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BEYOND THE WORDS IN THE BOOTH:

WHAT AI CANNOT DISCERN

ata American Translators Association

The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

Contents

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See more from this issue at *www.ata-chronicle.online.*

Features

8

ATA 2026 Elections: Candidate Statements

Calling all Voting members! Participating in ATA's annual elections is your opportunity to help shape the future of the Association. Learn what this year's candidates for ATA's Board of Directors have to say.

13

Beyond the Words in the Booth: What AI Cannot Discern

Interpreting live global events like the NATO Summit requires far more than mere linguistic interpreting. Drawing from 15 years of experience interpreting broadcast press conferences, this article examines the critical role of human pragmatics when navigating high-stakes political discourse, non-native accents, and unexpected slips of the tongue. It demonstrates why real-time booth teamwork, thorough preparation, and academic research remain irreplaceable in an era increasingly dominated by automated speech translation and artificial intelligence.

18
When There's No Word for It: How AI Fails Untranslatable Law

Generative AI is named for what it does: faced with a legal concept it cannot translate, it invents one. When asked to translate concepts that exist only within a specific jurisdiction, for example, AI doesn't flag the gap. It generates a confident, fluent, and potentially catastrophic mistranslation. The gap is structural, and this article explains how specialists catch it.

22
A Practical Resource Toolkit for English-Spanish Medical Translators

Medical translation demands more than terminology: it requires understanding concepts, audiences, and context to make well-informed decisions. This is especially true for translators working between English and Spanish, as they work across many countries, cultures, and healthcare settings. This article compiles a practical toolkit of resources that support that kind of decision-making, including comprehensive platforms like Cosnautas and the *mugüMED* dictionary, the *Merck Manual*, a dictionary from the Real Academia Nacional de Medicina de España, specialized glossaries for informed consents and mental health, and ATA's Medical Division's own resource collection.

Columns

4
From the President

6
From the President-Elect

26
Certification Forum

Make sure to check out the Chronicle-Online website!

This dynamic site offers bonus features, including member news, announcements, and access to the *Chronicle* archives (2000–present). You'll also find Mark Herman's "Humor and Translation" (topics have included Biased Artificial Intelligence, Algospeak, Foreignization and Domestication, and Demystifying Translation.

Visit www.ata-chronicle.online!

For submission guidelines, click here.

ata American Translators Association
The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

American Translators Association
211 N. Union Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: +1-703-683-6100
Fax: +1-703-778-7222
chronicle@atanet.org • www.atanet.org

Editorial Advisory Board
Andy Benzo, Lois Feuerle, Ben Karl, and Barbara Inge Karsch

Publisher/Executive Director
Adrian Aleckna

Editor
Jeff Sanfacon • jeff@atanet.org

Advertising
advertising@atanet.org
Tel: +1-703-683-6100, ext. 3007
Fax: +1-703-778-7222

Design & Production
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ANDY BENZO
president@atanet.org

One Year at the Helm

When I began this journey, I set a course around three priorities: education, marketing, and organization. One year later, those priorities remain our compass.

A year ago, I took the helm of the American Translators Association with a deep sense of responsibility, gratitude, and purpose. I knew the waters ahead would not always be calm. The T&I professions were already navigating rapid technological change, shifting markets, and new questions about the role of human expertise in an age increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (AI). However, I also knew ATA had weathered change before—and our greatest strength has always been the people aboard this ship.

When I began this journey, I set a course around three priorities: education, marketing, and organization. One year later, those priorities remain our compass. As I begin my second year at the helm, I'm adding a fourth: advocacy.

Education

On the education front, ATA is entering an important new chapter. We're launching our first microcredentials, beginning with courses focused on AI. Additionally, we're developing new educational opportunities with masterclasses in interpreting and courses designed to help candidates prepare for ATA's certification exam.

As technology changes how we work, our expertise helps us build trust, inspire confidence, and remain professionally relevant.

Similarly, our Certification Program is sailing into new waters with the successful registration of the ATA-Certified Translator® certification mark. This gives credentialed members another way to communicate their professional standing clearly and visibly. As I explained in my *last column*, the certification mark doesn't replace the certification seal. Instead, it provides ATA-certified translators with a designation they can use in professional signatures and communications. At a

time when the marketplace is becoming increasingly crowded with automated language solutions, clearly distinguishing verified professional expertise matters more than ever.

Marketing

Our second priority, marketing, is about looking beyond our own horizon. If we want the world to understand the value of language professionals, we must speak not only among ourselves but also to the people and institutions that need our expertise.

One important part of that effort will be a marketing campaign directed to translation and interpreting programs across the country. We want to invite these programs to become ATA institutional members and strengthen the bridge between academia and the professional community. But we also want to reach the students themselves. We hope the next generation of translators, interpreters, and terminologists know that ATA is their professional home, a place to learn, connect, grow, and find a community that will accompany them throughout their careers.

I firmly believe there is a future for our professions. The winds are changing, but they're not stopping our journey. We're adjusting our sails, reading the currents, and continuing toward new destinations.

Our marketing efforts will also take us beyond the language professions. We want to strengthen ATA's visibility among courts, bar associations, medical associations, businesses, government institutions, and others who depend on professional language services. We're also opening ***The ATA Chronicle*** to all, so people from all walks of life can discover who we are, what we know, and the extraordinary expertise within our community. Our knowledge should be shared.

Organization

Our third priority, organization, may not always be above deck, but it's essential to keeping the ship seaworthy. We continue examining how ATA can strengthen its divisions, chapters, committees, governance structures, and volunteer leadership. An association doesn't move forward because of one president, one Board, or one Headquarters team. It moves because hundreds of people contribute their knowledge, energy, ideas, and time.

Increasing the Role of Advocacy

Now, as we sail into year two, advocacy will become an even greater part of our course.

Advocacy means being there when the T&I professions and our members need a voice. In Wisconsin, ATA leadership and members of the interpreting community went directly to the State Capitol and ***testified against legislation*** that would have allowed AI-powered tools to be used in place of qualified human interpreters in the courts. Due in part to our efforts, ***Assembly Bill 377*** ultimately failed to pass the Senate. We have also

As technology changes how we work, our expertise helps us build trust, inspire confidence, and remain professionally relevant.

written to the North Carolina courts to advocate for our members, urging support for increased contract court interpreter compensation rates after funding was summarily excluded from the annual budget by legislators. Whenever opportunities arise to defend professional standards and the interests of our members, ATA will be there. (Visit ***ATA's Advocacy and Outreach page*** to learn about all the Advocacy Committee's efforts.)

Nonetheless, advocacy requires a lookout. We cannot address what we don't know. If something is happening in your state, court, workplace, or professional community that ATA should know about, please write to us. Tell us what you're seeing. Make us part of your journey. Our members are our eyes on the horizon, and the sooner we see what's approaching, the better prepared we'll be to respond.

Please remember your membership supports this work. When you renew your ATA membership, you're doing more than accessing individual member benefits. You're helping sustain an organization that can advocate for our professions, communicate with policymakers and institutions, and stand with our members when their professional interests are at stake. There is strength in numbers, and every member adds strength to our collective voice.

That brings me to perhaps the most important lesson of my first year at the helm.

We Are All ATA

The president may stand at the wheel for a time, but this is not the president's ship. It belongs to all of us. Every member who volunteers, participates in a division or chapter, earns certification, mentors a colleague, teaches a student, advocates for the profession, or simply explains why human expertise matters helps determine our direction.

Leadership is never about steering alone. It's about setting a course, listening to the crew, watching the horizon, and making sure everyone understands where we're going and why.

As we begin this second year, our course is clear: educate our members, make our professions visible, strengthen the organization that brings us together, and advocate for the professionals we represent.

There's still much to do, and new horizons lie ahead. After one year at the helm, I'm more convinced than ever that our strength comes from sailing together, with a clear course and a shared purpose.

Steady winds and onward.

BEN KARL
president-elect@atanet.org

You're unlikely to meet a more amiable or welcoming bunch than the folks at ATA's Annual Conference!

Stepping into the Future at ATA67

This is my final column before our 67th Annual Conference in San Francisco, which will be taking place in just a few days. It's also my final column of the year, and what an exciting 12 months it has been! Being elected to this position was truly an honor, and this past year has been full to the brim with making sure this conference exceeds your expectations and is right for this moment—one that is admittedly full of uncertainty and where the changes keep coming at a dizzying clip.

By the time you read this, unless you're already planning on being in San Francisco with us, I probably won't be able to convince you to drop everything and book your flight, but please allow me to highlight some of the things I'm most looking forward to at this year's conference that will hopefully inspire you to renew your ATA membership in a few months and make plans to attend ATA68 in Las Vegas!

The Session in Boston that Inspired this Year's Conference

At ATA66 last year, I had the pleasure of hearing Joachim Lépine speak about what he called the trifecta of *value*, *visibility*, and *viability* in our industry and whether we were adequately shifting our mindsets to build resilience for this new world we're facing. How many of us are truly conceiving ourselves as businesses, taking the time to really understand our clients' needs and designing an

offering that helps them meet their business goals within their proposed budget? Of the many questions Joachim asked the audience, one in particular stood out. After asking how many people systematically schedule an onboarding call with every new lead to convert that lead into a client, only a small handful—out of a room with at least 60 people in it—raised their hands. I think it was an eye-opener for a lot of people in attendance, and his words clearly resonated, judging by how long I had to wait for my turn to speak to him.

