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Jennifer De La Cruz is a federally certified court interpreter and ATA-certified Spanish<>English translator. She is a full-time staff court interpreter in Southern California. She has taught both medical and legal interpreting for over 10 years and has extensive experience as an interpreter and translator in the acute care hospital setting. Contact: jenuli@msn.com.

Barbara Inge Karsch has been a terminology consultant for over 14 years, initially at J.D. Edwards and Microsoft. Now, as a consultant and trainer for BIK Terminology, she is assisting clients with terminology projects. She also teaches at New York University and KU Leuven at Antwerp, Belgium. She is a U.S. delegate to ISO Technical Committee 37 for Terminology and Other Language and Content Resources. She was recently appointed chair of ATA's Terminology Committee. Her blog, BIK Terminology, focuses on terminology issues (http://bikterminology.com). Contact: bikterminology@gmail.com.

Corinne McKay is an ATA director and an ATA-certified French<>English translator in Boulder, Colorado. She translates in the areas of international development, corporate communications, and law, and is the author of two books for freelance translators: How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator (over 6,000 copies in print) and Thoughts on Translation. Contact: corinne.mckay@gmail.com.

Madeline Newman Rios is an ATA-certified Spanish<>English translator. She is also a certified federal and California State court-certified interpreter, as well as a translation instructor at California State University, Fullerton. As a language practitioner, she specializes in Spanish<>English translation and conference interpreting. She is the founder of Rios Translations (www.riostrans.com). Contact: riostspanish@aol.com.

Jost Zetzsche is an English<>German translator, a localization and translation consultant, and a widely published author on various aspects of translation. He writes the “GeekSpeak” column in The ATA Chronicle. His computer guide for translators, A Translator’s Tool Box for the 21st Century, is now in its 10th edition, and his technical newsletter for translators goes out to more than 10,000 translators. In 2012, Penguin published his co-authored Found in Translation, a book about translation and interpreting for the general public. Contact: zetzsche@internationalwriters.com.

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This is my last column in this space, as my two-year term as president will end at our upcoming Annual Conference in San Antonio in a few weeks.

The past few years have been a time of internal and external growth. As reported here and in other spaces, our Association added two new divisions (the Arabic Language Division and the Educators Division), bringing the total number of divisions to 18. At the same time, we introduced a new governance system for divisions that made the election process smoother and encouraged greater volunteer participation through leadership councils. Our restructured Mentoring Program, now in its second year, is attracting international attention.

We added important social media activities on Facebook and Twitter that are attracting thousands of followers, and worked to enhance business education with a complete set of new tools. Our webinar program is one of the finest remote learning platforms for translators and interpreters worldwide, and our new website, to be rolled out this fall, will further underscore our role as one of the world’s leading organizations for translators and interpreters.

Our Certification Program saw major advances with a scientific study of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for our profession, which resulted in further strengthening of our credential. The keyboarded exam became a reality after many years of development and our new CT seal is now an accepted practice.

At the same time, we worked to improve and expand relationships with other national translator and interpreter organizations to achieve greater visibility as a profession jointly. We are particularly proud of our cooperation with the federal government’s Interagency Language Roundtable and ATA’s leadership role in the newly established National Coalition of Interpreters Associations. As association dollars have to stretch ever further, it makes eminent sense to think bigger, beyond the boundaries of single industry groups, and to share resources that ultimately benefit all of us.

All of these achievements were made possible by the efforts of our dedicated staff, my colleagues on the Board of Directors, and by many other ATA members. ATA is fortunate to count on a great number of talented volunteers in many different capacities.

I see the purpose of our Association as strengthening our profession by enhancing the value of our qualification. The networks we form keep us informed, help us face challenges, let us run our businesses more efficiently, and ultimately make us better linguists. The structures built over the past years contribute to this purpose, but as with all buildings, they will need continuous care and maintenance in the years to come. Thank you all in advance for your contributions to this constructive process.

My best wishes go to incoming ATA President Caitilin Walsh and her new team. Please support her as you have supported me over the years. Caitilin has a strong vision for our Association and is sure to provide solid leadership.

Finally, a personal word of thanks to Walter Bacak, our Association’s Executive Director.

He is one of the best managers I have ever had the pleasure to work with. Without his insight and experience, few of our ideas would ever become reality.

I look forward to seeing many of you in San Antonio. Here is to the bright future of our Association—it has been an honor to serve you.

---

From the President

Dorothee Racette

dracette@hughes.net

Building and Growth

The past few years have been a time of internal and external growth.

Win a Free Night in the Conference Hotel

American Translators Association 54th Annual Conference
November 6-9, 2013 | San Antonio, TX

Five lucky winners will receive one free night at the Marriott Rivercenter, the venue for ATA’s 54th Annual Conference, November 6-9, 2013. Room reservations made before November 4th will automatically be entered to win. The winners will be announced at the Closing Session.

It is not unusual for ATA’s room block to be sold out before the Conference. Don’t wait! Book your room online now. You will find more details on the conference website at http://atanet.org/conf/2013.
They say that Texas is a state of mind, which seems very appropriate considering that ATA’s 54th Annual Conference will take place in San Antonio, November 6-9. And with November fast approaching, the conference state of mind is upon us. Lest we get too settled in, though, let me suggest that you might want to add the following items to the regulars on your packing list:

A Goal (Or Goals): Pour yourself a cup of coffee and sit down and have a heart-to-heart with yourself to take stock of where you are. Corporate-speak folks call this a SWOT analysis: be honest about your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Now, pull out that marked up preliminary conference program (the app and the online program reflect the latest changes) and see if your choices might need tweaking to respond to the goals you have just identified.

A Full Agenda: The advice “never eat alone” is sound. Use the conference app to contact fellow attendees and fill your schedule, and make sure you have someone slated for every meal, including breakfast! If your own cohort is not the breakfast type, consider finding an open chair next to someone with a pink “First-Time Attendee” ribbon and add to your established network over coffee and oatmeal. While you are at it, make sure there is at least one division social event on your conference calendar. ATA members who participate in division activities report very high levels of satisfaction.

An Open Mind: Finally, take some risks. Slipping into established patterns is easy, like pulling on your favorite jeans, but remember that personal growth means we need to leave our comfort zone. This is your opportunity to explore a field that interests you, connect with someone new, or take an unfamiliar tool for a test drive. Challenge yourself further by stepping up and sharing your new perspective—with a colleague over a cup of coffee, or perhaps by writing up your experience for a chapter or division newsletter or blog.

Have Fun: ATA’s Annual Conference offers a unique experience to bond with like-minded folks who understand your work pressures and challenges. Enjoy their company.

They say that attending an ATA conference is a transformative experience, and the keys to that transformation are in your hand. If you need a helping hand, you can ask any of your colleagues, ATA staff members, and our warm Texan hosts. They will be more than happy to point you in the right direction.

Looking forward to seeing y’all next month!

From the President-Elect Caitilin Walsh
cwalsh@nwlink.com

What you should plan to bring home from ATA’s Annual Conference:

- Personal contacts
- Contact information from potential clients
- Initiative to get involved with ATA and/or your chapter or local group
- New skills and inspiration to bring to your work
- A strong desire to go to next year’s conference in Chicago
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ATA is fortunate to have a dedicated, intelligent, and responsible group of volunteers serving on the Board of Directors. In addition to busy lives and careers, they work diligently to better the Association and the everyday lives of translators, interpreters, and company owners.

With this year’s elections, three long-time volunteers are stepping down. President Dorothee Racette, Treasurer Gabe Bokor, and Director Alan Melby have served a combined total of 35 years on ATA’s Board of Directors. Their service to ATA extends many more years if you include all of the time they spent volunteering prior to taking office.

Dorothee’s steady leadership has served ATA well in her two years as president. Please see her final column on page 5 to get a look at the wide range of programs and services she helped bring about for the Association and ATA members. Dorothee will continue to serve ATA next year as chair of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee.

Gabe first served on the Board in the late ’80s/early ’90s as a director, then returned in 2006 as a director and then as treasurer. As treasurer, he worked to enhance communication with the membership regarding the Association’s finances. His stewardship has also put in place longer term financial planning and forecasting. Beyond the Association’s finances, Gabe worked to ensure the fairness of the Association’s governance—from elections to the bylaws to the code of ethics and related administrative procedures.

Alan, who has served continuously since 1997, was elected director four times and secretary twice. He shared with ATA, among other things, his technology and testing expertise. He established the popular Translation Tools Forum at ATA’s Annual Conference that provided side-by-side comparisons of translation software programs. Alan also led the development of the keyboarded certification exam software and pushed to strengthen the Certification Program by ensuring the validity and reliability of the testing. He will continue to serve ATA as chair of the Standards Committee.

On a personal note, I am awed by the amount of time and work all three of them have given to ATA. Their dogged determination and ability to incorporate feedback time and again brought many projects to fruition. Gabe was always ready to volunteer; Alan worked 29 hours a day; and Dorothee provided dead-on guidance laced with a quick wit and a great sense of humor.

Thank you for your service.

Walter Bacak, CAE
Walter@atanet.org

Not Too Late to Register
American Translators Association 54th Annual Conference
November 6-9, 2013 | San Antonio, TX

It is not too late to register for ATA’s 54th Annual Conference, November 6-9 in San Antonio. If you are still undecided, consider the value the conference offers. Learn from experts in the field who have been where you are. Build your network. And, just get away from the day-to-day routines to help you take a fresh look at ways to improve your business and become more efficient. All of this means money in your pocket. Attending ATA’s Annual Conference is an investment in yourself. Please register today at http://atanet.org/conf/2013.
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- 6376 - Consecutive Interpreting (and/or)
- 6397 - Simultaneous Interpreting
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- 6331 - Translation Technologies
- 6335 - Topics in Translation
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Translators have focused a lot recently on whether and how recent advances in machine translation are affecting their work. But it would seem helpful to take a big step back and examine one of the basics of our profession: terminology work. Jost, a working English-German translator and translation technology expert, approached Barbara, a well-respected terminology consultant and trainer, so they could work on mapping some of the differences and similarities in each other’s approach to terminology. Here is their conversation.

Jost: To me, it has always seemed that there is a significant difference between how terminology is handled by terminologists like you, Barbara, and translators, like me. Maybe this conversation can help reveal either that I am wrong and there are no differences, or, if there are differences, what they are and how they can be bridged. But first, I would like to hear more about what you mentioned to me in passing the other day: that one of the tangible results when working as a terminologist for a specific product (for instance, a software product) is to find out whether the product is inherently flawed. That has never occurred to me as something that results from the work of a terminologist. Can you explain in more detail?

