work and simply ask whether Assignment X can wait until Thursday rather than Tuesday. There may be cases where “urgent” orders are not quite so urgent after all. Just make sure you know which clients will be open to granting an extension before you ask. Also, keep in mind that asking for extensions should not become a habit.

Sometimes it also makes sense to give yourself an extension on those personal projects you have not had time to complete (e.g., writing that business plan, launching a marketing campaign, reading that book everyone has recommended, etc.). These do not usually have to be done while you are already juggling five other projects for clients. But please make sure that you do not make a habit of putting things that would enhance your business on the back burner. If you do this, you run the risk of impeding your business in the long run.

Time to Close Up Shop

Where does all the extra work come from? What could you change for things to slow down? For example, if you have been snowed under since the start of the month, you may want to decide to take an unusual step: do not accept any new orders for the rest of the month. Many of us are usually reluctant to do this, and it is often seen as a last resort, especially as many clients seem to be in a hurry, but there are times when there is really no other option.

Therefore, it pays to be smart. Be realistic and evaluate exactly how much you can handle during peak times. It may be necessary to stop accepting new orders for a certain period. If you have good relationships with your clients, and that includes agencies, you will most definitely not lose them just because you are not available for a week or two. Your clients are also familiar with such hectic times, and many deadlines can be moved if need be. If a client really wants to work with you as their preferred translator, they will often wait until you are available.

Another option might be to cut back on personal hobbies and leisure time. But please make sure you do not let your quality of life suffer, and certainly schedule some time for rest and relaxation, even (and especially) during busy periods. Naturally, we all cancel personal lunch meetings or coffee breaks sometimes; that just comes with the territory of being self-employed. Even if you are a diehard workaholic who cannot enjoy a gym session or lunch with a friend if you know work is piling up on your desk, just try to take things back a notch and shift down a gear, rather than not do something you know is good for you.

Cut Back on Anything Less Important

Listen up, perfectionists! If you are smart, you will cut back on something when too much work suddenly comes in at the same time. For example, some of us may write a blog or be very active on social networks. These types of activities must not interfere with your work and should be lower in priority while things are busy. So instead of putting yourself under pressure to achieve your regular output on all levels, simply stop blogging temporarily or turn off your smartphone. Prioritizing also means redistributing your time and energy as needed.

Accept Help

If you do not have anyone to help you share your workload (e.g., a trusted local colleague) and outsourcing is not a path you want to go down, think a little further. What activities, including personal ones, can you delegate to someone else? Sometimes it is the little things that help. For example, accepting the help of others allows you to focus on the tasks at hand without interruptions. Perhaps a friend or relative could do the weekly shopping, pick up your child from school, or walk the dog. Perhaps your
spouse or significant other can get that printer cartridge on the way back from work and post your certified translation to the client during their lunch break? What about your personal commitments? Do you volunteer or serve on a committee? If push comes to shove, someone else can take over your duties for a while. You will find that people usually are very understanding in such situations, especially if they are also self-employed.

Tune Out Selectively
A simple, yet very effective approach is to have the courage to simply mute your phone or keep your e-mail program closed for a few hours. Because if we are really able to focus on one task, we get it done so much faster.

Further Reading

For more tips on how best to manage your time as a freelancer, visit the following links:

- **46 Must-Read Productivity Tips for Freelancers**
  http://bit.ly/Productsivity-for-freelancers

- **Five Management Tips for Freelancers**

- **Time Management Guide**
  www.time-management-guide.com

- **Time Management Tips**
  www.businessballs.com/time.htm

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When There Are No Words:
Translating from the "Heart"

By Maxwell Hoffmann

(There following was originally published on Globalization Partners International’s GPI Blog, http://blog.globalizationpartners.com.)

There are rare occasions where words are of no use. How do you communicate when you find yourself the only person in a group of travelers who speaks your language? What tools do you have to make yourself understood when the local alphabet is all “Greek” to you?

I found myself in just such a situation many moons ago, before I entered the translation and localization industry, when I was surprised to discover how “fluent” communications without words can become over a three-day period on a train. Memories of this experience have helped me to appreciate how our basic human desire to communicate effectively comes into play in the language translation process. It is astonishing how much information we can convey with no words or vocabulary.

Beyond Language Translation

Obviously, text and words are the most dominant elements of most content in language translation services projects. Many issues can cause unexpected surprises when translating text. In some cases, even copywriting is appropriate in order to create a slightly different message to suit the needs of a new locale. Graphics and images are equally important. There are times when it may be appropriate to substitute images or even colors in website translation to reach a new global audience effectively. However, as I discovered during that train trip many years ago, symbols and gestures can create an “ad hoc” language on the spot when necessary.
Imitating the Ancient Phoenicians

In the 1980s, I had a “dream” vacation that started with a trans-Atlantic cruise and culminated with a tour of Athens. I had several friends in London and thought that it would be an adventure to take a train trip from Athens through Eastern Europe, then Germany. The tracks would end in Belgium, where I could take a ferry to England and see the White Cliffs of Dover as my first glimpse of the U.K.

However, my travel agent did not do her research and booked my passage on a Greek/Yugoslav train that was described as something akin to the Orient Express. I was to have a private “suite” and access to the “dining car.” Before boarding in Athens, I started to get a bit nervous when I noticed I was the only passenger boarding without a three-day supply of food and other provisions.

The “suite” was a closet-sized chamber with a narrow bunk bed, and the “dining car” was nonexistent. I had one candy bar to last for three days. Within the first hour, I discovered that neither passengers nor crew spoke or understood a word of English or any Latin-based language. (I was semi-fluent in Spanish and could limp through Italian.) Although several passengers and crewmembers were fluent in Greek, Slovenian, and other tongues of the Balkans, we had no words or phrases in common.

