SHOULD I MARKET MY TRANSLATION OR INTERPRETING SERVICES ON SOCIAL MEDIA?
2020 has certainly been a unique and challenging year for ATA, as it has been for all of us. The Association, or should I say the hundreds of volunteer members and ATA Headquarters staff, have demonstrated a degree of resilience and fortitude in the face of an unprecedented global health and economic crisis of which we can all be proud.

ATA remains strong, vibrant, and flexible. We have adjusted to the temporary reality and restrictions imposed on us by the pandemic. ATA Headquarters staff have maintained their high standards for member services while working from home. All our volunteers—from division listserv moderators and blog or newsletter editors, to the members of the various standing and special committees—have risen to the challenge and advanced their work during these challenging times.

While they all deserve recognition, the people involved in our professional development program deserve special thanks for rapidly expanding our free training offerings, especially for interpreters who have been particularly hard hit by the impact from the pandemic. These individuals have worked to increase both the quantity and quality of remote professional development opportunities for our members.

ATA’s advocacy efforts have also been running at full steam this year as we worked to obtain amendments to California Assembly Bill 5. While not as successful as we would have wished due to the political realities in California, we would not have achieved the exemptions we did get without the grassroots efforts spurred on and supported by ATA members working on advocacy.

But all is not peaches and cream. ATA continues to face financial challenges, primarily due to a very slow but steady decline in individual membership. We have seen about a 15% decline in individual membership since its peak in 2010.

ATA must continue to work on improving and expanding its professional development program and other member benefits to increase the value proposition of membership.

That’s why ATA must continue to work on improving and expanding its professional development program and other member benefits to increase the value proposition of membership. And we need to do a better job of demonstrating and selling that value proposition.

One positive change in membership is that the share of voting members (active and corresponding) versus non-voting associate members has increased by almost 10 full percentage points in the past 10 years, from 21.0% in 2010 to 30.4% in July 2020. I would like to see the day when almost all individual members are voting members.

Thank you for your support and membership in 2020. Together, we will continue our work building a stronger association in these challenging times.

State of the Association
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ATA Introduces Six New Awards at ATA61!
Attendees at ATA's 61st Annual Conference came together virtually for a special awards presentation to recognize colleagues for their contributions to the Association and the translation and interpreting professions. ATA introduced six new ATA awards this year—Advocacy, Dynamo, Impact, Innovation, Mentoring, and Rising Star. Read on to find out who was honored!

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Should I Market My Translation or Interpreting Services on Social Media?
Translators and interpreters raise this question pretty frequently. But here’s the thing. If you’re planning to market your business on social media, keep in mind that it’s a long-term strategy. The more you show up and the more authentically you engage, the more you’ll get out of the social media platform(s) you choose for your business.

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Six Remote Simultaneous Interpreting Platforms and Zoom
Remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) is the new reality. So, what are some of the RSI platforms out there and what features do they offer? What are the technical requirements to support these platforms on your workstation? Let’s get a better idea of what to look for in terms of functionality by comparing some of the more popular platforms on the market.

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MADALENA SÁNCHEZ ZAMPAULO
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ATA61: A Team Effort

We did it! We reached the tail end of what’s turned out to be quite a year, and we had a very successful virtual Annual Conference. While I never expected to organize a fully virtual conference, it was truly a pleasure to take on this challenge on behalf of our members. Thanks to the more than 1,500 attendees, the countless hours from volunteers, and the intensive behind-the-scenes work of the ATA Headquarters staff, it was definitely a team effort!

While this year has taught us a lot about being resilient, it has also provided a lesson to those of us in ATA leadership to see how we can best serve members in a way that will add value to your lives and careers while supporting you wherever you are.

Even though we couldn’t put on a conference that would come close to the experience of meeting in person, we did our best to give attendees a memorable experience with networking events, 120 top-notch educational sessions, and more. Don’t forget that those who registered for the conference will have a minimum of six months of access to the recorded sessions. If you didn’t have the chance to attend, you can still purchase the conference package, as well as individual Advanced Skills and Training (AST) Day sessions—three-hour workshops that are a deeper dive into a specific, advanced topic.

There’s a little something for everyone! As always, members receive a reduced rate on all professional development offerings, so look for more information in ATA Newsbriefs and on ATA’s website.

If you joined us live for ATA61, I hope you had the chance to take advantage of the Exhibit Hall and Job Fair. I have to say, I was happy that I didn’t have to run to the Exhibit Hall on the last day this year just to meet with vendors before everything closed down. It was all at my fingertips and I could peruse their offerings on my own time. I also found the Job Fair easy to maneuver. Avoiding long lines was a definite plus of the virtual experience! I hope you had the same experience.

While this year has taught us a lot about being resilient, it has also provided a lesson to those of us in ATA leadership to see how we can best serve members.

If you would like to “re-live” the conference experience, be sure to visit ATA’s YouTube channel and check out the conference video from this year’s Annual Conference. We got a chance to see various colleagues’ “conference in your home office” experiences and catch an exciting glimpse into ATA62 in Minneapolis!

Looking ahead to next year, we’re planning for a hybrid conference for ATA62. As we all know, virtual events are here to stay. So, while we certainly hope you’ll make plans to join us in person next year in Minneapolis, we’ll try to accommodate those who cannot make it. Watch for more details in the coming months.

Lastly, thank you all for your support. This year hasn’t been an easy one, but we made it through together, and we’ve all learned resiliency and ingenuity in a time when so many major events were taking place in the world. We couldn’t have had such a wonderful virtual conference without your support and encouragement, so thank you, thank you, thank you!

Planet Word, a revolutionary museum dedicated to the power, beauty, and fun of language and to showing how words shape the human experience, opened its doors to the public in Washington, DC: https://bit.ly/2UerSmN

Nov 4 / @ATANET / #1NT #XL8

Oct 30 / @ATANET / #1NT #XL8

TOP TWEETS
We did it! Thanks to the more than 1,500 participants, presenters, and volunteers who made ATA’s 61st Annual Conference a reality.

Of particular note and thanks, ATA President-Elect and Conference Organizer Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo put in hundreds of hours in shaping the conference— from selecting sessions to finding volunteers to managing egos. (Anytime you have this many people, in addition to the anxieties of the current times, diplomacy and people skills are paramount.) ATA President Ted Wozniak also led us through the challenges of moving from an in-person event to a fully virtual format, offering his insights based on his two years of overseeing the Annual Conference.

I would also like to thank the hardworking, devoted ATA Headquarters staff—Roshan Pokharel, Mary David, Adrian Aleckna, Caron Bailey, Trish Boward, Teresa Kelly, Kirk Lawson, Jamie Padula, Jeff Sanfacon, and Cathy Taguding. They did a tremendous job in transitioning to a fully virtual conference in just three months and making it all happen.

Surveys: The Annual Conference is built on the successes and lessons learned from previous years. The key driver for any change is the feedback we receive from attendees. Thanks to everyone who took the time to complete the Overall Conference Survey. Your comments and suggestions will definitely be helpful as we plan for ATA62!

Session Recordings: If you attended the conference, be sure to go back to the conference portal and listen to any sessions you may have missed. The recordings will be online for at least six months. If you didn’t attend the conference, recordings of the educational sessions and Advanced Skills and Training Day sessions will be available for sale. Watch ATA Newsbriefs for more information.

Looking Ahead to ATA62: For the planners, mark your calendar. ATA62 is set for October 27–30, 2021 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Although we’re planning to meet in person, we’ll definitely have a virtual component as well.

Election Results
Congratulations to Lorena Ortiz Schneider, Robert Sette, and Veronika Demichelis, who were elected directors for a three-year term. We had a record number of voters— almost 30% higher than we typically see. Thanks to all the candidates who were willing to run and serve the Association. Here are the results:

DIRECTOR (THREE POSITIONS FOR THREE-YEAR TERMS)
Lorena Ortiz Schneider: 346 (Elected)
Robert Sette: 337 (Elected)
Veronika Demichelis: 326 (Elected)
Robin Bonthrone: 307
Manako Ihyaya: 300
Elena Langdon: 300
Antonio Guerra: 221

Twelve write-in candidates received a total of 18 votes.

PROPOSED BYLAWS AMENDMENTS
1. Proposed Bylaws Amendment—Rights and Privileges: Motion Failed
2. Proposed Bylaws Amendment—Multiple Candidates: Motion Passed


Be Sure to Renew Your Membership
Thank you for being an ATA member. Continue to receive the benefits you enjoy, plus stay tuned for a lot of exciting plans for 2021 with a new website, expanded professional development opportunities, and more. Watch your inbox and mailbox for more information. We look forward to serving you in 2021.
United Nations resolution passed in 2017 recognizes International Translation Day (September 30) as the day to pay tribute to the work of language professionals.

To commemorate the occasion this year, ATA released a short, animated video to remind the world’s 3.5 billion smartphone users how the work of translators and interpreters directly impacts their daily lives! The video conveys how translators, interpreters, localizers, transcreation experts, proofreaders, editors, and more helped turn a concept into the cell phone we use every day. It was created to help members get the word out to both their professional and personal network—people who may be unfamiliar with what they do—about the importance of the profession and their role in it.

The video was shared on ATA’s social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, and YouTube). It was also made available on Vimeo, where members could download and share it with colleagues and friends on their own social media channels.

**EPISODE 50: THE ATA PODCAST**
In addition to the video, members were invited to listen to a special International Translation Day episode of The ATA Podcast. Podcast Host Matt Baird interviewed ATA Past President Nick Hartmann for a look back at his career and the translation and interpreting industry—from the days of fax machines and modems in the early 1980s to the current age of specialization and machine translation. ATA’s first episode of The ATA Podcast was broadcast in celebration of International Translation Day on September 30, 2015. So, what could be better than to share the landmark 50th episode on International Translation Day!

**WHY TELL YOUR STORY?**
What better way to create a platform for raising awareness of the translation and interpreting professions than to utilize the power of social media to share what you do with family, friends, clients, and all those people who keep asking, “Can you really make a living doing that?” This volunteer effort was headed by Jamie Hartz and Molly Yurick, who spent countless hours coordinating the details with ATA Director and Public Relations Committee Chair Eve Bodeux, ATA Headquarters, and key volunteers such as Marion Rhodes (ATA’s Instagram guru!).

**LET’S KEEP THE MESSAGE GOING!**
If you missed ATA’s International Translation Day celebration, don’t worry! You can still access and share the video and the podcast to let everyone know what you do! Links to both the video and Episode 50 of The ATA Podcast can be found on ATA’s website: [http://bit.ly/ATA-ITD2020](http://bit.ly/ATA-ITD2020).

**NOTES**
ATI Introduces Six New Awards at ATA61!

ATA introduced six new awards this year to recognize excellence in the Association and our professions. The recipients were honored during an all-new awards presentation ceremony following the Annual Meeting of All Members.

ADVOCACY AWARD
Lorena Ortiz Schneider

Lorena Ortiz Schneider is the recipient of the 2020 ATA Advocacy Award, which recognizes a person or entity that has demonstrated outstanding advocacy for the language professions in general, for the importance of professional translators and interpreters, and/or for the greater societal understanding of the value of professional translators and interpreters.

Lorena’s initiative and legislative advocacy on behalf of independent translators and interpreters in response to California Assembly Bill 5 (AB 5), a California law that misclassified all translators and interpreters as employees, is inspiring. She galvanized the translator and interpreter community throughout California and beyond to raise awareness of the threats to the industry posed by AB 5 as it was on its way toward passage by the California legislature and became law in early 2020. She is the founder and lead advocate of the Coalition of Practicing Interpreters and Translators of California (CoPTIC), a hub for coordinating legislative advocacy activities around AB 5 and subsequent amendments thereto. Lorena’s efforts on behalf of CoPTIC helped the organization earn an exemption for translators and interpreters from AB 5.

