

# A PROPOS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRENCH LANGUAGE DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION

Volume IX, n°2

Summer 2006

## From the Administrator/Editor-in-chief

First of all, I heartily welcome all our new or recent members, who are among the over 1200 members that have joined the FLD.

Here is the Summer 2006's issue of "A propos". What do you call a newsletter that is published three times a year? I should probably post this question on the FLD list and someone would find the answer.

Our listserv is very active indeed and I hope most of you enjoy it. I am always amazed at the wealth of knowledge and resources that we can draw from other members when we are stuck with a technical,

medical or legal phrase. I also find excellent food for thought in some general discussions like the one on what is "international English", or how to share a project, or when members brainstorm about how to address a particular situation.

As one of the biggest divisions of the ATA, we must have a logo. A few members have come up with interesting ideas and I invite you all to vote and/or add your ideas and suggestions to the drafts I already received, so that we can have a logo ready in September.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Let out the book inside you!

It's been said that everyone has at least one book inside them, and changes in the publishing industry have made it much easier to let that book out. Traditionally, getting published has required authors to either pitch their idea to publishing houses, with the author often earning only 10-15% of the cover price in royalties, or to finance the cost of publishing themselves by purchasing a print run of books through a self-publishing company. Advances in printing technology such as high-quality and high-speed laser printing and faster binding techniques have given rise to a third way, known as print-on-demand, or POD. In this article, we'll look at how translators can publish their own work using a POD publisher, and suggest

some ideas for applying these techniques in real life.

In 2005, I started teaching an online course called "Getting Started as a Freelance Translator," covering topics such as how to write a translation-targeted resume, find and keep well-paying translation clients, pursue translator certification, and develop translation specializations. After several successful sessions of the course, I thought that there could be a market in publishing an enhanced version of the course materials as a book. As I started to research my publishing options, I quickly encountered the three routes mentioned above. After some initial research, I made a semi-educated

*(Continued on page 10)*

## À propos

### Contributors

Thomas Bowie  
Frédéric Houbert  
Corinne McKay

### Logos:

Marie-France Schreiber  
Virginia Anderson

### Proofreaders

Virginia Rinaldi  
Corinne McKay  
Alan Dages

### Editor

Michèle Landis

### Layout

Mylène Vialard

### FLD Administrator:

Michèle Landis  
mf\_landis@msn.com

### FLD Webmaster

G. David Heath  
infoexact@mindspring.com



Corinne and I are also in the process of organizing the "French dinner" in New Orleans. It will take place on Thursday November 2, so mark your calendar! We hope it will be a great success, but we still have to arrange the details.

Lastly, we would like to find a few volunteers to help establish a specific mentoring program within the FLD to follow up on an excellent idea expressed last year in Seattle.

Needless to say, we are always looking for articles, news, etc., anything of interest for us as professional translators and members of this division. We look forward to receiving your feedback and we wish you all a pleasant summer,

Michèle Landis

[mf\\_landis@msn.com](mailto:mf_landis@msn.com)

Corinne McKay

[corinne@translatewrite.com](mailto:corinne@translatewrite.com)

- need more info?

- have a topic of interest?

- need to react to one of our articles?



- have a comment about an article?

**WRITE US!**

[mf\\_landis@msn.com](mailto:mf_landis@msn.com)

## MARSEILLE (1945-1948)

Tom Bowie

Rejected for military service in 1942 because of a heart murmur ("A certificate of long life," one said) I was accepted for overseas service in the State Department's Foreign Service Auxiliary and spent the war years as an "economic warrior" in Spain. When our responsibilities brought us near the French frontier, we would look over and one colleague murmured "our sweet suffering land of France." In the frontier town of Irun we would sometimes meet American aviators, previously downed by the Germans over Normandy, cared for by the French and in time brought by the Underground over to Spain. "They treated us like gods," said one such American to me. He added that they cured his leg wounds which were inflicted by German pilots as he was parachuting to ground. And that he gained 20 pounds hidden by the French in Normandy.

After several months he was able to travel. The Underground brought him to Paris and there he joined a couple of other Americans, all instructed to follow a young woman who was dressed in a certain way. She was to lead them to a safe place, but they must never approach her or in any way betray any connection with her. This guide brought them to a residence, glanced at the door, and walked on. The soldiers entered and stayed there, under cover, for several days. But once, he said, several soldiers ventured out on the subway and apparently some Germans, having overheard Americans whispering to each other on the platform, had the Gestapo begin a search of the subway train. When they entered the car with the American soldiers two Frenchmen, who had grasped the situation, suddenly started a violent quarrel between themselves intentionally diverting the Gestapo's attention and thereby giving the soldiers a chance to slip out at the next station.

