Product-Centric Translation

Using a Database to Answer Real-Life Questions

From the President
Caitilin Walsh
president@atanet.org

Your Voice

With the election season behind us (though recounts are still happening in my neck of the woods), I have been thinking about participation recently, both in terms of voting and contribution to the greater good.

In terms of ATA, the first step for all of us in participating is joining. By signing on the dotted line, we state that we wish to be part of a group of fellow translators and interpreters who strive for professionalism. We agree to follow and uphold ATA’s Code of Ethics and Professional Practice—no small feat.

We know that people who take the additional step of signing up for divisions and participating in online discussion groups, and those who attend conferences and webinars, quickly realize the value of membership, and keep coming back. Like so many other things in life, taking risks and stepping out of our comfort zones generate real benefit.

When ATA was created by a handful of visionaries, the impetus was inclusive rather than exclusive, that is, everyone was welcome to move the profession forward, no matter the role they play. We carry that ethos forward, welcoming all. Our founders made a decision to tier membership between practitioners and supporters, and the familiar Active and Associate membership categories were born.

Historically, the vast majority of members were always “active” and voting members. Over the years, and with the growing acceptance of ATA certification, the percentage of Active members eroded slowly to become a minority, largely due to the increasing number of Associate members working in uncertified language pairs and the emergence of a cadre of increasingly professional interpreters. What great wealth these members bring us! And how much we have to gain by embracing them fully.

A couple of sentences on the ATA membership renewal form (and a link for the online version) leads to a short online form for Active Membership Review. It represents a Big Thing: a recommitment to our founding value that everyone is welcome in ATA. This simple act, an investment of about two minutes, opens doors to voting and serving the Association (that is, each other), and is the best way I can think of to honor the commitment of both our founders and current members.

Caitilin Walsh
Your Voice

American Translators Association
225 Reinekers Lane
Suite 590
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA
Tel: +1-703-683-6100
Fax: +1-703-683-6122
E-mail: Chronicle@atanet.org
Website: www.atanet.org

Editor
Jeff Sanfaçon
Jeff@atanet.org

Proofreader
Sandra Burns Thomson

Art Directors
Ellen Banker
Amy Peloff

Advertising
Caron Mason, CAE
advertising@atanet.org
+1-703-683-6100, ext. 3003
Fax: +1-703-683-6122

Membership and General Information
Lauren Mendell
lauren@atanet.org

Executive Director
Walter Bacak, CAE
walter@atanet.org

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Using a Database to Answer Real-Life Questions

By Andrene C. Everson

A database that tracks important parameters of your business can be an invaluable tool when you need answers fast.

Evolution of a Dictionary Project: An Interview with Javier F. Becerra

By Holly Behl

Javier F. Becerra reveals the many years of dedication behind his comprehensive Spanish-English legal dictionaries.


By Françoise Herrmann

Welcome to the World Intellectual Property Organization’s new database providing access to a wealth of multilingual scientific and technical terminology. The best part—it’s free!
Our Authors
January 2015

Holly Behl studied Spanish and linguistics at the University of Texas at Arlington and court interpreting at the Agnese Haury Institute. She works as a Spanish-English court interpreter in Dallas, Texas, where she serves as the president of the Metroplex Interpreters and Translators Association. She also writes about technology and interpreting on her blog, The Paperless Interpreter. Contact: holly@precisolanguage.com.

Andrene C. Everson has an MA in translation from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, as well as BAs in French, German, and biology. She has 19 years of experience providing freelance translation and editing services from both French (ATA-certified) and German into English, working mainly with scientific, business, international development, medical, and humanities texts. The latest of her several published book translations is a history of a Swiss chateau. She also recently enjoyed encouraging potential future linguists by designing and teaching an introductory high school French class. Contact: acetranslator@aol.com.

Françoise Herrmann is a freelance translator and interpreter for French and English (sometimes Spanish) based in San Francisco, California. She teaches patent translation and medical translation at New York University. She writes two blogs, one on patent translation (Patents on the Soles of Your Shoes) and one on medical translation (Billets Techniques TRADMED). Contact: fhermann@igr.org.

Uwe Muegge is vice-president of strategic technology solutions for OmniLingua Worldwide, LLC. He has more than 15 years of experience in translation and localization, having worked in leadership functions on both the vendor and buyer sides of the industry. He has published numerous articles on translation tools and processes and taught computer-assisted translation and terminology management courses at the college level in both the U.S. and Europe. In addition, he has been active in several standardization efforts; most recently as chair of ASTM F43.03 subcommittee on language translation. Contact: umuegge@omnilingua.com.

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The American Translators Association’s Board of Directors met November 8-9, 2014 in Chicago, Illinois, in conjunction with ATA’s 55th Annual Conference. Here are some highlights from the Board meeting.

Certification Decoupling: The Board discussed plans for communicating and implementing the decoupling of the Certification Program from membership. (This decision was approved at the October 2013 Board meeting.) Decoupling means that as of January 1, 2016, ATA membership will no longer be a requirement to take the exam or to be an ATA-certified translator. More information will be forthcoming once the plans are finalized.

Certification Committee: The Board approved the appointment of David Stephenson as the chair of the Certification Committee. He replaces Geoff Koby. David, who previously served as deputy chair, reported that Gertrud Champe was named deputy chair. At the Board meeting, David and Gertrud shared their plans for the Certification Program for the coming year. As ATA President Caitilin Walsh noted, ATA is fortunate to have the great continuity this key committee has exhibited over the years.

Business Practices Education Committee: The Board approved the appointment of Frieda Ruppaner-Lind as the chair of the Business Practices Education Committee. She replaces Paula Gordon. The Board was also informed of the new moderators for the Business Practices list: Frieda, May Fung Danis, and Susanne van Eyl. (The list is a valuable forum to get practical advice and learn from others who have been in your shoes: www.atanet.org/business_practices/bp_listserv.php.)

Chronicle Review: The Board approved the establishment of the Chronicle Review Task Force. The Board approved the appointment of Corinne McKay (chair), Jeffrey Alfonso, Chris Durban, Sandra Burns Thomson, and Thomas L. West III to the Task Force. The group will review the content, format, and delivery method of The ATA Chronicle.

Standards. The Board was briefed on current and pending translation and interpreting standards. The Board consensus was that ATA’s Standards Committee should continue to monitor all related standards. In addition, the Board emphasized the need to communicate with the ATA membership how these standards will affect the average translator, interpreter, and languages services company owner.

The Board meeting summary is posted online. The meeting minutes will be available online once they are approved by the Board at its next meeting. Past meeting summaries and minutes are posted online at www.atanet.org/membership/minutes.php.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for February 7-8, 2015, with the location to be determined. Board meetings are open to all members, and members are encouraged to attend.

Be Sure to Renew. Membership renewals have been mailed. It’s easy to renew online, if you prefer. Just go to www.atanet.org/renew. Thank you for your support and membership in 2014. We look forward to serving you in 2015!
ATA wishes to thank all of our sponsors and exhibitors for helping to make this conference such a success!

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ATA wishes to thank all of the volunteers from chapters, affiliates, and other groups who staffed their tables during the Annual Conference in Chicago.

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Thank you for your past support and for renewing for 2015.
Lewis Galantière Award
Juliet Winters Carpenter

Juliet Winters Carpenter, of Kyoto, Japan, is the recipient of the 2014 Lewis Galantière Award for her translation from the Japanese of Minae Mizumura’s *A True Novel* (Other Press, 2013).

*A True Novel* is a retelling of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* set in postwar Japan. The story begins in New York in the 1960s, where the reader meets Taro, a relentlessly ambitious Japanese immigrant trying to make his fortune. Flashbacks and multilayered stories reveal his life: an impoverished upbringing as an orphan, his eventual rise to wealth and success despite racial and class prejudice, and an obsession with a girl from an affluent family that has haunted him all of his life. The novel then widens into an examination of Japan’s westernization and the emergence of a middle class. The winner of Japan’s prestigious Yomiuri Literature Prize, Minae has written a novel that reveals, above all, the power of storytelling.

Juliet, an American translator of modern Japanese literature, has translated more than 60 Japanese works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Elana Seplow-Jolley, former managing editor of Other Press, states that Juliet’s “fluid translation provides English-speaking readers the opportunity to understand why Minae Mizumura is one of the most important novelists writing in Japan today.” Her translation of *A True Novel* also was runner-up for the 2014 Best Translated Book Award (Three Percent) in the fiction category and won the 2014 Next Generation Indie Books Grand Prize for Fiction (Independent Book Publishing Professionals Group).

Born in the American Midwest, Juliet studied Japanese literature at the University of Michigan and the Inter-University Center for Japanese Language Studies in Tokyo. After completing her graduate studies in 1973, she returned to Japan in 1975, where she became involved in translation efforts and teaching. She is a professor at Doshisha Women’s College of Liberal Arts in Kyoto, and was involved in the Japanese Literature Publishing Project, a national program established to promote translations of Japanese literature—including *A True Novel*. Her translation of Kobo Abe’s novel *Secret Rendezvous* won the 1980 Japan-United States Friendship Commission Prize for the Translation of Japanese Literature. *A True Novel* will receive the same award in February 2015, making Juliet the first translator ever to win that prestigious award twice.