Lorena has greatly increased the visibility and elevated the profile of our profession in the public consciousness. Thanks to her efforts, no legislator or legislative aide in the California Assembly or Senate is unaware of CoPTIC or ATA or the important role translators and interpreters play in California. Awareness and understanding are the first steps toward correcting misperceptions, and for this, ATA and its members owe a great debt of gratitude to the movement that Lorena has spearheaded.

Lorena is an ATA-certified Spanish>English translator, an ATA credentialed interpreter, and a California state-certified administrative hearing interpreter. She has worked for the U.S. Department of State as a liaison and seminar interpreter, as a conference interpreter for private industry, and as a community interpreter in mental health and workers’ compensation settings, at Social Security hearings, and for the California Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles. She is also a licensed interpreter trainer.

Lorena served two terms as assistant administrator of ATA’s Interpreters Division and was recently appointed chair of ATA’s Advocacy Committee. She also served on the board of the California Workers’ Compensation Interpreters Association effecting
legislative changes that provided for improved working conditions and remuneration for California interpreters.

**Dynamo Award**

Zenab Khouder

Zenab Khouder is the recipient of the 2020 ATA Dynamo Award, which recognizes a person or entity that has worked in a particularly energetic way to benefit ATA and/or the language professions.

Zenab’s enthusiasm for teaching has benefited ATA and its Arabic Language Division (ALD). She has demonstrated the spirit of helping others by sharing the knowledge and expertise she has gained in her career. By doing so, she has empowered many of her fellow interpreters. She started a weekly meeting with ALD members via Zoom, where language experts discuss various issues pertinent to translators and interpreters. She also created a YouTube channel where she posts the sessions.

Seeing the great need for interpreter training, Zenab began as a coach and trainer over 10 years ago. She has also volunteered her services in the community. When the pandemic hit, Zenab saw the situation as an opportunity. She put her passion for language and interpreting to good use by starting virtual interpreter training sessions to help others continue to achieve their goals. In 2020, Zenab was named Interpreter of the Year by the California Healthcare Interpreting Association.

Zenab is a state-certified Arabic court interpreter for the Illinois and Arizona Supreme Courts. She has experience in international communications, translation, interpreting, and teaching. She earned a degree in agriculture from the Faculty of Agriculture in Syria before moving to the U.S. in 1990. She has worked as a language teacher and an English coordinator both in the U.S. and Syria.

**Impact Award**

Lorena Ortiz Schneider

Lorena Ortiz Schneider is the recipient of ATA’s Impact Award, which recognizes a person or entity that has demonstrated outstanding leadership having an impact with ATA through work on a specific project or initiative.

Lorena is an ATA-certified Spanish>English translator, an ATA credentialed interpreter, and a California state-certified administrative hearing interpreter. She has worked for the U.S. Department of State as a liaison and seminar interpreter, as a conference interpreter for private industry, and as a community interpreter in mental health and workers’ compensation settings, at Social Security hearings, and for the California Employment Development Department and the Department of Motor Vehicles. She is also a licensed interpreter trainer.

Lorena served two terms as assistant administrator of ATA’s Interpreters Division and was recently appointed chair of ATA’s Advocacy Committee. She also served on the board of the California Workers’ Compensation Interpreters Association effecting legislative changes that provided for improved working conditions and remuneration for California interpreters.

Lorena is also the founder and lead advocate of the Coalition of Practicing Interpreters and Translators of California (CoPTIC), an organization that helped earn an exemption from California Assembly Bill 5, a California law that misclassified all translators and interpreters as employees in January 2020. Lorena, with ATA’s support, worked tirelessly to help translators and interpreters throughout the state find their voice and educate their elected officials, holding them accountable for representing the interests of all translators and interpreters as well as the interests of their limited-English-proficient constituents. With Lorena’s guidance, the original legislation was revised through countless meetings and letter writing efforts.

Lorena’s work made a difference and we all owe her a debt of gratitude. She has helped raise awareness of how vital the translation and interpreting professions are to Californians and California’s economy. Lorena is undoubtedly deserving of the first ATA Impact Award.

**Innovation Award**

Barry Slaughter Olsen

Barry Slaughter Olsen is the recipient of the 2020 ATA Innovation Award, which recognizes a person or entity that has worked in a particularly innovative way to benefit ATA and/or the language professions.

Barry is a conference interpreter with over 25 years of experience. He combines professional expertise and innovative approaches to interpreter education, advocacy for interpreting, and entrepreneurship.

Barry has taught in the Russian and Spanish interpreting programs at his alma mater, the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, since 2007. He has co-taught the practicum in interpreting, developed techniques for teaching interpreting remotely, and designed and taught a course on remote interpreting technology. During the pandemic, he has shared his expertise on integrating new technology into tried and true pedagogical approaches with students and colleagues alike.

Barry is an advocate for cooperation among academia, professional and industry associations, and interpreters in all fields. As co-president of InterpretAmerica (2009–2020), he co-produced conferences, webinars, virtual events, and publications, as well as provided consultancy and advocacy.

As an entrepreneur, Barry helped develop one of the first platforms for remote simultaneous interpreting.
and was awarded two patents as co-inventor of ZipDX. An active member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters, he has interpreted for the G20, the World Economic Forum, U.S. Department of State, Inter-American Development Bank, Organization of American States, and many other public and private sector clients. In 2020, Barry joined KUDO, a multilingual web conferencing platform, as vice president of client success.

As a visionary and innovator, Barry is focused on the future and the growing effects of technology on the interpreting profession. From 2016 to 2020, he wrote and produced a monthly blog and video series called The Tech-Savvy Interpreter examining specific technologies and trends that are changing the way interpreters work. He is a highly sought-after speaker on multilingual communication and technology, and has been interviewed by CNN, CBC, MSNBC, NPR, and PBS. His co-presentations for TEDxMonterey and Wired have become go-to resources for explaining what's involved in being a professional interpreter.

Barry's innovative force in a number of areas and ability to explain professional interpreting to a larger segment of the general public make him a natural choice for ATA's first Innovation Award.

**MENTORING AWARD**

**Susanne van Eyl**

Susanne van Eyl is the recipient of the 2020 ATA Mentoring Award, which recognizes a person or entity that has provided outstanding mentoring to the next generation of translators and interpreters, either through ATA's Mentoring Program or another channel.

Susanne is an ATA-certified English-German translator specializing in legal and business texts. She is also a certified paralegal with over 20 years of translation experience and the owner of van Eyl, Inc. She has always been eager to share her experience with others and encourage them on their professional path, most notably with her work as chair of ATA's Mentoring Program.

Susanne is well-known for the considerable amount of time and effort she has dedicated to ATA's Mentoring Program, providing translators and interpreters with opportunities to connect with and guide one another. Translators and interpreters benefit from the advice of experienced practitioners like Susanne and from opportunities to develop a sense of professional camaraderie. The exchange of advice and ideas between mentors and mentees participating in ATA's Mentoring Program ultimately contributes to the professionalization that ATA encourages from its members.

Over the past decade, Susanne has proven instrumental in revamping ATA's Mentoring Program. Susanne's close involvement since taking charge in 2010/2011 has led to her name becoming practically synonymous with the program—a testament to her dedication to translator and interpreter mentoring within ATA.

In light of Susanne's contributions to ATA's Mentoring Program, it's only fitting that she be formally recognized for her successful efforts to provide translator and interpreter mentees with structured access to the advice and guidance of experienced professionals.

**RISING STAR AWARD**

**Beth Smith**

Beth Smith is the recipient of the 2020 ATA Rising Star Award, which recognizes an early-career translator, interpreter, or entity that has already “made a mark” on ATA and is seen as having great potential to positively impact ATA and the language professions in the future.

Beth is the assistant administrator of ATA's French Language Division and serves on the Divisions Committee. She frequently gives back to the translation community by advising newbies and sharing her hard-earned knowledge with anyone considering translation as a career. Despite her relative newness to the industry, she has rapidly come to the attention of career veterans, not only for her translation prowess, critical thinking, and creative solutions, but also for her down-to-earth demeanor, quick wit, and can-do attitude. She is a role model to translators new and old, and we look forward to her impact on the Association and the broader profession in the years to come.

Beth has a master's degree in French language and literature from the State University of New York at Binghamton. After graduation, she held a variety of jobs (including teaching English for a year at the Université Lumière Lyon 2) before teaching French for 12 years for the Conroe Independent School District in The Woodlands, Texas.

She slowly transitioned from being a teacher to a full-time translator, completing a certificate in French-English translation at New York University. She also joined ATA and earned her certification (French>English). She specializes in advertising and marketing, transcreation, entertainment (e.g., music journalism, TV scripts, TV show treatments, and film proposals), and literary translation. Her translation (with Lynn Palermo) of L'Essence des ténèbres (The Essence of Darkness), a thriller novel by Tom Clearlake, was published in April 2020 by Moonlight Publishing.

www.atanet.org
Giovanna Lester Wins 2019–2020 ATA School Outreach Contest

ATA member and active volunteer Giovanna Lester, a conference interpreter and an ATA-certified Portuguese>English translator based in Miami, Florida, won a free registration to ATA’s 61st Annual Conference through ATA’s 2019–2020 School Outreach Contest.

Giovanna won the contest for her virtual presentation to students from Farmington R7 School in Missouri. She spoke to the 22 students aged 8 to 14 through the school’s language and culture program.

A passionate veteran of ATA’s School Outreach Program, Giovanna has a long history of presenting at her daughter’s schools over the years. Since her daughter is older now, the opportunity to present at these schools doesn’t arise as often. After schools closed in South Florida and elsewhere due to the pandemic, Giovanna happened to see that School Outreach Program Coordinator and ATA Director Meghan Konkol was looking for a virtual presenter for an opportunity with Farmington R7 School. She immediately volunteered.

Giovanna learned more details about the language and culture program at Farmington R7 and coordinated with teacher Jennifer Aholt for a Zoom presentation in June. She worked closely with Aholt to ensure that the students, their parents, and the class chaperones remained focused and could interact with her discussions on foreign languages and cultures expressed through music, clothing, food, literature, and technology.

Giovanna enjoyed the active participation of the students, and even noted the involvement of some enthusiastic parents.

This was Giovanna’s first virtual School Outreach presentation. Asked about the advantages of virtual versus in-person presentations, she says she values “being able to reach a public I would not otherwise have reached” and “taking the knowledge of these two professions to communities where they are not even offered as such.”

WHAT IS ATA’S SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM?

For 16 years, ATA’s School Outreach Program has been raising awareness of the role that translators and interpreters play in business, government, and society at large. With several sources predicting major growth in the demand for professional translators and interpreters, this program continues to build awareness of careers in the language industry. As our world becomes more integrated globally, businesses and governments are realizing the importance of using skilled professional translators and interpreters to communicate their message effectively and successfully to global audiences, avoiding potentially costly and embarrassing mistakes.

ATA launched the School Outreach Program in 2004 to educate students about translation and interpreting and to interest them in these rewarding career fields. Through the program, professional linguists speak to students at all levels, highlighting the career benefits of learning another language and the increasing potential for exciting work with language skills.

WIN A FREE REGISTRATION TO ATA62—2020–2021 SCHOOL OUTREACH CONTEST NOW OPEN!

The 2020–2021 School Outreach Contest is now open! Virtual presentations are eligible for entry into the School Outreach Contest. The winner will receive a free registration to ATA’s 62nd Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota (October 27–30, 2021). For more information, visit www.atanet.org/ata_school/school_outreach_contest.php.

Birgit Vosseler-Brehmer, CT is an ATA-certified English<>German freelance translator based in Germany. She specializes in technical, business management, and document translations. She is a member of ATA’s School Outreach team. Contact: bvb@bvb-translations.com.
Should I Market My Translation or Interpreting Services on Social Media?

If you have the time to scroll through any social media feed these days, you have time to market your business on a social media platform.