Chastened, they returned to their dwelling place and in due course they made their way to the Spanish border with the Underground. I was told this in Irun in June of 1944.

At the end of the war I passed the State Department's written and oral exams, entered the career Foreign Service, and was then assigned to Marseille. Our ship was the Italian passenger ship *Vulcania*, outfitted for returning US soldiers to the US. We landed at Le Havre and as we descended the gangway US soldiers lined up to board the ship. One called out "Well, goodbye France, we'll be back again in another 20 years." I reached Paris the day the busses started to run again. The city was muted, peaked, compared to 6 years earlier. There was very little traffic. People were preoccupied; food was scarce. I heard people say time and again, "Mais ça ne tourne pas rond."

Our Consulate General in Marseille had recently been reopened; rather, handed back by the Swiss who had administered the Consulate General when the Germans occupied all of France in 1942. Many a wretched, frightened visa applicant had stories to draw tears from their interviewers. The Vice Consul in charge, burned out, [but that term didn't exist then] admonished, "You know, this isn't the Salvation Army." Years later I met Giancarlo Menotti, the composer of "The Consul," and asked him if he had any particular consul in mind.

I prepared reports on economic and commercial conditions. I also did the "Documentation of Merchandise" which involved yards of red tape, to document US freight ships bound for the US and the "work-away passengers" aboard. Our office at the Place Felix Baret, close to the Prefecture, was a narrow four storey building: basement, main floor, second floor and third floor. Tucked away on the third floor

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

was a room occupied by the janitor's children. The Prefecture would recommend that we park our cars elsewhere when they anticipated a demonstration, of which there were many.

On the second floor was our file room, run by a former fellow worker from Madrid. For some errands she would call Theo, the janitor's son and unofficial messenger. Theo, THEO, TTHHEEOH. Then Theo would appear. Meanwhile, across the court yard an ancient parrot, born reportedly in 1856, the same year as Maréchal Pétain, caught up the call. It would repeat, exactly, the call that our file room clerk had made for Theo. But Theo always knew the difference.

Food and shelter was no problem for Americans at that time. But how different for the French population! The US Army had requisitioned the Hotel de Noailles (where, jadis, "M. André Gide ne faisait qu'entrer et sortir.") I had a room on the second floor and ate in the fairly spacious dining room run by a US Army mess sergeant. The first day I sat down alone for lunch and watched the others come in. A group of American Red Cross workers attracted my attention and after a moment I exclaimed to myself "Why, that's the girl I'm going to marry." And, a few years later, I did... That evening she came over to my lonely table, sat down, and we had a million things in common. The next night we went out dancing at a French restaurant, off-limits to US military-administered personnel. She was light as a feather in my arms as we danced about. This vice consul was not yet registered with the military so was theoretically ineligible for the Red Cross coffee and doughnuts but she knew how to get around such things. As a young girl she had lived with her parents vacationing in Antibes. We later checked out the place. I also went to Aix to visit my French friend from Sciences Po for whom I had typed a certain hasty paper years earlier. He was now married, father of an infant child, and in the French Foreign Service. I remember

he had a brother-in-law, also in the French Foreign Service who, while assigned to Tehran, learned to eat sliced whole garlic on toast for breakfast. He showed us at breakfast in the family garden. That was a far cry from a delicious French croissant.

One did not see many of those. In fact during those very early months after the war the American personnel of the Consulate General would bring to the office an extra breakfast roll or two to help their French colleagues make it to their meager lunch. I remember how our boss, the CG, Hervé L'Heureux, got a huge shoulder of beef from the Army. He brought it down to the basement and carved it up into substantial portions, one for each French employee.

Marseille's "Vieux Port" had been destroyed by the Germans. In 1945 it was a panorama of rubble. Part of the French naval fleet, sunk at the neighboring port of Toulon, was a strange sight to navigate. Turrets extended a few feet above the surface of the water.

When the US troops were departing from Marseille, the US colonel in charge of port activities handed me his leather crop, a sign of authority, and told me to keep things straight.