Minae Mizumura, of Tokyo, Japan, is a novelist currently writing in the Japanese language. She also writes essays and literary criticism in major newspapers and journals. Educated in the U.S., she wrote her first published work in the English language, a scholarly essay on the literary criticism of Paul de Man. She is often portrayed as a Japanese novelist who questions the conventional boundaries of national literature. Her other novels, not yet available in English, include *Light and Darkness Continued*, *An “I” Novel from Left to Right*, and *Inheritance from Mother*. Minae has taught at Princeton University, the University of Michigan, and Stanford University. She was a resident novelist in the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in 2003. She has won the 1996 Noma New Artist Award, the 2003 Yomiuri Prize for Literature, and the 2012 Osaragi Jiro Award.

The Lewis Galantière Award is bestowed biennially in even-numbered years for a distinguished book-length literary translation from any language, except German, into English. This award honors distinguished ATA founding member Lewis Galantière (1894-1977). His translations from French drama, fiction, poetry, and scholarship enriched cultural life during the middle decades of the 20th century, and are still being read over a quarter century after his death.
Harvie Jordan Scholarship
Rosario Charo Welle

Rosario Charo Welle, recently elected assistant administrator of ATA’s Spanish Language Division, is the recipient of the 2014 Harvie Jordan Scholarship. A freelance English>Spanish translator, editor, proofreader, and interpreter, Rosario is the owner of VerasWords Translations.

Since becoming a member of ATA in 2001, she has participated in the Spanish Language Division (SPD). In addition to her duties as assistant administrator, she currently serves as SPD’s webmaster and chair of its Website Committee. She was the editor of the division’s newsletter, Intercambios, from 2008 to 2010, and served a previous term as the division’s assistant administrator from 2010 to 2012. During her first term as assistant administrator, she helped integrate SPD newcomers into division and ATA activities. She maintained open and timely channels of communication and approachability with SPD members. She assisted and supported the work of the division to provide quality training and educational sessions during ATA’s Annual Conferences and SPD mid-year conferences. She also helped support and guide members of SPD’s Leadership Council and committees in carrying out their roles and activities. In her candidate statement for SPD assistant administrator, Rosario stated, “It is to my ATA membership and my active involvement in the SPD that I owe every accomplishment and my development as a professional translator.”

A native of the Dominican Republic, she has lived in the U.S. since 1993. She attended APEC University’s School of Languages from 1984 to 1987, where she studied English as a second language. She completed two years at Santiago Technology University as a student of modern languages. After moving to the U.S., she earned an associate of arts degree from Eastfield College, a BA in communication arts from the University of Denver, and a professional certificate in translation studies (English>Spanish) from the New York University School of Professional Studies.

In Santo Domingo, she had the opportunity to work for a non-governmental organization, where, in addition to other duties, she translated environmental documents from 1989 to 1991. For the past 14 years, her translation work has focused on the areas of education, communications, marketing and media, religion, and health care. She currently resides in Mesquite, Texas.

The Harvie Jordan Scholarship is awarded by the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation to a member of ATA’s Spanish Language Division in good standing to promote, encourage, and support leadership and professional development within the division.

ATA 2013-2014 School Outreach Contest
Jenny Stillo

ATA member Jenny Stillo won free registration to ATA’s 55th Annual Conference in Chicago for a photo taken during her visit to an advanced placement Spanish class at Crested Butte Community School in Crested Butte, Colorado, in May. Jenny’s session included several interactive activities with the students and incorporated ATA resources during the question-and-answer portion.

Jenny is a freelance translator and interpreter based in Crested Butte. In 2013, she received a certificate in translation from Arizona State University after two years of graduate work. Before her studies at Arizona State, Jenny had done various translation and interpreting jobs, but realized that being bilingual (Spanish/English) was not enough. She pursued formal training and honed her writing skills.

Jenny interprets for various medical clinics, health centers, and hotels in Gunnison County, Colorado. Although just starting out,
she has managed to get one of her translations featured in *The New York Times Style Magazine*. After receiving positive feedback from translation clients, Jenny is passionate about pursuing her translation career. She is actively seeking “the perfect” agency. She truly believes in the value and significance of her new profession and wanted to pass this message on to the students of the local community school. Jenny has taught Spanish for over 25 years to children and adults alike, and has successfully passed on the love of this second language. Now she feels the urge to inform her students of the exciting careers available to them as translators and interpreters.

The 2014-2015 School Outreach Contest is now open. The winner will receive free registration to ATA’s 56th Annual Conference in Miami, Florida, November 4-7, 2015. For more information, visit www.atanet.org/ata_school/school_outreach_contest.php.

*Contributed by Tess Whitty, ATA School Outreach Program Committee member and chair of ATA’s Chapters Committee.*

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**2015 Honors and Awards Now Open!**

ATA and the American Foundation for Translation and Interpretation (AFTI) present annual and biennial awards to encourage, reward, and publicize outstanding work done by both seasoned professionals and students. Awards and scholarships for 2015 include:

- **The Alexander Gode Medal**, ATA’s most prestigious award, is presented to an individual or institution for outstanding service to the translating and interpreting professions. This award may be given annually. Nominations are solicited from past recipients of the Gode Medal and the membership at large.

- **The Alicia Gordon Award for Word Artistry in Translation** is given for a translation (from French or Spanish into English, or from English into French or Spanish) in any subject that demonstrates the highest level of creativity in solving a particularly knotty translation problem. Open to ATA members in good standing.

- **The S. Edmund Berger Prize** is offered by AFTI to recognize excellence in scientific and technical translation by an ATA member. The award is given annually.

- **The Harvie Jordan Scholarship** is awarded to an ATA Spanish Language Division member in good standing to promote, encourage, and support leadership and professional development within the division. The scholarship is given annually.

- **The Marian S. Greenfield Financial Translation Presentation Award** is offered by AFTI to recognize an outstanding presenter of a financial translation session during ATA’s Annual Conference.

- **The Student Translation Award** is presented to any graduate or undergraduate student, or group of students, for a literary or sci-tech translation or translation-related project. The award is given annually.

- **The Ungar German Translation Award** is awarded for a distinguished literary translation from German into English published in the United States. The award is bestowed biennially in odd-numbered years.

For complete entry information and deadlines, visit www.atanet.org/membership/honorsandawards.php.

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**ATA Mentoring Program**

Each year, ATA’s Mentoring Program matches 30 mentees and mentors for a one-year mentorship period (April 15 to March 31). Mentees are selected through a competitive application process. ATA membership is required. Enrollment for the 2015 mentoring class is now open. Applications for both mentees and mentors will be accepted through March 7, 2015. Interested? Don’t wait! This will be your only opportunity to enroll in 2015. Look for the application form and additional details by visiting www.atanet.org/careers/mentoring.php.
Call for Nominations: ATA Officers and Directors

The 2015 Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is pleased to call for nominations from ATA’s membership to fill the positions of president-elect, secretary, and treasurer (each a two-year term), as well as three directors’ positions (each a three-year term). Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting of Voting Members on Thursday, November 5, 2015, in Miami, Florida.

Under ATA’s Bylaws, all Active members of ATA are eligible to run for elected office. Active members are those who have passed an ATA certification exam or who are established as having achieved professional status through an Active Membership Review (see the box below for more information on this process). Active members must be citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. Other member categories are not eligible to serve as officers or directors. However, any member may submit a nomination. Members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee are not eligible to run for elected office.

2015 Nomination Forms Online

Members may make a nomination using the relevant forms online (www.atanet.org/elections.php). Nominations should be submitted as early as possible so that the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee can fully consider proposed candidates. The deadline is March 1, 2015. Submit the completed form by e-mail, mail, or fax to:

Dorothee Racette  
Chair, ATA Nominating and Leadership Development Committee  
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590  
Alexandria, VA 22314 USA  
Fax: +1-703-683-6122  
E-mail: nominations@atanet.org

If you plan to put names forward for nomination, please contact the potential nominees first, explaining your intention and the fact that a nomination does not guarantee a formal invitation to run for office. If a nomination is not put forward by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee to ATA’s Board of Directors, an individual may still petition to be added to the slate of candidates by submitting the nomination in writing along with the signatures of at least 60 voting members endorsing the nomination. The petitions must be received by the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee no later than 30 calendar days after first publication by the Board of Directors of the names of the candidates proposed by the Committee.

All ATA officers and directors serve on a volunteer basis: please do not nominate colleagues who express serious concerns about service, or who have conflicting priorities. Please complete one of the four relevant nomination forms online according to whether you are nominating yourself or nominating a colleague, and whether the nomination is for a director or an officer position.

Become an ATA Voting Member: Apply for Active Membership Review

Who is eligible to become a Voting member? ATA Associate members who can demonstrate that they are professionally engaged in translation, interpreting, or closely related fields may be eligible for Voting membership. The qualification process, called Active Membership Review, is free and online!

Why should I become a Voting member? Voting membership opens doors to your participation in the Association—take part in ATA elections, volunteer for Division and Committee roles, and increase your professional networking possibilities.

Check it out at www.atanet.org/membership/memb_review_online.php
Anyone who has worked in the language services profession long enough and on complex and large projects is probably familiar with the following scenario. You have a multi-document, high-volume, high-priority technical translation project. A team of highly trained and experienced linguists and project managers works on that project, adhering to the latest industry standards. And yet, after delivery, client feedback is mostly negative. Wherever they look, the in-country reviewers find errors in meaning, terminology, stylistic inconsistencies, as well as other types of errors. How is it possible that when the right people do “all of the right things” the outcome is still wrong? While there is a wide variety of reasons technical translation proj-

Product-Centric Translation: What It Is and How Best to Handle It

By Uwe Muegge

Unlike with “general” technical translations, where the text stands on its own, in product-centric translation projects there is a direct link between the source text and a product or service.
ects fail, I would argue that there is one common root cause for many of these failures. And that root cause is ignoring the special needs of what is probably the most common type of commercial translation project today: the product-centric translation.