You may be one of the many freelance translators and interpreters who’ve asked themselves, “Should I market my services on social media?” and “Which social media platforms are best for marketing my translation or interpreting business to clients?”

You’re not alone. I hear this question from translators and interpreters pretty frequently. But here’s the thing. If you’re planning to market your business on social media, keep in mind that it’s a long-term strategy. Setting up an account and creating a few posts is the easy part. But if you hope to attract the right clients for you, it’s important to create a framework or plan to follow to make the time you spend worthwhile and effective. Here are some strategies to help you do just that.

**DETERMINE IF SOCIAL MEDIA IS, IN FACT, WHERE YOU CAN REACH YOUR POTENTIAL TRANSLATION OR INTERPRETING CLIENTS**

It’s easy to assume that marketing via social media is a “must” for any business. After all, shouldn’t every business use social media to reach their target markets? Well, it depends.

First, determine if your ideal clients—those you really want to keep working with 5, 10, or 15 years from now—are using any social media platforms. If so, which ones do they tend to use and why?

Let’s think about it this way. Most people these days have Facebook accounts. Many also use and love Instagram. A lot of people enjoy Twitter. And most of us have a professional LinkedIn profile. But where are your clients hanging out online? If you don’t know the answer to this just yet, it’s okay. Sometimes it’s easier to answer this question by simply ruling out a few of the most obvious options.

**Determine where your clients hang out online and why they use the social media platforms they use.**

**CONSIDER YOUR SPECIALIZATIONS WHEN DECIDING WHICH (IF ANY) SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS WILL GIVE YOU THE GREATEST RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

I bet most of my clients have personal Facebook accounts. They may even be on Instagram. But given my specializations, I highly doubt that they’re using these accounts for their work. Instead, they prefer the distractions these social media platforms provide away from their work.

So, it’s not the best use of my time to try to friend, follow, or connect with them on Facebook or Instagram. Yes, perhaps I could create a business page and target my ideal clients with ads, but I also don’t necessarily want to remind them of their work when all they really want to do on Facebook after 5:00 p.m. is check in with their friends. So, in that sense, I’ve ruled Facebook and Instagram out for my medical and life sciences clients.

That said, someone who translates for the fashion or beauty industry might very well have a large pool of...
potential clients hanging out on one of these platforms. But given my own specializations and clients, I prefer to look to other potential platforms instead. Following this method of ruling out the obvious options, I’ll move on to Twitter.

I’ve yet to find my main contacts within my clients’ companies on Twitter. Yes, they may have a company Twitter account, which I’ll follow and interact with from time to time. But typically, the people running their company social media accounts are not the decision makers or the ones hiring professional translators. So, that rules out Twitter for me.

Instead, I prefer to use Twitter to connect with colleagues and friends. I can still market my business via Twitter by using it to grow my referral network. In that sense, Twitter is a very powerful marketing tool. But more on that later.

**ONCE YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CLIENTS ARE HANGING OUT ONLINE, THINK ABOUT WHAT KIND OF CONTENT WILL RESONATE WITH THEM**

One platform where I can say my clients definitely do hang out is on LinkedIn. So, that means that if I’m going to create a social media marketing strategy for my translation business, I should come up with a way to regularly engage with them there.

Now, my clients may not be logging into LinkedIn every day, but they do check in from time to time, and they’re connected to more of my potential clients. This can be really beneficial for freelancers! That’s when I go back to the purpose behind the platform and the way my clients use it. Here are the questions I ask myself:

- Why are my clients using LinkedIn?
- What do they want to get out of connecting with others on this platform?
- How do they use the platform?
- When do they tend to sign in and engage with others?
- Where do they tend to be when they use the platform?

Let’s break these questions down a bit. By the way, these questions and this process can be used for any social media platform where you think your potential clients are engaging on a regular basis.

1. **Why are my clients using LinkedIn?**

Like most people with a LinkedIn account, the purpose of using this platform is to connect with other individuals. It’s expected that one is there to do business or form business relationships. So, I focus on that. **Building relationships.**

2. **What do they want to get out of connecting with others on this platform?**

Like most clients, mine want to connect with others who can help them in their business or position, or who can provide them with a solution to a problem. They also want to see how their friends, former colleagues and classmates, and new professional connections are doing. It’s a way to stay connected without having to hear about what someone had for lunch or read a political rant from their neighbor. It can also be a first step or introduction to someone before taking the leap to forming a business relationship.

3. **How do they use the platform?**

The answer to this question will be different for everyone. But my ideal clients are not usually scrolling through their newsfeed on a daily basis, going down a rabbit hole of posts. They just don’t have time. Instead, they log into LinkedIn to check their inMail or to approve a connection request. Maybe they want to look up a potential partner or client. Or perhaps they’re filling a need by checking in with a LinkedIn Group that reflects one of their special interests.

4. **When do they sign in and engage with others?**

I would bet that my clients tend to log into LinkedIn at the beginning of their workday, on a break, or between meetings. Because of how LinkedIn works and the fact that there is little drama to suck you in like other social media platforms (and if there is, I haven’t found it yet!), people tend to “get in and get out” when it comes to LinkedIn. So, they often use it in small pockets of time during the workday.

5. **Where do they tend to be when they use the platform?**

This is another question that will be different for everyone, but I think it’s safe to say that most of my clients use LinkedIn when they’re already at work—whether they’re in the office or still working from home due to the pandemic—because it very much relates to their professional life. Yes, they may check an inMail message on the weekend now and then, but I feel fairly confident that my clients are not spending their weekends mindlessly scrolling their LinkedIn feeds. Because I know all of this about my clients, I can come up with a game plan of sorts. It’s easier (and smarter!) for me to spend my time looking for useful content, like articles, that my clients would appreciate and find relevant. I simply send them a friendly message now and then to share something useful or send a congratulatory note about a work anniversary, a promotion, etc. This allows me to check in from time to time and stay top of mind with them much more than if I tried to create a bunch of original content to post in my feed and cross my fingers that they’ll see it.

So, it’s important to determine where your clients hang out online and why they use the social media platforms they use. Then, determine how you fit into this online space in relation to them (or not). Here’s another example. Let’s say you earn a decent amount of your income by translating documents for individuals. Maybe doing a bit of marketing on Facebook and Instagram is a good use of your time. You could join groups for speakers of your source language that also have the same interests or hobbies, engage with the people in those groups, and provide helpful responses to questions.
Marketing your services on social media doesn’t mean you have to practice direct sales tactics. After all, most translators and interpreters I know don’t want to be confronted with a marketing campaign that smacks of “salesy” copy or one-time offers. And with so much information flying around online these days, your clients are probably also sensitive to this.

**SHOULD I CONTINUE TO SPEND TIME ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS WHERE MY TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER COLLEAGUES HANG OUT?**

There’s a time and place for social media platforms that are not where you would typically find your clients or that are not considered business-related. I said earlier that I hang out on Twitter and that most of my connections there are friends and other translators or interpreters. And one might ask, “But why would you spend your time on Twitter if your clients are not there?” Valid question.

I spend time connecting with colleagues regularly for various reasons, but the main ones are because I like my colleagues and because I know that colleagues are the basis of our referral networks. Who better to refer you to a potential client than a colleague who knows you, understands your skill set, and can speak highly of your professionalism?

I think it’s safe to say that most of us can make a list of all our clients, and we’ll find that a large number of them have found us through referrals. Whether your referrals usually come from colleagues, friends, or acquaintances, social media can help you grow your network further. I can think of several colleagues I interact with regularly on social media. Because I see their names and friendly faces often, I’m reminded of them immediately when I come across a project or client who could use their services. So, I would say—continue to engage with colleagues on social media!

And while you’re probably not using some of these platforms to pitch your business to anyone, just the fact that you’re there and can provide helpful information, engage with others in a friendly way, and have an intelligent and kind exchange, means you’ll inevitably build relationships and trust among those who know you.

**FOCUS ON ONE OR TWO PLATFORMS AND MANAGE THEM REALLY WELL**

It does take time to market your services on social media, but so does anything worth doing. If you have the time to scroll through any social media feed these days, you have time to market your business on a social media platform. The key is to choose one or two platforms that will be worthwhile. See the first half of this article to help you determine what they might be.

Consider what type of content would be most helpful to your clients. Is it something you can post in a feed and use specific hashtags to grab their attention? Or would a direct message with some useful information be more effective? Perhaps there are a few ways you can use the same platform to market to your ideal clients.

Once you determine the platform and the method(s) of engagement, commit to 20 minutes a day. That’s all you really need to create a habit of engaging with potential clients and growing your referral network on social media.

If you’re like me, maybe you need to schedule this time. I would suggest scheduling your 20 minutes during a time block when your ideal clients might also be on the platform. This means that you’ll have a better chance of reaching them in real time. The more you show up and the more authentically you engage, the more you’ll get out of the social media platform(s) you choose for your business.

What tips do you have for engaging on social media platforms effectively to grow your business and your referral network? Please contact me and let me know.

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www.atanet.org
Six Remote Simultaneous Interpreting Platforms and Zoom

There are several options when it comes to choosing the platform that’s right for you. I’ll discuss some of the most popular ones here, comparing features and functionality.

Remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) platforms substitute and complement hardware equipment. They can be used for online events and webinars as well as regular onsite conferences with interpreters connecting remotely from the comfort of their homes or specially equipped studios.

So, what are some of the RSI platforms out there and what features do they offer? What are the technical requirements to support these platforms on your workstation? Well, let’s take a look. But first, a few basics.

**TIPS FOR AN EFFICIENT RSI WORKSTATION**

The photo above shows my remote workstation. As you can see, I have a laptop in front of me with a second monitor connected to it. The RSI platform is launched on one screen while the second screen allows me to consult support materials, glossaries, or search online. You can use two separate computers for this purpose, but it’s not really necessary as one high-power laptop/desktop covers it all. However, you might find having only one screen very inconvenient because any new window you need to open to check your support documents will most likely cover the RSI platform window. This means you’ll probably no longer be able to see the video stream or the chat window used to communicate with your interpreting partner and the moderator. Not being able to see everything will also increase the chances that you’ll miss important information.

So, what else do you need for your work setup?

**Quality Headset and Microphone:** The most essential criterion in choosing a headset is comfort since you’ll have to wear it for long periods. Some RSI platforms have certain preferences in terms of headset brand and type (see below). However, the final decision is yours.

**Ethernet Cable:** Another mandatory requirement is a high-speed Ethernet cable (or two!) to connect to the internet. I installed two completely independent Ethernet cables. If one line is down, the system automatically switches to the second line.

**Uninterrupted Power Supply:** It’s strongly recommended that you purchase an uninterrupted power supply device, which will allow you to work through short-term blackouts and protects your data and equipment.

**Soundproofing:** Your workstation should be as soundproof as possible to provide clear sound when using the microphone. You’ll also need to close any windows and doors to block outside noises. Many platforms recommend working from a specially equipped studio or hub if there’s one in your location.

**COMPARISON OF RSI PLATFORMS**

There are several options when it comes to choosing the platform that’s right for you. To help give you an idea of what you should be looking for in a platform, I’ve compiled profiles of some of the most popular ones in which I compare features and functionality. Space does not allow me to compare all the platforms out there, but I hope this detailed overview will help you make a more informed decision. For pricing information, please refer to the websites listed for each platform.

The main criteria I used when comparing the platforms discussed here include:

- Whether the platform also serves as an event platform, or can only be used for RSI
- Interface
- Video stream
- Audio stream
- Relay
- Handover
- Response time to questions (communication quality)
- The ability to listen to the floor speaker and your interpreting partner simultaneously
- Onboarding process
Technical requirements for the interpreter’s workstation

Technical support

Whether the platform offers a mobile app for interpreters

Let’s get started.

KUDO
https://kudoway.com

Kudo is both an event and RSI platform, which means it doesn’t need additional external program such as Zoom or Skype. KUDO supports screen sharing, document uploading, messaging in chat (for event participants), and polling. It also has an interface for participants and interpreters. Figures 1 and 2 on this page provide a sample setup, including a list of the various functions available to interpreters on the interface.