On the second anniversary in 1946 of the landing of troops in southern France (in our "consular district") I was sent to represent the Consulate General at the joint military celebrations for several towns on the coast. General de Laittre de Tassigny represented the French military. I noticed his ability to rivet the attention of anyone he was addressing, and they would stare into his eyes and nod submissively. I noted, too, that he had been well-briefed about little things, such as the two accepted ways, locally, to pronounce St.Tropez (St. Tropèze; St. Tropé). He used them both. I was so grateful to him for covering up my huge gaffe when I addressed the crowd. I simply dived into

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

my speech, forgetting the required greetings and salutations to the distinguished guests and notables. I was half through before I became aware of this. I lamely but bravely continued to the end. Next came the General and he out of the kindness of his heart, did the very same thing I had done, and only well along in his speech did he meld in the required salutations. I later thanked him for it and suddenly noticed I was doing what all the other persons had done, staring and nodding in agreement.

I later moved into an apartment. Landlords were glad to have official American tenants since the Communist mayor of Marseille encouraged drastic steps to provide housing to the local population. I kept my car in a garage not far away. One day I heard a Frenchman berating the local mechanic for stealing a tire from the Frenchman's car. The mechanic turned white with rage and took a pistol from his own car and lifted it up when I called out in French "Listen to the voice of America [how times have changed] and put down the gun!" They both looked at me in surprise; the gun was lowered; and they settled down to discuss the matter.

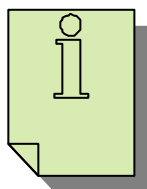
The Marseille population was generally very friendly to us but guns were a reality. The Norwegian Consul was shot and killed confronting a robber in his home. After I moved into a house on the Corniche I would notice strange footsteps on the gravel in front of the house. I remember feeling uneasy coming back home late at night. One night I thought I noticed someone standing behind a bush in the adjoining garden. I thought it better to pretend not to have noticed anything and took my time entering the house, slept fitfully, and when the maid came early in the morning, she asked if I were moving. I had apparently interrupted a robbery. When I went to that bush, there were two heavy footprints in the

ground. At the office they gave me a gun, with a few instructions. The next night or two I had the gun with me but after I recalled the old American saying "Never try to beat a man at his own game," I left the gun in the car and took my chances. Several police stayed in the basement garage for quite a long time.

Later on, in 1946, a one-man Congressional delegation came to Marseille for a briefing on the economic conditions. I was called in and met Congressman Christian Herter, later Secretary of State, who was part of a larger delegation headed by one Richard Nixon, to investigate conditions in Europe. His questions were searching; he took us to lunch. I noticed that he selected and named the wines like a native. In fact, he had been born in France and spent part of his childhood there. His accent was impeccable. President Ramadier's comment on his visit was printed in the local press: "...like an old family doctor coming to examine the patient..."

I must not "abuser de votre temps". But before closing I must recall how the Marseillais would say that the Parisians would "parler pointu." I continued my friendships with the French at my next post: Rabat, Morocco.

You can reach Tom Bowie at: [tdbowie@comcast.net](mailto:tdbowie@comcast.net)



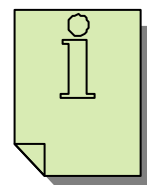
## Recommended links

The Translation Journal:

<http://www accurapid.com/journal/index.html>

Société française des traducteurs:

<http://www.sft.fr/>



# Saisir les subtilités qui existent entre l'anglais et le français ?

Frédéric Houbert

Etudier une langue sans prendre en compte la culture qui la sous-tend constitue une aberration que nul ne peut nier. Or, force est de constater que dans les cours de langue donnés dans les écoles ou en université, la dimension culturelle est souvent escamotée au profit d'analyses purement linguistiques que l'on présente souvent à tort comme étant la seule clé susceptible de permettre une bonne compréhension des langues. Passer sous silence ce que les linguistes désignent souvent sous le nom de « métalinguistique », autrement dit, nier les rapports qui existent entre les faits culturels et sociaux et les structures linguistiques, constitue une grave erreur que certains, pourtant, ont tendance, délibérément ou non, à perpétuer.