What Is Product-Centric Translation?

I first used the term “product-centric translation” in 2014 in an article in which I described how my approach to teaching translation technology differs from translation teaching in the literary tradition. Of course, my teaching at that point was informed by my work as a member of the operational leadership team of a large global language services provider. That was when I realized that practically all of the projects with which I was involved had several very basic characteristics in common.

1. The text to be translated is linked to a product. Unlike with “general” technical translations, where the text stands on its own, in product-centric translation projects there is a direct link between the source text and a product or service. (See Figure 1 for an illustration.) A translation of an article describing the pros and cons of a product in a trade publication would be a good example of a “general” technical translation. While the content of the article might be highly technical and involved, there is typically no direct connection between the article and the product it discusses. The manufacturer of the product usually does not commission an author or translator to write this type of material. A user manual, on the other hand, is a perfect example of a product-centric translation. The defining characteristic of a product-centric translation project is that it is tied to a product launch or the release of a new version of a product. Depending on the product and the international market where that product is to be sold, the translation may even be considered a part of the product.

2. The text to be translated is linked to other texts that are linked to the same product. Typically, the launch of a commercial product in foreign markets involves not only multiple documents but also multiple document types. In addition to the user manual, there can be other manuals, such as installation and service manuals. There might also be marketing collateral, such as brochures, catalogs, and a website that require translation. And if the product has a software component and a display, which more and more do these days, there will also be software strings and most likely online help and tutorials that need translation/localization.

3. The text to be translated is linked to previous versions of that text. As if product-centric translation were not already challenging enough, here is another complication general technical translation projects typically do not have: versioning! Over time, products evolve: into new versions, variants, or entire product families. As the product evolves, so must the texts associated with that product—and their translations.

Understanding the Business Requirements of Product-Centric Translation

Introducing the concept of “product-centric translation” is not an academic exercise. This type of project is actually very common in the real world of commercial translation. At the same time, the implications of product-centric translation projects do not seem to be understood fully by both the client and the language services provider.

The sections on the following pages provide some of the requirements that typical product-centric translations have. By the way, certain general translation projects have some of the same requirements. However, the consequences if these
requirements are not met are much less severe in general stand-alone translation projects than they are in product-centric translation.

**Requires Consistent Use of Correct Terminology**

Since users experience a product through its features and functions, it is of critical importance that the correct terms be used consistently in all translations describing the product. If a term on a label on a localized device does not match the term that is used in the translated user manual, the user experience is negatively impacted. To ensure the best possible user experience, terminology must be used consistently within and across all documents associated with a given product.

**Terminology Challenges:** In many product-centric translation projects, ensuring terminological consistency is a big, and often unresolved, issue. It can be hard for individual translators to use terminology consistently in a single document if that document is large enough and the linguists are working under a tight deadline. But more often than not, product launches involve many different documents that are typically translated by multiple linguists who often work independently of each other. Since every linguist has his or her own personal preferred terms (think USB stick, USB drive, Flash drive, etc.), inconsistencies are an inescapable reality. And I am not even talking about incorrect terms that are introduced due to a lack of subject-matter expertise.

Can translation editors fix terminology-related problems? If there is a budget for an editor, and if there is enough time for a complete edit, and if the project is small—maybe. But in a major launch with a tight deadline and budget, it can be next to impossible for a human reviewer to identify and eliminate variants and synonyms for possibly thousands of terms.

**Terminology Solutions:** For terminology to be used consistently across multiple documents that are being translated by multiple linguists, comprehensive, project-specific multilingual terminology must be available at the beginning of the project. That means that either the client provides terminology data with the source text, or the language services provider creates project-specific term bases immediately after the receipt of the source. Today, however, building large multilingual glossaries within a short period of time is not the challenge it used to be. (My team regularly creates multilingual term bases containing thousands of terms in a matter of days).

The other part of ensuring terminological consistency in large, complex, multilingual translation and localization projects may seem trivial, but it is not: making sure that the (freelance) linguists actually use the terminology data in their translation memory environment. Translation memory systems automatically look up and provide the translation for terms that are available in the translation memory system’s terminology management module. However, even today, many professional linguists are used to managing terminology in spreadsheets, where terminology lookup is a time-consuming and error-prone manual process. That is why it is not enough just to provide linguists with terminology data. It is equally important to educate linguists on terminology management best practices and to make the submission of terminology-related quality assurance records a mandatory part of every delivery.

**Requires Text that Can Be Recycled**

Product-centric translations typically involve a lot of text. The authoring departments that create the source documents for translation go to a lot of trouble to reuse text. Sentences, paragraphs, and even entire pages will be recycled across different documents and different versions of the same document. There are two important motivators for having translators reuse previously translated full and partial (fuzzy) matches when working on a new project.

1. **Recycling drives down cost.** One of the main features of translation memory systems is the automatic identification of previously translated sentences and the suggestion of corresponding translation proposals. Reusing an existing translation typically requires less effort on the part of linguists than translating from scratch. This is why many language services providers offer staggered discounts for 100% matches, high fuzzy matches, and possibly low fuzzy matches, as well as internal repetitions in a new source text. Recycling text in source texts, in combination with the use of the proper tools and processes during translation, can result in dramatically lower average costs per page for product-centric translations than for other types of technical translations.

2. **Recycling ensures that reviewed and locked content stays that way.** Because of the direct link between the translated text and the product, the creation of product-centric translations often involves comprehensive quality assurance measures, including multiple edit and review steps. In other words, in order to ensure the accuracy of product-centric translations, both the language services...
provider and the buyer often put a lot of effort into each translated sentence. In this type of business environment, once a translated sentence receives final approval, that translation is “locked.” “Locked” translations must be reused exactly as reviewed to avoid having to undergo the time-consuming and expensive review process again.

**Text Recycling Challenges:** Since reusing text is so pervasive in product-centric translation, linguists often receive only the new or changed parts of a document to translate instead of the document in its entirety. The practice of sending only isolated segments for translation can make it very difficult for linguists to do their job. Translating disconnected segments is particularly difficult if the language services provider or translation buyer does all of the leveraging in-house and does not send a translation memory to the linguist because there are no good matches. In this type of scenario, many linguists are tempted to work outside of a translation memory system. (“If there are no matches, why bother?”)

While using a word processor for translation generally has many drawbacks, this tool is particularly unsuitable for translating product-centric texts because it makes it very difficult to be consistent. In a translation memory, source segments and target segments are stored together, which makes finding previous translations easy. When translating in a word processing program without involving a translation memory, there is no connection between the source and target. In fact, the source and target are typically two separate documents. While not impossible, it is very difficult in a word processing program to reference previous translations, especially those created outside of the current project, for consistency purposes.

**Text Recycling Solutions:** For most language services providers, using translation memory systems to process large projects that have a lot of matches and/or repetitions is a no-brainer. But in order to ensure maximum reuse of translations with consistent terminology, *every single part* of a product-centric translation project must be processed in a translation memory system. That rule applies to even the smallest project (think just a few sentences), and projects that show no matches during analysis. If product-centric translations are created outside of a translation memory system, inconsistencies in style—and terminology—are all but unavoidable.

**Requires Short Turnaround Times/“Can’t-Miss” Deadlines**

Technical translations in general are deadline-driven, but product-centric translations even more so. Just picture a product launch on an international market that has to be postponed because the legally required user manual in the local language is not available. Delays in product-centric translations can cost the manufacturer millions of dollars in missed opportunities.

**Turnaround Challenges:** As companies small and large aspire to release their products on the global market at or shortly after their launch on the domestic market, the pressure on turnaround times increases. One common strategy to deliver large product-related translations sooner is to distribute the work to more language services providers and linguists. However, doing so often results in inconsistent translation, and to have those inconsistencies fixed by an editor takes time—time that is in scarce supply to begin with.

Adverse effect reports and product recalls are other examples of product-centric translation where time is absolutely of the essence. In these types of projects, linguists are faced with the task of creating a translation within the shortest period of time that meets the highest quality standards.

**Turnaround Solutions:** When the pressure to do it faster is high, so is the need to do it right the first time. Put in a team translation context, this means: a) developing project-specific terminology as early as possible, b) translating in a translation memory system, and c) using style guides. When all translators involved in a product-centric translation have access to the same project-specific terminology and translation memory, and use the same style guide, review and re-work should be minimal. And if editors and reviewers do not have a lot to change, translations can be delivered faster. This is particularly
true if all contributors to a project, such as translators, editors, and reviewers, use the shared resources of a server-based translation memory or translation management system.

**Summary**

The translation of materials that are connected to a product, or what I call “product-centric translation,” is different from generic technical translation. Product-centric translation involves the translation of dozens, if not hundreds, of interrelated texts, and they all support the international launch of a product or service. As product-centric translation projects are often not only large but complex, not to mention highly time-sensitive, following industry best practices is essential for the success of this type of project.

To achieve maximum output at consistently high quality (i.e., minimal re-work after the initial translation phase), linguists must work within a translation memory environment, even for the smallest job. Having all linguists use translation memory systems not only ensures stylistic consistency and the protection of “locked” content, translation memories also automate the lookup and use of terminology.

