TRANSLATING HUMOR IS A SERIOUS BUSINESS
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ATA Joins Forces with the Association of Language Companies to Bridge the Education/Career Gap

Language services companies increasingly need qualified talent to fill positions in translation, interpreting, localization, language instruction, testing, and more. Unfortunately, too few language majors enter the marketplace with real-world skills. The ALC Bridge project came into being to close the gap between the needs of academic institutions that are looking for job opportunities for their language students, and the business world, which is seeking students who are well prepared for careers in the language services industry.

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Looking for Member News and Humor and Translation? These columns are found in the Chronicle-Online edition: www.ata-chronicle.online!
The president’s column in this edition of The ATA Chronicle often reflects on the year just ended and recaps the highlights for ATA and its members. As I look back on 2020, “The Year of COVID,” I see that ATA and its members faced and overcame some severe challenges. But if you’re as tired of COVID as I am, I hope you’ll forgive me for looking forward more than backward.

But COVID is still with us and can’t be ignored. As the country turns to vaccination to end the pandemic, ATA will continue to advocate for in-person interpreters to be classified as high-priority vaccine recipients. The decentralized structure for getting needles in arms has resulted in disparity at the local and state levels, despite clear guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that in-person interpreters qualify as health care providers or a high-risk group.

We continue to grapple with uncertainty regarding in-person events as we plan for the Annual Conference and other events, including ATA Board meetings. I remain optimistic that the situation will be much closer to the “old normal” by this summer or the fall at the latest, and that ATA62 can and will be at least a hybrid event—in person with remote access.

I also hope that the Board will be able to hold its annual Strategy Day, an informal meeting that allows the Board to discuss big-picture items and take a longer-term, strategic look at ATA’s future.

Looking forward, ATA has also made lemonade out of the pandemic lemons. We increased our online professional development offerings substantially with new and timely webinars, including a free monthly webinar. The Professional Development, Membership, and Business Practices Education Committees have all worked to provide new remote opportunities for continuing education and to recruit and welcome new members to the Association.

ATA has made lemonade out of the pandemic lemons.

The pandemic also accelerated the Certification Committee’s efforts to find a way to offer true remote, at-home certification exams. At the January Board meeting, the committee reported that they believe they have now found a likely solution and hope to offer a test run sometime this summer. If successful, this will be a sea of change for our Certification Program, as candidates will no longer have to travel to take the exam. It won’t allow a shift
Jersey), so the battle over worker classification is not over. Such a registry could be a great help in gaining exemptions for practitioners where such legislation is enacted, possibly at the federal level as well.

The second potential offering under investigation is the establishment of a “basic” credential, which would be of particular interest to those who work in languages for which ATA does not offer certification. This is an extremely difficult nut to crack and it’s entirely possible that the committee will report that it’s not feasible or practical. But even if that’s the case, ATA will at least have taken a serious look at the issue and can have an answer to those practitioners working in other languages who ask: “Why can’t you offer me some kind of recognition?”

Finally, as I look at the second half of my term, I look forward to seeing many of the projects and initiatives launched in the past three years either coming to fruition or maturing. I especially look forward to attending ATA62 in Minneapolis in person. I miss seeing my ATA friends and colleagues. I even miss being buttonholed in the hallway or elevator! But I’ll admit I don’t miss all the hugging. But after a year of lockdowns and video-only interactions, odds are good I’ll dislike having my personal space invaded far less than pre-COVID.

### 2021 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 2021 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 ATA Dynamo Award** recognizes a person or entity that has worked in a particularly energetic way to benefit ATA and/or the language professions. This award is given in odd-numbered years.

**The ATA Mentoring Award** recognizes a person or entity that has provided outstanding mentoring to the next generation of translators and interpreters, either through the ATA Mentoring Program or another channel. This award is given in odd-numbered years.

**The ATA Rising Star Award** recognizes an early-career translator, interpreter, or entity that has already “made a mark” on ATA and is seen as having great potential to positively impact ATA and the language professions in the future. This award is given in odd-numbered years.

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

**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 may be given annually.

Planning is well underway for this year’s Annual Conference, set to take place October 27-30 at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Last year we took on a new conference model, a fully virtual event, and this year we’ll be doing the same as we shoot for a hybrid conference (in person and virtual).

I’ve heard from many colleagues who enjoyed ATA61 that they can’t wait to get together again in person. Well, if all goes according to plan with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine and there are no major hiccups along the way, we’ll celebrate another exciting conference and the joy of meeting again in person! Yes, things will look different. You can expect social distancing for all events and sessions, masks required throughout the conference venue, special precautionary measures for serving and consuming meals, etc. But rest assured that we’re on top of the planning and will do our best to make attendees feel both welcome and safe.

The Hyatt Regency Minneapolis is ready to receive us and the hotel staff has been lovely to work with as we plan this new-to-us conference. They are equipped to sanitize rooms and common areas frequently so that attendees feel comfortable during their stay. The hotel also offers several dining options, as well as 24-hour access to the Stayfit Athletic Club.

Whether you attend ATA62 in person or virtually this year, I don’t think you’ll be disappointed! The deadline for session proposals was March 1, and I’m excited to see what educational offerings are in store for this year’s attendees. We’ll hold the division annual meetings online, outside the conference dates, which opens up more slots for educational sessions. We plan to stream and record a wide variety of live sessions for our virtual attendees and look forward to offering networking opportunities that everyone can take part in. While we do expect fewer people to attend the in-person portion of the conference, we’ll take advantage of the cozy atmosphere (with proper precautions in place!) and all that Minneapolis has to offer.

In January I attended the virtual site visit of the host hotel for ATA62, and the location and setting will be wonderful, just as it always is when we come together. The Hyatt Regency Minneapolis is a block from the convention center, 12 miles from Minneapolis International Airport, and within walking distance of shops, restaurants, and more. It’s located on the Loring Greenway, an urban pedestrian walkway with art, playgrounds, and more, connecting the downtown area. And the Minneapolis Skyway System connects buildings across 9.5 miles (or 80 city blocks), including the host hotel, so you can get around easily and comfortably in colder weather.

Our host chapter, the Upper Midwest Translators and Interpreters Association (UMTIA) is excited to have us! If you’ve ever visited this area of the Upper Midwest, then you know that the “Minnesota Nice” is one of the best things about visiting the Twin Cities. Don’t believe me? Just check out the welcome video that UMTIA shared with us last year during the ATA61 Closing Session! (See links in the sidebar.)

As conference organizer, I look forward to this year’s conference planning as a familiar challenge with some new components tossed in for fun. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me. Whether in person or virtually, I look forward to seeing you this year for ATA62!
Board Meeting Highlights

The American Translators Association’s Board of Directors held its Winter Board meeting virtually January 23–24. Here are some meeting highlights.

Committee Appointments
President Ted Wozniak led the Board discussion on his research regarding appointments to ATA committees. The current wording of the Bylaws along with our parliamentary authority, Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, require that the appointment of members of all standing committees be approved by the Board. ATA has 20 standing committees and a handful of special committees. Special committees are established for a specific purpose, such as the Ad Hoc Website Committee, and dissolve once the project is completed. (Please see http://bit.ly/ATA-committees for the list of committees and their charges.)

New Committee Chairs
In addition to several committee appointments, the Board approved the appointment of Lebzy Gonzalez as chair of the Divisions Committee and Secretary Karen Tkaczyk as chair of the Honors and Awards Committee. Thanks to outgoing chairs Daniel Sebesta (Divisions Committee) and Loie Feuerle (Honors and Awards Committee) for all their time and work for ATA.

Ad Hoc Committees
At the last Board meeting in October, the Board approved creating two ad hoc committees to investigate establishing a national registry of freelance translators and interpreters in the U.S. and offering a basic credential for translators and interpreters. The Board also approved the appointment of the members to the ad hoc committees. Geoff Koby is the chair of both committees.

Certification
Certification Committee Chair Michèle Hansen and Deputy Chair Larry Bogoslaw briefed the Board on the committee’s work investigating and testing remote exam options. The committee is optimistic about ATA offering remote exam options later this year. The current plans are for ATA to continue offering in-person exam sittings as well. For this year, we’ve started to schedule limited exam sittings. These sittings are all tentative and subject to local mandates and regulations.

Certification Renewal Fee
The Board approved increasing the three-year certification renewal fee to $75 effective January 1, 2022. This is the first change since the fee was instituted in 2009 and is intended to more closely reflect the costs of renewal.