Barbara: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about commonalities and differences between the terminology work that translators and terminologists do. That is an issue very dear to my heart. In fact, I have just taken on the project leadership of an ISO standard on translation-oriented terminology work (ISO 12616) precisely to help bridge that gap further. But let me address your other question about how a terminologist can tell how well a product is conceived.
Each product, whether it is a physical product, a software product, or an information product, consists of ideas. In terminology management, we call them concepts. Concepts are reflected in text through terms and names. So, when we as terminologists or translators research terms and names, we research the concepts at the root of a product.

To give you a concrete example, we used to navigate the computer screen via old-fashioned tools like the keyboard, mouse, or trackball. For a few years now, we have been able to navigate via what is referred to as a touchscreen. The term itself is what we refer to as transparent—you can derive information about the concept by looking at the term.

Let's say the screen is named touchscreen, but the act of touching it does not have any effect. Then we know there is a problem either with the term or with the concept. If the problem is with the concept, you can conclude that there is a problem with the product, and not just at the linguistic level.

So, as we research a concept and its related concepts via documents and through our conversations with subject matter experts, we recognize how well conceived a product is both on the concept level and on the linguistic level. Make sense?

Jost: That makes it sound like terminologists should be team members of virtually every product development team. I assume that this is not the case. The few terminologists whom I know work in software-related companies. Would you say that there is a more pressing need for terminologists in companies that produce virtual products, or do these folks just have a better understanding of terminology? Or am I completely off-base in assuming that there are more terminologists in those kinds of companies?

Barbara: The short answer is that there is a more pressing need for terminologists in information technology environments. Given the right skills and circumstances (enough time, a receptive environment, etc.), many experts can create new concepts and name them perfectly well. With the increasing speed to market, the rising volume of material, and the growing complexity of our processes, however, the linguistic skills of a technical expert or even content publishers are not valued as highly as other more technical skills.

But that gap upstream creates problems downstream. We can measure it in longer e-mail exchanges between employees to clarify understanding, in a higher volume of support calls due to terminology questions, and in a higher number of linguistic bugs in the translation process, to name a few.

You can also assume that a technical expert, lawyer, or marketing wiz is more expensive than a terminologist. And so you have terminologists picking up tasks that were done by the experts themselves in the past. In the information technology industry, true subject matter experts who can define the concepts of their field are very rare in my experience. So, you might find more terminologists there for that reason.

Another explanation for why there are more terminologists in software-related businesses is that the return on investment of doing terminology work with a centralized approach goes up tremendously when you translate into multiple languages and can reuse the terminology for multiple products and versions. This is true for a small product, but it is even more significant for projects in the million-word range with hundreds of translators working in over 100 languages, such as Windows. If each one of them would have to research, say, what a “speed bump” is, the product team would have thousands of e-mail messages or phone calls to answer. Instead, it was defined in the database as a new Windows 8 concept. Translators receive an exported file and have the terminology at their fingertips. You know how much money IBM saved by making terminology available directly in their authoring environment? $3,000 per information developer per year!

Now, let me go back to your remark about the difference between how translators and terminologists approach terminology work. Have you ever researched an English term to find the German term? Have you ever not found a German equivalent and had to create one yourself? Have you ever documented your research in a spreadsheet or maybe even a database?
**Jost:** Yes, yes, and sort of yes. If I am working in a team, I might add some comment on the term that I find (or send out a note to co-workers or project managers), but if I am working for myself, I have to admit that “documenting” would mostly consist of adding a target term to the source term. Of course, my translation environment tool adds some additional information automatically, such as date or project of origin. It is not that I cannot see the benefit of adding more information, but for me, it is also a matter of efficiency. If I spend 20 minutes or half an hour researching or coining a term, and I know I am typically not being (directly) paid for that, I would be hard-pressed to spend another 10 minutes documenting that term carefully. It is a different matter if I am working for the exceptional client who pays for that kind of work, or if I work for one of my long-term clients with an established and well-documented termbase.

**Barbara:** If we work correctly, we do the same things: we research terms or names and their underlying concepts, we might give them a name, and we document that information. The difference is that I hardly ever spend 10 minutes documenting my findings. The skills of documenting terminology data (terminography) are one aspect where I see a gap that we can easily close. It requires a bit of interest by translators and a bit of foresight, but it really is not rocket science.

But here we also have the tools aspect, about which I am sure you have something to say. There are certainly opportunities for tool providers. I was lucky enough to have facilitated the design of two terminology management systems. A usability engineer can make a big difference during the development phase and can drastically reduce documentation time for users later on.

Another difference is that a centralized terminology management system at a language services provider, a company, or an organization serves more than translation needs. It helps transfer knowledge, assure consistency, advance branding goals, and avoid copyright infringements or other legal violations. Because of all these objectives, it is important that the data in the database be correct. Accuracy is achieved by thorough analysis and then by documenting the results of this work in a terminological entry.

Let’s say I invest about 18 minutes on the research and two minutes on the documentation of a particular concept. I want that to serve as many of the purposes defined by the company as possible, and I do not want to touch that entry ever again. If I only documented the term and part of speech—no sources, no contexts, no usage notes, no term types, etc.—it would be impossible for a target terminologist to find the right equivalent. Moreover, if a target terminologist documented only the target term, someone would disagree eventually. And now you do not have information supporting your decision. If, on the other hand, you document the information that you get during your research anyway, mistakes can be avoided and other users know why a particular target term was chosen.

**Jost:** That sounds really great, but if I wanted to play the devil’s advocate, I would say that new terminology is often changed by the client’s in-country office—sometimes for good reasons and sometimes for seemingly no other reason than to establish authority. So there is potentially a good amount of effort with documenting going down the drain. On the other hand, I like your point that adequate documentation would indeed make it harder for clients to change terminology for no good reason.

**Barbara:** Ideally, the client or subsidiary is part of the terminology workflow. If they are interested, which they would be if they provide feedback after the fact, we would ask them beforehand whether they would like to review the target terminology. Here is where the soft skills of a terminologist come in: negotiation and communication skills. They quickly need to loop in the right expert in their research (such as a subsidiary expert) in order to get the target term right from the get-go.

You are right, though, that terminology can become a power play. As in-house experts, we can often show the conflicting parties that, say, changing the German equivalent of fiscal year from *Geschäftsjahr* to *Fiskaljahr* in an enterprise resource planning product report costs several

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If tools are built for all of the complexities that terminologists need, but at the same time make it hard for the more hands-on processes that translators need, translators will not use them.
thousand dollars. If they cannot make better arguments than personal preference, that usually ends the discussion right there.

I do not see this as a conflict between the work of a translator and a terminologist. It is just that the circumstances, scenarios, or environments are different. But we are working along a spectrum where we have the ad-hoc, text-focused approach on one end, and a more systematic approach with longer-term and broader goals on the other. Depending on the goals, a translator or terminologist might work more on one end than the other.

Another aspect to consider is that because we want the reader to glean the main points of the entry quickly, terminologists follow terminographical standards and best practices. If we do that, we not only enable the human reader, but we also provide information in a machine-readable format. One obvious application is machine translation, but also spellcheckers, search engines, type-ahead functionality, etc.

Jost: Yes, things such as spellcheckers, machine translation, or automatic typing suggestions do certainly match my needs, but all of these require only a source and target term. As a translator, I do actually value my terminology databases a lot—in fact, a lot more than any other resource, including translation memories. This is partly for some of the features mentioned above—as well as some other productivity and quality-enhancing features, such as automatic correction or insertion—but these are the very features that also lead me to enter content into my termbases that would not fall under the typical terminology definition. These would include very common expressions, fragments, or various words—often in different morphological states—that make me faster and better as a translator, but also blur the line between a terminology database and a glossary. This is partly my fault—I can see that I might benefit from adding more data—but it is also the technology’s fault.

Here is an example. If my tools were able to take the grammatical information that I enter to adjust morphological changes automatically and use it intelligently, I would definitely enter that information. If not, I will not waste my time entering it.

And I would even go a step further by saying that the very way that the terminology component in some tools is built and the lack of immediate applicability to the translation process (at least traditionally that has been the case) has “taught” generations of translators to not invest in terminology work. If tools are built for all of the complexities that terminologists need, but at the same time make it hard for the more hands-on processes that translators need, translators will not use them.

Now, I do think that we translators bear some of the responsibility for why the tool vendors did not build some of their tools more to our liking. We did not engage enough with vendors in the beginning. This, of course, comes down to the old ostrich model—if you hide from technology, then it definitely will not develop in a way that matches your interest. You need to engage to make sure that your interests are addressed.

Maybe a “compromise” could look something like this:

• if translators could unlearn some of the things that they always assumed about terminology processes and tools (like “building and maintaining full-fledged terminology termbases is exceedingly difficult and is not something that can be expected of a freelance translator”) and start to engage more with technology vendors, and

• if tool vendors could provide for ever more applicable productivity features with their terminology components, and

• if terminologists could rethink some of the ways they communicate to translators about what is really important in documenting terminology and how that relates to productivity …

• ... maybe we would actually make some progress.

What do you think? Oh, and before you answer, maybe both translators and terminologists should combine forces to communicate to clients why terminology research needs to be paid more appropriately. And the argument could go like this: yes, we see the need to document our terminology, but since it is a need that goes...
Beyond our present project, it needs to be billed separately as well.

Barbara: I believe that many of the problems that you are addressing regarding tools, even the fact that some translators are technology-averse, can be solved through better usability, including more natural language processing (NLP) capabilities. Terminology work is not data entry. The majority of time goes, or should go, into research, and my challenge to tool providers would be to facilitate fast data entry more rigorously and to integrate NLP when the source text terms and names are matched to the termbase. Then even those translators who have commonly switched off the termbase in the past because it slowed them down rather than sped them up would be ready to adjust their working methods, right?

I do think that a course in terminography would go a long way and increase documentation time, quality, reusability, and exchangeability of terminological data tremendously. An entry does not have to be elaborate. It should be as concise as possible, but it must contain the most pertinent aspects of the concept and term. This, too, takes experience or some education. And that can be acquired. By the way, it is part of many translation degree programs.

You also mentioned that you are documenting more than just technical terms. While the focus of technical standards and terminology education is on terms and their concepts, those of us serving a translation audience have always gone beyond that. In other words, we have documented slogans for marketing, legal expressions, or even boilerplate text, to name a few. As a freelance translator, you can take some liberty with the things that you want to document. In large-scale settings, straying from standards has proven to have an adverse effect. For example, if I document a word that by definition does not have a clear underlying concept, I cannot assign one target-language word to it that would serve all possible senses of the source word. So, it is counterproductive and confusing to translators. As a freelance translator, if you document a word, say, because you are tired of typing it and just want to insert it automatically, nobody will stop you. Even better, if you marked it as such, it would be clear to other users with whom you might share your database sometime down the road. Incidentally, in the revised version of the ISO 12616 standard mentioned earlier, I would like to address these translation-oriented needs.