If there is one thing that is critically important in product-centric translation projects, it is the availability of comprehensive multilingual terminology at the beginning of these projects. Equally important is the use of project-specific terminology by all members of the linguistic team—and the automatic recognition of terminology during translation (and review!)—as is only possible in a translation memory system.

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**References and Resources**


“Can you translate this 4,000-word medical document into English by tomorrow morning? How long will it be? What will it cost?”

Freelance translators often hear such questions. While pondering your reply, are you secretly wondering, “As a biochemistry specialist, how fast can I translate a medical text? How can I know in advance how long the document will be? Isn’t this that client who doesn’t pay on time? Is this job really worth my while?”

To serve our clients best (and preserve our own sanity), we have to be ready to answer these questions accurately at a moment’s notice. But how? This can be a challenge, especially for new translators who are still developing a feel for how quickly they can handle various kinds of texts. Even experienced translators sometimes learn to their dismay that their “gut feeling” about a job has led them astray.

While the intuition developed over the course of a career is a valuable decision-making aid that is not to be disregarded casually, more objective tools can also be very
helpful. One of these is a database. It can be used to track factors such as productivity, client payment histories, and financial data. Such statistics can help you answer your clients’ questions readily and undertake more in-depth analyses for business planning purposes.

**The Database**

As a biology student, one thing I learned from all of those lab classes was the importance of documenting results continuously. This practice turns out to have value in the translation profession, too (think glossary compilation). So, when I launched my freelance career, I decided to apply it to the business side as well.

I used inexpensive off-the-shelf database software to create a customized database that documented key parameters for each assignment. A spreadsheet could also be an appropriate tool, though I find the more advanced searching, sorting, and reporting capabilities of a database program to be a decided advantage when I need to make a snap decision. For more sophisticated analysis (graphs, charts, advanced statistical functions), subsets of data can be exported to a spreadsheet.

The best tool is probably the one that you are most comfortable using and that fits your budget. At a minimum, it should allow you to:

- Customize the kinds of data you will enter.
- Enter data efficiently.
- View data in multiple formats, such as a list showing all records at once (see Figure 1) and a template showing one record at a time (see Figure 2).
- Sort by multiple fields at the same time (see Figure 3 on page 21).
- Search on multiple fields at the same time (see Figure 4 on page 21).
- Produce on-screen and printed reports (see Figures 5 and 6 on page 22).
Ideally, your database software will also have reporting functions for counting the number of records, totaling columns, taking averages, and so on.

Initial setup takes just a few hours. For me, maintaining the records has taken about five minutes per job, or just over seven hours per year—a minimal investment for many years’ worth of invaluable, detailed information about how I work! The return on my time investment was realized very early on. After just a year or so, the data I had collected were already providing reasonably accurate answers to questions like those mentioned in the first paragraph, as well as revealing patterns that informed my planning.

What Should I Track?

Only you can decide what information is most relevant to your business. The sample database record in Figure 2 on page 20 shows some of the kinds of information that can be useful. A brief description of each category follows. Note that some field values can be calculated automatically, such as the invoice item totals, invoice amount, days late, current balance, source language (SL) and target language (TL) words per hour, gross hourly wage, and percent expansion.

Project Information: This category gives the big picture of how many jobs you have done in each language combination, for whom, and when (see Figure 5 on page 22).

Financial Information: These notes reveal financial patterns such as your income by client (or by month, year, language combination, etc.), or a client’s payment history. Your entries here record the client’s job and payment references and show which clients are timely or slow payers (Figures 5 and 6 on page 22). This section is also handy for running end-of-year reports.

Productivity Statistics: Learn how fast you translated a given job, or your average speed for a group of jobs. You can determine your average word-count expansion or contraction between languages and what hourly wages you made. Client complaints could easily be tracked here as well (though that parameter is not included in our examples).

Retrieval Information: This “filing” information indexes all of those electronic files that multiply like rabbits so you can find them again later. For example, the “Category” field identifies the text type, which can be used in conjunction with the productivity statistics for more in-depth analysis (see Figure 4).
What Do I Do with All of This Information?

For starters, having this information will allow you to answer your clients’ questions. Let’s practice this using the database mockup shown in Figures 1-6.

Say, for example, that XYZ Corporation’s project manager calls and asks the questions listed in the first paragraph of this article, beginning with “Can you translate this 4,000-word French medical document into English by tomorrow morning?”

When the original document comes in, you check your database and notice that this job is similar to the one you did in June 2012 (Figure 1). Pulling up the record for that job (Figure 2), you see that you translated it at the rate of 375 SL words per hour. At that rate, it would take about 10.6 hours to translate this new job (4,000 words ÷ 375 words/hour). So, if the client is calling early in the morning and you do not mind working overtime, you might make this deadline. On the other hand, if it is already 9:30 p.m. and the client wants a polished product by 6:00 a.m. the next day, the odds are not good.

There is one caveat to keep in mind: one data point does not make a statistically valid sample. Be careful about using a single job to determine your rate of translation. This is where experience and intuition come in. Is this rate reasonable based on what you remember about other similar jobs? If you maintain your database regularly you will see the numbers often, so you should have a good feel for whether or not this data point is representative of your whole body of work (in our scenario, your medical jobs). For a more accurate estimate, create a search query to pull up all of the medical jobs from XYZ Corporation (as seen in Figure 4)—or even all of the medical jobs overall in the same language pair. This will help you find your average speed over a larger data sample.

In addition, you will be able to answer the project manager’s other questions:

“How long will it be?” Looking at Figure 2, you see that your “percent expansion” on the previous XYZ Corporation job was -6.00%, which means that the English TL text was 6% shorter than the French source text. Since this text is similar, you can estimate a TL word count of SL minus 6%, or 4,000 - 300 = 3,700 words. Again, to be more accurate, use a larger data sample and find your average rate of expansion/contraction for all of the French>English medical jobs you have done for XYZ, or for all clients.

“What will it cost?” Based on your estimated final length of 3,700 words and your usual per-word rate, you should be able to provide an estimate. (Remember to add your usual rush surcharge!)
You can also use the database to address your own questions. For example:

“As a biochemistry specialist, how fast can I translate a medical text?” Proceed as above under “Can you translate...?”. Or, given a little more time, you can be more sophisticated: determine your average translation rate (or hourly compensation) across all medical jobs, then across all biochemistry jobs. Comparing the two may show whether it makes more sense to specialize strictly in biochemistry and not accept medical work, or whether you can make almost as much by taking the medical job.

“How can I know in advance how long the document will be?” You cannot. You can only estimate. Your willingness to give a firm quote will depend on your risk tolerance. What is the likelihood (“risk”) that this job will expand or contract more than average? It is wise to remind the client that you will bill on the actual final word count (or time spent), or else give a firm estimate and state that the final invoice will not exceed the estimate by more than a certain percentage (depending on what terms you are willing to give).

“Isn’t this that client who doesn’t pay on time?” Pull up all of XYZ Corporation’s records to see how many jobs it has paid on time, late, and early (see Figure 5). You can even use the information to calculate how early or late it pays on average.

“What else can I find?” The database can help you decide whether or not to accept a job by revealing patterns you might not otherwise notice.

What Other Answers Can I Find?

The possibilities are almost endless. Here are some of the kinds of analysis you can do.

**Profitability:** Which clients are the most profitable? (Sort by client name and look at your average gross hourly wage for each client.) Which kind of work is the most profitable? (Sort by text categories, language pairs, etc.)

**Specialization:** Which text types do you translate the most? Are they the most profitable? (Sort by category and look at the average gross hourly wage for each text type.) If not, which ones are? (Sort by gross hourly wage and see whether a certain category of text rises to the top of the list.)

**Calculate Time Spent on Challenging Projects:** How much extra time do you spend on a particularly challenging project? Use the database to look at your usual average translation rate (words per hour) for similar text types, then multiply it by the number of words in the job in question to find out how long the job would normally have taken. Then check to see how long the job really did take in order to determine how much extra time was spent.

**Taxes and Business Plans:** You can produce periodic (monthly, annual) reports about your total volume of work plus a breakdown of jobs by language, text type, etc. You can detail how many clients you serve, including the client, language pair, and text type that provide the most income. Such parameters can be tracked over multiple years for an overview of your company’s trends. You can identify any cyclical “slack” periods during the business year (sort projects by date to see how many are assigned each month) and plan to use the time for other things such as continuing education, prospecting for new clients, and vacation. You can also check to see whether a client’s 1099 total matches your records (sort by client and add up all of the invoices for the year).

**Collections:** Which clients pay late? How late? How often? Your database can help you determine the financial risk of accepting work from chronic offenders (see Figure 6) and decide when it is time to move on to more reliable clients.

In summary, a database takes so little time to maintain, and can provide so much useful information, that it is well worth the effort!
Each year, Mexico City’s prestigious Escuela Libre de Derecho announces an elective course inconspicuously called “Legal English Workshop.” Now approaching its 25th year, the course is still taught by its founder—attorney, professor, and author Javier F. Becerra.

Becerra has written two legal dictionaries, the Dictionary of United States Legal Terminology (with Spanish explanations) and the Dictionary of Mexican Legal Terminology (with English explanations), each more than 1,000 pages, that are prized assets in many legal translators’ collections. Having retired from private practice after more than 40 years at a law firm, including a three-year stint as a managing partner, Becerra is now fully dedicated to his dictionaries, to his teaching career as a legal English professor, and to speaking engagements at many conferences, both in the U.S. and Mexico.