Nominating and Leadership Development Committee
The Board approved the appointment of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee: Lebzy Gonzalez, Yolanda Secos, David Stephenson, and Izumi Suzuki. The chair is Past President David Rumsey, who was approved in July 2020. The Nominating and Leadership Development Committee is responsible for putting forward the slate of candidates for the fall election. This year, they will be putting forward two candidates for each officer position—president-elect, secretary, and treasurer—and two for each of the three directors’ positions.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WALTER BACAK, CAE
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The Board meeting summary is posted online. The minutes will be posted once they are approved at the next Board meeting. Past meeting summaries and minutes are also posted online at www.atanet.org/membership/minutes.php. The next Board meeting is set for April 24–25, 2021. The meeting will be virtual.
ATA Joins Forces with the Association of Language Companies to Bridge the Education/Career Gap

By Caitilin Walsh

The Association of Language Companies (ALC) has been working to increase connections, relationships, and shared learning between the professional and academic sides of the language services supply chain. From these efforts, the ALC Bridge was born.

When I was a junior at Willamette University in Oregon, my French professor, a diminutive hunchbacked woman who threatened second-year students with the literary past tense, mentioned translation in passing. She said, “people translate into their native languages, since they’re far more eloquent and efficient.” My interest was piqued. If there was a rule of thumb around translation, it must be a real career, with real preparatory studies and everything else.
After class, I ran to the career center, which consisted of about six feet of shelves full of printed graduate school catalogues. I spent an hour checking the index of every catalogue. Not one had an entry for translation (except for one for the translation of computer code). If I wanted to be a translator, I was going to have to look elsewhere.

As luck would have it, I was to spend a year in France after graduating, giving me a vastly different perspective on learning languages and their role in society. One year stretched to three, and I met professional interpreters who traveled first class and talked to several people who were studying language and hoping to get into a grande école (competitive graduate schools that produced highly regarded professionals).

Fortunately, many things have changed since then. There are now graduate programs in translation studies at more than one institution in the U.S. And there are a handful of undergraduate and certificate programs that go beyond the literary tradition associated with universities. Increased globalization has led to explosive growth in demand for skilled people who can broker information in other languages. Translation and interpreting have become “hot” careers, and the demand doesn’t look to be dropping off soon.

As my term as ATA president wound down, I wanted a chance to address an area that clearly needed attention: education. ATA’s Education and Pedagogy Committee is charged with working to form the next generation of translators and interpreters, making it easier for students to find programs and making sure programs actually provide students with information they can use to build careers. The committee is also authorized to reach out and work with other organizations, with the understanding that this is an enormous task.

The Challenge

Language companies provide services and products to clients in a range of sectors in government and private industry. At a 2017 conference of ATA’s sister organization, the Association of Language Companies (ALC), members stated that the number one challenge facing their businesses is insufficient linguistic resources in their pipelines to meet the growing demand for professional translators, interpreters, localizers, and project managers.

As an industry veteran and member of ALC’s board of directors, Kathleen Diamond knew that employers need qualified talent to fill positions in translation, interpreting, localization, language instruction, testing, and more. From her perspective, though, too few language majors enter the marketplace with real-world skills—the result of a persistent scarcity of higher education institutions in the U.S. that offer career-oriented programs in the field of translation and interpreting.

Kathleen and her fellow ALC board members determined that it would be beneficial to connect with academic institutions in hopes of creating clear pathways for language students to potential jobs. A task force was formed and, under the leadership of ALC’s board of directors, an outreach initiative (subsequently called the ALC Bridge) was created.

As the chair of this new program, Kathleen reached out to colleagues from both the employer and educator sides of the issue to come together to form a volunteer committee to further the goals of the ALC Bridge. Representatives from many organizations—both nonprofit and for-profit—also jumped on board. As a partner association of ALC, ATA’s Education and Pedagogy Committee was given the green light to join the effort.

ATA has also been working to encourage institutions to include professional skill building and illuminate career pathways. But the jump from the safe haven of higher education to the real world of working is a daunting one. While ATA provides resources like the Savvy Newcomer blog to help those entering the profession, assisting the ALC Bridge to increase connections, relationships, and shared learning between the professional and academic sides of the language services supply chain seemed like a perfect way to extend our reach.

The work is twofold: leveraging the needs of academic institutions looking for job opportunities for their language students, and those of the business world, which is seeking students who are well
prepared for careers in the language services industry. The following provides an overview of initiatives that the ALC Bridge has undertaken with its partners. It’s our hope that the information here will entice you to explore the website (www.alcbridge.org) and inspire you to think about other ways we can bridge the gap—and what role you might play.

**Education as the Foundation**

Our efforts start with education. Globalization has led to a steady increase in the demand for language services in recent years. The biggest buyers of these services domestically are the U.S. government and the health care industry. (For example, the U.S. Department of Defense has a significant budget for language services.) There is also high demand for language professionals in the courts, retail, customer service, software, and financial sectors, to name a few. Paradoxically, at the same time, language programs at colleges and universities are experiencing decreased enrollment. Students (and their parents) see little opportunity for employment beyond traditional teaching and tenured positions in academia. In fact, companies have jobs going unfilled in fields requiring language proficiency and functional skills, such as language engineering, localization, and subtitling.

By connecting academia to the realities of potential careers, the ALC Bridge hopes for nothing short of a revolution in the way universities and colleges structure their language programs in response to, and in collaboration with, companies’ demonstrable need for human talent. The result will be appropriately educated and trained language students who are critical to the success of the 21st-century world economy.

**Working the Connections**

But the work of the ALC Bridge is not just about creating a revolution in the way higher education institutions prepare students. It’s also about working with key players in the language services industry to provide opportunities specific to graduates—or those nearing graduation—to gain and hone skills and transition to working life.

Unlike mass job posting boards, the ALC Bridge hosts a job board that offers a plethora of jobs specific to the language industry, not just generic job listings for translators and interpreters. The site includes internships as well as postings for other positions, such as project managers and localizers. The ALC Bridge is also creating opportunities to bring the business world into the classroom, giving students a peek at what awaits them. Judging from webinar attendance and enrollments in our pilot programs and the number of questions students have, we’re filling a need.

When talking about demand in the language services industry, the discussion inevitably turns to the role of technology and machine translation. It’s true that language services companies and their clients are becoming progressively dependent on industry-specific technology but struggle to find language professionals adept at using these tools or formats. The ALC Bridge is in a unique position to inform a curriculum that’s not only solid in terms of the theory and practice of language transfer, but also what cutting-edge technologies students need to master to be competitive.

**First Steps**

The first foray into connecting educators and professionals came in the form of a webinar series. The ALC Bridge has committed to producing at least four quarterly webinars, all free, and forming a library of on-demand webinars. The first webinar in October 2019 was “Careers in Language: An Introduction for Students.” Since then, we’ve produced webinars on careers in localization and translation and interpreting for students. There has even been one tailored to school districts that discussed three models for successful
high school interpreter training programs. We’re planning webinars discussing the translation and interpreting industry in Europe, opportunities for entrepreneurs, and ones tailored to community colleges for the remainder of 2021.

Career fairs also represent a way to reach students and faculty to give them an idea of what to expect working in the language services industry. Partnering with the Wasserman Center for Career Development at New York University in March 2020, we helped stage mock interviews for students who were preparing for life beyond graduation.

While webinars provide us with a broad reach, some educators we’ve talked with have asked for something more that would “fit” better into a traditional academic setting. As a result, we’re piloting a 13-week seminar program developed with faculty at Carnegie Mellon University. The course, which will meet weekly, includes virtual visits by professionals in different areas of the language services industry. It will require students to research questions in advance and write their thoughts on the different perspectives offered.

The latest programs in the ALC Bridge lineup include the creation of the ALC Bridge Speakers Corps. LanguageLine, an ALC member, has also announced they have created an unlimited number of internships for students in interpreting programs nearing graduation. These paid internships will include training and work in situations that will allow students to sharpen their skills. We hope the ALC Bridge Speakers Corps will provide a way for educators to pull professionals and potential employers into their classrooms to provide customized content that fits their program needs.

The Larger Network
The ALC Bridge is more than a few industry folks leveraging their personal academic connections. By bringing together employers in the language services industry, educational institutions, and career seekers in a vertical space dedicated solely to the language services, the number of connections increases exponentially.

This is where we can all play a role. Creating an account on the ALC Bridge website is free, and we hope that our network of partnerships can keep it so for the foreseeable future. Please visit the website and poke around. If you own a language services company, the website is a great place to post openings (or internships!). If you’re a recent graduate (or just looking for new clients), have a look at the current openings under “Where the Jobs Are.” If you’re an educator, look at the materials available to you. And if there’s something you would like to see or share, contact anyone on the ALC Bridge Committee (info@alcbridge.org) and let us know.

The ALC Bridge is also creating opportunities to bring the business world into the classroom, giving students a peek at what awaits them.

This article would not have been possible without the help of Kathleen Diamond, the founding chair of the ALC Bridge. She is principal of Kathleen Diamond & Co. and a consultant, entrepreneur, and business leader in the language services industry. She serves as chair of ASTM Committee F43 on Language Services and Products. She is fluent in Spanish and French in addition to English. She has a master’s degree in 16th-century French literature from the University of Florida.