Your remark about terminologists rethinking how to communicate with translators is interesting. I look at translators as my customers in those circumstances where I cannot collaborate with them directly, and as my best friends in the environments where I can work with them. Many translators have a good understanding of the terminology process. If someone does not care about the details of the terminological entry and just wants to get a bilingual glossary, I am happy to provide that subset of data. But they have to understand that correct use of the data in the translation process is their responsibility.

As for payment, I would encourage all translators who work with clients who do not provide terminological data to insist on rates that allow them to do the work properly. After all, correct terminology is part of a translation deliverable. If you know that the customer might come back with the next release or need frequent updates, etc., it would definitely be worthwhile to make the argument that terms researched once and documented properly will enable future work through cost and time savings. The client should pay for that.

Jost: So, here is to translators becoming target terminologists!
It goes without saying that online education has gained tremendous popularity and we will likely see more programs offered online for the interpreting profession in the near future. However, there are many factors involved when considering online courses, including where a person is in his or her professional and, more importantly, personal journey, and then, later, analyzing any impediments to commitment. Certainly, someone who is just beginning to explore the field and who is able to study on a full-time basis has different factors to take into account than someone who is already working in the profession and looking to get in a few continuing education hours. Having been a provider and a customer of both in-person and online interpreter training, experience tells me that the benefit to be had depends on some combination of the program and the time and effort put in by the learner. Here are some considerations that can help an undecided potential online student start to analyze whether online training is the answer that will help him or her get the most out of the interpreter training experience.

What are my needs for inter-personal contact? Aside from the level or depth of training you are looking to gain, thought must be given to the frequency of feedback you need, the extent of peer contact you desire, and whether either of these factors will be compromised by training online. Some students find that they are in their element when taking courses with their peers, meeting new people, and receiving the instant feedback that in-person training offers. On the other hand, others thrive and are truly at their best when working on their own. Of course, any feeling of missing out on the benefits of peer contact can be offset by connecting with other students and professionals through...
listservs and membership in professional organizations. There is also a lot to be said for switching it up a little by taking both online and in-person classes over the course of your initial training and, later, when pursuing continuing education. Your needs for interpersonal contact can even vary at different times of your life, so you may need to go through this analysis process each time you consider an online course.

**In addition to looking at the specific training you seek, you should look at how the program design itself might fit your needs.**

**Does the program fit my general needs?** In addition to looking at the specific training you seek, you should look at how the program design itself might fit your needs. If it is important to you that a course be flexible in terms of its timeline, for example, then one that requires strict adherence to a schedule may not be the most suitable for you. Consider, too, the knowledge and skills that you bring to the table and how soon you want or need to achieve the goals you have set for yourself. Look at what the program promises, guarantees, or offers and be realistic about whether or not you are going to have a hard time getting up and running. This is especially true for those just starting their interpreter training who have never had their language skills evaluated. These learners may tend to overestimate their abilities and can be hit unexpectedly by rigorous training material and deadlines. Hopefully, the programs you find will provide some sort of pretesting or assessment to ensure that you meet the minimum requirements for success. If they do not have these evaluative procedures in place, you can also seek this type of feedback from contacts you may already have in the interpreting profession. Remember, the decision you are making is not just about whether or not to enroll in a course. Having a difficult time with training can not only set a negative tone for future interest in pursuing a career, but it can also be extremely discouraging.

Before making the commitment, be sure to research the various programs available and ask course administrators to explain anything that is unclear. Because the online modality is in its infancy stages for our profession, your questions can provide very valuable feedback. You might find that there are alternatives to what is contained in a course description. The bottom line is to know your needs and make well-informed decisions from the start.

**Do I have the time?** This cannot be taken lightly. Just because we work a full day and have an entire evening free does not mean we do not get that time filled up with other responsibilities. Murphy’s Law would suggest that as soon as you sign up for a course, something will suddenly compete for your time. The question then becomes whether or not your life thinks you have the time. Taking an in-person course offers the advantage of being away, or “out of sight, out of mind” for whatever needs your attention, but when this is not possible, you must take assertive and perhaps aggressive steps to take control of some protected time for online study.

When there are family responsibilities involved, there has to be an understanding by everyone around you (including yourself!) that your study time is just as protected as if you were not home. This is so crucial and goes hand-in-hand with the study habits described below. Being realistic from the get-go and avoiding taking on too much, too soon will prove very helpful. You can define a specific day or set of days and set a range of hours, but beware of any of your own tendencies to stray from a given schedule. If you cannot honestly stick to something, maybe that something needs to be adjusted. Again, the key is really analyzing what you have to work with and making plans that you can truly control.

**Do I have the necessary study habits?** This is an extension of scheduling study time, but perhaps a bit more focused. Once you have found the protected time, you now have to look at how you will take advantage of it. First and foremost, online modalities can lend themselves to a person taking shortcuts in their own training that are not immediately noticed by an instructor. Keeping up with the program of studies does not mean, for example, rushing through a reading and skipping ahead to complete the quiz. It is also not a matter of submitting oral practice assignments for review that you really have not done your best to complete. The benefit of an online program can be greatly inhibited by reliance on such shortcuts, and can reflect underdeveloped study habits or
perhaps less commitment than originally expected. That is not to imply that the learner is necessarily to blame, because the factors of peer pressure and the in-person push to perform are not part of online training. Here, self-motivation and commitment are key.

If you have a tendency to procrastinate, online training could prove to be an extremely difficult transition. Instructors tend to detect when students have done assignments at the last minute, and it makes it difficult for them to provide feedback when they suspect that the student is just going through the motions and fulfilling a task. Learners who tend to get the most out of online study are—just like in-person learners—those who are essentially chipping away at the material at a steady pace. The only difference is that when you are in the comfort of your own home, there is not anyone standing over you or expecting you to get to class on time and stay the entire session. It might also be a good idea to figure out what you will need to maintain your interest for the duration of each study session. In addition to eliminating distractions (no social media posts while you study, for example!), this may mean setting aside a specific amount of time which you will spend on each part of what you will be reading, studying, or practicing.

It Is about More than Convenience

When trying to answer the question of whether online training is right for you, first consider the “you” part and then the “training” part. Take advantage of your strengths and work to minimize the effects of your weaknesses when it comes to self-discipline and study habits. Certainly, going through the questions presented here, and others that may be more specific to your particular circumstances, is a step in the right direction. Any decision you make will cost you time, money, or both, and if it is a glaringly wrong decision, it could also cost you an interest lost in a profession that is just as rewarding as it is challenging. As we embrace our cyber future for other aspects of our lives, we must remember that online learning may be more convenient, but this factor should not be the only one you consider when choosing the online route. Instead, think of how well online training will fit into your overall way of life.
As a translator, increasing your range of services to include writing articles (for both online and print publications), books or manuals, maintaining a blog, or even teaching an online course is an excellent way to expand your client base and to provide useful information to both colleagues and aspiring translators. In addition to offering a service to others and making your own workday more interesting, activities such as writing and teaching about the translation industry help position you as an expert in the field, someone whose opinions are sought and valued. In turn, this can help boost the bottom line of your freelance business.

Since launching my own freelance business in 2002, I have always combined translating and writing about translation, since my first (and happily for my bank account, unrealized) career ambition was to be a freelance magazine writer. Over the years, I have experimented with publishing an e-newsletter on open source software for translators, teaching an online course for aspiring translators, writing a book about working as a freelance translator, and offering a series of free articles on my blog. In this article, I will use some examples from these experiences to help other translators brainstorm about how to expand a freelance translation business into other areas.

What Have You Learned that Can Be Used to Help Others?

If you would like to take your business beyond translation, it is important to make the leap beyond thinking “But I don’t know everything ... what if no one wants to hear what I want to write or talk about?” Nobel prize-winning physicist Werner Heisenberg is
credited with saying, “An expert is someone who knows the worst mistakes that can be made in his field, and who also knows how to avoid them.” This idea inspired me to look back on my own worst mistakes as a beginning freelancer, and I am either happy (because I have now turned this into a successful part of my business) or horrified (because now I have to admit publicly to at least some of these mistakes) to report that I came up with a long list. For starters, during my first few months in business for myself, I issued an “invoice” that consisted of an e-mail stating: “Please pay me X dollars for the translation work that I did for you. My mailing address is below.” I translated a birth certificate for a client, but failed to format it to match the original format (I just e-mailed the client a Word document with a paragraph of text). I also applied for many projects that were way (way) beyond my level of ability, and tried to “impress” a new client by offering to translate a 6,000-word document, which was not a rush job, for the next day.

Happily, I learned from these mistakes and have gone on to become ATA-certified and run a successful freelance business. By taking a good look at where I have been and what I have learned along the way, I also theorized that other aspiring translators must be in the same position and would probably be willing to pay for an online course to help them avoid these and other basic business mistakes. As a result, “Getting Started as a Freelance Translator” (www.translatewrite.com) went live in the fall of 2005, and is now in its eighth successful session. My hunch about the fall of 2005, and is now in its eighth

For almost any area in which you have expertise, other people are willing to pay to benefit from what you know.

recent book, Thoughts on Translation, was published earlier this year by Two Rat Press.

It Is Time to Brainstorm!

All of these offshoots of my translation business have helped me in various ways, and, I hope, have also helped some other people as well. If you would like to take your professional image to the next level, the suggestions below describe how you can get started with your own “beyond translation” business expansion.

Start with a small step. If writing a book or developing an online course seems daunting, start with something smaller, such as writing an article for your website or for a translation industry publication. Pick a topic that you enjoy and know a lot about, whether it is German stock market terminology, translation memory tips and tricks, how to add value to your services, or writing terms of service for use with direct clients. Submit this article to The ATA Chronicle or to popular translation industry websites such as ProZ, Translators Cafe, and Translation Directory. (See page 20 for more resources.) Another excellent forum for short articles is your local ATA chapter newsletter or blog, or even the publications of other ATA divisions or chapters.

When you are ready to move on to more ambitious projects ...

Develop an online course. Again, think of a topic that you enjoy and know well; mostly, think of something about your job that other people would like to learn. How about medical translation for non-scientists? Proofreading and quality control for freelancers? Pitfalls and best practices for legal translators? Finding and keeping direct clients? Getting started in financial translation? Blogging for translators? For almost any area in which you have expertise, other people are willing to pay to benefit from what you know. An online course can vary from low-tech to very high-tech. For my course, I have a relatively low-tech setup: an informational page and online enrollment form with PayPal credit card processing on my website. Every week, I e-mail each student a PDF of the week’s lesson, and the student e-mails his or her homework to me. To market your course, you might start by writing a press release and sending it to websites and associations where your prospective students can be found, by running a Google AdWords advertisement (adwords.google.com) on similarly-themed websites, or by offering to teach your course through a college or university in your area.