Suddenly, I knew how the ancient Phoenicians must have felt when landing on unexplored Mediterranean shores, where the root of the local language was impossibly distant from their own.

Using Our Basic Instinct to Communicate

A few of the Greek soldiers on board took pity on me and shared some of their bread and cheese for the first night. One young man drew a crude map of the U.S., with a star where Chicago should be and a stick figure of a woman dressed as a bride. I eventually figured out that the stick figure was his sister. The floodgates of communication opened at that point, because we were both communicating about something that mattered: family. Within hours, with no language in common, we had become “friends.”

I had a tradeshow giveaway ballpoint pen that I gave to him; it might as well have been the crown jewels. When we came to train stations, the young Greek took pains to tick off the minutes on his wristwatch to show me how much time we had at each stop (usually 15). I did have some Greek money, so I was able to buy food (mostly fruit and local produce) at colorful stops along the way, including Sofia and Belgrade. Much of the rural landscape was dotted with peasant villages and seemed unchanged since the 1840s. It was literally a trip back in time.

This was no tourist train, and it was clear that many of the locals in the train stations at which we stopped had never met an American before. Although I did not understand a word they said, it was clear that the people at each train station wanted me to have a favorable impression of their land. Hand gestures made it clear that there were many offers of “free” food or drink, although I insisted on paying.

When there was time, I always drew a map of California with a star for San Francisco and a cartoon of the Golden Gate Bridge. Each native would exclaim in a heavy accent, “Awwww, Sohn Frahn-see-see-skoi!”

Much Can Be Learned without Words

I could have left it at that, just drawing a few cartoons for food and the essentials and then shutting myself up in my monk’s cell on wheels. But I craved companionship as much as anyone. Soon a cadre of Greek soldiers and some Serbians joined me for three days in a daily circle to try to communicate about just “anything.” It was amazing how much we understood from one another without words. Before long, I felt like I had a family, even though I was isolated and alone on a language level.

When I changed trains in Munich, my Greek soldier followed me to the other platform. He touched his heart and then mine, pointing to the sky. “Go with God.” It could not be clearer. In fact, words might have diminished that moment. He knew my name was Max. I knew his name was “Leftos.” Everything else we knew about one another had no words. After three days, without a word in common, we “knew” each other. I do not remember ever having felt closer to a friend before that moment.
A few years later, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I had a five-and-a-half-hour nonstop flight from New York to San Francisco. An ancient Russian grandmother boarded with her food/provisions in a basket. She did not speak a word of anything other than Russian and looked terrified. I flashed back to my experience on that Greek train.

The flight crew made an announcement asking if anyone on board spoke Russian, because the poor lady was refusing food service; she thought she had to pay. I was prepared to change seats and use my “wordless” skills acquired on a Greek train when an unexpected event solved the problem. The lady next to the confused Russian passenger dropped her wallet. When the Russian grandmother picked up the wallet, an accordion string of photos unfurled, revealing various shots of all of the other lady’s grandchildren.

A broad smile beamed across the Russian lady’s face, and she soon went into a series of spontaneous gestures and a few hand-drawn “cartoons” to figure out whether her seatmate had sons or daughters and where they lived. The seatmate cleverly drew a picture of a Christmas present with a plate of airline food coming out of it (“the food is free, a gift”), and the lady from Russia “got it.” A highly animated, yet “wordless” conversation continued through her worry-free meal and across the rest of the continent.

They were fast friends by the time we landed, neither speaking a word of the other’s language. In the baggage claim area, I saw the Russian grandmother reunited with her family. She held the hand of her seatmate and proudly introduced her new “best friend” to her family.

Before long, I felt like I had a family, even though I was isolated and alone on a language level.

**We Are Always Translating, Whether We Know It or Not**

What is the point of all this? Not a trip down memory lane. In two instances, I saw evidence that, stripped of any common words, alphabets, or vocabulary, we can communicate successfully to a high degree. Now, this is not a substitute for language translation in the business world. However, these experiences are a potent reminder that we all have the ability to define the intent of our message, “from the heart,” and find the best way to communicate it.

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There is nothing like an acronym to throw a roadblock into an otherwise simple translation project. The alphabet soup that some organizations churn out more efficiently than their own products can boggle even native speakers. Where do you start with a handful of letters that often confuse even supposed experts? Even some higher-ups are taking a stand on the acronym question. General James Thurman, commander of United Nations Command, Republic of Korea – U.S. Combined Forces Command, and U.S Forces Korea, tried to ban acronyms from use. His rational was that acronyms like AA can “mean 12 different things, from air-to-air, read or, more realistically, skim the entire document before you start, and make a list of the acronyms you find.”

Note: In this article, the term acronym is used to reflect accepted usage, since this is helpful when conducting Internet searches. However, only those abbreviations that are pronounced as words are technically acronyms—the rest are initialisms. A thorough exploration of the many types of English abbreviations could easily exceed the length of this article without touching on the classifications in other languages.

Acronym Translation Strategies

By Jenn Mercer
to assembly area, attack assessment, and anti aircraft. If a message reads, ‘Build AA (Anti-Aircraft) network in AA (Assembly Area) using AAA (Anti-Aircraft Artillery),’ no layman would understand what it means.”

The problem is that as translators we are not quite laymen, not quite specialists. Even specialized translators rarely have the luxury of specializing as deeply as do the people who write the documents we translate. Unlike General Thurman, we do not have the option of ordering acronyms not to be used in our presence. However, there are some strategies we can use to solve these puzzles.

Lay out the puzzle pieces: Read or, more realistically, skim the entire document before you start, and make a list of the acronyms you find. While most documents to be translated do not follow the convention of showing the expanded acronym the first time it is used, you may get lucky and find the full name used later in the document. I once found the acronym LLN to be cryptic until I ran across a reference to the city of Louvain-Le-Neuve. No amount of logic could have untangled an acronym like that.