Video/Audio Stream: KUDO can have several video streams available at once that you can switch between. As shown in Figure 2, there are three incoming and outgoing audio channels displayed on the right side of the screen, which means that, in theory, one pair of interpreters can work with three languages.

Relay Function: Yes, it’s available.

Handover: I think the most interesting and complex function, which is programmed differently on various RSI platforms, is the Handover function. This is used when one interpreter takes over for another. KUDO has a multi-stage Handover process. Handover can be initiated both by the active interpreter (the one broadcasting) and the passive interpreter (the one not interpreting). Here’s the process (see Figure 3 on page 16):

When it’s time for the second interpreter to take over, the active interpreter clicks the blue button (“Handover”) located to the left of the microphone button.

The active interpreter will see a message in a grey box displaying “Request sent.”

To initiate the handover, the passive interpreter clicks the blue “Request to switch” button.

After the request is sent the message displayed on the blue button will change to “Waiting for approval” with a 15-second countdown. This is the time given for the passive interpreter to confirm that they are ready to take over and click the “I am ready to switch” button.

The active interpreter will see the “Go” message displayed on the blue button followed by another countdown.
During this time, the active interpreter should conclude their interpreting segment and find an appropriate moment to switch the microphone over to the other interpreter.

Next, the active interpreter clicks the “Go” button to switch off their microphone.

The “Your turn” message will pop up on the passive interpreter’s screen close to the microphone button, which means it’s time for them to switch on their microphone and take over.

Kudo’s very elaborate handover process is designed for situations when interpreting partners are working from different locations and cannot communicate in person. However, it’s been my experience that the handover process is one of the bottlenecks for RSI in Kudo. I think the entire process is too complicated and that all the buttons and multiple stages required to request and confirm handover is really distracting when interpreting.

Is it possible to listen to the floor speaker and your interpreting partner simultaneously? Kudo did not allow for this option until recently. You could only choose one audio channel. As a result, many interpreters were using another device to call each other via a second application such as Messenger to ensure a seamless handover. But KUDO has recently rolled out a new release with this function enabled so that you can listen to your partner.

Onboarding Process: The onboarding process (e.g., training and adding interpreters to the database) is really well thought out. There’s a dedicated training module on the website complete with text descriptions and video guidelines on how to work with the KUDO platform. After training (or what KUDO refers to as the “interpreter’s journey”), interpreters complete their profiles on the website and can receive assignments from their own clients using the platform.

Technical Requirements:
- 8GB RAM, Intel i7 Core Processor, 15-inch monitor, and cordless mouse
- Dedicated sound card and graphics card
- One additional LCD monitor (minimum size: 20 inches)
- Two professional-grade USB headsets for backup (Suggested models: KOSS CS300 and Logitech H540)
- One APC Smart UPC unit as a power backup for all networking devices
- Google Chrome or Firefox web browsers
- Stable, wired connection for all computers in use by interpreters
- Upload and download network speed of at least 5 Mbps
- Room-wide wireless for redundancy

Technical Support: Technical support is provided by the moderator on the RSI platform. I have to say that KUDO replies very quickly to all questions.

Mobile App: There’s a mobile app for participants but not for interpreters. An app would be useful for emergency situations when an interpreter cannot connect to the conference via computer.

INTERPREFY
www.interprefy.com
Interprefy is both an event and RSI platform. Online events can be held either directly on the Interprefy platform or you can use Interprefy to connect to external programs such as Zoom, Skype, Webex, or Microsoft Teams. Figure 4 on page 17 shows an example of Interprefy’s interface.

Interface: The interface seems simpler than some of the other platforms out.
there, although there are still a lot of functions and buttons.

- Incoming and outgoing language channels appear on the top panel. One of the incoming channels is always for the source (or floor) language (the one used by the speaker) and the other channel is used for relay (English in Figure 4). The outgoing channels are for the languages you’re interpreting into (French in Figure 4).

- On the right side of the screen at the top you’ll see a Microphone button (red when on/grey when off) and a Cough button. Two chat windows appear below these buttons. The first is used by the virtual booth interpreters and the moderator and the second is an event chat for communication between all the interpreters and moderators working the event.

- On the left side of the screen there are speaker video windows you can switch between. In the top right corner, you’ll see the familiar Handover function.

Handover: Interprefy also has a very nontransparent handover process. If you click the green “Now” button in the upper right, you’ll see several pop-up windows that the active and passive interpreters need to click on before the handover can take place. I didn’t use this function with my interpreting partners. Instead, we usually agreed on manual handover without clicking any buttons. When the time was right, the passive interpreter signaled to the active one via chat that they were ready for handover. The active interpreter would then finish their interpreting segment and switch off their microphone the next time the floor speaker paused. The other interpreter would see this and take over. Like in KUDO, I find it easier to opt for a manual handover process in Interprefy because all the buttons and multiple stages of requesting and confirming handover are really distracting when interpreting.

Is it possible to listen to the floor speaker and your interpreting partner simultaneously? Interprefy does provide the convenient option of listening to both the floor speaker and your partner, and you can even adjust the relative volume of these two audio channels. For example, you can listen to the speaker while listening to your interpreting partner on a lower volume setting in the background—which is a good way to ensure that the interpreting feed is working—or increase the volume of your partner’s sound.

Onboarding Process: Interprefy’s onboarding process is also well tailored. It starts with a Skype interview. If everything goes well, they send you a checklist with technical requirements for the interpreter’s workstation.

Technical Requirements: The main technical requirements are:

- Laptops: Intel Core i5 (or equivalent competing brand), 4GB RAM, Windows 10 or higher (if using Mac OS X with the latest updated operating system)
- Second computer or tablet
- Ethernet connection (The minimum download speed required is 8Mbps and the minimum upload speed required is 4 Mbps)
- USB professional microphone (recommended: Yeti Nano)
- High-quality noise-canceling headphones (recommended: Sennheiser HD200 Pro and Sennheiser Earbuds SX 3.00)
- Software (Google Chrome and Team Viewer)

After confirming that your equipment complies with the checklist, Interprefy provides training on the platform in the form of a one-hour individual session with a technical specialist who demonstrates the platform functions and answers questions. After that you’re required to pass a brief test (interpreting a five-minute video that’s recorded and sent to other professional interpreters for evaluation). If everything goes well, you’re added to the database.

Technical Support: Interprefy’s response to requests is quite good. You can receive an answer the same day, often within an hour. Technical support is available and provided by a platform moderator.

Mobile App: There’s a mobile app for interpreters, but my experience using it (though I tried it only once) proved that switching between channels takes more time than in a browser on a PC. I also found that the app had a negative impact on the quality of my interpreting (text segments tend to get lost). After I spent several minutes interpreting through the app, I asked my partner to take over due to these reasons.

VOICEBOXER
https://voiceboxer.com
Voiceboxer is both an event and RSI platform, which means it doesn’t need additional external programs for online events.
Participant Interface: As shown in Figure 5 above, the interface for participants has two windows on the right. The larger window in the center is reserved for the speaker slides uploaded in advance. The window in the upper right displays the video of the speaker. Below the video window there’s a chat channel for participants. Participants can choose their language in the field on the bottom right (either the one spoken on the floor or the interpreted version). The vertical panel on the left displays icons for hand raising, the list of presenters and attendees, screen sharing, and camera settings. A very helpful feature is that the text in the slides is translated according to the language selected by the participant. This means that attendees are able to listen to the language of their preference and see the slides in the same language. All the messages in the chat can also be translated automatically by clicking on the option “to translate.”

Interpreter Interface: The interface for interpreters shown in Figure 6 above contains two video channels. Just like the interface for participants, the larger space in the center is reserved for the presentation slides and the video window displaying the speaker is on the right. A selection of incoming and outgoing audio channels is located at the bottom, with two default channels for each type of audio. On the left is the main incoming channel for the source language used on the floor (in blue) followed by the IT (for relay) channel in the white box. On the right we have the outgoing (target) languages: English (white) and French (red). The vertical panel on the left displays several icons, including the mute function and virtual booth controls to work in pairs remotely (i.e., the multi-stage handover function).

The triangle icon at the top of the left control panel (a slow-down reminder for the presenter) is a new function. The icon at the bottom (independent volume control) can be used to adjust the relative volume of the incoming sound and your partner’s outgoing audio channel, which makes it possible to listen to both the floor and your partner. Below the presenter’s video feed is the booth chat, which can be used by both interpreters and moderators.

Handover: An interesting feature of this platform is that there is no microphone button. By default, one of the interpreters has their microphone on when the event starts. To handover the microphone, the active interpreter sends out the request and the passive interpreter confirms their readiness to take over. Once this is done, the active interpreter finishes their interpreting segment and switches off the microphone.

Technical Support: In terms of technical support, response time varies (sometimes the same day, or you might have to wait several days). I did note that the contact email address was hard to spot because it appears in small print at the bottom right corner.

Onboarding Process: The onboarding process consists of completing the registration form on the website. It should be noted that demo sessions and trainings for interpreters are currently provided not by VoiceBoxer itself but by its partners.

Technical Requirements:
- High-speed internet connection
- Professional headset
- Google Chrome

Mobile App: There’s no mobile application for interpreters.

INTERACTIO
https://interactio.io

Interactio is both an event and RSI platform. Like KUDO, Interactio supports screen sharing, document uploading,
messaging in the chat (for event participants) and polling. It has an interface for both participants and interpreters.

**Interface:** The interpreter's interface in Figure 7 shows two default incoming and outgoing audio channels, although more channels can be configured. On the left, highlighted in blue, we have the incoming audio channel from the floor (English), and on the right, highlighted in light green, the outgoing channel (Spanish). The central panel between them displays important information: the current language being interpreted and the event duration time and interpreter's streaming time (a helpful function!).

**Handover:** Like all RSI platforms, Interactio provides relay and handover functions. There is a dedicated Handover button on the right side. If the active interpreter clicks it, the passive interpreter will see the respective message on the central panel. The active interpreter then switches off their microphone and lets the passive interpreter take over. Manual handover is also possible. The passive interpreter can switch on the microphone by clicking the Mic button in the center at the bottom (highlighted in green), which causes the active interpreter's microphone to switch off automatically. Interactio representatives explained that this function was programmed to enable the passive interpreter to take over without waiting for the active interpreter to switch off their microphone during an emergency (e.g., if the active interpreter is unwell and cannot complete the handover properly).

**Technical Support:** Initially, it took Interactio two days to answer my question regarding platform training. They replied that training is provided only after the order for your language pair is placed and you're appointed to the job. (How can I recommend my client to use this platform if I don't really know much about it?) Interactio did call me later and offered to do a training. As a result, I could better describe the platform functionality here. They did explain that they were a bit behind in their communication due to their increasing workload, which is quite understandable considering how many companies are going online these days. They promised to do better next time.

**Technical Requirements:**
- Ethernet connection: Connection reaction time (Ping) should be less than 100 milliseconds; download and upload bandwidth should be equal or greater than 10 Mbps
- Google Chrome
- Professional hardwired headset

**Mobile App:** There's no mobile app for interpreters. However, at the time of this writing, Interactio is testing an app that can be downloaded to a PC or laptop and used for participating in an event or interpreting alongside the browser version. This is a new feature we have not seen before.

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**SPEAKUS**

https://speakus.club/

SPEAKUS and VERSPEAK (discussed on page 20) have long been identical in terms of functionality (the company has recently divided into two brands), but some time ago VERSPEAK rolled out a new release with a completely new interface.

Let’s start with SPEAKUS. It’s a dedicated RSI platform, so it connects to external programs for online events.

**Interface:** As you can see from Figure 8 on page 20, the interface looks simpler than other platforms, but all the main functions are there.