Caitilin Walsh, CT is an ATA-certified French>English translator who delights in producing publication-quality translations for the computer industry and food lovers alike. A past president of ATA, she currently chairs ATA’s Education and Pedagogy Committee. She also serves as president-elect of the Joint National Committee for Languages. She teaches ethics and business practices at the Translation and Interpreting Institute at Bellevue College. She is also chair of the Translation and Interpretation Advisory Committee for the Puget Sound Skills Center. She is a graduate of Willamette University and the Université de Strasbourg. cwalsh@nwlink.com
ATA’s NEW MASTERMIND PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS: What Is It and Who Can Benefit

ATA’s new Mastermind Program offers you the chance to take advantage of a new kind of mentoring designed to offer you the support you need!

By Tess Whitty and Dorothee Racette

“None of us is as smart as all of us.” — Ken Blanchard

Most translators and interpreters go into business understanding that finding and retaining clients will be hard work. What many fail to see, however, is the difficulty in running a business alone and not always knowing what to do next. This is where ATA’s Mastermind Program can help!

ATA’s new program offers mentoring designed to help you learn and develop professionally. Participants work together in small peer groups (aka Mastermind groups) that meet regularly, giving members a chance to share knowledge on specific topics and work collaboratively to achieve their learning goals.

ATA’s Mentoring Committee, a subcommittee of the Business Practices Education Committee, introduced the initiative this year as a way to help serve long-term members. The pilot rollout for the groups is planned for this spring. Although the Mastermind groups for the 2021 program have already been organized,
a call for applications will be issued each January. The following should answer most of your questions about how the program is structured and what’s involved. If this all sounds interesting, start making plans to join us for next year’s program!

What Are Mastermind Groups?
The term “Mastermind” may suggest a connection to the concept of a master class, in which a highly experienced person shares their knowledge as an instructor. Mastermind groups, however, are the exact opposite. Instead of people learning from one expert, the groups are self-guided and choose their own activities. Mastermind groups follow a peer-based mentoring approach offering a combination of brainstorming, education, peer accountability, and support. Members challenge each other to set strong goals and, more importantly, work to accomplish them by holding each other accountable. As a result, the groups benefit from the synergy of energy, motivation, commitment, and everyone’s willingness to learn and grow together.

This means that professional peers—people at approximately the same level of professional experience—get together regularly to learn more about a specific topic jointly. The meetings follow a defined script, which helps ensure equal speaking opportunities for all participants.

The size of each group is relatively small, usually around six people. When you think of a 60-minute meeting, a group of six or seven gives everybody enough time to speak for five to 10 minutes. Keeping groups small is important because participation from each member is essential. All members are expected to come fully prepared and engage with each other in meaningful conversation.

Why Is ATA Introducing Mastermind Groups?
There is plenty of information and training available for those starting out in our profession, but materials for advanced specialization and experience can be scarce. For example, we may be using the standard functions of our software tools but have never taken the time to explore highly specific features. ATA often receives feedback from members with many years of experience as translators or interpreters who say they find it harder to locate learning content relevant to their concerns.

The idea of Mastermind groups originated from the process of matching mentors and mentees. Although the Mentoring Committee matches 30 mentor/mentee pairs of members every year through ATA’s Mentoring Program1, we saw an unmet need for in-depth discussions of more advanced topics. The Mentoring Committee wants to bring together people who are at the same level of professional experience so they can meet virtually for structured discussions.

The Mastermind Program is only open to ATA members and designed for more experienced translators/interpreters who want to grow their translation or interpreting businesses, develop another area of expertise, plan for retirement, or discuss other specific topics. We will initially offer three to four discussion topics a year, but are open to suggestions for special issues ATA members want to discuss. The groups will run from February to July. ATA will not be directly involved in the scheduling or running of the groups. We will expect the groups to follow shared guidelines so that everyone has equal learning opportunities.

At least two years of professional experience are required to participate. The concept is not an ideal fit for beginners who are learning about the industry and their careers. ATA offers other initiatives that newcomers will find more beneficial, including the Mentoring Program, webinars, and the Savvy Newcomer blog.2

How Will the Groups Run?
Groups will be assembled according to their interests. For example, members may want to talk about:

• Moving up to a new pricing tier
• Developing a new specialization
• Adding a new service to your portfolio
• Moving from agencies to direct clients
• Starting or developing a translation company
• Retirement planning
• Translation and the digital transformation
• Contracts and non-disclosure agreements

The program will run as a pilot with a limited number of groups in 2021. The list of discussion topics is open and will be updated every year based on the feedback we receive. If you’re interested in a specific topic or are willing to facilitate a Mastermind group for six months, the time to let the Mentoring Committee know is in January.

The Mentoring Committee will put people with the same interests in contact and provide instructions for the next steps. As mentioned earlier, to facilitate discussion, the groups will not be larger than six or seven people. The Mentoring Committee will provide training for people who are interested in serving as group facilitators.

Groups will decide independently where and how to meet. Venues can include Zoom, Google Meet, or similar applications. Someone in the group will keep an attendance record for the purpose of continuing education points (CEPS). Group facilitators and participants are eligible for CEPS and can earn up to 10 points (one CEP per two hours of volunteering).

The monthly meetings will include aspects typically not found in a class or presentation: giving each other feedback, sharing what you learned, or pursuing specific questions. No one in the group, including the facilitator, has to be an
expert on the subject matter. Activities such as selling your services, discussing unrelated concerns, or taking over the conversation will be firmly discouraged. The quality of discourse makes all the difference. When members of a Mastermind group abandon their cooperative dialogue and start complaining, they have turned their group into a committee.

Instead of a group of people learning from one expert, the groups are self-guided and choose their own activities.

Experience has shown that the excitement and learning intensity of Mastermind groups can wane after about six months. People usually begin to drift away because the topic has been addressed to their satisfaction, or the group is not as fruitful as it was initially. Of course, some groups may want to stay together longer, but our expectation is for the groups to work together for six months.

What Does It Take to Be a Mastermind Group Participant?
To make a Mastermind group successful, participants should be both interested and committed to making it work. Before the first meeting, members will agree on group rules, expectations, and guidelines. That includes setting a single, definite focus for the group and clarifying the outcome everyone is looking to create. Confidentiality is another critical aspect, so participants need to be sure to talk about what everyone can and can’t share.

Participants must commit to attending every meeting. As mentioned earlier, they are expected to show up fully prepared, take responsibility for their own goals, and hold each other accountable for working toward these goals.

The work of a Mastermind group doesn’t end after a meeting. Everyone must dedicate time for taking action, learning, and research between meetings. The group can also decide on shared activities outside of meetings, such as reading an article or chapter of a book together. Groups may invite outside speakers on specific topics or arrange for presentations. The most crucial point is that activities are planned jointly and that everyone takes an active role in the conversations. Leaning back and letting others do the work is not acceptable.

Mastermind Group Facilitators
Applicants to the program will have the option to volunteer as a Mastermind group facilitator. What does this entail? Facilitators start and run the groups. They help initiate discussions among members and ensure a successful group dynamic by encouraging teamwork and accountability.

Being a group facilitator has many benefits. It’s an ideal way to try something new. A group facilitator doesn’t need any previous leadership experience, and there is no expectation of teaching or being an expert. This means that the facilitator can have the same level of professional experience as the other group members. Qualifications include an interest in learning about the topic and a willingness to network with peers in other language pairs/fields/locations. Please be aware that all group facilitators will be asked to commit for a six-month period.

Facilitating a Mastermind group can expand your network beyond your language pair or division. Because all participants are ATA members, you’ll learn more about other ATA membership benefits and division activities.

Want to Learn More?
Tess Whitty and Dorothee Racette recorded a free webinar in November to provide an overview of the program, which is available on-demand.³

ATA is excited to offer the Mastermind Program as a new membership benefit in 2021. With your active participation and feedback, we hope to roll out a more extensive variety of groups in 2022. If you have any questions or suggestions, please reach out to us at mentoring@atanet.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

Dorothee Racette, CT, an ATA-certified German<>English translator, has worked as a full-time freelance translator for over 25 years. She served as ATA president from 2011 to 2013. In 2014, she established her own coaching business, Take Back My Day, to help individuals and organizations solve problems related to workflow and time management. As a certified productivity coach, she now divides her time between translating and coaching. dorothee.racette@gmail.com

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NOTES
1 You can find more about ATA’s Mentoring Program here: www.atanet.org/careers/mentoring.php.
2 See www.atanet.org/newcomers for more details.
Terms and Conditions of Service

The Key to Future-Proofing and Protecting Your Translation Business

By Paula Arturo

The difficult part for most translators isn’t finding an affordable attorney to draft their terms and conditions, it’s actually working with an attorney to get it right.

A few years ago, I decided to conduct a little survey to see how many translators had their own terms and conditions of service. It wasn’t a capricious question. I was generally interested in measuring whether or not my colleagues were aware of the importance of protecting their businesses with ironclad contracts. And, if not, why.