Remember that finding any piece of the puzzle is helpful. The translation of an acronym has four main components: the source acronym, the expansion of the source acronym, the target acronym, and the expansion of the target acronym. Many times, you do not find all four, and in fact they may not all exist. Not every term that has an acronym in one language has an acronym in another.

Go to the source: Find an industry website and look for acronyms or proper names. You might get lucky and find an acronym that has already been translated, but it is almost as useful to find the acronym expanded. In the best case scenario, you could find a target-language version of the official website (e.g., ECOWAS: www.comm.ecowas.int/sec/index.php?id=about_a&lang=en). For instance, the website for the European Union (http://europa.eu) is available in 23 languages. Most official websites are not this thorough, but looking for a target-language version is still a good strategy. If the acronym is not translated, consider translating it in parenthesis for informal documents. In order to find industry jargon, try looking for lists of acronyms by searching Google for the company website or the name of the industry plus the word “acronym” in either your source or target language (e.g., “real estate” + acronym).

Search specialized dictionaries: Your standard dictionary or even so-called unabridged dictionary is unlikely to have acronyms. However, specialized dictionaries contain acronyms in the appendix or within the body of the dictionary itself.

Search advanced online dictionaries: There are many linguistic resources available online, but it would be difficult to list them all for each language combination. However, sites such as Termium (English, Spanish, and French) and InterActive Terminology for Europe do a better than average job of showing acronyms. (See the list of links on page 23.)

Search acronym-specific websites: Websites do not necessarily need to be multilingual. Remember, even if we only find the expansion of an acronym, what we have really learned is what that acronym means. As translators, we should be able to take it the rest of the way. (See the links on page 23 for examples of French, English, and multilingual sites.) You can also find these sites in your language pair(s) by searching for the word “acronym” in your source and target languages. While the end goal is to find the target acronym or term, finding an expansion of your source acronym is often all you need to be able to look up a term in a regular dictionary, or to remind you of the target term.

Search linguistic communities: You can always ask for help, but often a fellow translator has already stumbled with the same term and found a way out. Try searching the KudoZ section of ProZ.com or the Forums section of WordReference.com. The answers you will find in these places are not to be considered definitive, but they can certainly give you ideas that you can then try to confirm with some more targeted searches.

Consider the possibility that the acronym is already in English (or your target language): It seems too good to be true, but in some fields this is more common than you might expect. For example, French has borrowed many English business acronyms and English uses borrowed French culinary terms. If the meaning and the context make sense, you may have just saved yourself a step. But ...
Resources for Acronyms

About.com: French Acronyms and Abbreviations
(French→English)
http://french.about.com/library/writing/bl-acronyms.htm

Ackr | Dictionnaire des sigles et acronymes
(Multilingual)
http://hades-presse.com/ackr/serci

Acronyms: The Free Dictionary
(Multilingual, but primarily English)
http://acronyms.thefreedictionary.com

Acronyama
(Monolingual: English, Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Italian, and Portuguese)
www.acronyama.com/?language=fr

All Acronyms Search Database
www.all-acronyms.com

InterActive Terminology for Europe
(24 languages)
http://iate.europa.eu

Linguee “Dictionary and Translation Search Engine”
(English→French, English→Spanish, English→German, English→Portuguese)
www.linguee.com

ProZ
www.proz.com/about/overview/terminology

Sigles.net
(Multilingual, French-based)
www.sigles.net

Termium Plus
(Standard, but extensive dictionary containing many acronyms in English, Spanish, and French)

WordReference.com Forums
http://forum.wordreference.com
Beware of doppelgangers: Some acronyms are used in multiple languages with different meanings. Just because an acronym is found in your target language does not mean it is correct. Always check the context.

Use advanced search techniques: I usually start with the simplest of search techniques by typing the acronym alone into a Google search window. If this works, great! Otherwise, I add surrounding source-language terms with a “+” to tell Google that I only want results that contain both my acronym and that term. Restrict your language choice to the source language by clicking on “Advanced Search” and selecting the desired language. I have also found good results by searching in my source language (French), but restricting the language for search results to my target (English). This is a good technique for finding previously translated documents.

If you can guess one word of an acronym, combine a search on the acronym with any words that you can guess. For example, you may be able to guess from the context that “TVA” has something to do with taxes. Search on “TVA + taxe” and the number one result is a Wikipedia entry on Taxe sur la valeur ajoutée. This would literally be “Tax on the Value Added.” It is not much of a stretch to figure out that this is a “value added tax,” or VAT.

Try rearranging the letters: This technique usually does not work, but in instances involving two closely related languages such as French and English, where the order of the adjectives and the nouns are reversed, it is amazing how often the translation for an acronym such as RH (Ressource Humaines) is reversed to HR (Human Resources). Use this approach carefully. Verify that the target acronym actually exists, that it is used in the same context as in the source, and that the meaning makes sense.

Sleep on it: For less obvious acronyms, sometimes you just need to give your subconscious time to work on a problem. Tight deadlines can make this tough, but that is another good reason to read through the document first to find the troublemakers. If you want to be really clever, e-mail a colleague, ask a question on a mailing list, post a KudoZ question on ProZ, and then take a nap. One way or another, you should have the answers when you awake.

Solving the Puzzle
Translating these tiny little fragments of language can be difficult, but it is not impossible. Start with these steps and see if you can add a few of your own. Remember that like General Thurman, even native speakers can stumble over acronyms. Now if only we could order our clients to stop using them.

Notes
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Many say that success in business depends on hard work, finding the right opportunities, being prepared when those opportunities arise, persistence, and a bit of luck. Of course, the harder we work and the more diligent we are, the luckier we tend to get, but I do not want to underestimate the importance of luck or of getting a lucky break. I remember my own lucky break very well.