Publish an e-newsletter. This involves somewhat less commitment than an online course, since your e-newsletter can be free and you can release it at your convenience.
Or, you can commit to a strict publication schedule and offer paid subscriptions to your newsletter. The best known translation-oriented e-newsletter is probably ATA member Jost Zetzsche’s technology bulletin *The Tool Box Newsletter* (www.internationalwriters.com), but there are definitely other niches waiting to be filled. Almost any translation specialization or language pair could lend itself to an e-newsletter, and e-newsletters are also great places for creative formats that do not take a lot of time to produce. For example, the e-newsletter *Marketing Minute* (www.yudkin.com/markmin.htm) offers a free weekly marketing tip that takes approximately one minute to read, which is a bonus for its readers and its author. Here again, it is possible to go low-tech by creating an e-mail address book list of your subscribers and sending them the newsletter manually using a blind carbon copy (BCC) e-mail. You can also go higher-tech by using an e-mail broadcast service such as Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com).

**Offer a webinar.** If you do not want to put together the material for a full online course, a webinar can help you test the waters of teaching without committing to a weeks-long course. In a webinar, participants either dial into a number that you provide or log in from their computers using a code and listen to either a live call or a recording. Some webinars allow participants to ask questions, while others involve discussions of a presentation that is e-mailed to participants in advance. In addition, audio conferencing services (ask colleagues for recommendations or search on the web) can offer a variety of options, including toll-free numbers for your participants to call, international conference calling, and recording your webinar for you.

**Write a book.** Technological advances in publishing have made self-publishing faster, easier, and cheaper than it was in the past. For example, Lulu Press (www.lulu.com) offers print-on-demand publishing of any document that can be uploaded as a PDF. As an author, the print-on-demand model means that you incur no up-front cost, and only pay a commission to Lulu when someone purchases your book. You also set the book’s retail price and decide whether it will be available in print, as an electronic download, or both, and Lulu handles all of your payments and order fulfillment. In addition, your book remains in print for as long as you want. By paying an additional fee for Lulu’s Global Distribution Service, your book is made available on Amazon.com and by special order in bookstores. This publishing model, which is also offered by other print-on-demand publishing houses such as Amazon CreateSpace (www.createspace.com), is an excellent option for niche market books such as literature in translation, specialized dictionaries and glossaries, and translation software user manuals.

**Market Your New Services**

For many translators, the hardest part of expanding a freelance business beyond translation is marketing. Especially when it comes to higher-value items such as books, some authors comment that, “Once you’re done writing the book, the easy part is over; then you have to sell it.” To
learn how to market your work, it is important to look outside the translation industry and learn from experts in the field of information marketing. A few of my favorite references are:

1,001 Ways to Market Your Books
By John Kremer
www.bookmarket.com/1001ways.html

Marketing Minute e-newsletter (free) By Marcia Yudkin
www.yudkin.com/markmin.htm

The Publishing Game
www.publishinggame.com
Contains free helpful information on all types of publishing

Jump Start Your Book Sales
By Marilyn and Tom Ross
www.amazon.com

Guerrilla Marketing for Writers: 100 Weapons for Selling Your Work
By Jay Conrad Levinson, Rick Frishman, and Michael Larsen
www.amazon.com

Get Creative!
For every idea I have mentioned, I am sure that a creative and motivated reader can brainstorm several more ways to expand a freelance translation business into other areas. However you choose to diversify your work and your income stream, going beyond translation is an excellent way to keep the workday interesting, return some of your expertise to your fellow language professionals, and increase your own visibility and credibility at the same time. Now, get those creative juices flowing!
Translation, for purposes of our profession, is a transfer from one written language into another written language. As such, it is generally a visual process involving the eyes and the brain. Yet written language is essentially derived from spoken language, the structure of which is profoundly influenced by phonetic considerations. For instance, when we read, the brain tends to reproduce the sound of the language internally. In light of this fact, translators might want to consider adding an audio component into the translation process. The following will briefly explore two questions. First, how does sound influence aspects of language that are relevant for translators? Second, what audio techniques can be used to increase translation efficiency, accuracy, and quality? Interpreters are not the only ones who can benefit from audio techniques to improve language skills.

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Using Sound to Increase Awareness and Develop Translation Techniques

I first became sensitized to the importance of phonetics to translation through an on-the-job experience. A certain in-house translation department, which had been translating its manuals using translation memory software, had fallen behind schedule and needed a freelancer to supplement their efforts. I was the lucky lady who got the job. As I sat floundering over noun strings in a text involving highly specialized technology, my supervisor, whom I will refer to as Fulano (not his real name), looked over my shoulder and pointed out that I had made a mistake. The sentence and my allegedly flawed translation were as follows:

- **English:** “This method achieves a significant reduction in emissions.”

- **My Spanish Translation:** *Con este método se reducen en gran medida las emisiones.*

- **Literal Back-Translation:** “With this method, they are reduced in great measure—the emissions.”

This led to the following exchange:
Fulano: “You forgot the word achieves.”

Me: “Oh, is ‘achieves’ a technical term for your industry?”

Fulano: “No.”

Me: “Well then, why does it need to be in the Spanish?”

Fulano: “Because it’s in the English.”

Most Spanish speakers I have consulted have confirmed my opinion that a literal incorporation of the word “achieves” creates a stilted, muddled sentence in their language. Yet Fulano’s preferred version, *Este método logra una reducción significativa en las emisiones*, became the “certified” translation of the sentence, enshrined for eternity in the company’s translation memory database and reproduced in every manual published by them thereafter.

The incident upset me, in part because it is a prime example of how translation memory can be misused. As I repeated the story to friends, it occurred to me that I had phonetics on my side. “You can hear it,” I would tell them. “Just say the sentence in English.”

“This method achieves a significant reduction in emissions.”

The phonetic stress falls squarely on the word “reduction,” and, consequently, the psychological mental/cognitive focus of the listener/reader also revolves around the concept of reduction. The Spanish translation, *Con este método se reducen en gran medida las emisiones*, also keeps the phonetic stress on the concept of reduction, and thus conserves the psychological focus of the sentence. If we were to analyze a literal translation, it would not pass that same litmus test. In the sentence *Este método logra una reducción significativa en las emisiones*, the stress falls primarily on the concepts of *logra* (“achieves”) and *significativa* (“significant”), which are secondary conceptually.

Other authors and linguists (Marina Orellana, for example) have noted the tendency of the English language to emphasize nouns versus the tendency of Spanish to emphasize verbs. It is my theory that phonetic stress is one of the reasons this phenomenon holds true. As such, the word “achieves” in the original English sentence, “This method achieves a significant reduction in emissions,” makes its primary contribution as a stylistic/structural component, allowing the concept of reduction to be expressed as a noun. More specifically, “reduction” becomes the direct object of the sentence, with all of the ensuing phonetic/psychological emphasis.

Phonetic stress can override traditionally analyzed considerations to produce a preferred structure for a sentence. A good example of this can be seen in the expression: “To boldly go where no man has gone before.”

Stephen Pinker, a professor of neurolinguistics, in his book *The Language Instinct*, uses this example to illustrate that prescriptive grammar rules (e.g., “Never use a split infinitive.”) are sometimes inane. He remarks: “To go boldly where no man has gone before? Beam me up, Scotty; there’s no intelligent life down here.” Pinker instinctively rejects the version that keeps the infinitive intact. In my opinion, a phonetic analysis underscores why his instincts are well grounded (if you pardon my pun). Listen to what happens to the words “boldly” and “go” in the disputed phrases:

**Star Trek Version:** “To boldly go where no man has gone before.”

**Grammar Teacher’s Version:** “To go boldly where no man has gone before.”

In the Star Trek version, the words “boldly” and “go” are not only stressed in terms of decibel level, but they also take longer to say. Thus, the concept of “go” gets a good second to sink into the mind of the listener. This is time enough to travel 186,000 miles at warp speed, which is the intended image that the writer hopes to conjure up in your mind. In the grammar teacher’s version, the word “go” is spoken on an upbeat, so ephemerally as to hardly be noticed at all.

The underlying theory for employing sound-based methodologies is the concept of “what sounds good is good.” That concept is, of course, a debatable half-truth. There are many instances where “what sounds good” is not actually good, particularly when it comes to employing correct terminology. The “what sounds good is good” method is mostly applicable to identi-
fying natural structures in a given language, which may or may not be accepted under prescriptive grammar rules. For example, if we make an oral comparison of the sentences “I’ve read many times Cinderella,” and “I’ve read Cinderella many times,” we can easily note the English language’s strong preference for keeping the direct object close to the verb. Nonetheless, this pattern does not reach the level of a prescriptive rule in English, and high-register English sometimes “splits” the verb from its direct object (e.g., “You are ordered to file, within 30 days, your answer to the plaintiff’s complaint.”). Examples of natural structures that are not accepted under prescriptive grammar rules are easier to come up with. (Did I just end a sentence with a preposition?) My favorite example is: “The judge’s grammar is terrible. I speak better English than him.” This is an actual quote from a court reporter who did not get the joke.

Indeed, the use of “than him” sounds pretty good to most native English speakers. The use of the objective case for the pronoun “him” when not followed by a verb is a deeply ingrained, natural structure in English. Moreover, it is arguably worth employing and, in fact, preferable for translating and/or interpreting certain informal language expressions such as “It’s me.” Yet this structure is considered grammatically improper under prescriptive grammar rules and should be avoided when translating high-register language, particularly in written documentation.

Using Sound-Based Analysis

Sound-based methodologies are useful tools for exploring and utilizing our instincts concerning language. Their suggested use is for purposes of complementing and strengthening translation technique, which I would define as follows: Translation technique is the ability to routinely apply translation principles derived from an analytical awareness of comparative language structures.

An analytical awareness of comparative language structures is developed through a combination of experience with, and exposure to, language, experimental analysis, instruction, and readings in language and translation theory. Sound-based methodologies can play a role in this process. For example, our “Cinderella” sentence (“I’ve read Cinderella many times.”) is simple enough to be explored instinctively. Listeners can “hear” the English preference for using a word order where the verb is immediately followed by its direct object. This can help the translator train or develop a translation technique that avoids unclear and/or awkward structures in a translation. To illustrate this point, suppose that a sentence would translate as follows.