I found that 51.3% of respondents didn’t operate with their own terms and conditions, even though 82.1% of the group worked with direct clients. When asked why not, the number one answer was fear of losing the client. Somehow in the social imaginary of this small sample group, the feeling was that clients would be put off by contracts.

As a lawyer, this logic is hard for me to understand. From the buyer’s side, I can’t imagine working with a professional who doesn’t put their promise in writing. From the translator’s side, I can’t imagine doing business without protecting my interests. A well-drafted contract is such a win for both sides in any line of business that the thought of doing business without one is, to me, simply inconceivable.
As a lawyer, this logic is hard for me to understand. From the buyer’s side, I can’t imagine working with a professional who doesn’t put their promise in writing.

Yet, I can still see how having your terms and conditions drafted for you can be a daunting task. And I understand why so many translators are put off by the idea of having to hire a lawyer to do that. They say talk is cheap unless you’re talking to a lawyer, and they’re right. But it doesn’t have to be. There are plenty of professional contract drafting services available at an affordable cost, so having your terms and conditions drafted for you doesn’t have to cost you an arm and a leg. But even if you can’t find an affordable service in your area, you can still think of the money you’re spending as an investment in future-proofing your business and protecting your interests in the long-term.

The difficult part for most translators isn’t finding an affordable attorney to draft their terms and conditions, it’s actually working with an attorney to get it right. That’s why you need to be very clear about what it is you do and what your business model looks like so you can give your attorney the necessary information to draft your terms and conditions well. In addition, there are some specific considerations you and your attorney need to keep in mind, some of which are summarized here in alphabetical order and not order of importance (read: they all matter!).

**Boilerplates:** Boilerplate clauses typically include force majeure, governing law, jurisdiction, and similar clauses. Lawyers often think of them as standard clauses that don’t require too much thought. But this outlook on boilerplate clauses is misguided. While they may be standard in the sense that you’ll find them in almost every contract with very little variation, a significant part of the time spent in court when contracts are breached actually revolves around boilerplates. We sometimes spend more time fighting applicable law and jurisdiction than we do more substantive matters. And all that translates into high costs and wasted time for you. This means your boilerplates have to be well thought out and, more importantly, if you and your clients are in different countries, they should be drafted by an attorney who is familiar enough with international contracts to do a good job. So, when choosing the right lawyer for you, ask if they’ve drafted international contracts before.

**Changes to the Translation:** If your name is going on the translation, this is a particularly important one. You want to make sure that changes are submitted to you for review. After all, it’s your reputation at stake!

**Client’s Responsibilities:** Because your terms and conditions are aimed at protecting you, you might want to hold the client accountable for helping you help them. Perhaps explicitly state that it’s up to them to mention and make available any reference materials they want you to follow, or that they’re responsible for reviewing your work and submitting changes or questions for your consideration within a certain period of time so they don’t come back a year later challenging your translation and expecting you to respond overnight. There’s no right or wrong answer here. What you and your drafting attorney put into this clause will depend on your business model. But take your time to think about it. Brainstorm possible scenarios and mention them to your lawyer.

**Confidentiality, Privacy, and Non-Disclosure:** These terms are not exactly interchangeable and one thing that’s often unclear in translation contracts is what constitutes confidential or private information and what may or may not be disclosed and how. Make sure you and your lawyer get this right. You want your client to rest assured that their important documents are in good hands.

**Copyright:** Who owns your translation? In many parts of the world, the law determines that for you. In others, it’s up to the parties. Either way, ask your lawyer what the law is in your jurisdiction. Depending on your area of specialization, owning your translation may be in your best interest. In other areas, it doesn’t really matter, but it may be an incentive to make sure you’re paid.

**Early Cancelation By the Client:** What if the client engages your service and backs out after you started translating? You want to make sure you’re paid for the work performed before they canceled. And that’s what this clause is for.
Incentives: Instead of late payment penalties, some lawyers may recommend you use your payment clause as an incentive to secure payment by offering a discount for full upfront payment. That might work for you. Or you might want to do both. Either way, don’t be afraid to discuss those options with your lawyer.

Late Payment: Are you expecting a late penalty fee? If so, what constitutes late payment? As of what date? How high is that fee? How do you plan to enforce it? These are all questions you need to ask yourself to get this clause right.

Method for Handling Complaints: You may very well be the world’s best translator, but even the world’s best translator can come across an impossibly difficult client demanding unreasonable explanations of your word choices or wasting your time with frivolous complaints. That’s why it’s not a bad idea to add a small charge or other disincentive to keep the difficult ones at bay.

Outsourcing: Will you be outsourcing the work? The client may have a right to know. In addition, the client may even get a say in some cases. If you’re outsourcing, make sure to include that in your terms and conditions. In addition, provide a thorough explanation to the client of how private and confidential information will be handled when outsourcing.

Payment: You want to make sure you get paid on time and keep the transaction costs to a minimum. For that, your payment clause should clearly indicate when (e.g., upon delivery, upon invoicing, 10 days after invoicing, etc.) and how (e.g., check, PayPal, or bank transfer) you expect to be paid. But one thing translators often overlook is who is going to cover the transaction cost. By that I mean whatever charges are attached to your preferred payment method. This is especially important when you and your client are in different countries, where transaction costs can get pretty steep.

Translation Credits: If you’ve negotiated translation credits, where and how should they appear? If it’s a book, the credits might be on the cover page. If you’ve translated a report, they might be on the back cover. Maybe you’ve translated a poem. It doesn’t matter what you translated. What matters is where and how you’re to be credited for your work.

Translator’s Responsibilities: Contracts should be drafted fairly and in good faith. While your terms and conditions are there to protect you, that doesn’t mean you can’t explicitly assume certain responsibilities to ease your client’s mind, and to prevent them from demanding more than you originally agreed to.

Quality Guarantee: Are you willing to put your money where your mouth is? If so, you might want to consider a quality guarantee. If you do, make sure you clearly outline what parameters you’ll use to measure quality. Remember, translation is subjective by nature. What you understand by quality might not be the same thing the client understands.

Of course this is not, nor purports to be, an exhaustive list of every clause you should consider including in your terms and conditions. These are just the ones that in my experience translators often overlook. So, think of this as a cheat sheet to help guide your conversation with your attorney. The best way to future-proof and protect your business isn’t with terms and conditions alone. It’s with a well-crafted business plan that’s properly outlined in your terms and conditions and having those terms and conditions drafted by a competent attorney in your area.

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You need to be very clear about what it is you do and what your business model looks like so you can give your attorney the necessary information to draft your terms and conditions well.
There’s no doubt that combining work with parenthood is a challenging task, but the life of a self-employed parent is definitely more intense on every level.

By Dorota Pawlak

Running a freelance translation/interpreting business is like running a marathon. And when you add family responsibilities, raising children, or dealing with a global pandemic, you can end up with an extreme ultramarathon—turbulent, ruthless, and unpredictable.

How do you stay calm and resourceful enough to make it safely to the next control point and enjoy your run?

To adopt the right strategy and reach the finish line, you’ll first need to define your biggest hurdle. Every freelancing parent may be on a different phase on their quest for harmony, so let’s analyze three key common challenges to help you build your resourcefulness from the right components.

Challenge #1: Transitioning from a Freelancer to a Freelancing Parent

This might be the toughest transition in your freelance career. There’s no doubt that combining work with parenthood is a challenging task, but the life of a self-employed parent is definitely more intense on every level.

Lack of security tied to full-time salaried employment, limited or almost nonexistent maternity leave, and doubts about how to keep both your clients and family happy may all be reasons for a constant headache and emotional rollercoaster long before your child is born.

These challenges only multiply when you try working at the same capacity as in your pre-parenthood days. Your energy, productivity, and ability to focus seem to shrink every time you sit at your desk. Your thoughts run to your sleeping baby or—if you’re lucky—to your childcare.
provider or family member who more or less willingly, and at a higher or lower cost, accepts the responsibility to entertain your offspring. Somewhat discouraged, you finally realize that going back to work isn’t going to be as smooth a process as you thought, which causes you to question your ability to combine parenthood with freelancing altogether. So, what’s the way out?

Prepare for the Change: When I was pregnant, I decided that once I survived the first year as a mother, I would share my story of juggling motherhood with freelancing and find other women with similar experiences. When my daughter turned 14 months, I contacted 15 women from six continents across nine industries with this question: “What is the best approach to balance motherhood with running a freelance business?” Through extensive interviews concerning their freelancing lives before, during, and after pregnancy, I learned about their struggles, rewards, plans, and strategies. Based on these stories and my experience, I wrote a book called You’ve Got This: How to Continue Your Freelance Career When You Become a Mother.

During this process, I realized that although there’s no one-size-fits-all recipe for success, there are a few simple steps you can take to transition smoothly into the life of a freelancing parent. And the first one is to prepare for the change.