In 1998, I was a starving international college student looking for the only job I was legally allowed to get: a part-time on-campus position. I heard about a Spanish translation position at CLASS! Magazine, a monthly bilingual newspaper for students in Clark County (where Las Vegas is located) with a circulation of around 30,000. It sounded very enticing, particularly the pay ($10/hour), which was more than double most other jobs on campus. I had done a small amount of translation work in high school and had some samples, so I applied. Several dozen applicants interviewed with the paper’s editor, Sari Aizley, who had an office at the university, which allowed her to hire several work-study students to staff her successful but vastly underfunded paper. When I first met Sari, I knew we would be friends for life, and I was right. Getting that coveted position was my lucky break, and I was in for a treat.

The job entailed many more responsibilities than any 22-year-old college senior could dream of having, including doing high-level interviews. During my time at the paper, I wrote, translated, and edited articles and became the head judge for the newly created Spanish poetry contest. I was given free rein to create new ideas, challenge existing ones, and leave my mark on the paper’s Spanish section, which had been named Díganos. I learned the importance of sticking to deadlines, purchased my first top-notch dictionaries, learned a thing or two about layout, and realized how much you can accomplish with a skeleton staff. I also picked up invaluable skills from Sari, who gently corrected my fledgling errors. There is no doubt that Sari is the best boss I ever had, and she became a true mentor throughout my tenure at the paper. I was only allowed to work there as a work-study student, and when I graduated the following year I had to tearfully part ways with CLASS! as an employee. However, I was elected to the board in 1999, where I continued to serve proudly until 2011, when I had the unhappy task of signing the papers that dissolved the organization. Our beloved nonprofit, which at the height of its success raised upwards of $250,000 each year at its black-tie events, did not survive the recession.

When I met Sari, I knew my future would be in translation. It was that very first position and that amazing boss who showed me that this would be a profession in which I could succeed. Following graduation, I was away from the industry for a few years as I secured a green card (which were not available for translators), but I knew I would be back. Sari was right there with me, writing letters of recommendation and, later, graciously serving as a reference whenever I needed it.

My lucky break was meeting Sari Aizley. What is yours? Be sure to keep your eyes and ears open. Your lucky break might not be as obvious as mine. Perhaps it will be the timid customer who calls about a birth certificate translation who ends up working at a Fortune 500 company and hires you as the exclusive translator. Or it might be a friend you have not thought of in a while. Or it might be the stranger in the supermarket whom you let ahead of you in line. Luck happens in mysterious ways, so be ready!
Blog Trekker

Three Reasons to Confer with the Author

(Posted by Lisa Carter on her blog, Intralingo, http://intralingo.com/blog-site.)

When I start work on a new literary translation for a publisher, I always ask whether I can have direct contact with the author. This is usually not a problem, but it has been difficult on two occasions.

Once, the author declined to have any contact with me. (I did not feel so bad, though, when I learned she would only deal with her Spanish agent and editor, not even the English editor!) Another time, the editor wanted to be the gatekeeper between the author and me, with all communication going through him. Since he was notoriously slow at responding to e-mail (often not replying at all), it was essentially like having no contact with the author.

In every other instance, though, I have corresponded with the authors of the books I have translated.

There can be a fine balance involved when consulting with an author. I never want to ask too many questions without thinking them through first, coming up with my own solution to certain translation conundrums. I certainly do not want to bombard him or her with daily e-mails. And yet I do not want to presume too much or just blithely translate the whole novel without conferring at all.

What I usually do is get in touch at the very beginning to see if the author would be willing to answer my questions when they arise. I then work through the whole novel, jotting down all of my conundrums in a notebook. Most of these translation problems work themselves out over time, but certain tricky bits will stay with me for the several months that it takes to translate a book. These are usually the questions I bring up with the author for discussion. I am always glad I did, for these top three reasons:

1. You learn things you could never know otherwise: In my most recent translation, there were a few instances scattered throughout the book where the language seemed quite harsh and very abrupt for the otherwise poetic tone of the novel. I kept wanting to soften the language, make it blend in better. The crude language kept jumping out at me, so I asked the author if this was intentional. Turns out it was. She wanted the harsh reality of those times (in Spain, under Franco’s regime) to be in stark contrast in order to make the dark side manifest.

2. It is a sign of respect, not an imposition: Every single time I have contacted an author, he or she has been grateful for the opportunity to discuss the work. Imagine if the tables were turned and you were the author. You would probably want to have a hand in how your novel is presented to other audiences. Also, by keeping the e-mail limited to questions of the utmost importance, I am not imposing on their time unduly.

3. To build a relationship: You and the author really are in this venture together, even if there is a publisher in between. It is up to both of you to make sure the translated work is a success, and that can only happen if you work together.

Maintaining a good relationship can also lead to the opportunity to work with that author again, translating more recent works when they come out in the original language.

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been working as an interpreter and the owner of a language services provider for over 30 years, so one would imagine that I have been around the block and back in terms of working with a large number of interpreters, both in court interpreting and conference interpreting scenarios. While that is correct, I have been fortunate to interact for the most part with very professional individuals. The following is an ad-hoc compilation of several intertwined qualities of the interpreters with whom I have worked that I have come to look for and appreciate during all these years.

**Respect:** An interpreter has to have consideration for the person for whom she is interpreting, her interpreting partner, and the ancillary cast of characters. This means being true to the message the speaker or witness is attempting to convey without paraphrasing, modifying, or editing speech. In terms of the other interpreter, she must be mindful of fulfilling her part without taking advantage of her interpreting partner, both in terms of dividing the actual interpreting time evenly and supporting the decision regarding when teams switch off. Also, it is important to meet the needs of the court reporters, for example, by controlling the dynamics of the participants in a proceeding so that you are not doing simultaneous over the witness’s voice, thus confusing the reporter, when you should be doing consecutive. Delivery must be smooth, audible, and convey the tone of the witnesses as well as the attorneys.