Possible non-legal translation: “By the year 2002, the U.S. will provide the Colombian government with two hundred million dollars in funding for anti-drug trafficking activities.” If this sentence were part of a legal instrument that obligates the U.S. government to provide the funding, the auxiliary “shall” would replace “will,” and the substitution of “by the year 2002” for “within the year 2001” would be an excessive change in wording.

Translation with Application of Technique: “The U.S. will provide funds in the amount of two hundred million dollars to the government of Colombia within the year 2001 to combat drug trafficking.” Depending on the type of text in which this sentence is found, other translation and/or editing techniques might be applicable. For instance, if the sentence were part of a magazine article, the following translation could be justified on the grounds of logic.

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The English sentence in our example has no structural need to use the verb phrase “that has developed.” It also has no conceptual need for the phrase (If there is a failure at some spot, it must have developed somehow.).

Let’s explore how the principle of correspondence between phonetic stress and psychological focus illustrates why these techniques are valid.

In the Spanish, the primary stress of the sentence is on the expression dejará de funcionar (“cease to function”). In the literal translation, the primary stress is on the word “system,” which does not do much to focus the reader psychologically on the concept of how well or how poorly the system is working. The unnecessary verb phrase “that has developed” also takes a considerable amount of time to read, again reducing the psychological emphasis on what should be the most important word in the sentence (“failure”). In the “suggested translation” version, “failure” gets decidedly noticeable phonetic stress.

It is worth mentioning that this awareness of the principle of correspondence between phonetic stress and psychological focus does not directly create a “translation technique” under my definition of that term. Indeed, this principle is best applied “in hindsight” to evaluate and determine the fidelity of a translation. A translation that conserves the phonetic stress and thus the psychological focus of a translation is a more faithful translation than one that does not. Awareness of this principle helps the translator understand why a sentence sounds good or bad. Being able to voice this principle may even be a powerful tool when it comes to client control.

These considerations are extremely relevant to translators, as our task is not merely to recreate a sentence in the target language that is “grammatically” acceptable. Our task is to recreate a target-language text in the most appropriate and natural style, while conserving the impact and meaning of the original. In my translation classes, I promote what I call the “DO” theory of translation. Our target-language words have to “do” what the source-language words “did” on all levels, both in terms of connotation and denotation, without excluding factors such as emotional impact and psychological focus. Often, this task necessitates quite
a bit of grammatical transformation. Yet, while creativity and approaches that involve major rewordings from one language to another are necessary and positive during the translation process, translators are not free to change whatever we want on a whim. A phonetic analysis of psychological impact can sometimes be the best way to test and demonstrate the fidelity of such transformations.

As noted earlier, phonetic analysis is a method that can be used to create an awareness of the impact of sound on language structures. Phonetics can also influence lexicon choices involving factors such as the length of a word or alliteration. And phonetic analysis of psychological stress can be particularly interesting when the preferred phenomena boldly go to the land of “broken rules.” Clearly, preserving phonetic stress in order to preserve psychological focus is a valid analytical criterion to apply in translation. I have not come across this concept in my own readings on translation theory, which either means that the theory is being introduced into the translation profession through this article or that I should have read more books. Either way, I would encourage it to be incorporated aggressively in training programs and evaluations of the fidelity of translation work.

**Using Sound to Facilitate Instinctive Approaches**

We would be unrealistic and misguided if we failed to recognize that translators often rely on instinct rather than technique to handle translation challenges. In other words, a translator might translate our sample sentence too literally, review it, realize in horror that it sounds terrible, take a break to let instinct kick in, and then come up with a “brilliant” alternative. Paul Kussmal, in his book *Training the Translator*, has researched this process. In his chapter on “Creativity,” he encourages instructors to “train fluency” in the “technique of brainstorming.” His research shows:

In a number of instances, the subjects interrupted the translation process by going to the kitchen to get a bar of chocolate or a drink, by going to the toilet, by putting a new cassette into the tape-recorder, etc., and when they returned to their task they suddenly produced a bright idea.

It is helpful to point out this reality to aspiring translators. Such a phenomenon explains why it is better for a translator to go to sleep at midnight, get up at 6:00 a.m., re-edit his or her translation, and turn in something good at 9:00 a.m., rather than work straight through to 3:00 a.m., turn in a shaky translation, and come down with mononucleosis. The instinct-driven “technique of brainstorming” is a valid component to approaching translation challenges. Creativity in translation is especially important in literary translations, for instance, where translators often employ their own literary devices to conserve the literary impact of a language construction that “goes flat” in the translation. Relying on instinct alone can be an inconsistent, slow process, creating impoverished translators and unsatisfied clients. It needs to be supplemented with a conscious awareness of contrasting language patterns. Nonetheless, it is important to develop methodologies for facilitating and bolstering instinctive, creative approaches, both for pedagogical purposes and for professional application.

The impact of sound on translation is often sensed instinctively long before it is understood analytically. Professor Pinker’s example demonstrates clearly, for instance, that even accomplished linguists sometimes rely on instinct in order to distinguish the clearer, more natural, more effective version of a phrase. In fact, linguists often use language instincts to generate data, which they then analyze to identify a principle. It is thus worthwhile for translators to incorporate audio techniques that allow for a better application of instinctive approaches in order to improve the style and accuracy of their translations.

I would hypothesize that language instincts work best at the “speed of sound” in other words, at the pace of normal human speech. This explains why some people can interpret a speech well but translate that same speech quite poorly. If the interpreter has strong language instincts, the speech, coming “at the speed of sound,” is paced in a manner that creates optimal conditions for his or her instincts to “kick in.” The speed of typing or handwriting is too slow, creating obstacles for instinctual responses. I have often seen this phenomenon with professional inter-
The impact of sound on translation is often sensed instinctively long before it is understood analytically.

The degree of success in applying audio techniques is dependent upon the strength of the translator’s oral instincts in the language being heard. Though each method has its inherent advantages and disadvantages, in the final analysis, the usefulness of any given method will vary from person to person. At one end of the spectrum, we could consider a translator with a good reading knowledge of a given source language and poor oral fluency. An oral rendition of the source language would be of little use in such a case. Nonetheless, an oral rendition of the target-language text could be quite helpful. At the other end of the spectrum, professional interpreters who have highly developed oral language instincts can benefit immensely from all of the techniques described here. Some of the audio techniques worth mentioning are listed below.

Create a sound file recording of the source text. This method has the advantage of helping the translator process the material semiconsciously before starting to type the translation. As a result, the translator is better oriented. The recording can be played when the first draft of the translation is prepared, mitigating fatigue and improving concentration. Indeed, such a method allows visual input (from the page) to be reinforced with audio input (from the sound file), thus involving a slightly larger portion of the brain in the translation process. The recording can also be used to check the translation against the source text.

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preters who study in my translation courses. In a like vein, interpreters tend to complain when speakers underestimate their level of skill and insert long, unnatural pauses between words, which interferes with the interpreter’s sense of focus. Translators rely to a much greater extent than interpreters on strong analytical skills. Thus, certain highly skilled translators can work well from several languages into their dominant language. Nonetheless, if the translator’s language instincts are weak, he or she may never be able to interpret.

On more than one occasion, I have attended seminars that describe the difference between interpreters and translators as one of personality. “Interpreters are extroverts; translators are introverts.” Such an approach is probably being given more weight than it is due, and is more entertaining than helpful when it comes to teaching interpreters how to become better translators or vice-versa. The instinctual versus analytical skills hypothesis seems to hold up better. It explains why persons who were educated in two or more languages in their youth are often strong interpreters and weak translators, while persons with strong academic backgrounds who learned other languages during adulthood can often translate well but have trouble interpreting. Such a hypothesis also sets a roadmap for creating professionals capable of performing well both as translators and as interpreters. While both fields demand training in terminology, specialized concepts, and language comprehension skills, the development of good translation techniques will essentially result from strengthening analytical skills, while the development of good interpreting skills will demand intense, repetitive oral practice with the language combinations to strengthen instinctual capabilities. As the saying goes, “translators work with their brains; interpreters work with their spinal chords.”

When I speak of “using sound to facilitate instinctive approaches” to translation, I simply mean that one of the techniques (source or target) should be read out loud. The advantages to such a methodology are numerous. The initial reading process itself, prior to commencing with a translation, is of great help for providing orientation. During the editing process, listening to either the source or target text eliminates the problem of going back and forth with one’s eyes between the two texts. It increases focus and concentration, and is an excellent way to catch omissions and meaning errors. Moreover, if one listens to the target text during the editing process, the translator can hear whether the final product “sounds good” or “sounds bad.” Run-on sentences, sentences with poorly referred antecedents, or false parallelism, for example, will tend to sound confusing. The translator will thus be given an instinctive alert that the sentence needs to be reworked.

A variety of “audio techniques” can be used to exploit oral instincts and improve translations. Please note that, although I will refer to these methods as audio “techniques,” they are quite different from the “translation techniques” mentioned earlier in this article. Translation technique is a conscious application of translation theory. Audio techniques are primarily geared toward helping the translator exploit semi-conscious, instinctual intelligence.
without having to look away from the target text. This method is especially helpful for training translators. Its prime benefit is that it increases accuracy, since the translator is not likely to make the same mistake or omission when recording a translation as she or he makes when visually reading and typing up the draft translation. The disadvantage of using this method alone is that it does little to contribute to polishing the style of the translated version.

Have someone else record the source text. I sometimes refer to this technique as the “unemployed husband/teenage daughter/retired mom” technique. It is essentially the same as the previous technique, but it does not create the semiconscious orientation that comes with reading the text for yourself. As a result, having someone else record the text saves you less time than you might think, unless the fax and/or handwriting is so illegible that simply deciphering it is a task in and of itself. One advantage to this method is that two people are less likely than one to misread the same text. The reader’s intonation and pace may also add insights to the meaning of the passage.

Read the target text out loud to yourself. This method allows you to hear your translation. Its disadvantage is that it is fatiguing to the voice and takes away from your visual focus on the text. It is a good method to use on an occasional sentence that seems a bit funny, but does not work very well for anything that is too long. In my experience, I have also misread the very word that I wrote incorrectly the first time. This method is also basically useless for comparing the translation to its original.

Have a live body read your translation to you. This method is quite useful as a post-translation audio technique, since it reduces the fatigue factor for the translator or editor and allows for a comparison between the original document and the translation. Nonetheless, it has its disadvantages. In practical terms, no one is going to read the entire text out loud twice. However, the reader is often asked to re-read a sentence or a paragraph, or to “wait a minute” while a correction is being entered on the computer. That makes the “live voice” method much more time consuming for the “support staff” than the “recorder” method. Support staff also tend to be less available at 2:00 a.m. than audio recordings or programs on your computer, tablet, or smartphone. One advantage of this method over almost any other is that the support person can provide additional feedback and ideas as you are working on the editing process. Like other two-person techniques, the reader’s intonation and pace may shed additional light on the text.