- It’s possible to configure several video channels, including the presenter's slides, and switch between them. There are two incoming and two outgoing channels. The EN/ZH buttons at the top under the Mute button are for outgoing channels. The Relay/DE/ZH buttons at the bottom are for incoming channels.
- The On Air button controls the interpreter's microphone (red means on, grey means off). The Mute button is used for switching the microphone off for short periods. Below the On Air button there is a chat for interpreters with hot buttons (“Take please,” “I’m ON AIR,” “Ok,” “Clear”). However, unlike other platforms, you can’t communicate with a moderator here. A special Whatsapp chat has been created for this purpose.
- At the bottom on the left there is one more window (or two, if there are two interpreters). The interpreters can see and hear each other here even if no one is On Air at the moment, which is another distinctive feature of these platforms. The question is whether this is convenient and necessary. In my view, the microphone indicator and the partner’s audio when “On Air” is enough.
- The interpreters’ video and audio feed can be disabled if needed. However, it should be noted that if you accidently switch off the audio on your side, your partner won’t be able to switch it on. It
SIX REMOTE SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETING PLATFORMS AND ZOOM continued

I accidently switched off my sound, so when I was interpreting I didn’t realize that she couldn’t hear me and didn’t know when to take over. Since there’s nothing to indicate that your partner’s microphone is switched on, the ability to hear is crucial. Related, you can listen to two audio channels at once: the floor and your partner’s.

Handover: There’s no automatic handover function here. However, in my opinion, this is not a flaw. As I have already mentioned, a complicated handover mechanism is counterintuitive and only distracts interpreters from the interpreting process.

Onboarding Process: The process is quite simple. You agree to participate in a demo session where you can see the interface for yourself and ask questions. The demo takes about 30 minutes. No testing is required.

Technical Support: The response time for both SPEAKUS and VERSPEAK is excellent. A response usually comes within an hour. Technical support is provided via external applications (e.g., Whatsapp).

Technical Requirements:
- High-power computer, Intel Core i3 or higher, 4GB RAM, Windows 8.0 or higher
- Ethernet connection (minimum speed 10Mbps)
- Comfortable USB noise-canceling headset with microphone
- Mozilla Firefox

Mobile App: There’s no mobile application for interpreters.

VERSPEAK
https://verspeak.com
VERSPEAK is also an RSI platform only. Figure 9 shows the new release of the VERSPEAK interface:

Interface:
- It’s possible to configure several video channels, including the presenter’s slides, and switch between them. There are two incoming and two outgoing channels. The RU/EN buttons at the bottom next to the Mute button are for outgoing channels and the ORIGINAL, RELAY (RU), and RELAY (EN) buttons on the left are for incoming channels.
- The On Air button controls the interpreter’s microphone (red means on, grey means off). The Mute button is used for switching the microphone off for short periods. On the right side on the bottom control panel, there are buttons for chat (clicking on it will enable a chat), a dictionary (enabling a built-in dictionary: Multitrain), and agenda (accessing the conference materials).
- Above the bottom control panel there are two windows. Like we saw it on the SPEAKUS interface, the interpreters can see and hear each other here even if no one is On Air at the moment. There are also hot buttons here (“Take please” and “Take over”) designed to streamline the interpreters’ communication.
The interpreters’ video and audio feed can be disabled if needed like we saw it on SPEAKUS.

**Handover:** Same as SPEAKUS.

**Onboarding process:** Same as SPEAKUS.

**Technical Support:** Same as SPEAKUS.

**Technical Requirements:** Same as SPEAKUS.

**Mobile App:** Same as SPEAKUS.

### ZOOM


Zoom, an online platform for holding meetings and conferences, now offers an interpreting function. This function is available under the Pro Plan with the optional add-on Add Video Webinars Plan. The conference host can enable this function when an additional audio channel needs to be created for a language to which an interpreter is assigned. Meeting participants can then select the channel (language) they want to listen to. (For more details on this function, please see the link above.)

The only thing that’s missing in Zoom that sets it apart from dedicated RSI platforms is the relay and handover functions. Interpreters can’t hear each other, which really complicates the handover process. This means interpreters have to connect via an external channel (e.g., Messenger or Skype) and hold the call throughout the conference so they can hear each other and ensure a seamless handover. Another option is to connect to the Zoom conference from a second device as a participant and listen to the interpreting channel.

Technical requirements for the interpreter’s workstation are not mentioned anywhere on Zoom’s website. Technical support is missing (the client has to undertake this responsibility). The response time to questions is very slow, sometimes more than a week, but this is obviously due to peak demand these days. Interpreters who have tried working with Zoom say that everything works well and that the sound quality is good. However, sometimes they face various issues (e.g., the host fails to assign an interpreter). Zoom states on its website that the interpreting function is still in a testing stage, which means errors are inevitable. Zoom also has a mobile app that can be used for interpreting.

### THE NEW REALITY

It seems that remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) is the new reality. There are many options out there besides the ones I’ve covered here, so don’t feel like you’re limited to these selections. Take the time to research what works best for you. I hope this information will be helpful and that you now have a better understanding of what RSI involves and how these platforms can be implemented into your work environment.

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**QUICK COMPARISON OF RSI PLATFORMS AND ZOOM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RSI platforms Parameters</th>
<th>KUDO</th>
<th>Interprefy</th>
<th>VoiceBoxer</th>
<th>Interactio</th>
<th>SPEAKUS</th>
<th>VERSPEAK</th>
<th>Zoom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interface for event participants</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td><strong>Relay</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handover</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to listen to the floor and your partner simultaneously</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Response to requests</strong></td>
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<td>1 day (often 1 hour)</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Registration form on website</td>
<td>Questionnaire on website, demo sessions</td>
<td>Individual training</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile app</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Language for the Good of All: ATA Members Make a Difference in the National Language Service Corps

Federal government activities often require additional professional language services and cultural competencies on a short-term basis for routine mission work or to satisfy contingency requirements.

Full-time employees of civil, foreign, and military service organizations routinely provide linguistic expertise to support the federal government. However, federal government activities often require additional professional language services and cultural competencies on a short-term basis for routine mission work or to satisfy contingency requirements.

To help address this need, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) launched the National Language Service Corps (NLSC) as a pilot program in 2007 to identify and recruit on-call, volunteer civilian language specialists. Initially, NLSC aimed to maintain a pool of linguists proficient in 10 languages. Since then, NLSC has expanded its capabilities to support over 414 languages and dialects. In 2018, NLSC extended its support beyond DoD organizations to all federal government agencies through formal partnership agreements.

Today, the Defense Language and National Security Education Office administers NLSC on behalf of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. NLSC has matured into an organization of nearly 11,000 highly skilled civilian volunteers who may be called upon to support the federal government, either remotely or in person, for a range of missions in the U.S. and abroad. These support services may include translation, transcription, language instruction, cultural advising, and testing development. Past missions have included:

- Interpreting for the commanding general of U.S. Africa Command and visiting regional leaders.
- Simultaneous and consecutive interpreting at the DoD’s U.S. Central Command’s planning conferences and training exercises in Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, and Qatar.
- Interpreting for the secretary of the Navy in town halls and community outreach forums during the 2010 Gulf Oil disaster.
- Supporting quality assurance, test validation, and language training across numerous government agencies.

Linguists who would like to volunteer their services must first apply to be NLSC members. Membership is free. Although there is no minimum proficiency level to become a member, applicants must complete a language self-assessment. NLSC uses the Federal Interagency Language Roundtable’s (ILR) proficiency guidelines (the ILR scale)\(^1\) to evaluate speaking, reading, listening, translation, and interpreting proficiency. NLSC seeks individuals who can achieve professional proficiency (“level 3”) in multiple language functions. Once approved as an NLSC member, individuals have access to formal proficiency tests. Some participating agency partners require members to submit the results of these tests before being selected for an assignment.

Once a partner requests language support, NLSC queries its membership through email, phone, or member-only social media platforms to find qualified personnel.
individuals. NLSC then contacts eligible members to verify their interest and availability. If a member agrees to participate in a mission, an NLSC mission support liaison will provide one-on-one assistance to the member before, during, and after the assignment. When NLSC members support government agencies, they’re hired as temporary experts and consultants in the excepted service. Members receive a small honorarium.

Assignments typically range from one day to two weeks but occasionally may be longer. Members can accept or decline opportunities based upon their interest and availability. Declining to participate in an assignment does not negatively impact a member’s standing or access to future opportunities.

So, what's it like to be an NLSC volunteer? To learn more, I interviewed three ATA members who actively participate in NLSC. I asked them how they learned about NLSC, what motivated them to volunteer, what services they provided, and what recommendations they have for individuals considering contributing their linguistic and cultural expertise.

**SUSAN DIX-BARBOZA**  
Susan Dix-Barboza, an ATA member since 1999, joined NLSC in 2012. As a certified Portuguese court interpreter in Florida, Susan was recruited by NLSC at a time when she was also approached for employment by several commercial language services providers. She attributes her interest in NLSC as being less about potential remuneration for her expertise and more about helping the U.S. fulfill language-related commitments.

For NLSC, Susan served the DoD’s U.S. Southern Command as an interpreter during engagements with Latin American officials. She describes this experience as an exciting opportunity “to take a step out of the box” and apply the simultaneous interpreting skills and professional etiquette she developed in her 20-year experience as a court interpreter in an entirely new venue. Susan says she was challenged by certain technical terminology and the intellectual style of interactions within a military setting. She prepared for her mission support role by collaborating with her NLSC counterparts via video conferences and researching videos, literature, and instructions before the assignment.

In a previous assignment, Susan teamed up with other NLSC members to develop Portuguese learning materials for high-level officials on various national security topics, the content of which involved voice broadcasts, transcriptions, vocabulary list development, and translations. She was able to work from home full-time for the duration of the project.

Susan recommends NLSC membership for individuals who enjoy new and unusual assignments. She adds that NLSC missions frequently present challenges that require task research and preparation, which her NLSC support team helped her carry out.

**HUA (BARBARA) ROBINSON**  
Hua (Barbara) Robinson, an ATA member since 2007, joined NLSC in 2011. As a member of the Northwest Translators and Interpreters Society, an ATA chapter, Barbara was recruited by NLSC based on her substantial capabilities and experience as a freelance interpreter and translator in Chinese. As an immigrant to the U.S., Barbara says she was attracted to NLSC by the opportunity to support the country. She was also interested in the career-broadening potential and flexibility to provide varied language services as a member of NLSC.

**LILI SELDEN**  
Lili Selden, who became an ATA member this year, was recruited by NLSC in 2019 while a member of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators. Lili is a credentialed court interpreter in Japanese for several jurisdictions in the eastern U.S. She has also been a translator for many years. Lili says she was intrigued by the “unconventional” aspects of NLSC, including the opportunity to meet the urgent needs of Japanese-speaking communities during natural disasters. As a former contract linguist at the U.S. Department of Justice who subsequently taught introductory interpreting courses to federal employees and military personnel, she also looks forward to opportunities to work with dedicated public servants and security personnel on critical missions.

For NLSC, Lili traveled to Guam in February 2020 to provide interpreting, translation, and cultural services for trilateral humanitarian assistance/disaster relief exercises involving military air forces from the U.S., Australia, and Japan. While serving alongside deployed forces in Guam, Lili engaged with both senior staff members and younger troops as an integral part of a military exercise team that featured blended cross-cultural integration. She provided full translations of exercise documentation and supported operational

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**The National Language Service Corps has matured into an organization of nearly 11,000 highly skilled civilian volunteers who may be called upon to support the federal government by providing advanced linguistic expertise.**
initiatives, which required her to understand and apply the terminology of mission concepts in Japanese and English. Lili enjoyed the intensity of the mission, in which everyone worked on their ability to train effectively together and communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Lili recommends that individuals considering volunteering for NLSC have “a sense of adventure and humor.” She says that NLSC assignments can be viewed as unusual opportunities that could well lead to memories of a lifetime.