**Discretion:** “Whatever happens in the booth stays in the booth ...” I truly value a professional who deals with issues in our working environment without complaining to the client or bystanders of the difficulties involved when there are other avenues available to solve the situation. I am referring to anything ranging from audio problems on the part of a technician, to slips on the part of your fellow interpreter, to personality judgments. There is a place and a time to criticize without endangering an account for the agency that hired you or the reputation of a colleague.

**Honesty:** Be true to the code of ethics of the profession without over-representing your credentials and capabilities. Pull your fair share of whatever work is involved without overcharging. Have unsolicited respect for the clients of third parties, and do not try to influence them to change their allegiances.

**Responsibility:** It will always be doubly appreciated when you take on more than your share if a situation warrants and you can help your partner. Always make sure that you are prepared for the work you have been hired to do. Leave no stone unturned in asking for and studying any available material to do the job as seamlessly and proficiently as possible. Another very important aspect of responsibility has to do with timeliness. Entertaining the possibility that Murphy’s Law may strike, we must arrive at venues with a minimum 30-minute lead time. That little extra time will give you, your partner, the agency that hired you, and the end client valuable peace of mind. It is well worth the effort.

**Sense of humor:** This quality goes hand-in-hand with the others. While humor does not replace the qualities above and you can get along without it and work with colleagues who do not have it, a sense of humor makes life so much easier and fun. It takes the edge off stressful work and allows you to laugh at what might otherwise be embarrassing and scary, letting you form healthy bonds and a camaraderie with the people with whom you work.

Strive to nurture these and other positive traits throughout your career and you will note how they enhance both your personal and professional life. Be genuine in your effort and realistic, knowing that practice makes perfect. Also, be aware that whatever you put off for another day will delay it coming to fruition.
My first job in our industry was at a now-long-defunct language services provider in Bellingham, Washington. Once, when the local paper came to report on our rapidly growing company, I made sure to smuggle a bottle of aspirin into each of our group pictures—it had become symbolic for me of the never-ending headaches of our very, very long workdays and our desperate attempts to make sense of an industry that was new to us all.

Today I would bring a different talisman into such a group photo—my beloved coffee. Maybe in the form of a chipped mug from one of my clients, or my cherished and tarnished moka pot, or the French press that has been with me for so many years. There are many reasons why coffee would be appropriate. It spices up my life while I labor for hours on insipid technical documents. It keeps my head from hitting the keyboard before the translation is delivered. And it enriches my life with its wonderfully deep and mysterious taste. Perhaps you can relate.

The other day I listened to a radio interview (n.pr/KUUQLq) commemorating the death of the inventor of Mr. Coffee, the ubiquitous coffee machine of the 1970s American kitchen. But only members of the older generation will recall what Mr. Coffee replaced, a devilish contraption called the percolator that made truly vile, bitter, and soulless coffee. This machine cooked coffee by circulating boiling water through a layer of coffee grinds for as long as it took to kill the beverage’s very last bit of good taste. The interviewee was asked why Americans would voluntarily choose to use a device that produced something that contained caffeine but otherwise had the taste of medicine. He said: “I think it’s because Americans love an appliance. You want to be able to plug it in and push a button.”

Do you see where I am going with my coffee analogy in a column on translation and technology? What a perfect illustration of machine translation! It does not taste good read well, but (most of the time) it delivers what is required—the gist, or the liquid caffeine—albeit without much spice or taste.

So what is the translator’s tasteful alternative? Two words: Kopi Luwak. Kopi Luwak is one of the fanciest and most flavorful coffees available. Made from the beans of coffee berries that are eaten by Indonesian civets—something between an otter and a cat—and passed through their digestive tracts, where enzymes transform the taste of these beans into a much more aromatic coffee. The civets then, ahem, defecate the beans, and lucky humans collect, clean, dry, and roast them. Only 1,000 pounds are sold every year, but the price ranges from $160 to $600 a pound. (If this is a little too scatological for your taste, you might be more interested in the even more expensive Monkey Parchment Coffee, which comes from coffee beans that have been chewed up and spat out by Rhesus monkeys in India.)

Whether it passes through the digestive tract or not, it really is a clever metaphor for what we do, especially in comparison to the percolator, a.k.a. machine translation. Translating is not just a matter of replacing text, but of truly ingesting the whole source text. If there is a way to use the percolator to arrive at that point, fine. But here is my experience. My sweet, late grandma-in-law did not drink coffee herself, but knowing my passion for coffee, she tried valiantly to please me with some percolated Folgers. It was a lovely effort, but it took a lot of milk and sugar to make that bitter beverage into something enjoyable.

That is a good comparison for what happens when we use machine translation as a first draft for our translations. It can end up taking way more work than we intended to make it “right,” and the result will probably still not be what we were hoping for in the first place.

Our ideal end product is not just an estimation of the target text, but one that is full of body and spice and life. It might take a lot of effort to get there, but the result is one for which customers are willing to pay.

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Federal Bureau of Investigation
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Upcoming Exams

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2 Sittings
October 27, 2012
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Albuquerque
September 15, 2012
Registration Deadline: August 31, 2012

Argentina
Buenos Aires
August 11, 2012
Registration Deadline: July 27, 2012

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Guadalajara
September 22, 2012
Registration Deadline: September 7, 2012

Michigan
Novi
August 4, 2012
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Japanese for Healthcare Professionals: An Introduction to Medical Japanese

Reviewed by: Buko Yoshimura

Author(s): Shigeru Osuka

Publisher: Tuttle Publishing

Publication Date: 2011

Number of pages: 526

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Price: $49.95

Available from: www.tuttlepublishing.com

Japanese for Healthcare Professionals: An Introduction to Medical Japanese is a 526-page hardcover book with a CD included. This is essentially a Japanese-language instruction book for health care professionals to use to enhance basic communication with their patients who speak Japanese. It is not intended as a medical reference.