Use text-to-speech software. This type of software can be extremely useful to a translator. Text-to-speech software reads the words written on the screen out loud. It is available on most updated computer operating systems and is incorporated into several specialized programs, such as preferred and professional editions of Dragon NaturallySpeaking. My favorite program, “Natural Reader,” has several pleasant voices available in English (U.S. or U.K.), Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Swedish, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic. Prices are in the range of $40 per voice, and the program provides a surprisingly natural stress pattern for most sentences. Use of this method is a wonderful cure for stilted syntax resulting from overzealous usage of the find-and-replace function and personalized macros. When translating texts meant for mass publication (especially if they need to make an emotional impact, such as a newspaper editorial or op-ed piece), use of the text-to-speech software makes a huge contribution to the quality of the final product. It is a good idea to read one paragraph at a time and adjust the translation as you go. Another obvious advantage to this method is economic. The voice in the computer is available day and night for a one-time fee (the cost of the software), and it is willing to repeat a phrase as many times as you are willing to hear it, at an adjustable speed. The software also reproduces errors some human readers are likely to inadvertently “correct,” such as an undesirable plural or past tense, or typographical errors. On the other hand, text-to-speech software will not catch homonyms or punctuation errors.

Most of the techniques I just described are not mutually exclusive. On translations that are particularly critical and/or difficult, it might be advisable to use audio file recording prior to starting the translation and during the first draft, and to use text-to-speech software for the editing process. This somewhat redundant, apparently time-consuming approach contributes to very high quality work. Any sort of prep time (including a simple visual reading of the text) almost always pays off in terms of a faster, more efficient translation. I have also found that a visual-to-visual/source-to-target comparison can be very mentally draining and inaccurate. Such a traditional approach often goes no faster than listening to a spoken version of the text.

Though audio techniques are excellent at highlighting problems for the translator or editor, they are less useful
when it comes to figuring out what to do about them. For example, if the direct object is too far from the verb in an English sentence, an untrained ear with sufficient fluency will easily notice that the sentence barely makes sense. Most people need training and/or experience, however, to recognize the problem immediately and casually cut and paste the sentence into a natural sounding word order. Misuse of an article will produce a notably irritating effect and sometimes an almost incomprehensible sentence. An untrained reader will often fail to realize that the article is at fault. Dependent conjunctions will introduce run-on sentences that the translator wants to split in two, but seemingly cannot. The translation technique of using a different conjunction at a later point in the passage is not apparent instinctively to most translators. Instinct alone will usually fail to recognize contrasting use of singular versus plural to express generality, use of the subjunctive in one language to express a conditional event expressed in another language through use of an indefinite article, or other complex comparative structures.

Audio techniques are also less likely to help translators who have developed language interference problems pick up errors that evoke a weak instinctive response, such as the misuse of prepositions in phrasal verbs. Another obvious problem is that audio techniques will also fail to point out the misuse of specialized terminology for a given field. Thus, audio, instinct-based techniques need to be complemented with analytical techniques, attention to proper usage, and familiarity with the field in question, all of which are needed in order for a translator to produce high quality at high speed and thus meet the demands of the market.

Prepare an Arsenal of Techniques for Better Translation

In conclusion, sound-based methodologies bolster contrastive structural awareness, albeit partially, while facilitating instinctive processes. The development of a true arsenal of translation techniques calls for a combination of methodologies, including intensive exposure to and analysis of written language samples, as well as readings and instruction in translation theory. Audio techniques, both on the analytical and instinctive planes, need to be applied in conjunction with these other fundamental approaches. When used in such a fashion, they can contribute significantly to better speed, accuracy, and quality, and to a deeper understanding of language theory. There is more to translation than meets the eye!

Notes


ATA’s 54th Annual Conference will take place in San Antonio, Texas, November 6-9, and I am quite excited to see all of my fantastic friends and colleagues. It will be my fifth year as a speaker, and as I finalize my presentations for this year, I wanted to share some thoughts about the mainstay of conferences: PowerPoint.

Even though I have been experimenting with other, much more exciting, software such as Prezi, for years, I find myself going back to good old PowerPoint. Throughout my years as a presenter, I have learned a few things about this presentation software. Let me elaborate and share a few of the lessons learned while avoiding death by PowerPoint during the many professional events I have attended in the past 15 years. Please do take some of them with a grain of salt, but I bet you will recognize some of these classic PowerPoint blunders from events that you might have attended.

If you think it is too small, it probably is. There is nothing more annoying than the speaker saying, “Well, you probably can’t see this in the back.” It is the speaker’s responsibility to figure out ahead of time how big the room will be and what people with 20/20 vision can read reasonably from the back of that room. If you think it is too small, increase the font.

Embed everything into PowerPoint. You should not need to exit out of a PowerPoint slide show to locate another file elsewhere on your computer, which is quite disruptive for the audience. Ideally, you will have a remote slide advance that allows you to stand away from the computer to click through the slides. Be sure to embed any charts, graphs, or videos into the PowerPoint presentation. I once went to a keynote speech where the presenter was awkwardly trying to click out of PowerPoint to show attendees a Word document. It was mortifying to see her wrestle with that task, and she lost my interest the first time she said, “Now, let’s see, let me click here …”

Less is more. I am just as guilty as everyone else when it comes to putting too much text on a slide. I recently heard about a nifty 5/7 rule, which means putting no more than five lines of text with no more than seven words of text per line. I do not know if I will be able to stick to that, but it seems like a good rule. People will be listening to what you have to say (well, let’s hope they do), so do not distract them by making them read long sentences.

Do not read off your slides. Now, my top PowerPoint pet peeve is when speakers feel the need, for one reason or another, to read off the slides. Attendees can certainly read the information on the slides for themselves, and they did not pay good money to observe the speaker crank his or her neck to look at the screen and read off whatever is there. Even if you do want attendees to read something such as a definition, put it up, remain quiet for a few seconds, and let them read it.

Manage your time. This goes back to both PowerPoint and to time management. If you have 30 minutes and 60 slides, this means you have to cover two slides per minute. Be sure to rehearse everything down to the minute. People will expect you to be prepared. Do not disappoint them by saying, “We are out of time, so I cannot cover the last two slides.” Rehearse, plan ahead, and build in a 10-minute window for technical snafus, a late start, long questions, etc.

Create a sense of anticipation like Alfred Hitchcock. My twin sister recently shared a great book with me about how film director Alfred Hitchcock would have given a presentation. The main lesson is that you might want to build some mystery and excitement into your presentation, perhaps by saying at the onset that you will reveal the secret/answer to XYZ at the end. In addition, I have found that using powerful images (purchased) is a great way to keep people’s attention. And yes, I have been known to use cute animals for the “aw-effect.”

Speaking at conferences is inherently tricky, as it is a tremendous responsibility, attendees have high expectations, and the audience is usually composed of people with a wide variety of skills. Congratulations to each and every one of you who has taken on the challenge of a presentation, with or without PowerPoint.

This column is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors. Ideas and questions should be directed to judy.jenner@entrepreneuriallinguist.com.
In these times of economic duress, everyone has been obliged to rekindle his or her marketing efforts to bring more business into the pipeline. We have all experienced the onslaught of solicitation, both in our own businesses and in attempts made by local competitors and by an ever-increasing number of non-local rivals to woo our clients away. Whereas we cannot neglect the acquisition of new business, I would posit that it is more efficient to retain and grow our existing customer base. (There are even some numbers to help back this statement up.)

For this reason, I am going to focus on some tips to keep the relationship with your current clients increasingly viable. If you run your own interpreting business, it is vital to know your biggest clients so you can nourish these relationships regularly and forestall attrition. We should make an effort to add personal touches to our dealings with these clients. If possible, stop by their offices occasionally in order to get to know their working environment. Introduce yourself to other staff members, such as the administrative assistants, and keep a record of their names so your communication can be more tailored.

You should also plan to remember these clients on special occasions so you do not get lost in the shuffle of the holidays at the end of the year. For example, you could show your appreciation for their business by visiting their offices and bringing movie tickets for the staff or even a tray of cupcakes with your logo on them. Personalized post-it-notes, pens, and flash drives are promotional items that have a better chance of not being ignored and will keep you top-of-mind. A simple survey through a free service such as Survey Monkey sent twice a year to clients is also a great way to keep your pulse on the market. If you choose to send a survey, you should budget for an incentive to get your clients to take part.

Many of our customers participate in community activities such as golf tournaments for a special cause or food drives, and they would appreciate our support. This does not mean that you need to participate in the event. There are always alternatives available, such as sponsoring a golf tee (with your name prominently displayed), paying for a portion of the goody bags (where you can often insert your materials) or beverages during the event.

Depending on your zest for civic duty and whether you have someone on board to help, you might raise your visibility by sponsoring a community event yourself, such as a 5K run for a worthwhile cause like the League Against Cancer, where you can sign up staff or freelancers. This is an excellent networking opportunity where you will have a good time, engender camaraderie, and always run into clients. You can have a booth at the event or sponsor a cooling station with water bottles bearing your name. There is an infinite number of events from which to choose that are always requesting volunteers (e.g., building projects by Habitat for Humanity). Your people can show up in company t-shirts designed for the occasion. Always take plenty of pictures at these activities (make sure to identify everyone properly). You can subsequently post the photos on your website, company Facebook page, constant contact mailers, or company blog.

Incidentally, if you do have a company blog aimed at clients, do not load the page with news items specific to interpreters. Keep in mind that many of our clients could not care less about reading interpreting news, just like many of us do not care much when clients send us news about their recent court cases and amendments to laws that have passed. If you are going to do a blog directed toward clients, you would be better advised to keep it light and concentrate on topics such as special events in your area, restaurant critiques, and sales and job opportunities. Only sneak in a reference to interpreting if there is something very interesting that happened that you are free to discuss (e.g., if you or your company earned an award) or if you can mention an interesting infobyte about language in general.

Remember that whatever you decide to do, the most important thing is to be persistent and always schedule formal or casual follow-ups on a regular basis to track how efficient a particular endeavor was in generating business.

Notes
Boredom in the Court

It’s a funny thing. From everything written and spoken about court interpreting, one would think that we are working away constantly—interpreting for trials, hearings, attorney/client interviews, and the like, all day long, with a nice break for lunch. I think we all agree that this would be the ideal environment for interpreters, but we work on the court’s schedule—not the other way around.