At that point, I had only just learned I had been elected to this position and would be responsible for planning this year's and next year's conferences, but my mind was already buzzing with ideas. How could I help our members find their answers to the value, visibility, and viability question, and add skills and tools to their toolboxes that could help them thrive as things continue to change?

Joachim has since spoken at many other conferences in both North America and Europe, and I'm excited for him to share his insights with us during this year's ***keynote address*** on Friday. There will also be a special surprise for everyone after his talk. As Joachim pointed out in Boston, and I think a lot of ATA members are feeling this right now, the days of coasting on thousands of words per day of easy agency work are long behind us, but we're still figuring out the right way forward.

This is precisely how the *themes* for this year's conference were born, and it was with these themes and questions in mind that I curated this year's program from the hundreds of submissions we received. And while the conference is notoriously busy for the conference organizer (and all the other volunteers who help make it great), I'm very much looking forward to attending sessions that will help me continue answering these questions for myself, too.

I also think this topic is timelier than ever. Just today, I saw a linguist in a private Facebook group ask what the "going rate" was for into-English translation offered by agencies in Europe. I believe the better questions are:

- "What sectors are growing right now, and how can I put my linguistic and cultural skills to work for clients in those sectors?"
- "How can I parlay my existing skills into new ones that are also in demand?"
- "How can I build a lead pipeline that will help bring clients who need my services to me?"
- "How can I leverage technology to augment my skills?"
- "How can I sell my inherently human value?"

We have amazing speakers covering these very topics this year, and everyone who is attending is in for a real treat!

Coming Together in Community

Since joining ATA in 2014, I've received thousands of dollars in work from people I've met at our Annual Conference, from boutique agency owners to fellow translators looking to team up. I've also referred thousands more dollars in work to colleagues I met at the conference, and subcontracted to many of them, too. And I didn't meet all of them at one of the more than *10 formal networking events* at the conference, which promise to be as productive as ever. I also met them while toasting my bagel at breakfast, fueling up on caffeine in the Exhibit Hall, or waiting to catch the elevator back up to my room. This year, there are even more ways to connect, including a new Quiet Corner in the Exhibit Hall where those of us who might need a physical or mental break from the hustle and bustle can sit quietly and decompress with like-minded people.

Your division or special interest group may have also organized an *off-site event* where you can connect further with colleagues working in your language pair or subject-matter area while exploring our amazing host city. Advance registration is required for some of these events, but in most cases, you still have ample time to sign up! And if none of these off-sites work for you, you can easily meet up with other attendees at the beautiful Eclipse Bar in the Hyatt Embarcadero lobby, or even just mill around the hotel entrance on the ground level to find an informal dinner group to join. You're unlikely to meet a more amiable or welcoming bunch than the folks at ATA's Annual Conference!

Important ATA67 Links

ATA67 Main Conference Site
www.atanet.org/ata67

ATA67 Full Agenda (Sessions and Events)
www.atanet.org/ata67/agenda

ATA67 Keynote Address
www.atanet.org/ata67/education/keynote

ATA67 Networking Highlights
www.atanet.org/ata67/networking

ATA67 Registration
www.atanet.org/ata67/register

San Francisco City Guide
www.atanet.org/ata67/city-guide

Make Your Voices Heard

And last but not least, it's also time for all active and corresponding members to make their voices heard in ATA's annual elections. You can vote up until the Annual Meeting of Voting Members and Election on Thursday, October 29, and all voting is done electronically (and by proxy), meaning that you fill out your ballot, then pick one of the suggested proxies (who are generally Board members), or enter the name of any other voting member of ATA who will be attending in person, to officially cast that ballot on your behalf at the conference. Your proxy doesn't know whom you voted for, or even that you selected them to vote for you. This process allows us to conduct entirely electronic elections and spare the vote counters of yore an afternoon in a quiet room counting ballots, and likely a few paper cuts. (*Learn how to become a voting member of ATA.*)

Remember, ATA is your association, and you get to select who represents you on our Board of Directors and any governance changes that affect you as a member. Make your voice heard, whether you'll be joining us in San Francisco or not. Re-read the *candidates' statements* and, if you won't be in San Francisco, watch their live statements *here*.

And with that, pack comfy shoes, travel safe, and see you in beautiful San Francisco!

ATA 2026 Elections:

Candidate Statements

ATA will hold its regularly scheduled elections in conjunction with ATA's 67th Annual Conference in October to fill the following positions:

- Treasurer (one position for a one-year term)
- Director (three positions, each for a three-year term).

Online voting is open now through October 29, 2026, until 3:30 PM Eastern Time.

Take time to learn more about the individuals on the slate—from background to experience to what they hope to accomplish as a member of ATA's Board. And don't forget to vote!

Treasurer | One-Year Term

MARIAN S. GREENFIELD
msgreenfield@gmail.com

I am pleased that I have again been nominated to run for ATA treasurer, this time for a one-year term after having served in the position for nearly a year as an appointee.

Since I was appointed in October 2025, I've accomplished quite a bit and would like to continue my work to ensure fiscal responsibility.

Among my accomplishments:

I worked closely with Executive Director Adrian Aleckna and ATA's Board to identify opportunities for cost savings and revenue growth, along with seeking input from past presidents. I then worked very closely with Executive Director Aleckna to present a realistic, balanced 2026–2027 budget to the Board, which passed with no revisions. I'm doing everything I can to ensure we stem the operating losses ATA has sustained for several years now.

For years we had been getting terrible service from our financial advisors, who would take months to act on our requests, often failed to respond to our communications, and put in very little effort to manage our investments. I therefore moved ATA's and AFTI's Merrill investment accounts to new financial advisors. Our new advisors are very responsive, completely restructuring our accounts to comply first with our old investment policy and then with the new, updated investment policy that allows for more modern, low-risk investment vehicles. I worked with the Finance and Audit Committee, the Board, and Governance and Communications Committee to develop the new investment policy. The return on ATA's investment account since our new advisors took

over in January (through mid-August) is 12.63%, outperforming risk-adjusted market performance.

I also worked with Executive Director Aleckna to move our Wells Fargo bank accounts to Bank of America (again because of terrible service, but also because our relationship with Merrill qualifies us for premium benefits for our bank and credit card accounts, with virtually zero fees) and our no-name, no-benefit credit cards to Bank of America cash back credit cards.

For those who don't know me, I would like to mention highlights of my background that prepared me for service as ATA's treasurer. I've served as treasurer of the New York Circle of Translators (prior to serving as its president-elect and then president) and as a member of ATA's Finance Committee, as well as having been responsible for budgeting, budget execution, and cost-cutting in my role as (worldwide) manager of translation at JP Morgan and exercising my craft as a financial translator for over 40 years.

In addition, I've served ATA as director, president-elect, and president and chaired several key ATA committees, including the Professional Development Committee.

While ATA's situation has changed since my prior service to ATA, as has the translation and interpreting industry's—with ATA membership shrinking rather than growing and the market becoming more difficult—I believe my experience in leadership and my understanding of both ATA's finances and the T&I industry will allow me to continue to contribute to ATA's strength.

I still believe that ATA is a great investment for everyone in the T&I industry and look forward to continuing to contribute to the value of membership.

STEPHEN LANK
SLank@cescols.com

I'm honored to be considered for the position of treasurer on ATA's Board and hope to earn the opportunity to serve the organization that has given me so much throughout my career.

For those who don't know me, I've worked in language services since 1987, beginning as a freelance translator. After a few years of struggling and realizing how much I simply didn't know, I discovered MIIS and earned my MA in Spanish translation and interpreting. That was my passport to a lifelong career, and I've never looked back.

From translation, I moved into project management, learning the full project lifecycle and how everything fits together; then vendor management, where I honed my advocacy skills championing translators and interpreters within the organizations I served. From there, I moved into senior leadership positions, learning how to run a successful language services company. This experience has given me a comprehensive understanding of our profession, from the realities faced by individual practitioners to the challenges of effectively managing a global operation—a unique perspective I believe would be an asset to ATA and its membership.

But what specifically qualifies me to serve as treasurer?

First, I bring direct association finance and governance experience. From 2017 to 2020, I served as treasurer on the Board of the European Language Industry Association during the challenging period when it moved its legal domicile from the U.K. to Belgium due to Brexit. That experience reinforced the importance of prudent financial oversight, effective risk management, and close collaboration among the treasurer, board, and staff.

Second, as CEO of Cesco Linguistic Services, I'm ultimately responsible for the company's financial health and long-term sustainability. I oversee budgets and cash flow, evaluate financial performance, manage risk, and balance current operational needs with long-term priorities. This requires more than just reviewing financial statements. It requires asking the right questions, anticipating challenges, evaluating competing priorities, and communicating financial information clearly so informed decisions can be made.

I would bring that same practical approach to ATA, helping manage resources so the Association can invest in programs and services that provide meaningful value to members.

Throughout my career, I've also volunteered countless hours for industry causes I'm passionate about. I'd like to highlight one that I'm particularly proud of: standards development. I've volunteered with ASTM International since 1998, helping to standardize industry best practices and bring awareness to the global importance of our profession. I chaired the committee that developed *ASTM F2575 Standard Practice for Language Translation*, and currently chair subcommittee F43.03, which oversees all translation-related standards. As AI becomes more ubiquitous, standards are an important tool for educating the public about the risks of entrusting too much to technology and why professional human practitioners must remain at the core of cross-cultural communication. As an ATA Board member, I would continue this work.