The Walking Dictionary

To understand Becerra’s dictionaries, we must leave the professor at his lectern for a moment and go back a bit to his days as a young Mexican lawyer. He had returned from two years in England as a Trinity College research student at Cambridge University, where he had written a thesis on comparative law, to work at a prestigious law firm in Mexico City. He was working with the firm’s senior partners on cross-border transactions and international mergers and acquisitions, but word got around that he had studied abroad and had mastered the language of law in English. As a result, colleagues would stop him in the hall to consult with him regarding English terms on so many subjects that he was forced to expand his comparative law research to include many areas of law.

“They saw me as a walking dictionary,” Becerra says with a laugh. He began jotting down the words and phrases that came up and, later, added brief explanations for his own benefit. Becerra’s assistant, Maria Luisa Lopez (known as Malú), organized his notes alphabetically, and eventually they turned into glossaries.

“The work on the glossaries was constant and automatic as I noted down what was discussed in those conversations,” Becerra explains. At that time, there were no computers, so the glossaries were typewritten at first. Later, they were updated on word processors, and finally, computers. This process went on for 25 years.

Legal Translation in the Field

Becerra’s work at the law firm always overlapped with translation. “90% of the firm’s clients were large multinational companies from the U.S.,” he explains. These companies wanted to do business in Mexico, but were not aware of how things worked there. “Generally, they would try to replicate their policies and procedures from the U.S., but we had to make adaptations and help the clients understand that certain things simply don’t work in Mexico, or they work differently.”

Becerra’s clients would send a variety of legal documents and contracts in English. Becerra first had to prepare a Spanish version that was then localized to conform to Mexican laws and regulations, business norms, and, most importantly, local drafting techniques. Later, the Spanish version had to be translated back into English for further review and comment from the client until a final bilingual version was acceptable to all parties. This was a long and difficult process but a necessary one to prevent unnecessary legal problems down the road. At first, the firm’s translation department prepared draft translations, but Becerra concluded that the drafts were often too literal to be useful.
The law exists to address unique problems in a certain place. Legal language is local, not universal.

“Legal systems are like a tree. There is a common trunk, but as it grows, the branches are not the same. Some of them might look similar, but others are totally different, even in the same language. To produce a translation that is correct, one must compare the legal language of two clearly identified countries.”

As a result, Becerra focused his dictionaries exclusively on the legal contexts of the U.S. and Mexico. “The law exists to address unique problems in a certain place. Since the ideas aren’t the same from place to place, the law and its language change. Legal language is local, not universal.”

Even with material restricted to the U.S. and Mexican judicial systems, Becerra explains that the dictionaries require constant updating as laws evolve.

“With the first dictionary, the typesetter was ready to format the dictionary for print, but I kept making changes. There were four versions of the manuscript before we had the final one. Needless to say, he was very annoyed and the working relationship became rather stressful for both of us. When it was time to publish the second dictionary, we went through five versions, but that time around the typesetter and I got along much better since we knew what to expect from each other.”

It took three more years to edit the second edition of the Dictionary of Mexican Legal Terminology. Becerra says it is now time to update the Dictionary of United States Legal Terminology.

Teaching and Going to Press

In 1989, a group of legal interpreters and translators contacted Becerra for help in developing correct legal vocabulary. He inaugurated the Legal English Workshop and convinced the Escuela Libre de Derecho to open enrollment to non-students so that interpreters and translators could attend. The course was a hit, but repeat students meant Becerra had to develop new course material every year. His glossaries continued to grow and, as a result, a variety of areas of law were studied and discussed.

Once he decided to publish a dictionary, Becerra entered a five-year period of intense editorial work to prepare his Spanish-English glossary for publication.

“What I had were two big lists; one with words and phrases from Spanish into English, and the other from English into Spanish. Although no one had taught me lexicography, I realized that translating words was not enough. Synonyms, conceptual descriptions, short explanations, and usage examples were required for the reader to understand and translate unfamiliar concepts. I used Black’s Law Dictionary as a guide to start shaping the first dictionary. In addition, I should mention that for that endeavor, I was fortunate enough to have the manuscript reviewed by George Humphrey, a U.S. lawyer who is now a partner of a large Houston law firm. In later years, I enlisted the collaboration of John Young, a diligent Canadian who is a lawyer both in Mexico and Canada, and who made valuable corrections, suggestions, and contributions for the second edition of that dictionary.”

Becerra notes that a common misconception, especially among non-translators, is that any legal term used in any Spanish-speaking country will be universally valid in all other Spanish-speaking countries. Despite common roots and a common language, however, legal concepts do not always cross borders.

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Dictionary for a New Era

Becerra is now preparing a pilot program for the English-Spanish Dictionary of United States Legal Terminology to test his idea to offer the new edition digitally. There are several reasons behind this shift away from print.

“It’s much easier to update an online version. The print dictionaries are enormous, but I’ve met people who carry both of them around. Frankly, it’s inconvenient. Now, with the technology we have, people are more accustomed to carrying an iPad,” Becerra says.

He clarifies that the digital edition would not be a simple e-book converted from the print dictionary. Although the details are still in development, the idea is to offer a service allowing online consultations and monthly updates to keep up with legislative reforms and other changes.

When asked about the team working on the updated content, Becerra laughs. “Team? My team is Malú and me.” He sets down his cup of herbal tea. “Let me see if I have a page marked up with corrections.”

He calls Malú, the same smiling assistant who has helped him not only with his everyday legal work, but also to write the dictionaries for 33 years. She appears with a stack of papers so tall it would be dangerous to move it with one hand. Becerra introduces her, then begins flipping through the manuscript, pulling out pages to show. He holds up one printout after another.

“The highlighted entries are new,” he says, pointing. At least half the page is highlighted. “You can also see notes for entries that still need to be incorporated.” There are asterisks leading to handwritten notes at the bottom of the page that continue onto the back. He unfolds a yellow paper taped to the bottom of the page showing even more comments on both sides.

Becerra is visibly excited about the newest iteration of his lifelong project. “The first edition of the first dictionary was 30 years in the making. The first edition of the second took eight years. The second edition of the first dictionary took three years. Now I’ve spent three years on new material for this edition, and, with an online format, I will be able to update it more rapidly.”

Becerra’s dedication to his new publishing venture is sure to be a welcome resource. Now that electronic formats and cloud storage are the norm for books, movies, and music, it makes sense for cumbersome reference works also to join the technological era. And there is no reason for less reliable resources to be the only ones available at the tap of a touchscreen. The added value from ease of access and slower obsolescence should make quality digital offerings attractive to translators and interpreters looking to update their collections. Here is hoping that Becerra will be one of many respected authors to embrace the digital possibilities.
Translators, please update your lists of patent translation resources! On September 19, 2014, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) launched a free multilingual patent terminology database containing over 90,000 scientific and technological terms and over 15,000 concept maps in 10 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. WIPO Pearl includes terms found in patent applications filed via WIPO’s Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), with a plan to expand the corpus to patents from other treaties contained in WIPO’s database.

How It Works

The WIPO Pearl term base offers two search modes: concept and linguistic. The concept mode returns semantic maps highlighting the relationships of a particular concept to other closely related concepts. (For an example, please see Figure 1 showing the concept map for the term “sole,” in the domain of Leather & Textile Industries/Footwear.) The linguistic search mode offers a series of parameters for searching, including source and target language, field, abbreviation, and concept. Results are returned with a reliability factor of 1 to 4, where “4” indicates the highest reliability of a translation, validated by PCT Translation Office terminologists and external subject matter experts.

The WIPO Pearl term base results are also connected to PATENTSCOPE, WIPO’s patent search engine, which enables you to search the entire WIPO collection containing 32 million patent documents for additional occurrences of your search term. PATENTSCOPE is also the unvetted default option in case WIPO Pearl retrieves zero hits.

For example, for high-occurrence terms such as “emissions trading,” “carbon credit,” or “insecticidal seed,” WIPO Pearl refers you to the PATENTSCOPE automated search to find all the occurrences of these terms in WIPO’s database and to provide you with a list of existing translations in 10 languages! Thus, you will find patent-based translations, retrieved via the PATENTSCOPE automated search engine, but you will be on your own (in “Linguee mode”) when it comes to selecting among many options that are not necessarily from the same domain.

Finally, the WIPO Pearl term base is also equipped with a crowdsourcing function enabling you to rate the quality of a particular result returned. In addition, as you hover over one of five rating stars, you will be able to discover how others rated the translation.
Research Vetted by Experts
WIPO’s Pearl term base offers the advantage of patent-based translations vetted by terminologists and subject matter experts. This saves you additional research steps to narrow the range of possibilities. WIPO Pearl is also a one-stop interface for PATENTSCOPE, an invaluable tool for finding translations using the 32 million patent documents available through WIPO.

The best source of terminology for patent translation is often the patents themselves. WIPO Pearl specifically addresses this point, offering an easy way of searching for existing patent translations in 10 languages.