Content

The book is composed of five parts:

• Parts I-III contain 10 lessons each, for a total of 30 lessons (e.g., helpful vocabulary to use during the initial medical examination, after the examination, and at the pharmacy).

• Part IV, “Basic Medical Terms (English-Japanese),” contains around 1,500 terms, grouped alphabetically under six sections. Each entry consists of three elements: 1) the term in English; 2) the corresponding Japanese, phonetically represented using the Latin alphabet; and 3) the Japanese characters.

• Part V, “Appendices,” contains a typical medical questionnaire that a patient would be asked to complete during a clinical visit, as well as indices and the answers to the quizzes provided in each lesson.

At the beginning of each lesson, 30 basic vocabulary words (all nouns) are provided. These words are considered by the author to be the most useful for the topic of the chapter and the situation presented in the sample dialogue segments following each entry. At first, the order in which these terms are listed seems arbitrary, but it actually follows the sequence in which the words appear in the short dialogue examples. Because they are not ordered alphabetically, looking for a particular term could prove challenging.

This book is packed with useful information such as grammatical explanations (rather extensive) and cultural notes. Each lesson concludes with three types of quizzes: comprehension, practice, and exercise. It is annoying that you have to flip to Part V to find answers to the quizzes, and it also seems strange that the answers are grouped according to the type of quiz and then sub-grouped by lesson. I guess most readers would go through those quizzes linearly, starting from comprehension, then practice, and exercise, but it is still time consuming to hop around to locate answers.

Errata

With random browsing, I found more typos than one would expect for a textbook. Any typos in the English words could have been caught very easily by running a simple spell-check program. The intended audience for this book would probably miss any typos in the Japanese, since most terms have been transcribed in Latin alphabet characters so readers can become familiar with the language without having to learn to read Japanese characters. Despite this, the author still should have visually checked each Japanese character carefully for errors. After spotting a few typos, I decided to check Part IV in its entirety (31 pages containing about 1,500 basic medical terms). Here is what I found:

• Typos in English entries: 1

• Instances where the alphabetic transcription of the Japanese word does not match the actual Japanese: 2

• Instances where the English entry and supposedly corresponding Japanese term do not match: 7
• Typos in alphabetic transcription of Japanese: 34
• Typos in Japanese writing: 4
• Instances where the corresponding Japanese terms are slightly off from common usage: 5

Since this reference is more of an instructional guide to the Japanese language and not a dictionary, some would say not to be so picky in my analysis. However, because the target audience for this book seems to be beginners, how are they supposed to learn the language properly if the language is not presented correctly?

The CD

When I found a CD inside the back cover of this book, I was delighted, thinking I could freely search any terms electronically, but I was wrong. The CD contains only a series of mp3 audio files, all named with the sequence of a lesson number and sub-number, without any descriptive element. A system for navigating the files is not provided. You have to click the individual file you want from a list of 125 files in Windows Explorer to play it. For example, if you are in Lesson 2 (“Useful Expressions”) in the book and want to listen to a native pronunciation of the vocabulary from that lesson, you have to locate the listing for CD 2-3, which is the corresponding mp3 file name. Then you have to go to Windows Explorer and locate the “JapanHealthCareProfessional” CD and scroll to “CD02-3.mp3” in the right-hand menu to play the file. You also have to listen to the entire file. For instance, “CD02-3.mp3” contains 10 sentences. A woman announces the number of each sentence, then a man reads the sentence. You cannot pinpoint a particular sentence in order to listen to it alone. Since you need to hear the woman’s voice announcing the number of the sentence to know which one it is, bypassing her would make finding where you want to go very difficult. Another annoyance is that the native voices are obviously not professional voice talents, so the rhythm of speech is quite monotonous.

Overall Evaluation

As mentioned previously, this is basically a textbook for health care professionals who need help communicating with their Japanese-speaking patients, with a focus on situations set in medical offices and hospitals. If you are using this book as a reference, chances are you either will not be able to find a given term or it will take you a long time due to the absence of a comprehensive index and the fact that not all of the entries have been classified into groups or ordered alphabetically. This book contains a wealth of information, but due to the high frequency of typos, it is strongly advised that you cross-reference other dictionaries as much as possible. As such, I do not think it would be of much use to professional Japanese-English translators or interpreters, who would be better served by purchasing a more comprehensive reference book or dictionary.

Buko Yoshimura is a freelance technical translator with extensive interpreting and translation experience in a wide range of fields, including health care. An ATA-certified English→Japanese translator, he also translates French into Japanese. Contact: buko@bukoyoshimura.com.
When I was registering for a one-day seminar on the basics of intellectual property, I reminded myself that even for many highly educated people, this entire topic is a closed book. If time allows, I will ask my fellow students how many of them are learning about this subject for the first time. To the instructor, and to me, it is the regular bread and butter of our occupations, and we view it as crucially important. However, I am sure we will both acknowledge that most Americans are, sadly, lost in a great cloud of unknowing about intellectual property.

New Queries

(D-E 7-12.1) The medical term in bold print has to live with a mere four words of context, and the colleague who posed the query suspects it to be of Flemish origin: Plots onstaaan van rilkoorts.

(Da-E 7-12.2) In some instructions for a split screen in accounting software, a colleague had trouble with rulleskakt. Here is some context: Du kan få en længere vandret rulleskakt ved at trekke i Opdeling-håndtaget til venstre for den vandrette rulleskakt (markeret med mørkeblåt). What is being referred to?