It's hard to boil down a 40-year career to 500 words, but I hope this broad picture of sound financial stewardship, professional leadership, and deep understanding of our profession is compelling enough to earn your vote.

MARÍA (MILA) BAKER

mariadlmdavid@gmail.com

My name is María Baker, and I go by Mila. I was born and raised in Santa Fe, Argentina, where I studied three languages (English, French, and Italian). After a stint in law school, I became a teacher of English as a second language. After completing this degree, I did some teaching work in my hometown and decided to pursue an MA in teaching in English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) and Spanish at West Virginia University. After graduating in 2013, I settled in Madison, Alabama, where I discovered interpreting and translation. I started in the medical field and became certified (National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters) in 2014. I became certified as a Spanish medical interpreter (Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters) in 2018. I obtained my ATA certification (English-to-Spanish) in 2021. I've been an ATA volunteer for many years. I've worked with the Medical and Spanish Language Divisions and Professional Development and Public Relations Committees. I currently serve as interim assistant administrator of the Spanish Language Division.

My work experience includes:

- Working as a freelance translator and interpreter for over 10 years.
- Working at a local language agency for a few years, which provided valuable insights into how agencies operate.
- Being active in my local organization, the Interpreters and Translators Association of Alabama, and being involved in advocacy in my state.
- Working for the International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA) as an outreach coordinator.
- Currently working as an in-house medical translator and doing some freelance work.

I've seen professional organizations inside and out, and I'm proud to be an ATA member and honored to be considered as a candidate for the Board.

We live in complex times, and there are many issues that require our attention and efforts. Along with listening to our members, these are the things I would like to focus on, if elected:

- **Working not only on increasing ATA membership, but particularly on increasing current and new members' involvement in ATA activities.** I would like to see more people in our divisions and committees, more people at our conferences and events, and more fresh ideas from new voices in the field and in ATA.
- **Working on advocacy.** We have a strong Advocacy Committee that works very hard to address issues of cultural and linguistic diversity and professional working conditions, which have been challenged in recent times. I want our advocacy work to be integrated into all divisions and committees, as far as this is possible. It will take efforts on all fronts to defend language access rights and the best compensation and working conditions for language professionals.
- **Exploring, along with the Board, possibilities for partnering with other organizations in our advocacy, professional development, and other efforts to benefit our members.** In particular, I would like to extend these efforts to interpreters and translators working with languages of lesser diffusion. I want to listen to all voices, even for languages that don't have a division or special interest group.

I can't wait to meet many of you in San Francisco!

ANALÍA BOGDAN

analiabogdan@gmail.com

I'm truly humbled and honored to be considered for a second term on ATA's Board of Directors.

When I was elected to the Board three years ago, I promised to bring enthusiasm, hard work, and commitment to the role. Throughout my term, I've worked to fulfill that promise while gaining a deeper understanding of our Association and the opportunities and challenges we face in this rapidly changing world.

During my first term, I served on the Finance and Audit Committee, the Governance and Communications Committee, and had the privilege of chairing the Divisions Committee. I also led strategic initiatives, including chairing the AI Statement Task Force, which developed ATA's updated statement on artificial intelligence.

My journey as a translator began in Argentina, where I earned a bachelor's degree in translation and became a licensed sworn translator. Before transitioning into translation, I spent 10 years working in the banking industry and became certified as a mutual funds advisor, an experience that gave me a strong foundation in financial

concepts and specialized terminology. I later moved to the U.S., earned a master's degree in financial and legal translation, and obtained my ATA certification, strengthening my commitment to professional excellence.

Professional associations have played a transformative role in my career. Through ATA and other organizations, I discovered the value of collaboration and volunteer leadership. Before joining ATA's Board, I served for over six years in the Technology and Financial Divisions of the Association of Sworn Translators of Buenos Aires. I also currently serve as treasurer of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Florida, where I continue to gain valuable experience in nonprofit governance in the U.S.

Since attending my first ATA Annual Conference, I've remained committed to giving back to this remarkable community. I've presented at multiple ATA conferences since 2019 and was honored to receive the 2022 Marian S. Greenfield Financial Translation Presentation Award for the best financial translation presentation for that year's conference.

If re-elected, I will continue working to ensure that ATA remains forward-looking, responsive, and relevant. My priorities include:

Leading amongst change. Artificial intelligence and emerging technologies have already reshaped our profession. I believe we must continue to act with urgency, providing members with guidance, resources, and leadership to adapt now while championing the irreplaceable value of our members.

Thrive working together. Our divisions, committees, and volunteers are the heart of ATA. I believe that by fostering engagement, mentorship, collaboration, and meaningful connections across our Association, we can continue building a stronger community.

Advocating for our members. I believe ATA must continue leading the conversation by raising awareness among clients, institutions, policymakers, and the public about the expertise, value, and essential role of our professional translators and interpreters in a multilingual world.

Serving on ATA's Board has been one of the greatest privileges of my professional career. I seek your support for a second term and remain as enthusiastic and committed as when I first ran for office. Thank you for your trust.

~~MEREDITH CANNELLA~~ (Withdrew)

(NOTE: Meredith withdrew her candidacy, effective October 8, 2026.)

STEVEN MCGRATH, CT

steven@mcgrathtranslations.com

I'm honored to accept this nomination to serve my colleagues on ATA's Board of Directors.

As chair of the Membership Development Committee, administrator of the Slavic Languages Division (SLD) since 2023, and assistant administrator and volunteer in other capacities before then, I've always appreciated the spirit of mutual service that makes ATA a welcoming home and source of support for language professionals. My top priority as a volunteer, including if elected as director, will always be maintaining a dutiful and responsive relationship with my fellow ATA members, especially those who take the initiative to improve the life of our profession.

I began translating while I was a graduate student and English teacher living abroad, and I earned ATA's Russian-to-English certification shortly after returning to the U.S. in 2017. During the pandemic, I started taking online Ukrainian classes and eventually started working out of that language. It's important to me to hear various perspectives within our industry, which is part of why I volunteered in the SLD and have engaged with several other divisions, in addition to joining both my local chapter and affiliate, the Upper Midwest Translators and Interpreters Association and Iowa Interpreters and Translators Association, respectively. In my time as an ATA volunteer, I'm especially proud of working with members to nurture their initiatives and confront the challenges of our times.

In a recent book, Cory Doctorow, a science fiction novelist, journalist, and technology activist, juxtaposed the concepts of "centaur" and "reverse centaur" in relation to workplace technologies. The former represents human intelligence that can—if it so wishes—use automated tools like a rider does a horse, to safely improve speed and dexterity, while the latter image has resonated with workers across many professions as an already-present dystopia of AI-empowered taskmasters. The good news is that society's attitudes have grown ripe to the idea of establishing qualitative and ethical standards for the use of AI, and ATA has great potential for leadership and partnership among an entire family of industries—a herd of centaurs working smartly and defending our interests.

ATA's greatest strategic resource has always been its members' authoritative expertise in matters of translation and interpreting. Even before the recent breakthroughs in large language models, ATA counted among its members some of the world's most experienced experts in machine-assisted translation

and its commercial applications, and we've led the way both in providing human-centered education on new technologies and establishing standards for using them. We should share our experience with other professional organizations to raise the bar in ways members will appreciate and clients will respect. We so often speak about client education. Now that the world recognizes the danger of "slop," we can make ourselves part of the bulwark against it.

Please reach out to me directly if you'd like to have a broader discussion about my goals. Our organization is strongest when all our voices are heard. I hope to earn your vote. Thank you for this opportunity to be of service.

TERESA SALAZAR

tessasalaz@gmail.com

My commitment to translation and interpreting began in 1981 at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS), where I earned an MA in translation and interpreting. I then spent 11 years as a freelance interpreter and translator; an experience that gave me a very clear understanding of the need to improve interpreters' working conditions, compensation, and professional standing.

That experience laid the foundation for my next role as the first director of interpreting services and staff interpreter ever contracted by the federal court in Washington, DC, where I built a professional working environment grounded in the realities of professional practice. I'm especially proud to have contributed to achieving a significant increase in the federal rate paid to court interpreters after years of stagnant fees, a reminder that sustained advocacy can produce meaningful changes. After 28 years at the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, I retired in 2023 and returned to freelance work, where I continue to engage actively with the evolving needs of our professions.

Throughout more than 40 years in the field, my guiding purpose has remained the same: to leave the professions stronger than I found them. I've advanced professional standards through position papers I coauthored while chairing the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) Position Papers Committee and serving for four years on NAJIT's board of directors. Since 1997, I've also contributed to the development of industry standards through my work with ASTM International, where I currently chair the Interpreting Subcommittee. Just as important, I've helped prepare new generations of interpreters and translators through workshops, presentations, and teaching as an adjunct instructor in the Graduate Studies in Interpreting and Translation Program (GSIT) at the University of Maryland.

We're living through a defining moment for translation and interpreting as AI reshapes professional practice. Some fear that human expertise is being displaced, but I believe our role is evolving and we must help shape that evolution. We need to understand what AI can offer while protecting the judgment, accountability, ethics, and quality that human practitioners bring to our work. ATA is already working to raise awareness among professionals, and our Association must continue to be a strong voice in determining how technological change affects translators and interpreters.