**GROWING PROFESSIONALLY WHILE SERVING THE COUNTRY**

Susan, Barbara, and Lili say that membership in NLSC is intrinsically satisfying because it allows them to apply their skills and experiences on a temporary basis to help U.S. government agencies accomplish conventional tasks and manage emergencies and unforeseen circumstances.

Tangible benefits that may enhance the career profile of ATA members also typically accrue from active participation in NLSC, including:

- Enhancing one’s language industry credentials through temporary employment within the framework of the U.S. government, national security, and foreign-language communities, including W-2 employee status, proficiency assessments through the Defense Language Proficiency Test/Oral Proficiency Interview process, and security clearances.
- Broadening one’s linguistic and cultural skills and experiences, often through active engagement in extraordinary missions and operational environments.
- Expanding one’s professional network by working with federal government organizations that value language, diversity, and culture.
- Having the freedom and flexibility to accept or decline NLSC mission work, including assignments requiring national or international travel.

**OKAY, HOW DO I SIGN UP?**

If you think NLSC seems like a good fit for you, just follow these steps to become a member:

1. Submit the prescreen application.
2. Complete the application and global skills self-assessment.
3. Submit all completed forms.
4. Qualified applicants will receive an acceptance letter.
5. Sign and return the commitment letter and commit to NLSC’s Values and Member Code of Conduct statement.

To learn more about NLSC membership and start your application, please visit [www.nlscorps.org/membership](http://www.nlscorps.org/membership).

NLSC program managers seek candidates with proven skills, competencies, and experiences in interpreting and translation, especially if these skills have been endorsed through credentialing or certification. To this end, ATA members should consider if and how voluntary membership in NLSC might align with their language services endeavors and professional development ambitions. If you enjoy new and unusual assignments, volunteering for NLSC could be for you!

Special thanks to our ATA colleagues Susan, Barbara, and Lili for participating in the interviews, and to Elsbeth Clay and Hyejin Hickey at NLSC for supporting ATA’s Government Division’s initiative to develop this article. For more information on the National Language Service Corps, please visit [www.nlscorps.org](http://www.nlscorps.org).

**NOTES**


**If you enjoy new and unusual assignments, volunteering for NLSC could be for you!**

**REASONS TO JOIN NLSC**

**Opportunities to Network:** With over 10,000 members, you can meet others who speak your language or who may work in a field that you have been considering.

**Language Sustainment and Enhancement Opportunities:** Hone your existing language skills or work to pick up a new language using NLSC’s free online learning tools and trainings.

**Connect with the Language Community:** Meet others who are as passionate about language as you are.

**Gain Professional Experience:** You may be invited to support a federal agency as an interpreter, translator, instructor, or cultural advisor.

**Interesting Speakers and Events:** From language sustainment to emergency preparedness training, there’s always something new to learn and discuss.

**Serve Your Country:** Use your language skills, regional expertise, and cultural capabilities to help your community and country.

**Government-Credentialed Language Score:** Validate your language skills with the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) or the Oral Proficiency Interview, two of the most widely recognized language proficiency tests offered by the U.S. government.

**Enhance Your Résumé:** Boost your language credentials by adding your membership, service experiences, and DLPT score; learn valuable techniques for marketing your language and cultural skills.

**Free Membership:** Becoming a member of NLSC is free!

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**Rusty Shughart** is a retiree of the U.S. federal government and the U.S. Air Force. He is a member of the leadership council of ATA’s Government Division and currently chairs the Government Linguist Outreach Task Force. Contact: russ4ata@yahoo.com.

For complete details, check out [www.nlscorps.org](http://www.nlscorps.org).
Women and Machine Translation

It has always bothered me that there seems to be a serious under-representation of women who are involved in the development of machine translation (MT). Since it didn’t make much sense for me, a man, to write and complain about that, I asked three women—Lynne Bowker, Sharon O’Brien, and Vassilina Nikoulina—who are involved in MT in academics and development to discuss the topic with me. It ended up being a phenomenal exchange (with me on the receiving rather than the giving side). Without further ado, here it is.

Jost: I’m so glad that the three of you are willing to talk with me about women in MT development and women in the academic pursuit of MT. But first, would you mind introducing yourselves?

Lynne: I grew up in Canada and received my initial BA in translation. I’m a certified French>English translator (Association of Translators and Interpreters of Ontario) and worked briefly for the Canadian government within the Translation Bureau and as a freelancer before studying for my graduate degree. I received an MA in translation from the University of Ottawa in the early 1990s, when I became interested in technologies for terminologists and translators, which were just beginning to emerge on the market. I continued my studies in language engineering and earned a PhD from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. My first academic job was at Dublin City University in Ireland, where I taught both translation and computational linguistics. In 2000, I returned to Canada and am currently a full professor at the University of Ottawa with a cross-appointment between the School of Translation and Interpretation and the School of Information Studies.

Jost: Let me add one more thing to that, Lynne. You were also recently chosen as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Congratulations!

Sharon: I received a BA in applied languages (with French and German) from Dublin City University, in what was effectively a translator training program. In my final year, the instructors introduced us to the translation system from ALPNET, after which I was hooked on translation technology! I had the opportunity to do a master’s research project with the Eurotra project, an ambitious machine translation project established and funded by the European Commission from 1978 to 1992, where I investigated the effectiveness of MT for “sublanguage” (or language for special purposes). Afterwards, I moved to Luxembourg for a three-month internship with the European Parliament. During this time, I had the pleasure of using the DOS version of the Trados Alignment tool for three whole months (i.e., T-Align, the precursor to WinAlign) to align translations in 11 languages of the CVs of members of Parliament so the translation memories (TM) could be used for the upcoming elections.

Somehow, this qualified me as a “language technology specialist” for a localization company in Dublin that was interested in introducing Trados into its workflow. My job was to define the localization processes with a TM tool and train and support the translators. At one point, a very adventurous client wanted to test MT (which was still known as rule-based MT at the time), so I was responsible for that project. After a few years of working in the localization sector, I decided the time was right to get a PhD and that MT and post-editing was an interesting topic. I went back to Dublin City University and completed that PhD in 2006, after which I became a faculty member within the university’s School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies.

My message to MT researchers is that the translation studies and professional translation community is here, and we have a lot to offer and are open for collaboration. Develop with us not for us.

Vassilina: I grew up in Russia where I completed my initial studies in applied mathematics. I arrived in France at the École Polytechnique in 2003, where I completed the equivalent of a master’s degree in computer science. I got acquainted with MT during my first internship at Systran in 2005. Despite my mathematical background, I’ve always been interested in foreign language studies, which is why I decided to pursue research in MT. I completed a PhD focused around statistical MT at the University of Grenoble and Xerox Research Center in Europe (XRCE) in 2010. Afterward, I kept working on MT and other topics related to natural language processing within Xerox Research in Grenoble. In 2017, Naver, Korea’s leading internet portal company, acquired XRCE. As a follow-up of this acquisition, I had a chance to spend 10 months with the team working on Papago¹ (Naver’s MT engine) in Korea in 2019. It was a great and challenging experience that allowed me to transition from the MT research world to its practical application, and at the same time act as an active MT user in my everyday life. (I used Papago MT every day, several times a day!) I’m now back in France conducting my usual research
activities, but I try to keep in touch with Papago colleagues and collaborate on different MT-related subjects.

**J** Great. Let's start then. Do you think it's true that there is a difference between the number of women working with MT in academia and industry?

**L** This seems a bit anecdotal. Are there any statistics on how many women work with MT in academia/industry versus how many men? Unfortunately, I don't know of any statistics, and I really don't have a good grip on the nature of the gender imbalance other than in the most vague or general way. Also, “working with MT” covers a lot of ground—user versus developer and everything in between.

**J** Thanks for pointing that out. I checked with the group program manager for MT at Microsoft and he pointed me to a document that showed that of all the technical roles at Microsoft, approximately 20% are held by women.² He confirmed that this percentage is approximately the same for MT development. And it’s indeed “MT development” that I had hoped to focus on in our discussion, but if you have insights on different kinds of usage between female and male users, I would be very interested in that as well.

**L** As I mentioned earlier, I work at the University of Ottawa’s School of Translation and Interpretation, where one of our goals is to educate language professionals in the use of translation tools (both computer-assisted translation and MT). So, most of my MT-related attention focuses on the user perspective. I don’t work directly in tool development per se, and the students I work with don’t usually go on to work in development either. Like me, they are language professionals and language researchers who have an interest in how translation technology is used by language professionals and others. In my experience, both in Dublin and in Ottawa, the development work is more often being done by researchers in computer science departments. Of course, there’s conversation between the translation school and the computer science department, but the development work is principally driven by the computer science researchers. Here in Ottawa, we also have the National Research Council of Canada, which has a very active research and development team working on language technologies, including MT (e.g., the Portage system).

Although there are some women researchers in both the university computer science department and at the National Research Council of Canada, they are certainly in the minority. In contrast, women are in the majority at the School of Translation and Interpretation, particularly in the student body. So, in my experience, women researchers are more often found working on the user side of MT, while the development side is more dominated by male researchers.

**V** I’m on the side of MT development, and the observation here is the same as for computer science in general. There are many more men than women in this domain. I’m not sure that there is a difference between the industry and academia, though it seems that it’s already the case among computer science graduates, who seem to be “equally” (?) distributed between industry and academia.

**S** My experience would be similar to Lynne’s. If we’re focusing only on MT “development,” then the majority are male, but I see a growing number of female academics in computer science in general and in the field of natural language processing specifically. However, I think this represents the traditional gender imbalances between science and humanities. If, on the other hand, we broaden out what we mean by “working” with MT, then the picture is more positive. I know of many women working in MT client support, MT evaluation, MT process integration, and MT usage.

**J** Maybe I’m barking up the wrong tree here, but don’t you think that academia (i.e., research) and development work very closely together in the case of MT?

**S** Yes, that has been my experience, but I wouldn’t say it’s true of all researchers’ experience. The research funding agencies are increasingly requiring collaboration with commercial and nonprofit organizations and are (quite rightly) demanding evidence of “impact” for the “citizens” they represent. We’ll hopefully see more collaboration as a result. The challenge for those of us in translation studies is to ensure that we’re not last-minute add-ons to projects that simply tick a box. My message to MT researchers is that the translation studies and professional translation community is here, and we have a lot to offer and are open for collaboration. Develop with us not for us.
Yes, academics and developers do work closely in the case of MT, but at the moment the academics are coming more often from computer science departments than from translation departments. But I agree with Sharon that things are moving in a positive direction. So-called “action” or “participatory” research, which originated in the population and public health domains, is being adopted more widely now and is very relevant to MT research. In a nutshell, participatory research means that researchers are taking steps to include the communities that their work is intended to help more fully in the research process. As Sharon notes, the idea is that the community (e.g., MT users) would not be an afterthought but would be more active participants in the research design process as well. In this way, the research and resulting tools would hopefully better meet the needs of users.

So, you don’t think that MT would benefit from proactively working with linguists as part of their development teams? I have admittedly asked developers this question a number of times, both in the areas of statistical and neural machine translation, and have typically received strongly worded answers—which I will not disclose here—but I would be interested in what you have to say about this.

That’s an interesting question. I’ve worked with linguists on several occasions during my career (mostly on natural language processing problems other than MT), which has always been an enriching experience for me. The subject of my PhD was to explore whether syntax could improve statistical MT. The problem is that, so far, the impact of linguistic structures has been relatively limited, and outweighed by the gain from “more data” or “bigger model.”

In my understanding, both linguists and algorithms try to discover the regularities (and irregularities) of the language, or several languages at a time in the context of MT applications. Some of those regularities will be consistent across domains and others will change when we switch from one domain to another (e.g., conversational language versus news articles). The algorithms have far more capacities to adapt to the context/domin switch given that those algorithms have access to the relevant data. Therefore, linguists would have a hard time to compete with machines on the tasks where the data is abandoned. However, when we switch to lower resource tasks, including the translation from very low resource languages, or some translation for very specific domains, we would definitely benefit from the linguistic insights, which could guide MT developers in the design of algorithms.