What people may not realize is that our work does not always involve interpreting at trial. There are many relatively brief court proceedings that can last as little as five minutes. Most of the judges with whom I work make it a point to give priority to these brief appearances involving interpreters. They are aware of the costs involved, and do their very best to “let the interpreter go” as soon as possible. The problem is that it is not always possible. So many things can happen in the course of a court calendar that can result in delays—failed plea negotiations, attorneys busy elsewhere, preceding matters that take longer than anticipated, etc. I even have a judge who insists on going through the calendar in alphabetical order. Woe is me if my limited-English-proficient client’s last name is Zúñiga!

The awful thing is that those moments of boredom waiting to interpret for a plea, case review, or probation hearing can be far more draining than an afternoon of good, hard, intensive consecutive interpreting. I wonder why this is. You would think that doing nothing would be far more restful than subjecting oneself to those exciting, focused, adrenaline-inducing moments typical of actual interpreting, but it is not so. So how do we cope with boredom in the court?

What Not to Do in Court

As usual, I am reminded of a story. About a year ago, I was sitting in a courtroom with a colleague waiting for a trial to begin. It was a case of a misdemeanor assault committed by one woman against another during a barroom brawl. The victim was unwilling to allow the prosecutor to offer a plea bargain to a reduced charge, and the defense attorney was unable to convince the defendant to plead to anything at all.

And so back and forth it went. Finally, it was decided that the case would go to trial, and we two interpreters were all ready to go into team interpreting mode. But first, the court had other business to conduct, other matters to resolve, and the trial would have to wait until the calendar was clear. There was no way for us to know when the case would go before the judge. We could leave the courtroom and wait for a bailiff to call us back in, but there were no chairs or benches in the hallway. We had no choice but to stay in the courtroom while waiting for a case to be tried. Their attitude seems to be: “Heck, I might learn something!”—although then again, they might just be trying to impress the judge with their rapt attention to the pearls of wisdom falling from his or her lips.

What is wrong with just paying attention? It beats the heck out of being bored out of your gourd. Okay, sometimes I do sit and make grocery or to-do lists, or discreetly remove the contents of my ever-messy briefcase and do a little organization. Sometimes I study the pictures of long-gone judges that festoon the walls of some of the older courtrooms. Once in a while, I even do some work on my blog post! But there are times when the wait is a little longer than usual, and these endeavors can occupy just so much of the time spent waiting. I have got to do something. If I just sit...
and let my mind drift, I find that I start falling asleep! It has happened, although I usually manage to catch myself before I actually fall off the bench. Embarrassing.

So, I usually try to observe what goes on in court. I try to make the best of the situation and perhaps learn something to become a better interpreter. I jot down phrases I have never before encountered. I listen to the idiosyncrasies of this particular judge’s plea colloquy or that one’s bond review, and figure out how to untangle sometimes clumsy syntax to form a comprehensible equivalent. After all, I may be interpreting those very words in a short while. (I hope!) If I am not too tired, I practice simultaneous interpreting silently in my head.

And then there is always the fascinating study of human nature, of which there is always plenty on display in any given courtroom situation. People sometimes say to me, “You must have seen just about everything by now.” Very true. Such observation both occupies the mind and teaches us about our fellow human beings.

So don’t get bored! Get busy! Use your time to your advantage. You will serve the court better by using it as an educational resource. In addition, you will feel that you have actually accomplished something rather than suffered through what might have been a tiresome (and tiring) morning.

References


The subtitle of this book is "Tactics and Techniques for the Translator." This is very important because although the Introduction to Russian-English Translation (IRET) deals with Russian>English translation, I believe the advice and translation techniques and devices ("tricks of the translator’s trade") offered by the author would help any translator, regardless of the language combination.

The preface states: “There is a very real need now for translators with an excellent knowledge of both Russian and English, as well as for teachers of translation who could provide professional guidance and practice” [emphasis added].

There are probably not too many people who can fit the bill as a translator or a teacher, let alone both. Natalia Strelkova does. She has the fortune of being bilingual in Russian and English since childhood. She received her degree from the City University of New York. For 35 years, she had worked in the Soviet Union (and later Russia) as a translator and editor and taught at the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages, and later at Georgetown University and American University. She has also worked as an interpreter for U.S. and Russian government projects.

The book is the result of more than 30 years of the author’s experience in day-to-day teaching, writing, translating, and editing. It “attempts to point out ways in which the translator can convey the intention of the author of an original Russian text so that an American reader might react to the translation the same way the Russian reader would react to the original, i.e., understand it in the same way.”

The IRET was written with the intent to help “the practicing as well as the aspiring translator … Not a textbook in the usual sense, it is intended as one translator’s informal guide to the fascinating possibilities of our profession.” Strelkova warns that “no textbook can ever replace a solid grounding in the two languages and cultures with which the translator is working, as well as constant exposure to the literature, both classic and modern, the media (print, video, TV, online), and live discourse in those languages” [emphasis added].

**Content**

The book’s structure is clear and logical. The “Preface: Is This Book for You?” and “Introduction: The Art of Translation” are followed by nine chapters. At the end, there is a glossary of linguistic terms used in the book, a bibliography, and a brief summary of the author’s linguistic career. What follows is an overview of each chapter.

**Chapter 1, “Principal Aims of Translation.”** identifies three main attributes of good translations: they must be accurate, correct, and readable. To achieve this, a Russian>English translator needs to have a firm grasp of Russian grammar and usage, employ good English grammar and stylistically and culturally appropriate usage, and use a flexible approach by testing out different English versions—because “[t]here is seldom only one right translation (and usually a few wrong ones as well).” The importance of knowing the intended audience is also emphasized.

**Chapter 2, “The Translation Process.”** discusses the three stages of translation work: studying the original, the translation work proper, and self-editing, with collecting information as a sub-stage within each stage. It is mentioned that “many students and professionals believe they can dispense with the first … and the last
“stage” and pursue only the “interesting” middle stage.

Chapter 3, “Accuracy—The Essence of Translation,” which is 75 pages long, deals with the translation work proper and is the heart of the book. It stresses that because “accuracy is not merely an important consideration—it is key,” the translator’s challenge is “how to achieve true accuracy without sacrificing readability or good English usage.” The chapter offers various devices and techniques that help meet this challenge and provides numerous examples on how to use them, including:

• Distinguishing between key and auxiliary words (props*);
• Proper handling of process nouns (nouns derived from verbs);
• Dealing with syntax effectively;
• Understanding the crucial importance of context;
• Using modals* and “modals”*; and
• Understanding the source-text author’s choice of words, what he or she had in mind, and deciphering what lies behind those words.

And here is an unexpected piece of advice regarding cognates: “‘False friends’ of the translator? Not really. Use cognates to your advantage. Just don’t take them for granted.”

There are numerous examples of creative translations, such as:

• в историческом плане (historically)
• Почему вы так думаете? (What makes you think so?)
• никогда не пойду на такое (I will never agree to a thing like that)

Still, one might quibble with some of the suggested translations:

• снижать рост преступности (bring down the crime rate)
• новенький «Сатурн» (neat little Saturn)
• В какой области его вклад наиболее значителен? (Where did he do his most significant work?)
• издавна (for thousands of years)
• дом отдыха (vacation hotel)
• При очередной задержке (The next time it stops)
• они внушили нам (they convinced us)
• вид у него какой-то жуликоватый (he’s on the up-and-up)
• делать что-то тяп-ляп (do something “any old way”)
• практика (new routine)
• К нему пришли родственники (His mother and father are here)

Chapter 4, “How Professionals Maneuver Around Difficulties,” deals with devices the translator uses in situations where a translation proves difficult—“methods worked out by generations of translators-theoricians for use when needed.”

Chapter 5, “Achieving Readability,” describes methods a translator can use when the meaning in the original is blurred.

Chapter 6, “Correctness—Grammar and Usage in English,” proclaims that because there are fundamental differences between Russian and English and “even apparent similarities can sometimes cause trouble,” grammar is the road from Russian to English.

Chapter 7, “Editing for Clarity, Ease and Effect,” covers the final stage of the translation process. It also touches on the use of print and online dictionaries.

Chapter 8, “Notes on Everyday Russian Culture,” reminds us that “translating ‘culture,’ i.e., cultural references, is one of the most difficult tasks facing the translator.”

Chapter 9, “Practice Tests,” starts with a short sample text with suggested translations and analysis. This is followed by excerpts from published books and articles, to be used as practice tests. Readers can compare
their translations to those offered in the IRET.

**General Observations**

What looks to me as the IRET leitmotif is expressed in the introduction: “Recognizing that fundamental difference between Russian and English syntax is critical to translation,” so “Russian words, phrases, and sentences need to be ‘decoded’ and reformulated in English.” These thoughts are reinforced throughout the book: “Context can help you decide on form … Judging when and how you can change content is a different, but equally important matter”; “Make [content] changes when you have the right or duty to do so (and don’t when you do not); “a total makeover can be applied”; “methods the translator employs … sometimes involve changes in content as well as form”; “liberties can be taken in a popular text to enliven the proceedings.” This advice is applicable to translating general and political, as well as art and literature texts.

The author does acknowledge that when translating certain legal or technical texts, “every word of the original must be reflected with a word in the translation,” and that “no word of colloquial language should be allowed to creep into the translation of scientific or technical texts,” and that “If a text is written for professionals …, terminology should not be tampered with.” As a translator of technical, legal, and medical documents, including patents, I could not agree more. When translating these documents, there is not much flexibility in terms of form, and no flexibility in terms of content.

Finally, in the “Yes, but …” department, I noticed some punctuation errors and a few typos (all in the Russian part):

- Творчество Дюрера сохранила свою свежесть
- большая часть населения, воспитана [instead of воспитанная] на стереотипах мышления, не готова к новому подходу
- Вы не взглянули?
- возможность достичь основу ... для подписания ... договора
- не вмешиваться в делах друг друга
- соцработник

**Overall Evaluation**

The *Introduction to Russian-English Translation* is a valuable aid to any translator. To those just starting out, it offers a wealth of “tricks of the trade” that can help them master the art of translation. To those who have already “graduated,” it is a great toolbox that can be turned to when in doubt or to see if a better solution to a difficult problem is available. While the book deals with Russian->English translation, I am sure it will be equally helpful to English-Russian translators.

What I would like to see in the future is that hardcopy books like this one are accompanied by a searchable CD so that they can be consulted “on the fly.”

**Notes**

1. I am not sure why only American readers are mentioned here.

2. Terms marked here with an asterisk are explained in the IRET glossary. For example, the definitions for the words on page 35 (quoted directly from the book) are:

   - “Prop: an accessory supporting the key word or words, whether required grammatically or used for balance.”