Notes


Related Patent Resources

European Patent Office Glossary
www.epo.org/service-support/glossary.html

United States Patent and Trademark Office Glossary

WIPO Pearl Portal Homepage
www.wipo.int/wipopearl/search/home.html

WIPO PATENTSCOPE
www.wipo.int/patentscope/en

WIPO User Guide
www.wipo.int/wipopearl/search/userGuide.html

Patents on the Soles of Your Shoes
(author’s blog)
http://patentsonthesolesofyourshoes.blogspot.com


WIPO Pearl: Key Features

- Results in 10 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.
- Classification of concepts by 29 subject fields.
- Fully validated content with reliability scores.
- “Concept maps” that provide an innovative graphical display of related concepts by language and subject field.
- Context provided for all terms.
- Term labeling (e.g., “recommended,” “standardized,” or “avoid”).
- Integrated with PATENTSCOPE and cross-lingual information retrieval.
- Users can rate the quality of results.
Blog Trekker

Language Access Services: Who’s Responsible for Success?

(Posted by Erin Rosales on Connecting Cultures, http://blog.interpreterdevelopment.com/blog.)

A news article surfaced recently in which a 911 dispatch operator told the Spanish-speaking caller “no Spanish.” Usually, these stories are about the health care team failing to contact interpreter services, resulting in outcomes of varying degrees of devastation. That was not the case, according to the article. This time, the 911 dispatch operator contacted the language services provider only to learn that an interpreter was not immediately available. Obviously that is a significant problem for 911 dispatch. And the minutes ticked by.

I have no insider information as to exactly what went wrong and why during this call. As an outside observer who has only seen a news article, I am entirely unqualified to speak concerning the specifics of the incident. Clearly, there was a breakdown somewhere. Perhaps even more than one.

The way I see it, we the people of the language services community can respond in one of two ways:

1. We can ridicule or criticize those involved. (What were the 911 people thinking when they contracted That Company for language services? That Company has no business providing services anywhere. Scoff! Scoff!)

2. We can dismiss the incident as irrelevant to what we do. (Whew, glad that’s not my problem! Stinks to be them!)

Or maybe there is another way to respond.

Maybe we use this incident as inspiration to assess our own state of affairs. Maybe we take action proactively to uncover opportunities to make improvements within the language services areas we do impact and influence. Everyone involved has an opportunity to contribute: interpreters, translators, project managers, operations specialists, interpreter trainers, budget owners, business owners, administrators, department managers, and anyone else involved. When it comes to providing excellent language access services, no one is off the hook.

Ask yourself: what changes can we make that will result in improved language services?

- How can we improve operational efficiencies?
- How can we make better use of the available resources?
- What new resources or processes would result in measurable improvements?
- What opportunities are there for inter-departmental collaboration?
- How can I meet the needs of my team so that they can meet the needs of others?

And do not just ask yourself these questions. Ask your team. Ask your organization. Ask your customers. You get the idea.

You might not be able to implement every idea or secure every resource, but you might be surprised at how much you can do. You probably will not make headline news for improving your own or your department’s performance. That’s okay. You will have had a positive impact on the organization, the individuals counting on language access services, or the language services practitioners (interpreters and translators). Maybe even all of the above. That is worth much more than making the news.

Information and Contacts

Internet blogs are rich sources of information for translators and interpreters. They allow users to post questions, exchange ideas, network, and read news and commentary on a specific subject. The topics featured in this column are actual blog postings concerning issues pertinent to your colleagues in the field today. For more blog listings, visit www.atanet.org/resources/blog_trekker.php.

Reminder: Beware of Scams

If it’s too good to be true, it is probably a scam. A number of email and online scams have specifically targeted translators and interpreters. Stay vigilant!

ATA Members and Internet Scams
www.atanet.org/membership/internet_scams.php

National White Collar Crime Center
www.nw3c.org
Aside from LinkedIn, Twitter is my preferred social network, and it can also be very productive—productive for networking with colleagues, for meeting clients, and for displaying publicly who you are and what you stand for. In relation to other forms of social media, it is also less unproductive because it does not necessarily require you to read never-ending posts (though it might lead you to some of those). You are supposed to express yourself in 140 characters or less (though finding just the right way to say it within those constraints can take some time!).

I have looked at some colleagues’ tweets in the past couple of weeks and noticed a couple of tips that might be worth repeating.

1. Never start a tweet that is supposed to be seen by everyone with @username, since this will be seen only by that username plus everyone who follows the username and you. Enter a period (or some other character) before the @ sign. You have probably seen this advice many times, but during my recent tweet analysis I was surprised at how many experienced tweeters make that mistake.

2. If you feel like tweeting about private things as well as professional things, make sure you have two different accounts. Really! I immediately unfollow other tweeters who start to report on personal matters on a regular basis. While it is not important what I choose to do, many of those whom you really want to reach are doing the same. It is not enough to say that you do not promote your Twitter account anywhere in your professional material. As soon as you participate in a professional discussion, you are effectively promoting it.

3. If you get frustrated with someone’s barrage of tweets but you do not want to frustrate them by unfollowing them, you can also “mute” that account by clicking on the three dots at the bottom of one of their tweets and selecting Mute @username. To my knowledge, this is available only in the non-mobile web version of Twitter.

4. Make sure to give credit where it is due. If you find something through someone else’s tweet or e-mail, make sure you mention it in any related follow-up tweet you might send. If you post a link to an article that someone interesting wrote, make sure to research his or her Twitter handle and mention that in the tweet as well. And if you are retweeting someone but have changed some of the content, make sure to precede it not with RT (retweet) but MT (modified tweet).

5. #Use #hashtags judiciously, but not to #the point that #your #tweets are really #hard to #read. It is probably a good idea to set a hashtag in front of a central term (like #translation or #xl8), but I even prefer not to do that. Instead, I really enjoy using the hashtag as a way to explain or comment on my own tweet (this should be a whole new area of linguistics). For example, here is a tweet I recently sent that broke my own rule on never sharing private matters, but at least it is language-related:

Jeromobot @Jeromobot
“Give me a rootbeer but go easy on the root” #My21yearoldlivingthedream

Here are some other helpful tips (most of them relate to the non-mobile web version of Twitter):

6. It is a good idea to download your archives of tweets occasionally, especially if you tweet a lot. This will help you quickly locate a tweet you might have sent a long time ago. You can do that under Settings> Account> Request your archive.

7. You can also use helpful keyboard shortcuts in the Twitter interface. To see all of them listed at once, just press the question mark key when you are in the Twitter web interface. (Cool, huh?)

The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost is the co-author of Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World, a perfect source for replenishing your arsenal of information on how human translation and machine translation each play important parts in the broader world of translation. Contact: jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.
8. Obviously, the best way (legitimately) to gain more followers is to post interesting and engaging tweets. If you want to speed it up a little, here are a couple of ways to follow others so that you engage with them and hope that they will follow you back:

- When there are translation-related conferences happening (and they are always happening somewhere), click on the conference hashtag to see who is tweeting from the conference. Not only will you get a good (and cheap) overview of what is happening at the conference, you can follow the tweeters and maybe even engage them in a conversation while staying under the hashtag umbrella.

Search tweets under translation-related hashtags such as #xl8 and consider following those.

- Select Discover>Activity within Twitter to find out who the folks you are following are “favoriting” and following. They might be worth following as well.

- Select Discover>Find Friends. If you have a webmail account, Twitter will look through your address book and see whether they match existing Twitter accounts that you do not follow. Here is a tip for selecting whom to follow among the suggestions: do not do it if there is no profile picture, no description, or no or only old tweets. All of the others might be worth looking at more closely. (Do not spam and invite non-Twitter users, though.)

Finally, make sure that you do not just gain colleagues as followers but also potential clients. Think of Twitter as your interactive, ever-evolving business card. You will be glad you did.
As many readers of this column might know, I am quite a tree-hugger. I drive a Prius, have been bringing my own recyclable grocery bags to the store for the better part of 20 years (to puzzled looks in the U.S. at first), and generally try to live as green as possible. I print very little and prefer to do the vast majority of tasks online (thus avoiding mailing printed documents such as checks and payments), but I print out every single project that I do multiple times. I know that is not very planet-friendly, but it is an essential part of my quality assurance process. Let me elaborate.

It is a well-known fact that professional translators produce several drafts of their work that they revise and tweak until arriving at the final product. I am known to be an avid reviser and rewriter of my own work after it comes back from editing, and sometimes it is hard to put the pen, or the mouse, down and to let the work go and turn it in. Before I do that, there is one last important step, which is seeing my work printed out. I advise printing out several versions of any translation, but I realize this is really quite bad for the environment, so perhaps just printing out the last version should do.

It is truly amazing how many things one’s eye catches on paper that you simply cannot catch on a computer screen. I am not quite sure why that is, but I have never printed out anything and not found additional errors. These are mostly not translation errors, but almost always typos or numerical errors (think 1948 instead of 1984 and similar issues that the brain tends to ignore on screen).

While I am at it and reviewing the printout of my translation, I employ a second one of my favorite techniques for quality assurance. I read the entire text again, line by line, without looking at the source text unless I need it for reference, and I ask myself the following questions:

- Does this make sense?
- Would I have written this if this were not a translation?
- Does this sound idiomatic?
- Does this sound translated? If yes, how can I fix it?

Finally, I look for errors in logic and fact. That means I take nothing for granted and question everything that is on the page. For instance, is Yellowstone National Park in California? No, it is in Wyoming and Montana, but Yosemite National Park is in California (a fact that The New York Times magazine recently got wrong). Is Uber an American company? (It is.) Are there really two million yoga professionals in the U.S.? (There are not, but there are millions of practitioners). Can drones swim? (No, they fly.) Is Labranard really the correct name for a dog breed? (It is.) Are there 3,400 NCAA Division 1 universities? (No, there are 340.) Are there geysers in Chile? (There are.)