How? Well, if you’re planning to take a longer parental leave, you’ll need to prepare your freelance business for this absence. You can train an assistant to take over some of your tasks, or refer clients to a trusted colleague during the time you can’t work, or even hire a sitter for your business (yes, that’s a real thing!). Whether or not you’re planning to take a parental break, you should always have a reasonable financial buffer. In the ideal scenario, your financial cushion should cover your expenses for at least six months. This buffer will help you through unexpected events, such as a sudden loss of clients, late payments, or health problems. You could also use this buffer to take a longer leave of absence or supplement the maternity allowance some governments offer to self-employed citizens.

Another approach is to make sure your business can generate passive income so you can make money even when you don’t work. (More on this in a bit.) It’s always great to diversify your income streams and find ways to make a profit without an active effort. Of course, this is a good strategy to apply any time, not just when you’re planning a parental leave.

Change Your Perspective: The second step to a smooth transition into your life as a parent and freelancer is to get ready to change your expectations. As a freelancing parent, you’ll often have to adapt your work to your baby’s routine. Starting each day in front of the computer and working for 12 hours without a break might not be an option anymore. But that’s a good thing. Working in small pockets of time will help you stay more productive and focus on what really matters. Your work time will finally be the time for work, not for mindless scrolling through social media or never-ending chats with friends.

If you decide to work only during your baby’s naptime, you’ll need to switch to a super productive mode. Forget about taking on every project, limit your networking time, or cut down on other activities you don’t consider profitable enough. Learn to take advantage of short, random moments during your day and get used to working in small chunks of time. For example, for the first six months of my daughter’s life, I worked only when she was sleeping. This often meant I had only about 40 minutes of work time before switching back to parenting mode. Or—because my baby could only sleep next to me—I had to type on my laptop and hold her at the same time. Of course, I missed the comfort of my office with two large screens and an ergonomic keyboard, but I didn’t want to abandon my daughter for too long when she was awake. There’s always something you can adapt or reorganize in your daily life to focus on what really matters.

But all these changes can’t be successful if you forget about two other essential steps: taking care of yourself and building a resilient business model, which is also crucial in the next two phases.
Challenge #2: From a Freelancing Parent to a Jack-of-All-Trades

The most surprising shift for nearly all parents came with the pandemic. Apart from being forced to work from home, both freelancers and in–office employees had to suddenly take on the roles of teacher, supervisor, non–stop entertainer, and professional multitasker. Due to the challenges created by the COVID–19 crisis, most self–employed parents experienced an income drop and had to reduce their working hours up to 30% to live up to the requirements of the new reality.

How do you focus on work when you need to constantly check on your children? How do you avoid the burnout and keep clear boundaries between home and work when you’re constantly “on”? To regain your sanity, start with the following steps.

Prioritize Your Self–Care: Your business and family need the best version of you—as relaxed as possible, motivated, taken care of, and physically and mentally strong. It’s not easy, especially if your responsibilities seem to multiply and your to–do list never ends. No matter where you are on your adventure as a freelancing parent, you can’t be resourceful if you keep neglecting yourself.

When you take time to look after yourself on all levels, wonderful things happen. For example, you’re able to find answers to many questions such as: Why am I doing this today? Why do I want to continue running my business? Why is this task so important? Why do I feel I need more alone time? Prioritizing your well–being will help you show up for others, realign with your goals, and get ready to serve and help—whether it’s your clients, your family, or the people around you.

Self–care doesn’t have to be expensive or time consuming. Getting enough sleep, having a healthy diet, and surrounding yourself with positive people are very simple and powerful activities that will help you find energy and motivation for your business and family. And if you can complement these simple steps with physical exercise or meditation, you’ll reap even more benefits. After all, you can’t pour from an empty cup, so make sure your self–care cup is always full to share your resources with others.

Care about Your Plan: To navigate through so many different challenges, you need a plan. Create a schedule for work and home–schooling activities, discuss it with your family members, and then stick to it. Once you divide your day into fixed chunks of work, household chores, and home–schooling responsibilities, everyone will be more likely to get their jobs done.

Remember to encourage your children to be more independent by setting up routines and systems for simple tasks such as preparing healthy snacks or organizing study materials to limit the number of times family members call for your help. Freelancing gives you some degree of freedom and flexibility in this regard, so try to adapt your work time to your children’s home–schooling schedule. If you have a partner, communicate clearly with them to share the home–schooling and household responsibilities.

You can’t cope with everything alone, so don’t be afraid to delegate or ask for help. If possible, arrange for paid or unpaid support: a family member, neighbor, or babysitter who could spend some time with your children and give you an opportunity to work in silence without interruptions. Maybe there are other freelancing parents around you who also struggle with our new reality. What about organizing playdates or negotiating home–schooling swaps to create some kid–free time at least once a week? Little tweaks here and there may help you survive even the toughest marathon and let you stay in control when you feel you’re losing it.
In this way you’ll be able to earn money without the constant exchange of your time and skills, which can help you stay afloat. For instance, as a translator or interpreter, you have excellent writing and language skills. Perhaps you could write an article that a publication would be willing to pay for. Think about writing an e-book you could sell. You could also offer a webinar or online course. Start an educational blog and sell ad space. Use affiliated marketing to promote other products or services by linking to them on your blog, social media platforms, or website in exchange for a commission when readers click the links. Develop a YouTube tutorial series to generate online traffic. The possibilities are endless. Obviously, some of these ideas will require an initial investment of time and/or money. The point is to create something that will continue to generate revenue.

There’s always something you can share with others, such as expert knowledge, invaluable experience, or amazing ideas. Figure out how to convert your ideas into a source of steady passive income and protect your business from unexpected storms.

Finding Harmony: A Difficult Balancing Act
It’s not easy to stay calm, focused, and resourceful when you have to constantly deal with new challenges and limitations. But if you plan ahead, prioritize your self-care, and learn to adapt quickly to new conditions, you’ll eventually turn your marathon into a light stroll and find harmony between freelancing and parenting. MA

NOTES

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Challenge #3: From a Jack-of-All-Trades to a Balanced Freelancer
No crisis or transition lasts forever. The challenges you experience as a freelancing parent right now may be less or more intense, but at some point your life will be balanced again. When the dust settles, take some time to reflect and equip yourself for other potential turbulences.

Redefine Your Strategy: Start by assessing your results. How did you and your freelance business cope with the hectic turmoil? What turned out to be the biggest pain point? Is there anything you could change to survive and thrive? For example, you may want to narrow your niche to attract more (or better) clients and achieve a higher earning potential. You could also focus on what’s in demand right now to ensure your clients receive what they need the most. Try to reach out to your network, engage with colleagues and clients, or research a new direction for your business. Sometimes pivoting will help you take the business to the next level and prepare for upcoming changes.

Strategize for the Future: Is your business model future-ready? Do you have enough long-term clients, or do you need to constantly chase small one-time projects? Maybe it’s time to refresh your portfolio by adding subscription-based products and services or creating passive income streams. In this way you’ll be able to get more steady passive income streams.

Other Handy Resources for Freelancing Parents
What makes us laugh varies tremendously from person to person, language to language, and culture to culture.

By Marina Ilari
It’s Hard to Be Punny: Puns and Wordplay

Puns and wordplay are two of the most common forms of humor. Puns are jokes that make use of words that sound alike or nearly alike but have different meanings. Wordplay is verbal wit based on the meanings and ambiguities of words. And, of course, the way words sound and are written vary from language to language—hence the challenge for the translator.

Consider the joke told to me by my seven-year-old son. “What room does the ghost not have in his house? The ‘living room!’” Funny, I thought. And as any translator obsessed with language, I couldn’t help but wonder how I would translate that joke into Spanish. Translating it literally would make no sense, as the word “living room” in Spanish doesn’t have the double meaning of “room of the house” and “alive” as it does in English. If I had to translate it, I would come up with a completely different joke while trying to preserve something of the original—perhaps the ghost asking a question but with an answer that would be funny in Spanish. An example could be “¿Por qué el fantasma cruzó la calle? Para llegar al otro lado.” (“Why did the ghost cross the street? To make it to the other side.”) This solution would provoke the same emotional reaction from the reader—hopefully a chuckle.

Cradle Culture

Jokes can be an expression of the social and cultural environment in which they are created. As such, each culture can have its own special sense of humor that might be tied to its history, traditions, values, and beliefs. Sometimes, this means that only people from that culture would understand a joke or find it funny.

For example, in Argentina we have a specific way of reciting certain jokes, introducing them with the expression “aro, aro,” which comes from the language of Mapuche, an Indigenous group inhabiting southern Chile and Argentina. This expression means “with your permission” and connects one joke to the next one—a sort of bridge between a series of jokes. These jokes tend to use the same structure: “Yesterday I passed by your house and you threw something at me.” Usually what’s being thrown is then reflected upon by some witty comment. For example, “You threw a juice at me. Tang!” This is a play on words between the juice brand Tang (very popular in Argentina in the 1990s) and the sound the juice carton would make if it hit a person’s head. I can imagine that someone from a different culture would find this joke confusing or unamusing. One way to adapt it into English would be to use a different wordplay, such as: “Yesterday I was walking by your house and you threw a full block of cheese at me. That wasn’t very mature was it? Gouda thing I wasn’t hurt.”