   - “Modals: the grammatical forms (e.g., should, would, may, might, etc.) that actually alter the meaning of a verb.”

   - “Modals: words or phrases that would seem to tone down the original Russian, but often rhetorically serve to emphasize the thought.”

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**Dictionary Review Continued**

**Conference Tweets**

It is the Twitter world at ATA’s 54th Annual Conference! Join the conversation or just tell colleagues “wish you were here.” Search #ata54 at www.twitter.com or follow ATA at www.twitter.com/atanet.

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**Boris Silversteyn** is the secretary of ATA. He is a past chair of ATA’s Divisions and Dictionary Review Committees. He is a Russian and Ukrainian translator and interpreter specializing in science and technology, finance, business, law, and the environment. He is an ATA-certified English->Russian translator and a grader for ATA’s English-Russian and English-Ukrainian certification exams. Contact: bsilversteyn@comcast.net.
After his first eye surgery, The Translation Inquirer is happy simply to be able to look at a computer screen and see everything clearly.

New Queries

(Dutch>English 10-13.1) The phrase ‘s lands wijs, ‘s lands eer must have a snappy equivalent in English: Al de enthousiaste woordvoerders van de multiculturele samenleving die zweren bij het devies ‘s lands wijs, ‘s lands eer wat moeten die nu denken?

(English>French 10-13.2) Can anyone render proper French for “patient acceptability” in this medical text? Here is what it says: “We will focus on the main inhalation devices for COPD therapies. The key attributes of these devices will be covered, and factors affecting dose delivery, patient acceptability, and device handling will also be discussed.”

(English>German 10-13.3) It is the first part of this medical sentence that is troublesome, especially the word “from” in the context: “When these polynucleotides are used to express the encoded protein from a cell, the cell’s natural secretion and processing steps produces a protein that lacks the signal sequence explicitly listed in columns 4 and/or 11.” Also, should “produces” be corrected to “produce?”

(English>German 10-13.4) The troublesome term, “tail price,” is actually defined in the context sentence for this query, but that does not necessarily take care of the problem. Here is what is written: “The tail price is the reduced price per dose set by the manufacturer and paid by GAVI: the remaining amount is paid by the AMC.”

(English>Hungarian 10-13.5) The translator may or may not be correct in guessing that “blunt” in this computer programming context does not have the customary English meaning. The text speaks of “blunt mode,” which is a way of determining whether the blunt calculation is based on torque or energy measurement. It also mentions “blunt delay,” defining the duration for which the torque must be greater than the blunt limit to cause an alarm. What is this all about?

(English>Portuguese 10-13.6) What are “ball-and-cage devices” in orthopedics? The full sentence that perhaps may unlock this is “Types of prostheses noted to cause a more severe hemolysis are ball-and-cage devices and bileaflet valves.”

(French>English 10-13.7) Gent de voyage (the meaning of which the translator already knows and which is also a legal category) is found in isolated, disconnected sentences in a video game about a politician’s career. What makes this query unique is the headbutting requirements of political correctness and translation accuracy, since “vagrants” and “vagabonds” are offensive, and “travelers” is almost certainly too vague. Here are some context snippets to help: Interdire l’entrée dans le village pour les gens de voyage; assister à un grand fête de gens de voyage. Who can help with this?

(German>Italian [English] 10-13.8) The text from which the query is drawn has the look and feel of a patent, and therefore, rather than quoting the whole lengthy passage, we will skip a bit: Kitzfahrendschalter werden zum Abschalten einer Fahrbewegung vor Erreichen eines Endanschlags eingesetzt ... Zwei C-Schienen mit den einstellbar angebrachten Betätigern sind in einem, der Geschwindigkeit angepassten Abstand vor dem Endschlag der Kranzbahn oder des Katzträgers anzubringen. If you can render that word in bold properly, then you will make someone out there happy. English is acceptable as an answer, although the original query did not involve English.

(Italian>English 10-13.9) La scroscia is a segment of the wings of a dramatic stage that is not familiar to one of our colleagues. Here is some context: Con le cantinelle legate precise, la scroscia dietro tenuta ferma con i sacchi di sabbia.

(Norwegian>English 10-13.10) The very first word is the problematical one for this query related to economics: Avlesningstidspunkt for indekser skjer 4—fire—måned før ovennevnte dato.

(Russian>Italian [English] 10-13.11) This is a very straightforward query. How do you render агентский договор into good Italian? English will also do.

(Spanish>Italian [English] 10.13.12) What is troublesome in this passage about human resources is grupo de mandos. If necessary, tackle it in English: Publicación e información de puestos vacantes incluido grupo de mandos, en las aperturas de hipermercados a nivel Europa.

Replies to Old Queries

(French>German [English] 7-13.3) (rouleaux de table): To Leonid Gornik, this is simply a table roller for a table that has a number of parallel rollers instead of a table top for moving products, such as finished cheese.

(Italian>English 7-13.4) (valli salmastro): Arthur MacRae defines this as a
Humor and Translation

Mark Herman
mn18@columbia.edu

By now, many of you may have seen the video of “Gopher Tuna” (www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIwrgAnx6Q8), first posted on May 11, 2012, by someone calling him/herself FamishedMammal. It is a parody of “O Fortuna,” displayed over animated drawings while Carl Orff’s choral setting of the original Latin medieval poem, composed in 1936, is performed in the background.

“Gopher Tuna” is, in part, a homophonic translation; that is, a translation in which the sounds of the original words take precedence over everything else, including sense. It is supposedly what would result if someone who does not understand any Latin picked out a few words that sound vaguely like English words and then filled in the remaining syllables with additional English words to make quasi-meaningful phrases, while not requiring the poem as a whole to make any sense. The rhyme scheme and meter of the original are mostly followed, but there are deviations, possibly by accident, possibly on purpose.

Homophonic translations were discussed previously in this column in June 2005, February 2007, and November-December 2008, and Carmina Burana, the cantata for which “O Fortuna” serves as both the opening and closing choruses, was discussed previously in this column in June and July of 2006. Though some homophonic translations are not meant to be funny, most are. And “O Fortuna,” which is used over and over to provide a generic “exciting” background to films, television shows, and commercials, is especially ripe for parodistic treatment because so few people understand Latin.

On the next page you will find the original Latin text, a literal translation, and “Gopher Tuna,” which really needs the animation to have its full hilarious effect:

Submit items for future columns via e-mail to mn18@columbia.edu (that is 18, not el-8). 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.

The Translation Inquirer Continued from page 37

“salty marshland.” Salmastro, says Leonid Gornik, means “brackish,” a term that can be applied to either water or soil. Therefore, he prefers “brackish-soil valleys.” As his source, Leonid quotes a 1963 work, the Big Italian-Russian Dictionary.

(Ionian>English 7-13.5) (orafo incassatore): In the world of jewelry, says Elsa Proverbio-Bradford, this is a “stone setter.” For Arthur MacRae, this occupation is “setting goldsmith.”

(Spanish>English 7-13.9) (valores mobiliarios): Audrey Feldman says that these are “movable goods,” as opposed to real goods (real estate, properties, etc.). Carlos Rodriguez-Iglesias calls them “movable and immovable assets,” but notes that in Puerto Rico they are far more commonly called bienes. Margarite Heintz Montez calls them “liquid assets.” Arthur MacRae simply calls them “securities.” Jeremy Osner suggests “movable property” or “movable goods,” Yvonne Godoy-Ramos offers “fixed income assets” or “mortgage-backed securities.”

Gee, the other July queries must really have been tough! Less than half of them were addressed in this column. But do not get me wrong. I am grateful for all of them. Enjoy the delightful month of October. I certainly intend to.

Email queries and responses by the first of each month to gdecker@uplink.net (subject line: The Translation Inquirer). Generous assistance from Per Dohler, proofreader, is gratefully acknowledged.
### Latin

_O Fortuna,_

*velut luna*

_statu variabilis,*

*semper crescis*

*aut decrescis;*

_vita detestabilis*

*nunc obdurat*

_et tunc curat*

_ludo mentis aciem,*

*egestatem,*

_potestatem*

_dissolvit ut glaciem.*

_Sors immanis*

_*et inanis,*_

_rota tu volubilis,*

_status malus,*

_vana salus*

*_semper dissolubilis,*_

*_obumbrata*

*_et velata_*

*_michi quoque niteris;*_

*_nunc per ludum_*

*_dorsum nudum_*

_fero tui sceleris.*

_Sors salutis*

_*et virtutis_*

*_michi nunc contraria_*

*_est affectus*

_*et defectus_*

*_semper in angaria._*

_Hac in hora_*

*_sine mora_*

*_corde pulsam tangite;*_

*_quod per sortem_*

*_sternit fortem,*

*_mecum omnes plangite!*

### Literal Translation

_O Fortune,*

*like the moon*

*changeable,*

*youth are always waxing*

*or waning;*

*detestable life*

*first is hard*

*and then soothes*

*feelings by playing its game;*

*poverty,*

*power,*

*it melts like ice.*

_Fate monstrous*

*and empty,*

*you are a whirling wheel,*

*your condition destructive,*

*your well-being meaningless,*

*ever dissolving,*

*shadowed*

*and veiled*

*you oppress me too;*

*now by gambling*

*my bare back*

*I expose to your villainy.*

_Any chance of health*

*and virtue*

*is now against me;*

*it has been impaired*

*and afflicted*

*always in servitude [to Fate].*

*At this hour*

*without delay,*

*_pluck the vibrating strings;*_

*because by chance*

*_Fate prostrates the strong,*_

*_let all weep with me!*

### “Gopher Tuna”

_Gopher Tuna!*

*Bring more Tuna!*

*Statue of big dog with fleas*

*Some men like cheese…*

*Hot temperate cheese*

*Green chalk can taste like hippies*

*You caught two rocks?*

*Pet two cool rats*

*You don’t get cheese or chicken*

*Play chess all day…*

*Hold his sock tip*

*She sold me good, hot chicken*

*Saucy hot peas*

*Get me cod, please*

*Rock talk to boy who believes*

*Suck juice from moose*

*Fun, handsome goose*

*Cement pizza? Noobie, please!*

*Open bra top…*

*Get him locked up*

*Leaky Aquariataries*

*Look there! Fruit Loop!*

*Don’t sue YouTube…*

*They wrote the dictionary*

*Salsa Cookies!*

*Windmill Cookies!*

*They gave you gonorrhea*

*This octopus!*

*Let’s give him boots!*

*Send him to North Korea!*

*Ow, paper cut!*

*Sand paper, ahh!*

*Potato soup and Chicken!*

*Go taste the dip!*

*It’s made with Cool Whip!*

*Make room for aaaaAAAaaa*

*piece of lovely cake*
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