So, to answer your question, yes, I do believe that linguists could help with MT development when the data is limited or sometimes inexistent. If we go beyond MT tasks (which is pretty well defined), in natural language processing in general, I do believe that linguists’ insights are precious in formulating new challenging tasks for natural language processing. And this is how progress is made.

The move to data-driven MT seemed to reduce the importance of linguistics—and of linguists. The improvements of MT output, thanks to neural MT, could be seen as limiting the role of linguists even further. However, there is another way of looking at it. To move neural MT output to the next level, the issues that need to be resolved are linguistic issues (e.g., gender in language, style, register, and cohesion, etc.). I think it would be a big mistake for MT developers to assume that this is just a machine learning problem that will be solved by data.

I believe a study by Pierre Isabelle, who served as the principal scientist and group leader of the interactive language technologies group at the National Research Council of Canada, and his colleagues is a good illustration of what Sharon is saying. This study creates a challenging test set to evaluate the capacities of various MT systems to handle various linguistic phenomena. On the other hand, what this work and a follow-up work show is that even if not perfect, current MT systems are making progress in handling those phenomena.

I think it’s not only about the data. The data itself is multidimensional. Various factors are important, such as the amount of data, the quality of data, and diversity of data. But it’s also about the algorithms, which evolve and are able to handle more data and get more out of the data. For example, in 2019, Naver, which was an early pioneer in the use of user-generated content, released an update to Papago, its automated translation app. The update allows the user to control the register of produced translation, including rendering English into honorific Korean. There is a combination of data and smarter algorithms behind this feature. So, to a certain extent, some of the problems cited by Sharon could be partially addressed by more/better data and smarter algorithms. But we definitely need more challenging datasets and better evaluation procedures to progress further. Algorithms such as bilingual evaluation understudy (BLEU) scores won’t be able to trace this kind of progress.

Is there a threshold for women to get into this field, and what is the path to become part of it?

Is the threshold specific to MT, or does it apply more broadly to tech or even science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)? Are there genuinely fewer women in the field, or do women just have a lower visibility? For instance, in academia overall (across all disciplines), there are nearly as many women as men, but when you get to the senior positions (e.g., full professor), the men account for about 70-75% of the posts, and the women just 25-30% (in Canada, anyway). 

So, the imbalance is not in the total number but in the distribution, with men all bunched up in the senior ranks and women all bunched up in the lower ranks. And this is across all disciplines, so not really tech-specific. Generalized explanations that are given are that women are penalized by taking maternity leave, by having or wanting to do more of the caregiving (both for children and elderly parents), or that they are paid significantly less and so don’t feel motivated to work twice as hard. But I’ve seen specific studies on this problem in academia and specific studies on gender pay gap issues, but I’ve never seen specific studies on the MT field.
If you want to work in MT development, you need to have some background in coding, which is not typically part of a degree in languages or translation. Maybe it should be! But at present, it’s not the norm. In Canada, this usually means studying computer science, or some other program that has a strong software engineering component. It’s pretty common nowadays for graduate programs in computer science to offer courses in natural language processing, whereas graduate programs in translation offer courses in translation technologies that focus on technology use rather than on its development. So, to my mind, the most typical path to MT development would be through a computer science program rather than through a translation program. There certainly seem to be fewer women in computer science programs at the present time, though there are initiatives to increase the number of women in the STEM fields, so hopefully we’ll see progress in this regard moving forward.

Researchers are taking steps to include the communities that their work is intended to help more fully into the research process.

As far as I know, it’s generally encouraged to increase diversity in the computer science field in general, and MT development is a subfield of computer science in this context. Both companies and universities strongly encourage qualified women candidates to apply for jobs, and various programs exist to make women’s presence in the field stronger. I don’t think one can define any “threshold,” though as I mentioned previously women are already under-represented in computer science departments.

Any imbalance in the field of MT mirrors the imbalance in STEM. In my institution, I see proactive efforts to address this issue—not just in STEM but in computer science and natural language processing as well—by seeking to increase the number of women studying in these fields. In fact, at the ADAPT Centre for Digital Content Technology at Dublin City University, there are currently seven men and 10 women, the latter ranging from the level of professor, through research fellow, post-doc, PhD, and project staff.

There’s another issue here that I think is equally important, which is interdisciplinarity. As Lynne says, the route for anyone into MT development is normally through a computer science (or related) degree. Most MT developers “see” the world through that lens. In MT development and deployment, that typically led to a focus on measuring “success” in computational ways (through BLEU scores, for example), using data that was limited and not checked for quality. Increases in BLEU scores (or equivalent) are emphasized rather than an impact on end users. Having people on your MT development team with linguistic, translation, and human-computer interaction skills in general means that you have a much stronger team who see the world through different lenses. This should ultimately make your science and technology more robust and acceptable. The big issue for me is not how many women are working with MT, but how many people from different disciplines are contributing to the development and measurement of success.

What I think I’m hearing all three of you say is that people with linguistic skills would be helpful. And if that’s the case, do they necessarily need the coding and STEM skills you mention? (Although, I really like Lynne’s suggestion that coding should probably be part of translation programs!)

Yes, but a considerable challenge is bridging gaps. Therefore, it makes sense for the computational people to understand translation (and translators and end users of translation) and for linguists to understand coding. We’ve started to address this in our MSc in translation technology program, where our students used to take a course in Java programming (now moving to Python). This course is also delivered to students in other faculties, and I don’t mind boasting that our students do really well, probably because they “get” language. This opens the door for them into MT development companies, where they will not necessarily do coding but will understand what’s going on. Other master’s programs have also started to introduce coding modules.

I totally agree with Sharon. I think it’s important that we “speak the same language” to better work together.

At the moment, our translation program doesn’t include coding, although students could certainly take this as an elective. There are some humanities coding courses offered, such as through the digital humanities minor. But we don’t have a program specifically dedicated to translation technology, as Sharon describes at Dublin City University. For many years, universities were very discipline-based, and so language and computing were essentially in separate silos. But in the past 50 years or so, interdisciplinarity has begun to emerge. In the early days, it was mostly just lip service since the longstanding siloed structures of academia made it difficult to put into action. However, these structural hurdles are gradually disappearing, and I suspect that as universities continue to embrace interdisciplinarity, more programs such as “translation technology” will appear. And it’s in this interdisciplinary space that people can be properly supported to develop hybrid skill sets (e.g., language plus coding) and then go on to act as bridges.

Would this field look different if more women were present? Both and maybe separately in academia and industry. Would MT itself be different?

I’m not sure how the men/women parity would transform the field of MT development. What would be interesting is if MT developers started to work closely with MT users (who, as Lynne mentioned, are mostly women). That could definitely push MT research in a slightly different direction, which could benefit both sides (MT developers and MT users).
Some very interesting recent work on gender bias in MT has been done by Eva Vanmassenhove, who recently completed her PhD on MT at the School of Computing at Dublin City University and who is now an assistant professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. Vanmassenhove looked at how corpus-based MT systems, such as neural MT systems, can perpetuate and even exaggerate any gender bias found in the training corpora. So, this is a case where a woman MT researcher explored the topic of gender bias, and perhaps that’s a topic that would not necessarily have been investigated as readily by a man. Thanks to this work, Google Translate has undertaken to seek ways to reduce gender bias in their system, which means that the MT output of tomorrow will hopefully look different than the MT output of today. I also agree with Vassilina that finding ways to bring MT developers and those who study user issues in MT together for more conversations is also important. And I think there actually has been improvement in this area in recent years. The MT Summit conferences, as well as some European Association for MT conferences are increasingly offering different “tracks” (e.g., research and development track, user track, etc.), which offer opportunities for people with different interests in MT to come together and share and learn from each other. Let’s hope this trend continues!

This is a difficult question to answer without simply speculating, but I find myself echoing the thoughts of Vassilina and Lynne. Much more emphasis has been placed recently on the end user experience of MT. This has actually been driven from the translation side of the house (for obvious reasons), the majority of whom are women. We want to know how good MT is, for what types of text, domains, for which use-case scenarios, and how it impacts a wide variety of users. We are also asking questions about ethics, fair use, etc. (Although this discussion is not only driven by women!) The field is much richer when different types of researchers and users come together. I would like to see more of that!

I really want to thank you for this conversation. I learned so much. I also want to thank you all for your work and the thoughtfulness with which you conduct it.

Remember, if you have any ideas and/or suggestions regarding helpful resources or tools you would like to see featured, please e-mail Jost Zetzsche at jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.

NOTES
Cognitive Testing Using an Interpreter

(The following was originally published on the blog of ATA’s Interpreters Division, www.ata-divisions.org/ID/blog.)

I recently completed an interpreting assignment between a developmental psychologist and a child with autism during which the child was given a cognitive test. I have done many of these sessions over the years and remember being disappointed on several occasions that the session didn't go as smoothly as I would have liked. I always wished I could have done more to help create a better experience for both the child and the provider—more like a monolingual test.

There are several challenges that are introduced in the evaluation room by having a second language in the mix. Interpreters are trained to use the first person when speaking for the provider and for the child. So, imagine a female provider showing the child three toy cars of different sizes and saying, “Hand me the little one.” In the child’s language, should the interpreter say, “Hand me the little one,” or “Hand her the little one”? Either way, it would be confusing for the child.

If the child is verbal and is learning English as a second language, the mere act of interpreting during the session can sometimes be misunderstood by the child as a correction. They get confused about which language they are supposed to use and feel discouraged from the start.

It’s also difficult for the interpreter to know how much encouragement, clarification of instructions, redirection of focus, and deal-making to offer. In a monolingual setting, the provider can immediately react to the child’s cues with the appropriate response. Typically, the interpreter is not trained or authorized to make those choices.

PLANNING AHEAD

In this recent session, I knew about the test far enough in advance and asked permission to reach out to the provider so we could arrive at some strategies I would now like to share. We spoke by phone, exchanged email, and then met briefly before the family arrived on the day of testing. I didn’t bill for the one hour of preparation time. I was paid a two-hour minimum fee and felt that my total work time was compensated.

The provider, whom I’ll call Nicole, had studied Italian, the primary language of the child. That was clearly a huge asset. I’m not sure whether or not our strategies would have worked had the provider lacked this basic knowledge of the child’s language. Nicole acknowledged that she couldn’t conduct the evaluation in Italian, but she felt confident she could understand the child’s utterances and would understand my interactions with the child in Italian. That eliminated the need for me to interpret from Italian into English and the resulting dynamic where the child might feel scolded or corrected by hearing the rendition.

Nicole reviewed the various tasks of the test in advance and showed me how most of the commands could be done without using any pronouns representing the provider or the interpreter. (For example: “Which one of these pictures goes here?” “Put the picture here.” “Watch. Make one like this. Now you do it.” “Count the blocks. How many blocks are in the pile?” “Touch the shape that goes in this pattern.” “Touch the letter L.”)

There was one task involving hand movements that was different in this regard, so we decided I would model the three hand movements (like in the game Rock Paper Scissors) and the provider would observe and take notes of the child’s response. The commands were, “Watch my hand and do what I do. Ready? Now you try.” I was to follow the illustrations in a testing book. The sequence of hand movements got progressively longer. Nicole told me that if the child made three mistakes in a row, we would stop and move on to the next task. This was also the guideline with all the tasks in the test.

Before the session, Nicole showed me how the testing books prop up with their own binder on a flat surface. They’re printed like a flip chart so that the child sees an illustration on one side and the provider sees instructions on the back side. The exact words that the provider is to say are printed in a bright red font. For many of the tasks, I was able to simply do a quick sight translation of those red words into Italian without needing Nicole to say them first in English.