As translators, we have the difficult task of deciding how to handle a challenge like the example above. Depending on where the joke is used (e.g., in a nonfiction book versus a movie subtitle), one option would be to use footnotes or insert an explanation of the joke. However, we must be aware that although providing such an explanation could be interesting to the reader, we’re essentially sacrificing the humor in the joke. It would also usually be the case that we wouldn’t be able to provide an adequate explanation. So, as translators, we must find a way to adapt what’s funny from one culture to something that would resonate and be funny in the target culture.
Knock Knock, Who’s There? Know Your Audience

One of the most important things to consider when translating humorous content is the target audience. For a language such as Spanish that has so many different variants, knowing if you’re translating for a specific country or region, or if you need to use a “neutral” Latin American Spanish term, will determine what terminology you can and cannot use. For example, if you encountered a word like “cool” in English, it might be particularly difficult to translate into Spanish. This is because “cool” can be translated in many different ways depending on the context and the target audience (e.g., “guay” in Spain, “chévere” in Colombia, or “copado” in Argentina). If you’re translating for a broader audience, you’ll need to avoid using regionalisms. The age of the target audience will also need to be known, since the approach we take translating content for children is considerably different than translating for an older audience. For example, we wouldn’t be able to use inappropriate language or intricate vocabulary.

Is This Thing On? Translating a Bad Joke

Another dilemma is when the joke that needs to be translated is bad (or very bad). Should the translator transcreate it into another bad joke or think up something funnier? How can you be sure you’re translating something that will be funny to the target audience? Well, you can’t. You can try your best to make someone laugh, but it’s not up to you whether or not they think a joke is funny. You can, however, do your research and try to cater to a specific audience (the more specific, the better) to produce the desired laugh. You can also examine the intention of the author. For example, perhaps the

QUICK TIPS for Translating Humor

WHEN TRANSLATING HUMOR THAT’S TIED TO A VISUAL:
Focus on finding something funny in your target language that includes the visual. Adapt the joke or wordplay to something that includes the imagery in some way, since the viewer won’t be able to ignore what they see.

WHEN THERE’S A PUNCHLINE:
Time the punchline correctly so as not to ruin it for the audience. Remember that timing is everything in humor!

WHEN THERE’S A CULTURAL REFERENCE:
Know your target audience and try to find an equivalent in the target culture that will resonate with them.

WHEN THERE’S A PUN OR WORDPLAY:
You might need to transcreate this entirely, so think about something new that could preserve some of the essence of the original.

WHEN THE ORIGINAL JOKE IS BAD:
Think about the author’s intention. Are they actually trying to make the audience laugh? Was the bad joke used on purpose to achieve some other comedic effect? Answering these questions will help determine if you should translate it into something funny or produce another “bad joke” in the target language.
author was purposely using a joke that’s not funny for a reason. It’s important for the translator to pick up on that.

The Bigger Picture: When It’s Not Just About the Text

Depending on the type of humorous content you’re translating, you might be faced with an additional challenge: the audio and visual references tied to it. This is particularly relevant in all forms of audiovisual translation. As a translator specialized in video game localization, I see this consistently: something that’s supposed to be funny but also has an image connected to it that can’t be ignored.

In this situation, we can’t disassociate text from the visual and audio. For example, we can’t transcreate a joke such as “Why the long face?” when it’s tied to an image of a horse’s face. This could actually be translated in a straightforward manner in Spanish, since we have the same expression (“¿por qué esa cara larga?”) that has the double meaning of being sad and literally having a face with long features. However, if your target language doesn’t have such an expression, you’ll need to transcreate something that’s funny that can be connected in some way to the image of a sad horse’s face.

Pause for Laughter: Timing and Humor

It’s widely known that timing is the secret to comedy. Punchlines are especially important when delivering a joke, so translators must be attentive to this. We’ve all seen this problem countless times in subtitles, when the punchline appears on the screen before the actor delivers it. This can be a letdown for the audience because it’s essentially ruinng the joke. Translators must be especially sensitive to subtleties in timing. It’s not just about what words we’re choosing, but also when they are shown or delivered that matters.

Preserving Humor in the Target Language

The difficulty of translating a joke lies in the fact that humor is an integral part of the culture in which it was created. Perhaps the most difficult jokes to translate are those that rely on puns, wordplay, or cultural factors. Think of jokes like:

• “I meant to look for my missing watch, but I could never find the time.”
• “I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. Then it hit me.”
• “Why does Peter Pan fly all the time? He Neverlands.”
• “What happened to the guy who sued over his missing luggage?” Answer: “He lost his case.”

As translators, we have the difficult task, dare I say the responsibility, of making such jokes work for the target audience.

As Mark Twain said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is really a large matter—it’s the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.” Finding the right words to preserve humor in the target language is an art form and is a serious business, indeed. 

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When I want to relax, I usually listen to some of my favorite classical music on the Idagio app or meditate. I also use the Calm app to hear the soothing sounds of nature. Yoga is another favorite. I also recently discovered sound baths (where you are “bathed” in sound waves) that feature calming sounds produced by a variety of sources, including gongs, chimes, tuning forks, or the human voice.

I was hooked on ASMR the first time I tried it and can already anticipate the relaxation by merely thinking about it. Many friends and colleagues are hooked as well. One friend listened to ASMR before a big interpreting exam, which she aced, and partly credits ASMR for getting her in the right mindset.

ASMR involves so-called brain triggers in the form of gentle sounds (tapping, etc.), gentle whispering, or a combination of both. Essentially, these stimuli are meant to produce a “tingling” sensation in your brain that causes you to relax. Just keep in mind that not everyone reports feeling this sensation. (Don't worry if you're in this category because there are also special ASMR videos for tingling-resistant folks!)

There are a variety of ASMR channels on YouTube, some of which have become quite popular in the past year with millions of subscribers. One of my favorites channels was created by YouTuber Tingting. She is Chinese
2020 was such a tough year that I promised myself I would try anything that offered what I was looking for: rest, relaxation, and meditation.

but presents her videos in English. I’ve enjoyed ASMR videos in languages I don’t understand, as it’s not about the words but how the words make you feel.

I find when I listen to ASMR videos, I’m instantly relaxed and feel energized and either ready to tackle my day or go to sleep, depending on which video I chose. I sometimes also listen to ASMR during my daily hour-long walks and find it really calms me down and puts me in a positive mindset, which we all need these days. Another YouTube channel I really like is called Gentle Whispering. You may have to try different channels until you find one that really speaks to you, but there are hundreds from which to choose. Some ASMR channels focus on role play, meaning the speaker will be simulating a head massage, a visit to the hairdresser, or some other relaxing activity. Those are generally less compelling for me as I tend to prefer softly spoken videos or those featuring only sounds or words.

I certainly don’t blame you if you’re still a bit skeptical, as this column perhaps isn’t the best medium to describe an audio and video sensory experience. However, I wanted to share the information about ASMR widely because I bet many of you will really like it. It’s also entirely free on YouTube, although you can choose to financially support some of the hard-working content creators through Patreon.

I’ve listened to ASMR before complicated remote simultaneous interpreting assignments, right after waking up, before I go to sleep, and before conference interpreting assignments. It works like a charm and I feel energized just thinking about it. I think this is a healthy addiction that many of us might really enjoy in 2021. After you try ASMR, I would love to know what you think.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**


Gentle Whispering YouTube: [www.youtube.com/user/GentleWhispering](www.youtube.com/user/GentleWhispering)


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This column is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors. Ideas and questions should be directed to judy.jenner@twintranslations.com.
How to Maintain Your Working Languages as a Translator

“Learning is like rowing upstream. If you stop rowing, you’ll start floating backwards.”

—Chinese proverb

Every translator knows that continuous study is key to remaining fluent in a second language. But how much effort do you put into maintaining your working language(s)?

I’m a lifelong learner of languages—Spanish, French, Mandarin, American Sign Language, Korean, and currently studying Cantonese. While I run a language services agency, my previous life was as a freelance Spanish>English and French>English translator. Before I launch into my favorite tools and strategies for learning and maintaining languages, I’ll make sure you’re convinced this is a worthwhile pursuit.

Working on Your Source Language

As a translator, your source language is most likely not your native language. You probably spent many years studying and perfecting it until the day you decided you knew enough to take the leap and become a translator. But after that, did you keep studying?

As translation work (hopefully) starts to pile up and life inevitably gets in the way, you could be forgiven for making your studies a low priority. After all, you’re a translator! You’re already fluent, right?

But don’t forget: language is constantly changing. It takes work to stay ahead of the latest slang, terminology, styles, and contexts that will affect the accuracy of your translation work. Furthermore, the ability to use language is a skill that takes familiarity and practice. As that year abroad in Madrid drifts further into the past, are you able to retrieve vocabulary as fast as you once did? Does it take a little longer to remember the most elegant solution for that tricky Japanese grammar structure? If so, you might want to consider working on maintaining your source language.