Many times, we get so caught up in linguistic details that we do not really stop to think about facts and figures. Doing this at the very end, printed document in hand, usually helps me refocus and allows me to catch some errors that I did not see on the screen. In order to placate my bad environmental conscience, I print on both sides of recycled paper and give recyclable grocery bags to everyone I know.
The ATA Chronicle  
January 2015  

Interpreters Forum  
Jennifer De La Cruz  

The Speed Bumps on My Freeway  

We interpreters are so hard on ourselves. It drives us nuts to be unable to recall the perfect term, the ideal phrase for the shade of meaning we have to render. We know it, but we just cannot get it out fast enough. We pause, and it seems like an eternity while we rack our brains. Stress levels rise, our faces turn ashen, and we are a deer in the headlights of one of the many dilemmas of real-time language transference.

There are those certain words that I know will trip me up going in. When I worked as a medical interpreter, my renderings always lost their flow for a millisecond as I recalled the words for “goiter” versus “gout,” “ureter” versus “urethra,” and “bladder” versus “gall-bladder.” They are not hard terms, but they just happen to be similar enough in some sense for them to be my red flags. Years of practice definitely helped get past these difficulties, but I always became hyper-aware for just a moment.

Sometimes it is also easy to trip up on the unexpected term. As a court interpreter, I am quite accustomed to rattling off a defendant’s rights in very fast simultaneous mode, English into Spanish, day after day. However, one term that trips me up is “no contest.” I say it in Spanish all the time, but most defendants do not plead “no contest,” so I hardly ever have to render it back into English. So when that unusual case comes up, my brain does not register it as quickly or easily into English. I admit that when I am running on autopilot and get that unexpected Spanish word, my brain hiccupps before I render the English. I am simply not wired for that term in that direction.

Then there are those times when our brains have the vocabulary we need to render into our target language, but we simply cannot come up with it. I remember taking an exam once that required my interpretation to say something like “the rooster crowed,” and I desperately resorted to the equivalent for “the rooster said tweet tweet.” Sure, depending on the context it could be fairly harmless, but when a fail like that goes into English, on the record, in a formal setting, it could throw a courtroom into a thunderous roar of laughter.

Or how about when somebody for whom we are interpreting throws in a poorly pronounced word in the opposite language? My brain sometimes does not register it at all until I have a chance to call a time out and get a repetition or clarification. We frequently get folks who want to use the English “yes” rather than use the term in the foreign language. It takes experience and quick thinking to recognize this and apply interpreter protocols. I will never forget one of my first times interpreting at the witness stand and rendering a loud Sí in Spanish for the entire courtroom to hear. Oops … interpreter correction, your Honor, the word should have been “Yes.”

How to handle these momentary lapses of interpreter perfection? Humility and a dose of good humor are a good start. Experience teaches us that the faster we go and the longer we are interpreting, the more likely it is that we will make mistakes beyond our red flag words. Keeping in mind that we are expected to be pretty adaptable and generally speedy, we do need to take stock of our limitations and implement preventive measures such as proper breaks and asking folks to slow down a bit. It is all about solid performance, and it sure is not a race.

There are subtle techniques for a fast-paced environment to help us avoid the traps that can throw off our confidence and mess with the ebb and flow of our work. Taking that extra sip of water, asking for a pause to consult a dictionary, or even changing a sitting position can be enough to turn a potential fail into a professional win.

With practice, we can also learn better ways to render a complete interpretation using fewer syllables or fall behind enough to produce a syntactically neater message that does not require us to go so quickly. When we are working in a situation that allows for either the consecutive or the simultaneous mode, we can take advantage of the benefits of consecutive to pace ourselves as needed.

We are always susceptible to moments of imperfection. If we

Information and Contacts  

Jennifer De La Cruz is a federally certified court interpreter, an ATA-certified Spanish<>English translator, and a staff court interpreter in Southern California. In addition to freelancing as a translator specializing in the areas of law, medicine, and business, she writes for the blog of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators. She has been working as a professional interpreter and translator since 1997. Contact: jenuli@msn.com.

Continued on page 35
About 25 years ago, totalitarian barriers surrounding the Czech Republic suddenly crumbled and all kinds of influences, particularly those from the West, began to flood in. One such stream was the English language—at first British and American, and, later, other linguistic variations of the language. Nowadays, English is a reasonably established second language in everyday use by the Czech people—in street conversations and foreign company communications, in the names of products and institutions, and in schools and markets.

Sometimes, the way English is used in the Czech Republic is somewhat questionable, as in naming a commuter train *City Elefant*, and somewhat jarring, as in naming a transit company *Student Agency* (officially pronounced *aghentsy*). Occasionally, when accompanying Czech visitors or reading texts or comments written by Czech employees of a foreign company, one runs into English sentences that can be properly understood only if tentatively translated back into Czech to regain the semantics.

So, is it possible to develop a tool that would help those proficient in the language use idiomatic English like native practitioners without requiring them to travel to and live in an English-speaking country? Yes, perhaps, and the *Czech-English Combinatory Dictionary: Noun and Verb* is meant to do just that. Although the dictionary was published in 2005, I still think it could be a good learning tool. I also decided to review it because I was interested in the authors’ concept for the dictionary and the way it was implemented.

As the authors note in their introduction, the first specialized dictionary that was designed to help Czech advanced students and users of English learn the most common verbs and match them together properly with nouns was published in Prague in 1991. *The Czech-English Combinatory Dictionary: Noun and Verb* is a successor to that effort, helped greatly by the computer technology that has been developed in the meantime.

But learning correct idiomatic usage is not just a question of providing the proper combination of verbs and nouns or other colloquial word combinations. Speech and text often follow a prefabricated pattern of segments formed as predictable preferences. Noun and verb combinations are the most typical colloquial words. The entries contained in this dictionary are the most typical and regular coherence collocations, those noun and verb combinations that come together most often among users to express well-established meanings.

**Content**

The backbone of the *Czech-English Combinatory Dictionary: Noun and Verb* consists of 1,500 Czech nouns. These were taken from two sources: 1) the 1991 publication mentioned earlier, and 2) a frequency list for the Czech language that was compiled from a corpus of 100 million Czech words by a specialized institute of the School of Arts of Charles University (Prague) in the 1990s. These nouns were then combined with complementary collocated verbs and other relevant phraseological elements (objects, adverbs, prepositions, etc.) based on frequency analyses of Internet-sourced U.S. newspaper English corpus (from the *San Jose Mercury* by the University of Alberta) and British newspaper English corpus (from *The Times*). The authors also consulted more than a dozen collocation dictionaries that began to crop up in the U.S. and Europe in the 1990s, as well as combination and general dictionaries of English.

The dictionary is well organized visually and structurally. Entries of Czech nouns listed alphabetically are

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**Dictionary Review**

**Reviewed by**

Ivo Reznicek

**Czech-English Combinatory Dictionary: Noun and Verb**

**Authors:**
Aleš Klégr, Petra Key, Norah Hronková

**Publisher:**
Karolinum, Charles University Press

**Publication date:**
2005

**Number of pages/entries:**
372 pages and a CD

**Price:**
$23

**ISBN:**
80-246-1106-6

**Available from:**
www.cupress.cuni.cz/ink2_ext

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**The Dictionary Reviews are compiled by**

Peter A. Gergay
followed by English nouns, and are only occasionally complemented by a particularly fitting adjective or adverb. Alternative English synonyms of single Czech nouns are kept to a minimum, generally not exceeding two. The list of nouns is followed by Czech verbs, first in the combination of verb + noun (as object) [vo], then verb + noun (as adverb) [<>], and finally noun (as subject) + verb [sv]. These are complemented as needed by designating the case (indicated by a number in parentheses, except for nominative and accusative) and indicating a pronoun, reflexive pronoun, preposition, attribute, and adverb. The corresponding British English is then provided, unless there is also an American equivalent (marked as such). For example, here is one of the shortest entries:

anténa (rozhlasová, televizní) (radio, TV) aerial, (US) antenna; [vo] instalovat install; nasměrovat direct, orient, fiddle (into a better position); nastavit, naladit adjust, tune; odstínit screen; otočit (4, 7) turn, twist (around); postavit erect, put up, set up, stand up; potřebovat (směrovou) need (directional); používat use; přidat add; připojit, zapojit connect; uzemnit earth, ground; vychýlit slant; vysunout pull out; zasunout push in; [<>] použít jako use as; připojit k (3) attach to; [sv] přijímá (signal, program) picks up, receives (a signal, programme); vysílá transmits

The authors note that the content of the dictionary includes about 4,000 words in Czech and somewhat more in English. If this is so, it can cover only a limited range of meanings, thus limiting its usefulness to learning enough vocabulary to carry on a general conversation or write a general letter or report. Just by looking at the entries at random, however, it seems that the number of words included, even when assuming that many verbs are repeated in the entries, is greater. As suggested by the methodology for its compilation, which is described in detail in the introduction, at best the dictionary reflects the content of general newspapers or similar media.

Overall Evaluation

Although the dictionary contains a sizable number of collocated combinations, it only includes a seven-page index of English equivalents and three and a half pages of Czech headwords. As such, it is not of much use for professional translators and interpreters. I was looking for several words that are notoriously difficult to translate, but could not find them. There are also not many entries from specialty fields such as law, medicine, or business. However, the dictionary may be quite useful to Czech students of English or employees of international companies who would like to achieve a better command of the language than what passes as simplified corporate English or Pidgin English.