As a director, I would contribute a long record of advocacy, standards development, teaching, and practical experience, along with a commitment to ensuring that innovation strengthens our professions rather than diminishes them.

~~GABRIELA (SIEBACH) SERRAMBANA-ESPINOZA~~

(Withdrew)

(NOTE: Gabriela withdrew her candidacy, effective August 29, 2026.)

BEYOND THE WORDS IN THE BOOTH:

WHAT AI CANNOT DISCERN

Interpreting at the recent NATO Summit offered a practical look at modern conference interpreting, touching on key themes like managing diverse accents, the role of human judgment alongside AI, the importance of booth teamwork, and the connection between research and practice.

By Ozum Arzik–Erzurumlu

The High-Stakes Pressure Cooker

For the past 15 years, my summers have been defined by a familiar, high-intensity ritual: interpreting the annual NATO Summit press conferences live on television. It is a grueling yet exhilarating endeavor where high-stakes diplomacy, geopolitical posturing, and real-time media scrutiny converge in the booth. Operating during a live broadcast forces interpreters to

Interpreting the annual NATO Summit press conferences live on television is a grueling yet exhilarating endeavor where high-stakes diplomacy, geopolitical posturing, and real-time media scrutiny converge in the booth

maintain total professional decorum under immediate, widespread public exposure. Indeed, the literature suggests that broadcast interpreting is the most stress-inducing mode in the discipline, as Ingrid Kurz, a pioneer in the development of interpreting studies who also interpreted live broadcasts of the July 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing, confirmed empirically by pointing to its mass audience reach and acute real-time vulnerability.[1] It is precisely this high-stakes pressure that proves why human intelligence, emotional poise, and rigorous preparation still rule the airwaves.

This summer, again, while vacationing in Turkey, I stepped out of holiday mode and back into the broadcaster's booth when the summit convened in Ankara. The two days offered a practical look at modern conference interpreting, touching on key themes like managing diverse accents, the role of human judgment alongside AI, the importance of booth teamwork, and the connection between research and practice.

"The Islamic Republic of Japan": Why Human Interpreters Beat AI in a Crisis

The central narrative of this year's summit was heavily dominated by intense discussions surrounding ***Operation Epic Fury*** and the volatile situation in the Middle East. Both the television broadcast network and our interpreting team were on high alert. High-stakes military conflict leaves zero margin for error; every adjective, entity name, and policy nuance carries massive geopolitical weight.

Then came the moment every broadcast interpreter simultaneously dreads and prepares for.

During a fast-moving press conference alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, U.S. President Donald Trump said: "We had 111 missiles shot by the Islamic Republic of Japan." He meant Iran.

I was live on air, interpreting simultaneously into the microphones for thousands of television viewers. In a fraction of a second, a complex cognitive cascade took place in my mind:

1. **Acoustic and Lexical Recognition:** My brain registered the literal words: *Islamic Republic of Japan*.
2. **Contextual Evaluation:** My world knowledge and immediate domain awareness instantly flagged the geopolitical absurdity. Japan is not an Islamic republic; the context was clearly Operation Epic Fury, naval encounters, and Middle Eastern missile strikes involving Iran.
3. **Pragmatic Intervention:** I made an immediate tactical decision. Rather than blindly interpreting the literal words, which would have confused broadcast viewers, produced instantly misleading news copy, and created unnecessary diplomatic chaos, I used the surrounding context to preserve speaker intent. I bypassed the slip of the tongue, relied on macro-contextual coherence, and seamlessly maintained the flow of the narrative without getting bogged down in an obvious verbal error.

I was interpreting live, with no time to think twice. I knew the context, and I knew President Trump meant Iran. My fidelity was to the Turkish audience, so I said "Iran." In hindsight, the alternative was available to me. I could have rendered "Islamic Republic of Japan" literally and let Turkish viewers hear the slip exactly as it was uttered, leaving the judgment to them. Why I did not is worth examining, because fidelity was only one of the things I was weighing.

As Chikako Tsuruta, a Japanese broadcasting interpreter, observes, interpreters working with President Trump's speech routinely smooth and sanitize it, and the motive is not purely a service to the audience. An interpreter who renders a leader's disfluencies faithfully risks

having them attributed to the booth rather than to the podium. The result is what Tsuruta describes as a double bind between fidelity and reputational risk.[2]

My correction served the viewers, but it also protected me. But notice what it took to answer the question at all: knowledge of the war, the region, and the speaker. A machine hears "Japan" and says "Japan." My choice also depended on who was listening. I was interpreting for a Turkish television audience and didn't want viewers to come away believing that Japan and the U.S. were at war. In a conference setting, I would let the slip stand so that the parties in the room could hear it and respond to it themselves. The same slip has two right answers, and choosing between them is a judgment about the listeners, which is one more thing the machine does not make.

The Machine Would Have Been Accurate

An AI translation model operates on statistical probability, direct lexical mapping, and syntactic parsing. It lacks true intentionality, real-world grounding, situational pragmatics, and the ability to "read the room" or process subtle contextual cues. Faced with "Islamic Republic of Japan," an AI model would have faithfully, mechanically output the literal equivalent. In doing so, it would have broadcast a false statement to an audience relying on accuracy, potentially sparking misinformation in real time.

This gap in automated capabilities is underscored by empirical findings. A quality study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) Interpretation Team evaluating the Wordly AI platform across high-stakes speeches in six United Nations languages found AI unsuitable for formal settings, assigning it an average score of only 46%.[3] The report specifically highlighted critical failures in language identification, contextual understanding, and the misinterpretation of proper nouns and dates.

What saved the NATO Summit broadcast was not dictionary knowledge; it was human pragmatic competence. Human interpreters do not merely process code; we process meaning. We understand the speaker's intent, political context, global history, and immediate situational dynamics. We know when a speaker meant to say X even when their mouth said Y. As long as political discourse remains human and prone to slips of the tongue, the world will need human interpreters to bridge the gap between word and intent.

This incident challenges the cliché that interpreters are merely jacks of all trades and masters of none. While moving rapidly between disparate topics might look like broad generalism, it actually highlights our true specialization: we are jacks of all trades, but absolute masters of conveying meaning.

The Unseen Effort: Booth Teamwork and the Prep Phase

To the television audience watching at home, conference interpreting looks like an individual performance. A voice speaks over the politician's voice, perfectly synchronized and authoritative. But anyone who has worn the headset knows that conference interpreting is inherently a team sport.

For the NATO Summit, my colleague and I worked in a tight-knit pair, rotating duties to manage the intense cognitive fatigue that accumulates during simultaneous interpreting. But our partnership began long before we ever set foot in the booth.

Although the summit itself spanned just two days of live broadcasts, the preparation phase was extensive. Long before the press conferences began, my colleague and I were in constant communication:

- **Glossary Building:** Shared spreadsheets filled with hyper-specific military acronyms, diplomatic titles, weapon designations related to Operation Epic Fury, and current NATO policy terminology.
- **Media Monitoring:** Continuous exchange of news articles, press briefings, and geopolitical analyses from both Western and regional Turkish news outlets.
- **Video Analysis:** Analyzing recent speeches of key attendees to tune our ears to their speech cadences, favorite idioms, and rhetorical habits.

This preparation phase, invisible to the public and uncredited on television screens, is actually one of the most intellectually satisfying aspects of our

Operating during a live broadcast forces interpreters to maintain total professional decorum under immediate, widespread public exposure.

It is precisely the high-stakes pressure that proves why human intelligence, emotional poise, and rigorous preparation still rule the airwaves.

profession. It requires us to become temporary subject matter experts in a domain within days. When a team enters the booth thoroughly prepared, they function as a single cognitive unit: one interpreting while the other monitors incoming news alerts. The seamless delivery on air is direct proof of the hours spent collaborating off air.

Navigating Global Englishes: Non-Native Accents on the World Stage

One of the defining features of the Ankara summit was the prominent presence of Turkish political leaders delivering their press statements in English. For conference interpreters—and particularly for interpreting students and trainers—accent variation is a known hurdle. Yet, seeing it play out on a global broadcast stage reinforced a fundamental reality: exposure to diverse English accents is not an optional elective in interpreter training; it is a core professional requirement.

In international settings like NATO, English functions as English as a lingua franca (ELF). Interpreters rarely have the luxury of listening exclusively to ***Received Pronunciation*** (U.K.) or Standard American English. Instead, we navigate a rich tapestry of phonetic variations, idiosyncratic stress patterns, shifted vowels, and localized syntax. When a Turkish minister speaks English in a fast-paced press conference, an interpreter cannot pause to decipher unusual stress placement on a technical term.

As Michaela Albl-Mikasa, a professor of interpreting studies at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences, has extensively documented, the paradigm shift toward ELF in international conferences presents unique cognitive and processing challenges for interpreters. Non-native English input alters traditional comprehension and production mechanisms, placing a higher cognitive load on the interpreter's processing capacity.[4]

For interpreting students who often complain that non-native accents are "unfair" or "too difficult," the Ankara summit served as a vivid counterargument. Training must move beyond idealized standard accents. To be market-ready, interpreters must systematically train their ears on non-native speakers—from Turkish and English-as-a-second-language diplomats to regional accents across Asia, Europe, and Latin America. In today's multipolar diplomatic landscape, if you cannot interpret global Englishes, you cannot interpret world news.