(E-Po 7-12.3) Finding a Polish rendering for the obscure “payment intangible” might prove to be elusive. Here is a bit more context: “A ‘payment intangible’ is a monetary obligation that doesn’t qualify as an account (UCC §9-102 (a)(61)), and would include the obligation of a borrower on a bank loan; the buyer of an interest in a bank loan under a participation arrangement is akin to a factor, but is not considered to be a part of the industry.” Go ahead, try it if you can.

(F-E 7-12.4) A colleague admits to struggling over a sentence containing a reference to a contemporary artist revisiting the works of the great historical painters: Ces œuvres ne sont pas des copies ni des reports au carré, mais l’expérience directe d’un format. What is to be done about the three words in bold?

(G-I [E] 7-12.5) In good Italian (or English), what sort of change of status does Staderhebung signify? The term appeared within this context: XXX ist die älteste Stadt und feiert im Jahr XXX ihr 800-Jahr-Jubiläum zur Staderhebung.

(I-F [E] 7-12.6) In patent law, what does imputazione coattiva mean? The only context is the short phrase il giudice può disporre l’imputazione coattiva, but maybe that is enough.

(N-E 7-12.7) The translator knew that the problem word meant something like “someone responsible for selection,” but simply could not decide on a satisfactory English equivalent. The word in bold is the problem: Dette ble det gilt ‘muntlig’ beskjed om til utvalgsansvarlig for bedrift X i slutten av november.

(Pt-E 7-12.8) The three troublesome words in bold come from within a financial contract: O presente Aditamento não constitui novação, não tendo as partes, assim, o ânimo de novar as obrigações assumidas no Convênio ora aditado. What do they mean?

(R-E 7-12.9) As an adjective, фактурный was a stumper for a translator trying to deal with this bit of news that was very fresh at the time this column was compiled: Французская нация сделала свой выбор и сказала «нет» Никола Саркози, ... любителя фактурных топ-моделей. What is the descriptive adjective for these models?

(Sp-E 7-12.10) Believe it or not, canal proved to be difficult in the following civil engineering context: La continuidad de los canales se realizará ‘a tope’ y nunca por solape. La máxima longitud permitida de tabique sin canal, tanto inferior como superior, sin soluciones alternativas, será de 30 cm y siempre habrá que justificar la imposibilidad de realizarlo continuo. There is more context, but perhaps what we have transcribed is enough.

(Sp-E 7-12.11) This last query concerns an abbreviation: EGY. It appeared under tipo de paciente on a medical bill. Another abbreviation used in the same column was OP (“outpatient”), but that is merely context, not part of the query. Figure out what EGY means if you can.

Replies to Old Queries

(Da-E 4-12.3) (B-skat): According to Peter Christensen, the Nordansk Ordboeg defines it as skat af ikke faste indtægter, that is, “tax on investment income,” “income from self-employment,” or anything that is not A-skat.
Going a bit more into the accounting details, Paul Norlen found that the Danish tax agency has a publication in English on its website, stating that: “B income is income which has not been taxed when paid to you. B income may be fees or profits from self-employed business activities and interest receivable. Such income is subject to B tax.”

(E-G 5-12.3) (ARST; DI): Roland Greifer says that the former stands for “alarm reset” or “auto/automatic reset,” depending on the context. If the reference is to electronics, DI typically stands for “digital in.” The German for these, respectively, is Alarm-Rückstellung, Auto-Rückstellung, and Digitaleingang. But typically these acronyms are left as is, since they tend to correspond to labels on the circuit board. Ten of these are explained or featured in their long form in parentheses in the text.

(E-I 5-12.4) (ramming paste): Lorraine Axelson found pasta di riempimento (della suola del forno) at ProZ.

(E-Sp 4-12.6) (candied): Leticia Calcada likes glaseado for this. Peter Christensen says it is acaramelado, as in camotes acaramelados, a term that can be searched for in recipes and images. For the “sweet” in “sweet potatoes,” Eva Molina-De Vilbiss suggests escarchado, confitado (with Rey Rivera agreeing with the latter). For the potato itself, she prefers boniatos, but knows that in other Spanish-speaking countries, it is camote.

(E-Sp 5-12.6) (treatment winding of a transformer): When windings are being prepared for service, says Sheldon Shaffer, this is the kind of treatment they receive. It often involves the application of electric current to heat oil-impregnated coils in a vacuum, though the technique may vary. Online searches found that tratamiento is ubiquitous in this context. Paul Gallagher says that a mis-parsing of the context sentence has resulted in a disjointed query. The query should be rephrased as: “The windings can be classified in three basic ways: by mechanical characteristics, by electrical characteristics, or by treatment characteristics.” The result is that the query term is actually “treatment characteristics,” making it a relatively easy one to solve.

(F-E 4-12.7) (en cocotte luttée): This, says András Kiss, means “sealed with a pastry crust.” He did a Google Images search that confirmed the usage. As for the entire context phrase from page 34 of the April issue, he offers “Porto onion soup under pastry crust, €8.5.”

(N-E 5-12.11) (sjøprovetur): Thor Truelson, Charles Ek, and Dan Lufkin define this as “sea trials,” which is a series of tests conducted before a ship is officially put to use. Dan adds the rest of the context sentence: “The consultant has calculated that the ship’s average speed on sea trials should be at least ... knots at summer draft.” Charles contrasts this with the mistaken “maiden voyage,” which would be jomfrutur or førstetur. Andrew Catford notes that the latter would come after the sjøprovetur.

(Pt-E 5-12.12) (acerta os ponteios): Alan Clarke says that this literally means to “reset the clock” for purposes of accuracy. In colloquial usage, it is more frequently seen in a context of “to set the record straight.” The text in question supports this usage.

(R-E 5-12.13) (овчина-гольяр): Svetlana Beloshapkina suggests “broadtail lamb” for this, or “hide of premature lamb” as Callaham’s Russian-English Dictionary of Science and Technology defines it. Leonid Gornik believes a typo led to this query: it should be овчина-гольяр, resulting in an English rendering of “undressed sheepskin.”