Working on Your Target Language

How about your target language? The language you translate into is usually your native language. Does it really need any extra work?

It used to seem crazy to me that someone might actually need to expend effort studying their own native language. Does it really need any extra work?

But it has become shockingly clear just how fast language changes and that I need to make a real effort to keep up.

This is even more the case if you’re living in a country
where your native language is not spoken. I’ve been living outside the U.S. (in Korea and China) for most of the past decade. Every time I go back to the U.S., there’s new slang. Even new grammar! Yes, most of that new slang will not show up in the texts my company receives for translation, but there’s always emerging terminology to be learned. How about the term herd immunity? A few months ago, I wouldn’t have known what that referred to. But if you keep up with English–language news, you’ll unfortunately know that term quite well.

In addition to staying up to date with changes in terminology, I need to make sure that the languages that surround me here in Asia don’t start affecting the natural fluency of my native English. The other day, I went to write a sentence in an email and started to second guess myself. ("I would say that in Chinese, but would I really say it this way in English?") I had to check it with a friend.

To maintain my writing ability, I make it a point to surround myself with the best possible versions of written English. In addition to reading every day, I listen to podcasts produced throughout the Anglophone world. This is especially important for me because even though my immediate English–speaking world (my husband and my parents via Zoom) is primarily in North American English, I still need to stay equally familiar with British and Australian vocabulary and phrasing.

**Do Translators Really Need to “Speak” Their Source Language?**

After all, translators work with written text, so how important is it for them to improve their speaking and listening abilities in the source language? This really depends on the translator and their personal goals. It’s definitely the case that you can be an excellent translator without being able to speak your source language.

Comprehension is a very different muscle.

However, the more ways you can access any given language, the more information you can access and the better translator you can become. Why wouldn’t you give yourself the best possible opportunity to access that information? For this reason, I recommend that translators continue to work on their speaking abilities in their source language.

**My Credentials as a Language Learner**

At this point, you might want to know a bit more about me. I’ve always loved the challenge of learning a new language, although I got started a bit late.

I began learning my first second language (Spanish) in high school. Even though I struggled (it took me about six years to become fluent in Spanish), I became enamored with the process of learning languages. Over the next 10 years I studied French, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, and Korean. I ended up majoring in linguistics to better understand how languages are structured and acquired in the human brain.

As much as I love learning new languages, I also know how quickly I can forget them (sorry, Russian and Arabic!). For this reason, I’ve learned to integrate language maintenance into my schedule. Over the past decade I’ve tried what feels like every app, tool, and strategy to learn a language. Now, I can tell you what works.

The key to learning or maintaining a language is to attack each separate element of the language using a tool that targets that particular element, as opposed to trying a one-size-fits-all approach. That’s why just using an online learning platform like Duolingo isn’t going to get you very far. (I’ll talk later about how Duolingo can be helpful!) So, here are the tools and strategies I use to target each element.

**Lexicon/Vocabulary**

- **Memrise**
  - [www.memrise.com](http://www.memrise.com)
  Memrise is a great app for studying vocabulary. It won’t teach you grammar or pronunciation, but it uses spaced repetition algorithms to show you flashcards in sequences that are optimized for long-term memory. You can create your own flashcard packs in Memrise, but I’m usually able to find specialized packs that already exist (e.g., a pack that’s just for studying the vocabulary from a specific Korean textbook).

- **Glossika**
  - [https://ai.glossika.com/home](https://ai.glossika.com/home)
  Glossika offers lessons for learning new scripts (e.g., Arabic or Japanese). I also use Drops to strengthen specialized vocabulary (e.g., computing and politics).
conglomeration of several muscles, as is your throat. Therefore, to properly pronounce a language, the best thing you can do is train your muscles to move naturally in a new way, in much the same way you would train to play a sport. And to do that, I really like Glossika. Glossika is a browser-based app that curates lists of hundreds of sentences to maximize various grammatical structures and pronunciation patterns. You listen to those sentences and repeat so you can let your muscle memory take over when you speak. Warning: this is really tedious. But it’s also really effective in improving both your pronunciation and ability to quickly recall grammatical structures.

Grammar and Syntax
Duolingo

www.duolingo.com

Duolingo can actually be very effective for learning the grammar of European languages. This is because the focus of Duolingo really is on grammar, and the gamification of the app makes grammar much more fun than usual. Currently, I’m trying to reanimate my dead Russian abilities, so I’ve been using Duolingo for the grammar.

Lingodeer

www.lingodeer.com

If you’re learning Asian languages, Lingodeer is a similar but much more effective alternative to Duolingo.

Pragmatics/Culture
Italki

www.italki.com

This is a platform to match language students with virtual teachers. It also streamlines payment, scheduling, and accountability because students and teachers review each other’s work after every lesson. Over the past five years, I’ve taken hundreds of lessons on italki and found it to be the single most effective tool for learning or maintaining a language. I take three to five lessons per week, depending on my language goals at that moment.

Motivation and Inspiration

The most important part of learning or maintaining a language is motivation. Motivation can be tricky to maintain, especially if you’re busy with translation work. Making incremental advances in your language abilities is never going to be more important than the day’s urgent tasks, right? So, how do we make it a priority? If you aren’t motivated, then none of the tools or strategies I’ve listed here will make any difference in your language-learning journey. For me, one of the most effective ways to stay inspired is to connect with communities of language learners. There are lots of language learners and polyglots on YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter who post about their own habits and struggles. Watching them succeed is hugely inspiring to me. How do you find them? Look for hashtags such as #polyglots or #languagelearning, or a hashtag relevant to the language you want to learn. Follow the hashtags so that this media will end up in your social media feed.

If you would like to follow me, I post often about my adventures in language learning. Give me a follow and let me know about your challenges! I love to help my colleagues on their language-learning journeys. Two of the places you can find me are my blog (misslinguistic.com) and on Twitter (mslinguistic). Happy learning!

It takes work to stay ahead of the latest slang, terminology, styles, and contexts that will affect the accuracy of your translation work.

Studying for Proficiency Tests

Another great way to keep your grammar up to date is to study for proficiency tests. I don’t necessarily recommend this method for learning to speak a language, but signing up for a test is a great way to stay accountable to your goal of increasing your knowledge of grammar. Here are some tests that are available for a variety of languages.

- For English: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
- For French: Diplôme d’études en langue française (Diploma of French Language Studies, or DELF)
- For Chinese: Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (Chinese Proficiency Test, or HSK)
- For German: Zertifikat Deutsch (ZD)
- For Korean: Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK)
- For Spanish: The Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (Spanish Diploma, or DELE)

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

Since the use of social media has become increasingly important for my business (and many of yours as well), I thought it would be a good idea to write about what I do on “my” social media platform. I also asked some colleagues to share how they fare on other platforms (more on that below).

In preparation for this, I read an interesting book by Renée Desjardins, a professor from the Université de Saint-Boniface in Winnipeg, Canada, called Translation and Social Media.1 It was published in 2017 so it’s a little outdated, but it was helpful to read anyway because Desjardins analyzes the function and role of social media for the translation profession. She also highlights some very interesting facts that most of us may know but have never heard articulated. Here are some examples:

- Social media profiles present an unprecedented opportunity for translators to have their voices heard right next to other professions (and other branches of the translation world), rather than clustered in small discussion forums primarily concerned with topics relevant only to a specific type of translator. (Note: there’s nothing wrong with the cluster, but it clearly serves a different purpose.)
- Social media platforms present a public space for translators to combine their voices, acting as potential platforms for solidarity and strength.
- Social media platforms provide individual translators and groups of translators (e.g., associations) space to represent their complete portfolio of services and expertise.

All this stands in sharp contrast to the presumed invisibility of the translator. (Note that one of the most influential books in translation studies was and still is Lawrence Venuti’s The Translator’s Invisibility.)

I found it exciting to look at this and realize (again) that our participation on social media not only fulfills our own agenda (e.g., to find jobs, make friends, or be entertained), but that of our profession as well.

As mentioned earlier, I asked some colleagues to share their experiences on different platforms. Clearly there are more platforms than those mentioned here, but Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter seemed the most obvious choices, at least from a U.S.-based perspective. Interestingly, you’ll notice we have two colleagues talking about Instagram. (It was really hard to find translators or interpreters who were using Instagram in a manner that was productive for their business, and then surprisingly two of them agreed to share their experience almost simultaneously!) Here’s what they had to say.

**Facebook**

Veronika Demichelis
facebook.com/demichelislanguageservices

It’s often overlooked that Facebook isn’t just a social media platform, but a search engine that helps people discover local businesses. I’ve learned that firsthand, seeing that at least three to five clients a week approach me and say they found me through Facebook. Some of them find me through my Facebook business page, others through word-of-
mouth referrals from their Facebook friends, and others find me in several local Facebook groups where I’m a member. That last strategy has been particularly helpful, as group members who have already used my services are often the first ones to respond when someone is looking for a translator. Free advertising? Yes, please!