Bridging Practice and Research

There is a persistent assumption in our field that practice and scholarship occupy separate buildings—that interpreters work and academics write, and that the two exchange occasional pleasantries at conferences. My experience has been the opposite: the booth generates the questions, the desk answers them, and the answers come back into the booth as something closer to instinct. The Japan moment is a case in point. I did not correct that slip because I had read a paper about correcting slips. I corrected it because years of analyzing this particular speaker's discourse had already told me what his sentences do when they go wrong.

That difficulty, it turns out, is not a Turkish problem. Colleagues working into Hindi, Japanese, and Arabic have reported the same obstacles in the press and scholarly literature: sentences abandoned before they resolve, a narrow band of adjectives asked to carry an enormous load, and a flow of argument that resists the anticipation strategies interpreters depend on.[5] I documented the same features working into Turkish and examined how interpreters handled them.[6] What strikes me now is that the syntactic looseness and referential drift that make this speaker so hard to render are exactly what made the error legible the instant it occurred. The research did not slow me down in the booth. It sped me up, because it had already narrowed the

field of plausible meanings before the sentence arrived.

This is why I resist the idea that interpreter training is vocational while interpreting studies is theoretical. The two are the same thing at different speeds. What we ask students to do under pressure—hold context, read speaker intent, anticipate, repair—is simply the live form of what we examine slowly at the desk. And the examining matters more now than it used to. As automated systems become fluent enough to be mistaken for competent, we need to be able to say exactly what a human interpreter contributes.

The Enduring Value of the Human Booth

As I returned to my vacation after two days of intense media interpreting in Turkey, I reflected on how much the interpreting landscape has shifted over my 15 years at the NATO Summit. Tech stacks have grown sleeker, remote platforms have proliferated, and AI tools have grown increasingly sophisticated. Yet, as recent industry studies show—including CSA Research's large-scale report, which found that only 10% of end users trust the accuracy of machine-driven apps—automated systems are far better suited for routine, low-risk logistics than high-stakes, nuanced diplomatic exchanges.[7]

The core of our profession remains remarkably unchanged. Interpreting is not about replacing Word A in Language X with Word B in Language Y. It is an embodied, social, and emotional act rooted in human connection, situational agility, deep contextual awareness, and collaborative preparation. Whether it is decoding complex non-native accents, protecting a broadcast from a slip of the tongue, or working in tandem with a trusted booth partner, the human interpreter remains the ultimate safeguard of clear, accurate international communication.

What this practice demonstrates is that conference interpreting remains a norm-governed profession, organized around accuracy, neutrality, impartiality, and confidentiality, rather than a transcoding operation that happens to be performed by a person. It is also, as situated approaches to interpreter cognition have established, an activity that draws on embedded, embodied, enactive, extended, and affective cognition, in which the booth, the partner, the glossary, and the news feed all function as genuine cognitive resources rather than peripheral supports.[8] In an age when interpreting is turning into a zone of insecurity— "marked not only by technological disruption, but also by a broader destabilization of the norms, values, and institutional protections that have traditionally underpinned the profession"[9]—it is crucial to say plainly what we do. Our work is not words. It is communication. We are communication professionals.

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Ozum Arzik-Erzurumlu is a full-time faculty member in the Program in Translation and Interpreting Studies at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her research, addressing the history and sociology of conference interpreting, interpreter training, and the digitalization of the profession, has appeared in *Interpreting, Translation and Interpreting Studies and Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*. She has a PhD and is an accredited professional conference interpreter working with Turkish (A), English (B), and Spanish (C), and has interpreted for U.S. presidents on behalf of Turkish broadcasters since 2006. She is the author of *Reimagining Conference Interpreting in the Age of AI* (Routledge, 2026). *ozum@ozumarzik.com*

When There's No Word for It:

How AI Fails Untranslatable Law

We call it generative AI, and that name should serve as a warning.

By Nancy Verástegui

The Translation that Passes Review

Artificial intelligence (AI) doesn't know what it doesn't know, and nowhere is that clearer than when you hand a machine a company's articles of association and watch it work.

Ask it to render "Votes of Members" and it returns *Votos de los Miembros*. The grammar is clean and the register is correct, so the phrase would sail past a busy proofreader without raising a flag. To a Mexican lawyer reading that same clause, however, it means almost nothing, and the reason cuts to the heart of everything that follows: *miembro* is not what Mexican law calls the owner of a company.

The Ley General de Sociedades Mercantiles (Mexico's General Law of Commercial Companies) speaks of *socios* and *accionistas*, and where it does use *miembro*, it means something else entirely: the *miembros del consejo de administración*, or the "members of the board" (according to *Article 143*). A machine that renders "member" as *miembro* has not reached for a weak synonym; it has taken a real word from the statute and

set it down in the wrong place, close enough to survive a quick read yet incorrect enough to send a Mexican reader toward the boardroom when the clause is about who owns the company. And even the right word is not a single word, because it depends on the vehicle: the owners of an S. de R.L., roughly a limited liability company, are *socios*, while the owners of an S.A., a stock corporation limited by shares, are *accionistas*. That's a distinction the AI model never stopped to make.

Here's what the machine did, and didn't do. The machine invented nothing; it knows perfectly well that "member" is *miembro*. What it skipped was the harder question, and the only one that matters, which is who this person is inside this company and under this law. Translating "member" without feeding the proper context to the AI model gives you a technically correct word bolted onto the wrong legal reality, and if the same document also defines "shareholder" as its own term, a single careless *miembro* erases a distinction the drafters built on purpose.

Bottom line: A perfect sentence can carry a broken meaning, and no one checks the ones that sound right.

Why "Generative" Is the Whole Problem

We call it generative AI, and that name should serve as a warning. A generative model generates: give it a concept that has an equivalent, and it retrieves one. But give it a concept that has none and it will still do the only thing it knows how to do, which is produce something anyway, in the same confident register it uses for everything else.

Contrary to AI, human translators are curious and question the terms in front of them as part of their skill set. When we reach a term we're unsure of, we slow down and do something about it, whether that means flagging it, querying the client, or leaving a translator's note. This hesitation is itself information, because it tells the reader which parts of the document to trust and which to check twice. The AI model has no such reflex. It hands you the word it's sure of and the word it invented with the same untroubled calm, translating the first 10 clauses of a contract correctly and then the eleventh, the one built on an untranslatable concept, in exactly the same tone. Nothing in the output signals that the ground has moved.

Two things make this worse in law, and neither is about Spanish specifically; Spanish and Portuguese are just where I work. The technology has always run ahead of the law it translates. And legal language, more than most, exists to do one job: communicate a precise consequence. When the words survive but the consequence doesn't, the translation has failed, even when every word is "correct."

The Unidentical Twins

Some legal concepts live inside one system and nowhere else, because the other system never needed them. Mexico's *amparo* is one example. *Amparo* is a judicial action regulated by the Law of *Amparo*, a regulatory law

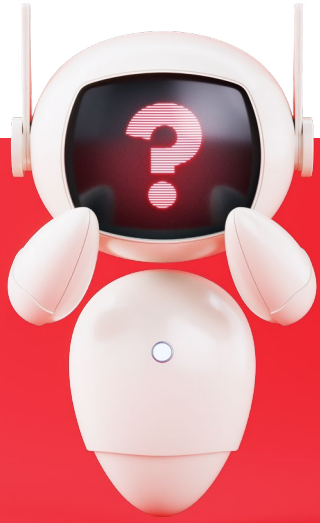
A perfect sentence can carry a broken meaning, and no one checks the ones that sound right.

of Articles 103 and 107 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States, to protect an individual or individuals from the acts or omissions of authorities that violate the human rights and guarantees protected under the Constitution. AI offers "injunction" or "constitutional appeal" without blinking, and neither conveys that an *amparo* is a judicial action.

Fe pública is another example. The AI model renders it literally as "public faith," a word-for-word calque that mirrors the Spanish but carries none of the institution behind it, the authority I confer every day as a *notaria* (a civil-law notary, worlds apart from a U.S. notary public).

The pattern of AI output is not unique to Mexican legal terminology. For example, Brazil's *recuperação judicial* is its bankruptcy-reorganization procedure, closest in Mexico to *concurso mercantil* (the country's court-supervised insolvency and reorganization proceeding). Translate it as *recuperación judicial* and a Spanish reader hears "judicial debt collection," which is roughly the opposite of what it is. *Judicial reorganization* is better. "Chapter 11" is worse, because it trades a careful analogy for a false equivalence.

Artificial intelligence doesn't know what it doesn't know.



These are the unidentical twins: a source concept and a target word that look like they should match but don't. Which raises the question every one of us has actually faced at 2:00 a.m.: When do you keep the foreign term and footnote it, and when do you reach for the nearest functional equivalent? There's no single rule. The honest answer is that the untranslatable forces a decision, and the decision is ours to defend.

The False Friends that Went to Law School

Beginner translators learn the easy false friends early (e.g., "actually" is not *actualmente*, "library" is not *librería*, and "carpet" is not *carpeta*. These words raise a red flag. However, the dangerous words finished law school, passed the bar, and show up to work in a suit. These include:

Delinquent: A "delinquent account" is simply past due. Render it as *cuenta delincuente* and you have called a late payer a criminal, because *delincuente* in Spanish means precisely that, a criminal. The cognate is flawless, and the category has slid from contract to crime.