Since the Czech entries are translated into English, the authors claim that the dictionary can also be used in reverse by English speakers who wish to improve their Czech. However, the Czech language is more difficult to learn than English, especially considering its complex syntax. Learning the language is a laborious process that would probably require more than this dictionary. I say more power to those who will try.

Ivo Reznicek is a translator and interpreter of Czech, Slovak, and English. He has been a freelancer since the early 1990s. He lives in Louisville, Colorado. Contact: ireznicek@aol.com.

Have an idea for a dictionary you would like to see reviewed? Contact Peter A. Gergay, chair of ATA’s Dictionary Review Committee, at pgergay@aol.com.

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Recognize and implement preventive measures, we are more likely to take the occasional mistake in stride. Time and practice help turn the harsh jostle of a freeway speed bump into a harmless jiggle.
I thought I had a fairly good concept of the character sets contained in a typical word-processing program, at least for Windows. That is until recently, when I decided to scroll through them in leisurely fashion. As a supposedly savvy linguist, I was astounded to discover that I was only familiar with a small percentage of all the various characters and symbols. It was humbling, and even more so with the awareness that, with the major Oriental languages not present, plenty of heavily used symbols are simply not there, and cannot be with the systems as they are currently designed.

New Queries

(English>Russian 1-15.1) A colleague presented numerous context sentences for “drug moiety,” but none really are decisively explanatory. Therefore, we will provide the sentence that is the most wordy:

“Immunoconjugates allow for the targeted delivery of a drug moiety to a tumor, and, in some embodiments, intracellular accumulation therein.” Does that help with supplying the Russian?

(English>Russian 1-15.2) In a patent-literature query, the text speaks of an international application “as filed, and entry of these amendments [which do not go beyond the disclosure of the application] is respectfully requested.” How would you express the words in bold in Russian?

(French>Polish [English] 1-15.3) The term sédimentables proved to be a tough one for a colleague trying to go into Polish. Here is the context geological paragraph:

Les aérateurs jouent aussi un rôle de brassage de la masse d’eau afin de permettre la diffusion de l’oxygène dans la zone aérobie du réacteur et pour mettre en contact les bactéries, sédimentables, avec les polluants. What can they be?

(German>Croatian [English] 1-15.4) The problem term in this query, Ausgleichsverfahren, is not too difficult, but the challenge is finding a Croatian equivalent. The word appeared in this context: Das gefertigte Gericht bestätigt, dass gegen die Firma kein Konkurs- bzw. Insolvenzverfahren, kein gerichtliches Ausgleichsverfahren und kein Sanierungsverfahren eingeleitet ist.

(German>English 1-15.5) The text of a report on surgery caused problems, specifically the term einbohren. Here is some context: Nach Exposition erfolgt Schablonieren des Schenkelhalses, dabei zeigt sich, dass der Radius 49 mm der geringstmögliche ist. Markieren der beiden Achsen mit dem Elektrokauter. Aufsetzen des Zielbügels im Bereich des Schnittpunkts. Der Zielbügel lässt sich zirkulär gut um den Schenkelhals führen. Einbohren des Zieldrahtes. Überbohren desselben mit dem 49-mm-Bohrer. Einsetzen des 49-mm-Führungsstabes. Nun werden über diesen mit der 55-mm-Zylinderfräse gefräst. Can anyone explain what was occurring at that moment during the operation?

(Italian>English 1-15.6) The three problem words in this query about contract verbiage are in bold: La presente donazione viene effettuata in conto di legittima e per l’eventuale supero sulla disponibile e per quest’ultima parte con dispensa dalla collazione. What do they mean?

(Latvian>English 1-15.7) The Translation Inquirer confesses that he never realized that there needs to be a technical specification for polo shirts, but this Latvian query—a great rarity—is just that: Atgriežta plecu daļa ar ielocēm. Does it have anything to do with a “turned-back shoulder?”

(Portuguese>Spanish [English] 1-15.8) The text inspiring this query speaks of o pedido, pela sociedade, de concordata, autofalência ou concursode credores. The translator provided a tentative Spanish rendering, but we shall not muddy the waters here. Please attempt to provide the mystery word, and, if possible, the entire phrase, if necessary, in English.

(Spanish>Dutch [English] 1-15.9) A colleague wants to know what the difference is between pellejas and...
pellejos in the following pair of sentences. Pellejas, no sé, allá cada una con el uso y disfrute de su cuerpo. Pero, desde luego, cuanto más Viejas, más pellejos, congéneres, eso es un hecho científico.

Replies to Old Queries
(English>Spanish 10-14.2) (lance products): Undaunted by the challenge these two words presented, Jaime Pachon did some online research and found them rendered as materiales que se pueden rociar. Lance products are used in the construction industry to spray on walls, roofs, or any other construction material (e.g., sheet rock) to provide them with additional texture or finish, such as when waterproofing a roof or giving a decorative finish to a wall. The entire sentence will read: Una boquilla para arrojar materiales que se pueden rociar (yeso, rellenos para alisar, gotitas, yeso decorativo) productos fibrosos (pulpa, fibras de relleno decorativas), productos impermeabilizantes.

(English>Spanish 10-14.4) (front line and relapsed settings): Melissa González says that these are casos nuevos y por recaída, which refer to situations involving patients newly diagnosed with lymphoma. The second half of the phrase refers to situations involving patients who improved but then exhibited repeat symptoms.

(German>English 8-14.4) (Ungehorsamsbuße): Ilse Andrews is commenting not on the content of this query, but on the spelling. Spelling reforms can make life difficult, and the Swiss have long eliminated all “ß,” including the one in the word above. Modern German readers will read the reformed spelling—the last five letters of it—as the plural of “…bus” (the transit vehicle), thus producing a comical word. Busse carries the meaning associated with transit, but Buße means “penalty” and exists only in the form with the letter forbidden in Swiss German.

The Translation Inquirer feels in his very bones that a delay of even 48 hours in submitting this column to ATA Headquarters would yield several more good responses to old queries. However, the deadline has been set and the publication show must go on. So, with only three responses—but all good ones—we shall terminate and thank the participants.
Humor and Translation
Mark Herman

When I was a chemical engineering student at Columbia University, I took an elective course on “The Comic in Modern Literature,” taught by the poet Kenneth Koch (1925-2002). He told us that when he attempted to reserve copies of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* for the course at the Columbia Library, the librarian was outraged. “*Ulysses* is a great book,” she said, “and great books are not funny!”

Alas, great works of art are too often treated with such false reverence. Their comedic elements are often overlooked by critics and translators alike, especially if the comedy is black. And no humor is blacker than that of Franz Kafka (1883-1924), the great chronicler of 20th-century angst and alienation. Kafka’s most famous work is probably *Die Verwandlung*, a novella about a traveling salesman so alienated that he turns into a giant repulsive insect, finds all food unappetizing, and eventually starves to death. *Die Verwandlung* was written in 1912 and first published in 1915. Fortunately, at least one translator, Susan Bernofsky, is willing to see the humor in the horror. Here is a scene that would be equally at home in either a horror movie or a farce: “He [Gregor Samsa, the giant insect] caught only a last glimpse of the door to his room flying open, his shrieking sister, and his mother running out of the room before her wearing only a chemise, for his sister had undressed the unconscious woman to let her breathe more freely. Then he saw his mother rush to his father’s side, her unfastened skirts slipping one by one from about her waist as she ran …”

The above quotation is from *The Metamorphosis*, Bernofsky’s recent translation of *Die Verwandlung* published by Norton in 2014. According to the jacket blurb, “Bernofsky strives to capture both the humor and the humanity in this macabre tale ….”

Particularly humorous and human, at least to me, are the first few pages, where, despite the fact that Gregor is now a giant insect, the implications of this have still not registered in his brain, and he is still worrying mainly about matters relevant to his job as a traveling salesman.

*Die Verwandlung* poses many translation problems, some of which are discussed by Bernofsky in her afterword. As has often been remarked, *Die Verwandlung* does not follow the common story structure of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, conclusion. Instead, the climax occurs in the very first sentence: *Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheueren Ungeziefer verwandelt.*

This opening sentence poses at least three problems with which translators have wrestled for decades. The first is the final participle *verwandelt*, obviously related to the title noun *Verwandlung*. “Metamorphosis” is the usual English translation of *Verwandlung* and is a process that many insects actually undergo. Its participle forms are “metamorphosed” and “morphed,” which are too unusual and too slangy respectively for most translators. The English participle usually used is “transformed,” and therefore, unlike in the original, in English translations the last word of the first sentence and the title are usually unrelated etymologically.

The second problem is the three “un’s” that form the beginnings of three words that are not something else. Despite the fact that “un” in German is a direct cognate of “un” in English, it is very difficult to achieve the triple negativity in a normal English sentence.

Finally, there is the meaning of *Ungeziefer*. According to Bernofsky: “*Ungeziefer* describes the class of nasty creepy-crawly things. [It is not as specific as “insect.”] I think Kafka wanted us to see Gregor’s new body and condition with the same hazy focus with which Gregor himself discovers them.”

So, though Bernofsky’s new translation is a very welcome addition to the list of *Verwandlung* translations, it will undoubtedly not be the last attempt to recreate Kafka’s novella in English.
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