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Nicole’s familiarity with Italian afforded her a level of comfort, so she gave me her blessing to offer the child verbal encouragement (e.g., “Come on, you can do it!”), clarifications on the instructions (e.g., “Do it here on the table.”), re-directions (e.g., “Can you please put all four legs of the chair on the floor?”), and deal-making (e.g., “When you finish this task, you’ll get a snack.”). The obvious warning was that I was not to give the child any hints of the correct response during testing. There are one or two designated teaching examples for each task when the child is coached a little toward the correct answer, but no coaching is allowed after those are done.

Since this child, like many children, had a short attention span, it was helpful that there were two of us. I was able to put away the props from one task while Nicole got out the next set of props. Thus we avoided creating dead time and maintained the child’s collaboration. This extra help, of course, is optional.

I feel strongly that if interpreters and psychologists can plan together in this way, the evaluation can go much more smoothly and quickly and lead to more accurate results.

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In the January/February issue, just before the pandemic, I wrote about whether remote simultaneous interpreting (RSI) was the next best thing. While I’m pleased with the completely accidental timing of my article, I didn’t have a crystal ball then and I certainly don’t have one now, but I think we can all agree that the future has arrived much sooner than we expected.

Almost overnight, RSI went from being something we were discussing as a profession but infrequently doing to something we do frequently. We had to struggle to adapt and learn. We still have a lot of work to do on all fronts (including fee schedules, working conditions, dealing with acoustic shock, and client education), but I would like to share some of my experiences doing RSI on the platform that my clients have chosen, for better or for worse: Zoom.

In the spring, all interpreting work disappeared for about a month or so as my clients, including federal courts, law firms, court reporting firms, and some interpreting agencies figured out ways to continue working remotely. Much interpreting work was soon moved online. (It’s a good thing we live in 2020 and not in 1980 or even 2000, when technology was not advanced enough to permit widespread remote work.)

My law firm clients, figuring their civil cases couldn’t be delayed indefinitely, took to Zoom relatively quickly. It was all consecutive, though. While I’ve done dozens of depositions, examinations under oath, and arbitrations in consecutive mode via Zoom, I wanted to be ready for simultaneous conference interpreting work via Zoom. I’ve used several other interpreting platforms that are designed around the needs of professional conference interpreters but have had a tough time convincing clients to use them, their main question to me being: “Why don’t we just use Zoom?” My arguments in favor of these other platforms seem to fall on deaf ears, which is frustrating but also understandable from their point of view, as clients tend to want simple solutions that are affordable and can easily be used by non-linguists such as deponents with limited technical skills.

But what about conference interpreting? I figured it would be back at some point, perhaps in remote or hybrid form (such as hubs, which are now relatively widespread in Europe), and I wanted to be ready on all platforms. The in-person conference interpreting assignments I had booked for March were all canceled and no remote option was offered, but I figured it was only a matter of time. Since I had some experience using dedicated interpreting platforms but not Zoom, I set out to learn how to do it. This is where the amazing interpreting community came in.

My colleague Ernest Niño-Murcia, a federal court interpreter, and his teammates Tamber Hilton and Aimee Benavides, also federal court interpreters, had been posting extensively on their efforts to learn and do simultaneous interpreting via Zoom, and had shared successes and frustrations that I found incredibly helpful. (Ernest, Tamber, and Aimee have joined together to form T.E.A. Language Solutions, offering RSI training and technical support for interpreters and clients, which fills an important need.)

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In the middle of this pandemic, one realizes that there’s a great community out there, trying to help each other adapt to our new, and oftentimes scary, interpreting world. Reading about it is one thing, but I needed to practice, and Ernest and Tamber graciously agreed to train me and one of my interpreting partners, Anabella Tidona in Los Angeles.

We spent several hours one evening practicing handovers between interpreters and shared the frustration of not being able to hear each other when you interpret. (We’ve solved this with a second device and a WhatsApp call that’s always active.) We ran through scenarios when the interpreter is
I’ve used several other interpreting platforms that are designed around the needs of professional conference interpreters but have had a tough time convincing clients to use them.

the host, including how to assign ourselves and others as interpreters. Because the Zoom interface for participants is different than the one interpreters see during a session, we practiced using this interface. Gaining this perspective will allow us to more easily offer participants basic assistance when they can’t hear (e.g., “You’re on the wrong channel!”). I had never used Zoom simultaneous before and was incredibly grateful to Ernest, Tamber, and Aimee for sharing their expertise for free. They asked Anabella and me to pay it forward and train other colleagues, which we’re currently doing.

Relatively quickly after our training session, Anabella and I received our first request to interpret a meeting via Zoom using simultaneous, and the client was delighted that we knew the basics. Since then, we’ve interpreted for more than 20 meetings, conference calls, and webinars, and most of them have worked quite well using some necessary workarounds. (We’ve also submitted requests to Zoom to fix the known issues.) My latest gadget is a cell phone holder with a ring light so I don’t have to prop my phone up against a stack of books for the WhatsApp call. This holder was recommended to me by an interpreting partner, and purchased with a gift certificate from another colleague, Maria Baker, whom I helped solve a different interpreting challenge. It all came full circle! I’m grateful for the work, the friends, and colleagues and can see some silver linings.

NOTES

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Our Extremely Diverse (Translation) World

I've known Kirti Vashee for many years, and you also likely know him from his eMpty Pages blog,1 where he writes about the translation world, especially machine translation (MT), and generously gives space to other experts to publish their views. His interest in MT is not a coincidence as he has worked for a number of MT providers, including the statistical MT pioneers Language Weaver and Asia Online (today: Omniscien) and, lately, SDL. Therefore, I was really surprised to hear Kirti say the following a few weeks ago during a panel he chaired on MT as part of the MultiLingual Summer Series: “We in the technology space make the mistake to see ‘human translators’ as a monolithic group. They are not—they have widely varying abilities.”2

As in virtually any discussion on MT, that panel also discussed how MT will impact translators. Very often we hear a similar refrain from MT experts regarding this: “Translators are important and will continue to play a crucial role as post-editors of machine translation.” But what Kirti said was clearly different. And then, almost as a continuation of that comment, he wrote a blog post entitled “The Premium Translation Market: Hiding In Plain Sight,” where he thoughtfully explores the “premium market” versus the “bulk market” and “value-added market” and ponders the continuum that exists between them.3 I encourage you to read his post if you haven’t already. As one might expect, it caused quite a social media stir. Since I was on vacation when it first posted, I read it after my return and have been thinking a lot about it.

There are some minor things that Kirti says (or where he quotes others) that I don’t agree with—mostly concerning a too-strict definition of what a “premium translator” can or cannot do. But I really like other concepts, especially the continuum of the market, meaning that there are many variations between the polar ends of bulk and premium, and it might often be impossible to actually classify any given activity within that continuum.

As I thought some more about it, however, and tried to place myself and my work as a translator into the linearity of that continuum model, I realized that this paradigm doesn’t necessarily work. Here’s what I think. The translation world is much more varied than you or I or really anyone knows.

One of the reasons for this third dimension is the role of expertise in things other than “just” various levels of subject matter expertise and a comprehensive understanding of the industry in which you work. For example, this dimension might include skills in data management and the technical savvy to use that well-managed data for a given client.

Consider my favorite client, for example. Due to this client’s workflow, translation work is charged by the word, which is often not the most ideal scenario. I charge about twice the rate quoted in Kirti’s post for the “value-added market” (I’ve been the go-to German translator for this particular end-client for more than 15 years), but in reality I’m typically able to bill a multiple of that. Why? Because my translation memory management is better than my client’s. (And my client is completely aware of this and has no issue with it.)

I know this is not a one-off case. With any client for whom I’ve worked for more than a year or two, the quality of my translation memory and the termbase I’ve maintained for that client and the ones that are provided by the client should be identical. But they always start to diverge, with mine being much more valuable and complete and—increasingly—profitable. I’m certain that any experienced translator in a similar situation will be able to verify that.

Now, according to the guidelines that Kirti’s post suggests, I don’t work for the “premium market.” For instance, I don’t meet with C-level executives of my client, I don’t do this particular client/subject matter full time, and—probably most importantly—the kinds of materials I translate are not really those that, according to Kirti’s post, fall under the rubric of “premium” materials. But

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1. eMpty Pages
2. Vashee, Kirti. “We in the technology space make the mistake to see ‘human translators’ as a monolithic group. They are not—they have widely varying abilities.”
in the 3-D continuum model, I both provide a premium product and am being paid a premium price.

I’m not telling you this to highlight my own work or value as a translator. Instead, I would like to point out one thing (maybe one-and-a-half things). We operate in an extremely diverse (translation) world, and none of us has seen it in its entirety. I think this is fantastic and something to celebrate. This means that anyone who suggests that our world is going through inescapable technological or other changes might very well be the truth from their particular perspective, but that perspective might be completely opposite to yours or mine. Clearly, we need to be aware of what’s happening with the market, with technology, and especially with processes driven by artificial intelligence, and we need to understand them at least conceptually. And then we need to make educated decisions about how and whether to integrate them into our processes—or not.

The other “half” that I would like to conclude from all of this is that translation memory management pays off! It always does. As an individual translator, you cannot leave it up to your long-standing clients to maintain the translation memory by themselves. They might very well do that, but you’ll be better at it, and you’ll benefit greatly.

NOTES
1. You can find the eMpTy Pages blog at http://kv-emptypages.blogspot.com.

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The year 2020 is one that few people will likely forget or look back on fondly. The severity of the pandemic combined with—in the U.S. at least—various social issues has upended many lives. For ATAs Certification Program, the effects have manifested themselves in two interrelated outcomes: a sharp reduction in exam sittings owing to local restrictions on gatherings, and a renewed focus on providing a remote online testing option.

In the early months of the crisis, as most areas were in some form of lockdown, several previously scheduled exam sittings had to be canceled, and it was not until July that a protocol was developed for holding sittings safely. Since then, four sittings have been held involving 30 candidates—a far cry from the more than 400 people who take the exam in a typical year.

The difficulties of holding in-person sittings can be obviated by adopting a workable model for administering the exam remotely (i.e., with candidates taking it at home on their own computer). This has long been an aspiration of the Certification Program, but past efforts to move in that direction have been stymied by an inability to identify vendors that can meet our requirements with regard to language/keyboard support, internet access, and, above all, security. Still, great strides have been made in the remote testing sector, even before the pandemic spurred greater interest in and demand for a variety of offerings. At this point, I can say that we’re very optimistic about having a home testing option in place within the next year without compromising any of our standards.

Another challenge facing the Certification Committee is the implementation of the Knapp review. Last winter, the Board commissioned Knapp & Associates International to review the 2000 Hamm Report with an eye to validating its findings. Knapp concluded that the vast majority of Hamm’s recommendations remain valid, so the Committee was tasked with drawing up a roadmap for implementing the Knapp review findings or—where appropriate—presenting justification for not implementing individual recommendations.

During a Zoom meeting in July, the Certification Committee developed such a preliminary roadmap, which it presented to the Board. The identified short-term goals include formulating a more definitive statement describing the level of performance targeted by the credential (which has since been completed), developing a discipline policy to address behavior or practices that are unacceptable to the Certification Program (to be implemented in conjunction with the Ethics Committee), and reconsidering the current appeals policy. Medium-term objectives include developing an online grader training module, formulating revised eligibility requirements, exploring ways to give candidates more feedback on their performance, and establishing high-level strategic goals. Much of this will be rather labor-intensive, and progress will depend on efforts made by dedicated volunteers. But the Certification Committee will press forward, always in the interest of enhancing the status of ATA Certification.

This is my last column as Certification Committee chair. It’s been my honor to serve in that position for six years, after five years as deputy chair. During that period, the program has undergone many changes, not least of all the final transition to computerized testing. I’m confident that the Certification Program will remain a robust asset no matter what challenges arise, under the capable leadership of Michele Hansen and Larry Bogoslaw.

NOTES

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