Molest: In a non-molestation order under Section 42 of the Family Law Act 1996, "molest" is a deliberately broad prohibition on harassment, interference, and disturbance. *Molestar* drifts toward mild annoyance, and translating it that way shrinks a serious order into a request to please stop being irritating. It runs the other way, too: in modern American usage, "molest" can carry a sexual meaning that a translator must not import unless the instrument supports it. The word means what the instrument makes it mean.

Execute: This one reaches past our field, which is why it's so easy to miss; everyone executes a program, plan, or strategy. In a contract, "this agreement was duly executed" means it was signed. So, *el contrato fue ejecutado* tells a Spanish reader it was performed or enforced, which is a different act at a different moment. Here is the twist worth spelling out: "execute a judgment" genuinely is *ejecutar una sentencia*. The verb follows the object it acts on, not the dictionary.

Consideration: *Consideración* exists in Spanish, and it's perfectly good Spanish, which is exactly why this one is dangerous. It's simply not the right word in a contract. "For good and valuable consideration" invokes a common-law doctrine, the bargained-for price that makes a promise binding, and civil law has no twin for it. *Contraprestación* is a useful bridge without being an equal.

Equity: The term is the final boss: one word wearing three coats. First, the body of common-law remedies born in the Court of Chancery. Second, capital, the value in a company or a property. Third, fairness. Only the third is *equidad*. Call the first *equidad* and you delete an institution; call the second *equidad* and you turn money into morality.

And yes, I know. As expert translators, you already know this, and so do I. It still happens, in real files, all the time.

Making the Machine Doubt

This is where our work actually lives. Human judgment re-enters only when you force the AI model to notice what it skipped, and the way you force it is through carefully worded prompts. I think of the human half as Artisanal Intelligence: context, doubt, and craft, set against the machine's speed.

Left alone, or run in a model that keeps no memory across a session (which happens even inside the same chat), the machine will hand you an assortment for a single defined term: *socio*

in one clause, *miembro* in the next, and then "director," *consejero*, or sometimes *consejo* or *junta* for "board." One document with five names for the same person.

So, I prompt the machine to doubt through my prompts. DOUBT is the checklist I use:

- **Define both systems.** Name the source law and the reader's law before anything else.
- **Order alternatives, not answers.** Ask for candidates and what each one keeps or loses, and refuse the first or "only" word the machine offers.
- **Unmask assumptions or, better yet, set them.** Tell the machine in one instruction what the relationship between Members and Directors is in the document and that it needs to hold this distinction throughout the document.
- **Back it with sources, briefly.** Make the machine cite the statutory definition rather than assert one so you can check the citation instead of trusting the tone.
- **Test against the text.** Here's the rule of thumb worth tattooing: two separate defined terms cannot become the same word in the same document.

Unlike the AI model, we read for context; we doubt, question, test, and proofread. DOUBT doesn't hand you *socio*. It makes the machine show its work so you—the one who knows that "member" under Section 112 of the Companies Act 2006 is still not *socio* under the Ley General de Sociedades Mercantiles—can make the call it cannot.

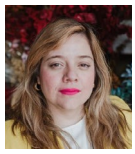
Where the Value Went, and Why You Can Charge for It

None of this argues against AI. I use it every day. And more than once I've caught a fluent output being confidently, invisibly wrong. Reviewing a cooperation agreement not long ago, I hit section headings that governed the "Provision of Data" from one company to another, already rendered into Spanish as *provisión de datos*. It was clean, it was grammatical, and it had passed every eye until it reached mine. In the context in which it appears, "provision" carries none of its contract-clause or accounting-reserve senses; it's the plain noun of the verb to provide, and the heading should read *suministro de datos*. Nothing about *provisión* looks wrong until you remember this one word leads three separate lives in a legal document, and only the context tells you which one you're standing in. The point is where the value moved.

When the machine does the fluent 80% in seconds, that 80% stops being what a client pays a premium for. What they're paying for now is the 20% the machine cannot see: the confident sentence resting on a concept with no equivalent, the flawless cognate that quietly changed the branch of law, the judgment that "member" in this context is *socio*, and why. That's legal reasoning applied to language rather than typing speed, and it's worth charging for, precisely because it's the part the machine performs with the most misplaced confidence.

> *The technology has always run ahead of the law it translates.*

The machine translation that should scare us comes across as professional and legally correct, and slips through review because everyone, the reviewer included, mistook fluency for accuracy. Learning to distrust that fluency, on purpose and by method, is fast becoming the most valuable thing a legal translator does. ATA

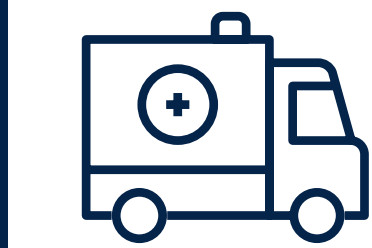


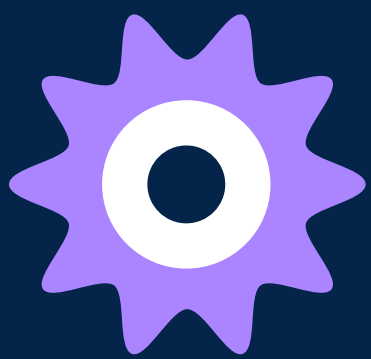
Nancy Verástegui is a Mexican attorney and a federally certified translator (English and Portuguese into Spanish) authorized by Mexico's Federal Judiciary Council and the Superior Court of Justice of Nuevo León. Beyond translating, she builds and leads legal and translation teams for law firms, corporations, fintechs, and digital platforms across Latin America, the U.S., Brazil, and Spain, and holds an LL.M. in international and comparative law. She founded Translations by Lawtin and has presented at ATA's Annual Conference on legal terminology and the limits of machine translation in high-stakes work. *nancy@lawtinlegal.com*

A **PRACTICAL RESOURCE TOOLKIT** FOR English-Spanish Medical Translators

A good resource isn't simply one that offers a quick equivalent, but one that helps translators understand how a term works well in a real medical setting.

By Daniela E. Obregón, María Paula Plazas



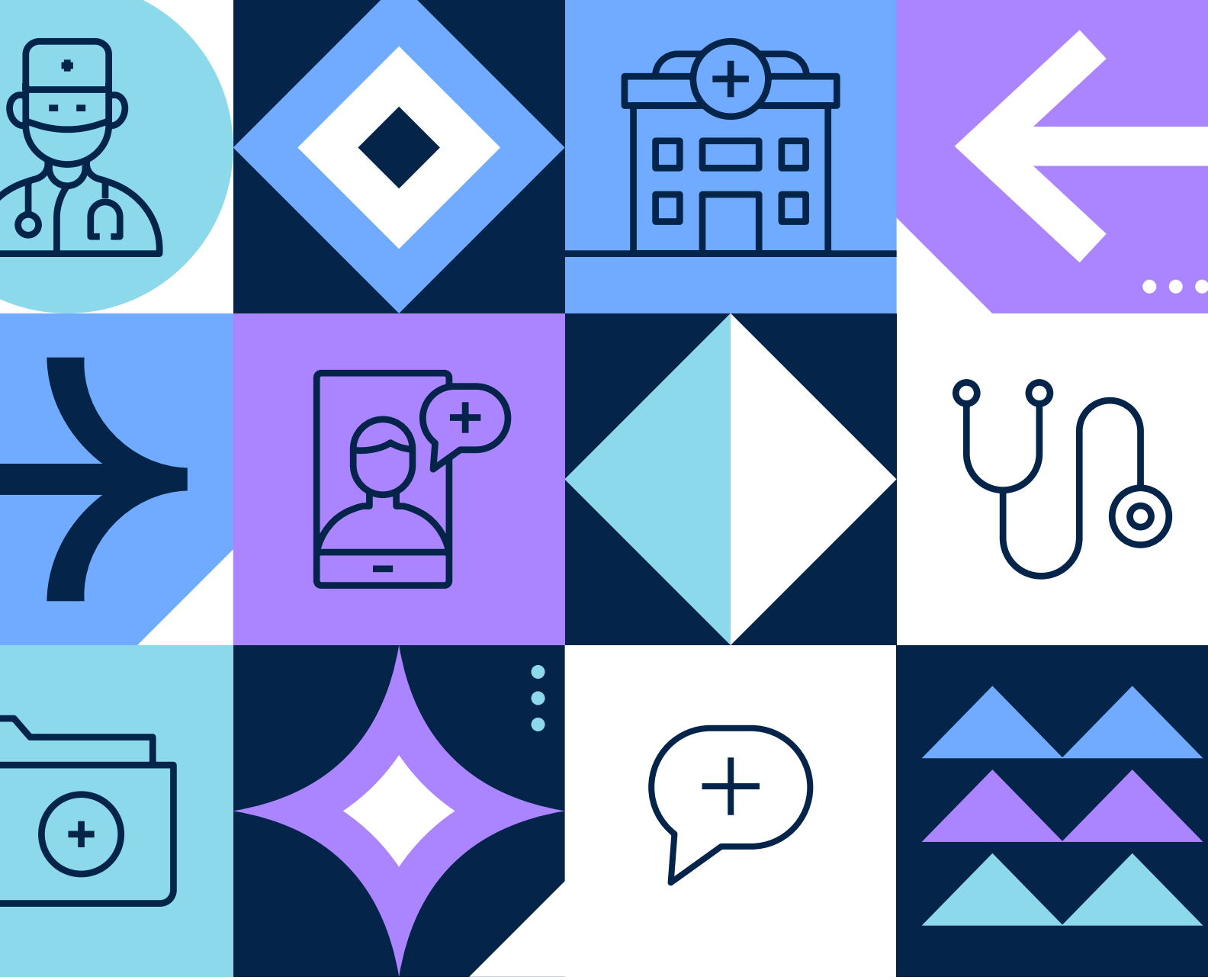


Usually, medical translation is associated with terminology, and while terminology matters, any experienced translator knows that medical translation involves much more. Translators need to understand concepts, recognize the purpose of the text, identify the intended audience, and make choices that are accurate and appropriate for the context. For instance, a term that's acceptable in a scientific publication may not be the best choice for patient-facing materials. That's why it's important to build a good set of resources that help translators verify concepts, compare usage, and make better-informed decisions.