(Sp-E 3-12.10) (guayabera): Interesting new light on this word is shed by Alma Flores, who provided the following: ... no le quedó otra que quedarse como la guayabera, por fuera (“... they screw with market pricing when, after all, they are the ones that provide the information, and we are left yet again on the outside with a financial and reputation risk”). It is that “being left on the outside” that gives guayabera its saliency here.

(Sp-E 4-12.10) (aprobado con desvios): Given that the phrase seems to be part of an evaluation process, Rey Rivera says that “approved with changes” or “conditional approval” may fit the meaning.

(Sp-E 4-12.11) (poner en mora): Eva Molina-De Vilbiss says that we need to start with the legal meaning of mora, meaning “delay.” In the context sentence on page 34 of the April issue, requerido refers to the person who summons. Poner en mora means that the person is imposing a default on the other party. The context could be a reference to a breach in contract (incumplimiento de contrato). Rey Rivera likes “to put in arrears,” based on the definition of arrears as found in Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary.

There is no risk of this column failing to thrive, and for that I thank all of you contributors. I was almost tempted to hold back some replies for a month, but it would not be fair. See you in August!
According to the ancient “Long Count” Mayan calendar, December 21, 2012 marks the end of a B’ak’tun, a cyclical time period of about 394.3 solar years, and the beginning of a new one. It also marks a period of about 5,126 years from a mythological starting point. When the new cycle begins, the odometer of the world, so to speak, will be reset to zero, which is a fitting number because the Maya were one of the first peoples on earth to use zero as a placeholder; in their case, within a vigesimal (i.e., based on the number 20) positional numeral system. This was pointed out in the 1988 film Stand and Deliver, during which high school math teacher Jaime Escalante, as portrayed by actor Edward James Olmos, taught calculus to Latino students previously thought incapable of even elementary mathematics. He said words to the effect: “Your ancestors the Maya invented the zero. Mathematics is in your blood.”

December 21, 2012 is also the date of the winter solstice, and the date when the sun will conjoin the Milky Way and the plane of the ecliptic for the first time in some 25,800 years. All this, added to the general worry about the environment and the economy, has created a great market for doomsday books, especially among people who care little that the Maya did not predict the end of the world, and that reconciling the ancient Mayan calendar with a modern one is not easy; the December 21 date could be off by as much as 60 days.

Actually, the Maya had not one, but a system of calendars, the “Long Count” being the one that covered the longest period of time. All Mayan calendars were cyclic and repetitive, lasting from a minimum of 9 days to multiples of the 394.3-year B’ak’tun. Some interlocked, and of particular importance were the 13-day and 20-day cycles that formed the so-called Sacred Round, or 260-day calendar. The cycles were associated with celestial objects, deities, and animals, among other things.

In addition to their calendars and zeroes, the Maya had a complete writing system, with at least one extant written artifact dating to the third century BCE. The system is still used and taught in some schools in Mexico, although Latin alphabet equivalents have largely replaced the original system. Mayan writing uses logograms (the smallest units of meaning in a language), complemented by a set of syllabic glyphs similar to those used in modern Japanese. It is totally unrelated to Egyptian hieroglyphics, though the similarity in appearance confused many scholars for over a century.

By the early 20th century, parts of the system were deciphered, but just those numbers and texts relating to astronomy and the Mayan calendar, which has the doomsayers in such a dither today.

In the 1930s, Benjamin Whorf identified phonetic elements within the writing system. In the 1950s, Yuri Knorozov showed that the symbols were not alphabetic but syllabic, and, by the 1980s, it was known that most of the previously unknown symbols form a syllabary. Soviet authorities used Knorozov’s work as propaganda, claiming that his work relied on a “Marxist-Leninist” approach.

Unfortunately, this caused it to be dismissed at first by many Western scholars, delaying the advance of Mayan scholarship.

In 1959, Russian-American scholar Tatiana Proskouriakoff noticed “a peculiar pattern of dates” on stone monument inscriptions at the classic Mayan site of Piedras Negras, and determined that these represented actual events rather than disquisitions on religion, astronomy, or prophecy. This ultimately proved to be true of many Mayan inscriptions. In particular, there were dynastic histories. Further work was done by archaeologists, art historians, epigraphers, linguists, and anthropologists, allowing an actual history of ancient America to be read and understood. The Maya are now known to have been, not peaceable astronomers as some had claimed previously, but members of a society full of wars, dynastic struggles, shifting political alliances, complex religious and artistic systems, and disputes over personal property and ownership.

Progress in decipherment continues, and over 90% of Mayan texts can now be read with reasonable accuracy. They do not predict the end of the world; only the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. University of Florida anthropologist Susan Gillespie says the 2012 phenomenon comes “from media and from other people making use of the Maya past to fulfill agendas that are really their own.”

It is ironic, now that the Maya’s history is again readable, that some are misusing that history to predict the end of all history.
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translateinthetownships.com

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Tennessee Association of Professional Interpreters & Translators
Annual Conference
Nashville, TN
www.tapit.org

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Kazan, Russia
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October 13, 2012
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www.cit-asl.org/conf/presenters.html

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Conference of Interpreter Trainers
Annual Conference
Charlotte, NC
www.cit-asl.org/conf/presenters.html

October 22-26, 2012
Société française des traducteurs
9th SFT Medical Translation Seminar
(English-French)
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October 24-27, 2012
American Translators Association
53rd Annual Conference
San Diego, CA
www.atanet.org/conf/2012

October 28-November 1, 2012
Association for Machine Translation in the Americas
10th Biennial Conference
San Diego, CA
www.amtaweb.org

November 16-18, 2012
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