I don’t use my personal Facebook page much, but I keep my business page on Facebook updated, respond to inquiries through Facebook Messenger, and regularly check if there are any translation-related questions in any local groups where I’m a member. If there are any, I respond to them and offer advice. By investing about 30 minutes a week, I usually get two to three well-paid translation jobs a week from clients who found me through Facebook. So, despite having issues with Facebook’s “content personalization” and targeted advertising, I think it has been a great supplement to my marketing strategy.

I have a lot more to say about finding translation clients through Facebook. Are all the clients there looking for fast and cheap? (No.) Do they all need official document translations? (No.) What groups should I join to find clients? What do I need to have on my business page? How can I get more word-of-mouth referrals? Reach out to me, and I’ll be happy to chat!

**LinkedIn**
Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo
linkedin.com/in/madalena-sánchez-zampaulo-ma-ct-35078bb8/

LinkedIn is a social media platform that’s meant for those who are there to do business. This platform has been one of the most powerful tools in my marketing toolbox, especially in the past few years. Like many people, I used to simply let my profile collect dust, connecting to new people every now and then but not really using it on a regular basis. Now it’s one of the main ways I build relationships with potential clients and build my client base over time.

I use the free version of LinkedIn but take advantage of all the ways it can work for me: optimizing and opening my profile so potential clients can find me more easily, reaching out to potential clients who are likely to need my services and who I know I can serve well for years to come, and using the direct Messenger feature to connect with those who hire and make decisions in their business. For example, after a new client reached out to me last month, we set up a Zoom call to talk about her need for a freelancer, and I’m now working on several projects for her through the first quarter of 2021.

I could go on and on about the power of LinkedIn. Not only is it a robust search engine, but Google recognizes it as a trusted source of information, which means that most people’s LinkedIn profiles rank quite high in search results (often on the first page) when clients are looking for them by name or using other specific keywords. Spending a few minutes every day on this platform is a very small investment for the return I’ve seen. I would recommend that every freelancer get comfortable using LinkedIn regularly and connecting with their potential clients through using groups, messaging, and creating an optimized profile. Be sure to check out the ATA webinar I gave on using LinkedIn to reach your ideal clients.3

**Instagram**
Ilduara Escobedo
instagram.com/translation_expert

I started my business account on Instagram in June 2019. My goal was to network and meet colleagues. Recently, I reached a little over 1,600 followers.

I posted daily for over a year but, starting this year, changed that to three posts per week. So far, the change has not affected my statistics. I probably spend about three to five hours per week planning the content I’ll publish the following week. In the platform itself, I try to spend at least an hour per day, mainly engaging with other users and answering direct messages and comments.

I believe Instagram has helped establish my brand and I’m proud to belong to an amazing community of translators, interpreters, linguists, and freelancers. I’ve made great contacts there. Every day I learn something new or refresh my knowledge!

Thanks to my Instagram account, I’m now a member of an Instagram affiliate marketing program and a brand ambassador. I’ve also promoted other accounts, for which I’m compensated.

Chloe Stout
instagram.com/choleouttranslations

I first set up my “professional” Instagram account in 2019 to share my experience of working as a translation trainee at the Council of the European Union. When I decided to go full-time freelance last May, I began using the account to document my journey as a freelance translator and subtitler and share tips about freelancing and languages in general.

The time I put into Instagram varies each week. I try to post on my account a few times a week to keep my followers engaged, but there are some weeks where I’m too busy to plan posts or feel as though I don’t have anything interesting to say. I try to spend some time every day scrolling through my feed and engaging with other people’s posts and creating or planning my own posts. Sometimes I have a good idea of what I want to say and what image I want to accompany the post, but other times I spend more time researching, planning, and taking photographs for potential use.
I also use the Instagram Stories feature to share inspirational posts I’ve seen. I’m also trying to use this function more to share things about myself, my business, and the “bigger picture.” For example, just last week I hosted my first Q&A session on my Stories where my followers could ask me anything about translation, freelancing, or my professional journey. It got really good feedback, so it’s definitely something I’ll do again.

Most of my current followers are fellow freelance translators or language professionals. I also like to follow accounts that provide marketing tips and support freelancers. At some point, I would really like to transition my account to attract more potential clients, especially since I specialize in marketing and digital services. At the moment, however, I enjoy connecting with other freelancers and sharing experiences. While my Instagram account hasn’t yet directly attracted clients in the same way my LinkedIn page has, it has led to referrals from other freelancers who have seen what I do and allowed me to make meaningful connections with other people in the translation industry.

**Twitter**

**Jost Zetzsche**

[www.twitter.com/Jeromobot](http://www.twitter.com/Jeromobot)

I only use LinkedIn and Twitter. I’m happy with that limitation because it allows me a much more focused use of my efforts, particularly on Twitter. I use LinkedIn more passively, primarily to announce new books and projects.

Most of what I tweet are links to articles or resources. If I really like them, I tend to spend quite a bit of time preparing those tweets, including researching the Twitter handles of the authors or other people who might be mentioned in the article or resource in question. My hope is to start conversations with journalists or other stakeholders, which happens rather frequently. (This might be because I have a reasonably high number of followers, which I think helps get you noticed when you reach out to others.) I see my function as a cheerleader to communicate a better way of thinking and writing about translation than how it’s typically perceived by the outside world.

I actively shy away from heated because, in my opinion, their outcome is not very productive. The jobs I get through my Twitter presence are based on potential clients’ perception of me as someone with industry knowledge. While some of those offers have been translation jobs, more are in the area of consulting, speaking engagements, and collaboration.

I would guess I spend about 30 to 40 minutes per day on Twitter, which includes perusing news items I might or might not tweet about.

Oh, and while we’re talking about Twitter: Alex Drehsel and I have passed our administrative duties for the TranslationTalk Twitter account into the enthusiastic and capable hands of Andie Ho, Deepthi Limaye, and Nadine Edwards. On the off chance you don’t know about that Twitter account, you should definitely open twitter.com/translationtalk and start following—regardless of whether you have a Twitter account. (Hint: it’s hands-down one of the best Twitter accounts for translators and interpreters out there!) MA

**NOTES**


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Progress Toward a Remote Testing Model of ATA’s Certification Exam

What’s happening with at-home testing? This question is on the minds of many members as ATA works to address the effects of the pandemic on our current in-person certification exam model. We’re excited to provide this update on the process involved in revamping our delivery method and the progress made thus far.

Remote testing has been under discussion for some time, but the lockdowns and other restrictions in 2020 propelled the Certification Committee to ramp up its efforts last summer to find a suitable vendor and platform to make this model a reality as soon as possible. We started with a list of nearly 20 options, many of which were ruled out because they were unable to accommodate non-Roman writing systems. Language-wise, Arabic has proven particularly difficult for vendors to manage due to the right-to-left writing direction. We briefly considered moving exams online just for certain languages but decided it would delay the development of some exams, might increase costs since we would be working with multiple vendors, and would be confusing to exam candidates (with information and instructions changing once for the initial vendor and then again later on).

Another sticking point has been the nature of our exam model. Many online testing platforms don’t allow test takers to exit the platform once they start their exam. This restriction disables access to other programs on candidates’ computers, as well as to the internet. These platforms won’t work for us since we allow internet access to non-interactive websites and allow candidates to use some resources they have stored on their computers, such as glossaries or dictionary apps.

The path has taken many twists and turns, but we’re close to reaching our destination of at-home testing. Proctoring has also been a hurdle. Some potential vendors use only automated systems that often flag apparent violations like accessing outside websites, while others only work with their own proctors. Because ATA allows access to certain online sites but not others, it’s best for us to use our own specially trained proctors, who are translators themselves. However, most vendors are unwilling to create custom arrangements just for us because ATA’s exam volume (on the order of 500 exams per year) is small compared to, say, universities or organizations of nurses or accountants.

After extensive online research, email exchanges, telephone calls, virtual meetings, and live demos, we’ve identified a company we believe will be a good match. We’ve had multiple meetings with this vendor to explain our model and requirements, including calls with their programmers to tailor the interface to work with our various languages. We had a pilot test in January and scheduled more testing in February and March. We’re in the process of negotiating a contract and have started writing the instructions for candidates and proctors. Some details need to be reviewed by ATA Headquarters staff and possibly legal counsel. Once the administrative obstacles have been cleared, we’ll be able to share our proprietary exam passages with the remote testing vendor, start training our proctors, and move into beta testing.

The path has taken many twists and turns, but we’re close to reaching our destination of at-home testing. We’ll be sharing much more information in the coming weeks and months as the details get hammered out and this more convenient model becomes available to our members later this year. Thanks for your patience and stay tuned!

NOTE
1 For a complete list of acceptable resources allowed during the exam, check out the “Computerized Exam Online Resource List” on ATA’s website, https://bit.ly/ATAexam-resources.

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