Medical translators working with Spanish have the extra difficulty of a language used across many countries, cultures, and healthcare settings. Each text has different demands on terminology, register, and readability. A good resource isn't simply one that offers a quick equivalent, but one that helps translators understand how a term works well in a real medical setting. For this reason, we've compiled a list of resources we usually use and find useful, and we hope you will as well.

Cosnautas

To get started, a must-have resource for medical translators is ***Cosnautas***. This platform offers several specialized resources in various languages. Linguists working with English and Spanish can find the *Dictionary of Doubts*



in Chemical Translation (English–Spanish), the *COVID-19 Dictionary* (English–Spanish), the *English–Spanish Dictionary of Clinical Research*, the *English–Spanish Dictionary for Allergology and Clinical Immunology*, the *Repertoire of Initialisms, Acronyms, Contractions and Symbols used in Spanish Medical Texts*, and the beloved *Dictionary of Doubts and Difficulties in English–Spanish Medical Translation*, also known as *Libro rojo*. For medical translators working with other languages, Cosnautas also offers resources for French, Portuguese, and German.

Last but not least, Cosnautas features some great tools: the *Illustrated Multilingual Dictionary of Medical Devices*, a dictionary of medical devices with entries translated into six languages (English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Portuguese), illustrated with descriptive images; the immediate translation solutions finder (IRIS), a text analysis tool that converts terms into hyperlinks to useful information and translates them; *Árbol de Cos*, a database of links to useful online resources for medical translators and writers; and Cercaterm, a search engine with entries in Catalan and equivalents in Spanish, French, and/or English.

mugüMED

Another valuable English–Spanish medical dictionary is ***mugüMED*** by Pablo Mugüerza. Terms can be searched in either language and results display entries containing the searched term.

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Once selected, the platform provides both English and Spanish equivalents, along with alternative translations, comments from the author, related links, and usage examples. Although mugüMED currently contains more than 12,500 terms, some sections are still in development, and users can suggest new entries. Because mugüMED is regularly updated, it includes neologisms, making it a useful tool for translators, especially in fast-evolving areas such as clinical trials.

Merck Manual

To keep building a medical translation toolkit, a practical resource for professionals and consumers is the ***Merck Manual***, which was first published as a reference book for physicians and pharmacists in 1899. Over time, it has expanded its offerings to provide high-quality medical information to a wide range of users, including healthcare professionals, students, veterinarians, and consumers.

The manual is organized into three levels. First is the medical topic (e.g., cardiology). Second is the chapter, such as Specific Cardiac Arrhythmias. Finally, each chapter is divided into individual topics, such as atrial fibrillation. The site is user-friendly and features a navigation bar that provides access to specific types of content, including symptoms and signs, diagnosis, and treatment related to the selected topic.

The *Merck Manual* is available in three free versions.

- The Professional Version provides detailed medical information for healthcare professionals and students.
- The Consumer Version presents the same topics in terms that are easier to understand, and this version is intended for patients, parents, and caregivers.
- The Veterinary Version contains information for veterinary professionals and pet owners.

All three versions include a language-switching feature that was introduced in 2016, when more than 10,000 medical resources were translated into Spanish with the help of highly qualified native Spanish-speaking physicians and medical linguists. Lastly, according to the *Merck Manual* website, AI is not used to translate its articles. Instead, AI is used only to help users find information more efficiently.

Glosario crítico inglés-español de documentos de consentimiento informado

When the subject turns to informed consent forms, one resource that stands out is the ***Glosario crítico inglés-español de documentos de consentimiento informado*** (*Critical English–Spanish Glossary of Informed Consent Documents*), available free in Tremédica's *Panace@* magazine.

Published by Pablo Mugüerza, Lida Barbetti Vros, and Lorenzo Gallego-Borghini, this glossary presents terms in English with some possible equivalents in Spanish,

as well as the translation problems each term raises. Considering that informed consents bring together medical, pharmaceutical, biochemical, statistical, administrative, and legal terminology, the authors of this glossary examine the recurring terminology of these documents, from trial design, participant rights, procedures, and risks to confidentiality, and why it's important to offer alternatives that are both accurate and natural in Spanish.

Manual de traducción inglés-español de protocolos de ensayos clínicos

To accurately translate clinical trial documents, one invaluable resource is the *Manual de traducción inglés-español de protocolos de ensayos clínicos* (*English-Spanish Translation Manual for Clinical Trial Protocols*), second edition, by Pablo Mugüerza. The digital version of this manual is available through Revistes Catalanes amb Accés Obert (RACO, Catalan Journals in Open Access).

The manual can serve as a learning resource, a specialized dictionary, a reference book, and a practical guide for translating clinical trial protocols. The author explains the different sections of a clinical trial protocol, introduces relevant English terminology, defines each term, and provides one or more Spanish translations for that term. At the end of the manual, instead of using isolated sentences, he includes examples of complete paragraphs commonly found in clinical trial protocols along with proposed Spanish translations and a commentary on some of the translation decisions. These examples are an excellent resource for practicing research skills, refining translation techniques, and comparing one's own work with that of an experienced medical translator.

Glossary of Psychology and Therapy Terms

For translators working in mental and behavioral health, a good resource is the *Glossary of Psychology and Therapy Terms*, available free online. Unlike the previous resources discussed here, this glossary runs from Spanish-English and includes definitions in Spanish for each entry, which is what makes this resource so valuable. It covers the vocabulary of therapeutic practice as well as an extensive section of suicidology terms, including the specialized vocabulary of risk assessment and prevention. As with any single-source glossary, it's important to cross-check entries against current clinical usage; however, as a conceptual map, it's a generous and practical contribution.

Diccionario panhispánico de términos médicos

Last but not least, one reliable resource for translators working into English is the *Diccionario panhispánico de términos médicos* (*DPTM, Pan-Hispanic Dictionary of Medical Terms*). Developed by the Real Academia Nacional de Medicina de España (RANM) in collaboration with the Asociación Latinoamericana de Academias Nacionales de Medicina (ALANAM) and 12 Latin American national academies of medicine, the DPTM was launched in 2023 to serve the Spanish-speaking scientific and medical community. This dictionary, available free online, contains more than 70,000 Spanish medical terms along with the definitions in Spanish and their English equivalent. It's also an interactive resource that reflects the collaborative work of specialists from multiple disciplines, including biologists, epidemiologists, linguists, and other experts.

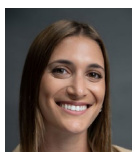
ATA's Medical Division

Finally, more resources that are worth checking can be found on *ATA's Medical Division* website. Under the "Resources" tab, translators can find general resources, dictionaries and glossaries, and language-specific resources, all of which are regularly updated by the members of the Medical Division Leadership Council.

A Reliable Toolkit = Informed Decisions

To sum up, building a reliable toolkit of medical resources will help translators make informed decisions. As professional translators know, these English-Spanish resources are just starting points. Besides having a good toolkit, translators should compare the proposed terms against other terms, adapt the terms to their audience, and create their own glossaries for each client and/or subfield within medicine.

Daniela E. Obregón is a freelance English-to-Spanish translator, conference interpreter, and certified healthcare interpreter. She has a master's degree in translation from New York University and a postgraduate degree in conference interpreting from the Argentine Institute of Translation and Interpretation. She is the founder of Connected Care, a boutique translation agency specializing in healthcare and nonprofit organizations. She serves as the administrator of ATA's Interpreters Division and is a member of ATA's Professional Development Committee. *daniela@getconnectedcare.com*



María Paula Plazas, CT, is an ATA-certified English-to-Spanish translator, a subtitle creator with a master's degree in audiovisual translation, and is certified as a translator by the U.K.-based Institute of Translation and Interpreting. She is the founder of MediVerba, a medical translation company specializing in clinical trials, health insurance, and employee benefits. She served as administrator and assistant administrator of ATA's Medical Division from 2021–2025, and was the recipient of ATA's Rising Star award in 2023. *info@mediverba.com*

Will Joining a Study Group Help Me Pass the Exam?

In my many years as a grader for the Spanish-to-English certification exam, I've been approached by prospective candidates wanting to know how best to prepare for the exam. In the past, I've offered exam preparation workshops at ATA's Annual Conference, as have other graders in their particular language pair. Such sessions are a regular feature at the Annual Conference and at language division events. After attending the sessions, many candidates have felt the need for further work with peer groups, especially under the guidance of a certified translator who is familiar with the exam parameters.

There are no statistics to show the exam pass rates for participants in these groups, but anecdotally, there's a high degree of satisfaction with them. One group of candidates for the Spanish-to-English exam who had already gotten together to prepare for the exam contacted Caron Bailey, ATA's Certification Program manager, to see if someone in the Spanish-to-English workgroup would be willing to offer them a grader's perspective as they reviewed each other's translations. Caron asked for volunteers, and I answered the call. I thoroughly enjoyed my interactions with these translators, and other graders have had similar experiences.

I know how my particular study group functioned, but I thought it would be interesting to find out how groups in other language pairs organize themselves. I posted a query on the grader communication platform, Basecamp, and I was amazed and gratified by the response. I immediately heard from graders in the Chinese, French, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish workgroups (into and/or out of English) who either had been involved in study groups themselves or referred me to others who were willing to share information about their process. I sent them a set of questions, which they generously took the time to answer in detail, as shown here. (Many thanks to Luyi Yang, Charlene Johnson, Patricia Newell, Justin Mattos, Audra Lincoln, Giovanna Lester, Elizabeth Pérez Diner, and Pamela Shepard Garcia, as well as the graders who referred me to them.)

1

What prompted you to organize the group?

Certified translators have reported that the most expeditious way to pass the exam is to share translations and get peer feedback. "Having others point out sources of errors that I had not noticed is how I learn," said Miki Allen, facilitator of the English-to-Japanese group.

In response to my questions, some of the translators said they were

preparing to take the exam themselves and reached out to other members of their language division to recruit participants for a study group. Others had already participated in one and stayed on to help facilitate its successor, either out of generosity or because they were still studying. Some of these groups have been going on for years, as the baton is handed off again and again to new facilitators. Still others grew out of exam preparation sessions sponsored by ATA. For example, Luyi Yang of the Chinese Language Division practice group says:

"In May of 2023, I joined ATA and was interested in taking the exam. I felt I needed some practice, and Rony Gao [a Chinese to/from English grader] gave me guidance on how to organize and run a practice group. ...I've since passed the exam in both Chinese-to-English and English-to-Chinese. As there has been continued interest in practicing for the exam within the Chinese Language Division, I kept the practice going until now. I tell myself that I will stop running the group if no one practices anymore, but amazingly that day hasn't come yet!"

In addition to a personal interest in preparing for the exam, some organizers wanted to, in the words of Audra Lincoln of the Japanese-to-English study group, "hold myself accountable in doing the prep work." In the case of the English-to-Japanese study group, Miki Allen reports that:

"Some hope to sit for the exam soon, some hope to take it sometime in the future, and some already have credentials from other countries. We even have a member who is ATA-certified, but joined the study group because they were interested in what the group would do and wanted to experience that kind of learning environment."

Many, but not all, of these study groups received guidance from current graders, as in the case of Chinese to/from English, and they were also influenced by some of the Certification Forum columns published in *The ATA Chronicle*.

2

How did you identify potential members of the group?

In almost every case, it was the language division that got the ball rolling in response to member requests for study groups. Some organizers also obtained names from ATA's online directory. It was always one or two motivated translators who agreed to facilitate a study group. To announce a group's formation, they used outlets like publications, mailing lists, and events sponsored by their division, platforms such as WeChat and Discord, and other professional gatherings. There was no shortage of prospective exam candidates eager to sign up. Members tend to come and go as their time and interest allow, so participation from one session to the next can vary. According to Miki Allen,

"If there are more than six participants in a session, we feel that the group should break into two smaller groups to better facilitate the exchange of our translations and feedback."

In addition, she says:

"We have a non-disclosure agreement for members of our study group. This means any content or materials shared during the study group cannot be shared outside the group, and members must be diligent in email communication. If you cannot meet a submission deadline, you would have to communicate that to the group so the schedule could be adjusted. Basically, this is all in an effort to prevent ghosting. The group has a condition for membership, and that is that they are experienced, professional translators rather than someone who hopes to one day become a translator."

3

How does the group meet, and how often?

The groups tend to meet on real-time communication platforms such as Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, or Discord. The frequency varies from weekly to biweekly to monthly. The most common pattern is for the facilitator(s) to post a passage for translation and give everyone a specific timeline for posting their translation and commenting on others'. Often the translations are merged into a single Google Doc for peer feedback, but in some cases the facilitator assigns particular feedback pairs. For example, the Chinese to/from English practice group also has a WeChat group to discuss translation issues. Those who can't participate in the online meeting can still benefit from the comments in the Google Doc.

4

How do you select passages for translation practice?

In some groups the facilitator selects passages for translation, while in others group members take turns selecting them. They generally follow the guidelines for passage selection available on ***ATA's website*** or in articles previously published in ***The ATA Chronicle***, and most try to replicate the conditions of the exam (adhering to the time limit and restricting themselves to the resources on the ***Allow List***). Members of some groups share practice tests they've previously taken, while others use passages from ATA chapters' or other organizations' study groups, or from translation courses they've taken. They may even take portions of texts they've translated for actual clients, provided there is no infringement of client policy. For example, the Chinese to/from English study group chooses one Chinese and one English source text for each practice round, both on the same topic. Sources of passages include newspaper editorials, magazine articles, think tank reports, and government or non-governmental organization websites.

New Certified Members

Congratulations! The following members have successfully passed ATA's certification exam!

English into Chinese
Lisha Li
Ai Ting Tai
Zhifan Wang

English into German
Katrin Dolle

English into Japanese
Miki Allen

English into Romanian
Cristina Moldovan do Amaral
Ioana Nitra

English into Russian
Olga Roshet
Yuliia Vereta

English into Spanish
Silvia Martinez

English into Ukrainian
Alina Zhurbenko

French into English
Elizabeth Birdsall
Ann Jones
Sarah Mitchel
Eden Bravo Montenegro

Italian into English
Daniel Davis
Myriam Seers

Spanish into English
Geraldine Zafra Bustos
Sharif Gazawi
María Luisa Ortega Hernández
Irene Lopez-Obrecht
Rachel Pascual
Russell Santana
Emmeline Startt

5

How is feedback handled?

Members' translations may or may not be anonymized prior to being distributed or uploaded as Google Docs. Groups usually ask members to comment on a certain number of their peers' translations in addition to receiving feedback on their own work (an arrangement Audra Lincoln calls "pay to play"). Some groups encourage participants to comment on their own translations when they post them to explain their decisions or highlight challenges they encountered. In some cases, an online meeting is held after feedback has been shared to delve further into some of the issues that were raised. In other cases, the feedback is not given in writing, but the group goes through the source passage sentence by sentence, with each participant reading their own translation and discussing the choices they made. The Portuguese-to-English study group is a little different, in that the coordinator, Giovanna Lester (a certified translator who is also involved in the certification program of the Brazilian counterpart to ATA, Abrates) chooses the passages and reviews all the translations to identify challenges for the group to discuss in their Zoom session.

Most groups have established some guidelines for giving feedback, making sure it's respectful and constructive and based on citations from reputable references rather than personal opinions. They are encouraged to comment on both strengths and weaknesses, striking a balance between empty praise and undue harshness.

6

Do you use any ATA grading tools when providing feedback?

Group members are usually not required to cite ATA grading tools when giving feedback, but links to the documents on ATA's website (the *Framework for Standardized Error Marking*, the *Flowchart for Error Point Decisions*, the *Explanation of Error Categories*, and, where applicable, the *Into-English Grading Standards*) are made available to everyone for reference. The Portuguese-to-English and English-to-Japanese study group members actually grade each other's translations using these tools, but other groups use less formal ways of giving feedback.

Study Groups: A Learning and Networking Experience

Perhaps the best explanation of the benefits of study groups comes from one member of the English-to-Japanese group:

"I've been participating in the monthly study group for more than a year now. It's all thanks to Miki's organizational efforts. Last year, I attempted the ATA certification exam but did not pass and felt pretty down about it, but I've been so encouraged by the group's commitment. But I think the biggest benefit has been building a network of American, Japanese, and Australian colleagues, because when there's extra time after our sessions, I can discuss all and sundry with them about interpreting and translation."

As noted at the beginning, there's no hard statistical evidence to show that participants in study groups are more successful than other exam candidates, but it's certainly a learning and networking experience that provides more insight into different approaches to translation. It also ensures deep familiarity with exam passages and grading standards, which can only improve performance. If you're looking for a study group to join, I suggest you contact your language division and inquire about whether one already exists or if there are others interested in forming one.

Holly Mikkelson, CT, is professor emerita of translation and interpreting at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. She is a federally certified court interpreter and an ATA-certified Spanish to/from English translator with four decades of professional experience. She has taught classes and workshops all over the world. She has written many articles and books on various aspects of interpreting and is the author of the Acebo training manuals for court and medical interpreters. She serves as co-deputy chair of ATA's Certification Committee. *hmikkelson@gmail.com*

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Cover fines and penalties as specified in the HIPAA/HITECH Act assessed against third parties who make a claim against you for indemnification or contribution for such fines or penalties.

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