Les premiers à s'être penchés sur la question des différences stylistiques qui existent entre le français et l'anglais, et sur celle de l'importance de la dimension culturelle dans l'étude des rapports linguistiques, sont J.P. Vinay et J. Darbelnet. Dans leur ouvrage *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* (Didier, 1958, revu et corrigé en 1977), ces deux linguistes apportent la preuve, exemples à l'appui, que langue et culture sont intimement liées. Pour eux, « un rapport existe entre le monde extérieur tel que nous le concevons et la forme linguistique de nos pensées, de notre culture ». Pour développer leurs arguments, les auteurs s'appuient notamment sur le concept évoqué plus haut de « métalinguistique », qu'ils définissent comme étant « l'ensemble des rapports qui unissent les faits sociaux, culturels et psychologiques aux structures linguistiques ». De nombreux autres auteurs, dont

## Une question de temps...

Eugene Nida par exemple, se sont penchés sur la question des rapports qui unissent langue et culture, sans toujours partager le même point de vue, comme en témoignent ces quelques lignes extraites de *La traduction aujourd'hui*, de Marianne Lederer (Hachette, 1994, p. 122) : « Observant que chaque langue découpe le monde à sa manière, ce qui est exact, on a conclu, ce qui est faux, que chaque langue impose une vision du monde particulière à ceux qui la parlent (c'est la fameuse hypothèse Sapir-Whorf). »

Certains seront d'accord avec cette affirmation, d'autres pas. Notre propos ici n'est bien entendu pas de départager les deux camps, mais plutôt de s'interroger, comme l'ont fait, dès le début des années 1950, J.P. Vinay et J. Darbelnet sur les différences stylistiques qui opposent le français et l'anglais. Pour ce faire, arrêtons-nous un instant sur l'exemple du mot anglais *time*, dont les facettes multiples constituent un terrain particulièrement propice à l'étude des subtilités qui font de l'anglais et du français des langues en même temps si proches et si différentes.

Tout d'abord, le mot *time* constitue une preuve évidente des différences qui existent entre l'anglais et le français lorsqu'il s'agit de « découper » la réalité. Là où l'anglais propose trois termes différents en fonction du « temps » dont il est question, *time* pour désigner le temps qui passe, *weather* pour le temps qu'il fait, et *tense* pour évoquer le temps grammatical, le français ne fait pas de différence et se contente du terme générique « temps ». La même constatation pourrait être faite à partir du terme français « maladie », qui devient en anglais *sickness*, *illness*, ou *disease* selon le type de maladie et selon sa nature, chronique ou passagère.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

*Time* est en fait un terme à caractère hyperonymique, dont les dictionnaires bilingues éprouvent bien des difficultés à cerner le sens exact : « temps, délai, période, durée, laps de temps ; intervalle », sont quelques-unes des traductions que propose le *Guide anglais-français de la traduction* de René Meertens. D'autres ouvrages, tel le *Dictionnaire anglais-français Robert & Collins*, ajoutent à cette liste d'autres traductions comme « moment », « heure », ou « fois ». Les nombreuses expressions et locutions construites autour de *time*, que l'on retrouve dans ces dictionnaires et dans les autres, permettent de constater le décalage évident qui existe entre la vision de l'anglais et celle du français. Il suffit de citer des expressions comme *to play for time* (« chercher à gagner du temps », « jouer la montre »), *to have the time of one's life* (« s'amuser comme un fou »), *time will tell* (« l'avenir le dira »), ou encore *to die before one's time* (« mourir avant l'âge ») pour se rendre compte que l'anglais et le français ne se situent pas sur le même niveau et pour constater qu'à une expression idiomatique dans une langue correspond une autre expression dans l'autre langue. Les cas où la vision de la réalité est équivalente ou quasi-équivalente restent rares et lorsque cela semble être le cas, ex. *time is on my side* : « le temps est de mon côté », une réflexion plus poussée permet de se rendre compte que l'on a traduit un peu vite l'expression anglaise et que l'on a oublié ce qu'un locuteur français dirait le plus spontanément (« le temps joue pour moi »).

Signalons par ailleurs que *time* est souvent mis au pluriel, auquel cas il sera traduit, selon le contexte, par « le temps » ou « les temps » : *times are hard* : « les temps sont durs », mais *to keep abreast of the times* : « vivre avec son temps ».

Il est particulièrement important de remarquer que *time*, comme bon nombre de substantifs en anglais, est souvent utilisé en position de nom adjectivé, et c'est donc le plus souvent le cooccurrent associé au mot qui va en

déterminer la traduction la plus appropriée : ainsi, *time bomb* sera rendu par « bombe à retardement », *time loan* par « prêt à terme », *time travel* par « voyage dans le temps », *time trial* par « course contre la montre », et *time zone* par « fuseau horaire ». Dans les deux premiers cas, on constate que *time* est rendu par un terme plus précis en français : la traduction se fait donc par « particularisation » ou « hyponymisation ».

Ces quelques exemples permettent aussi de se rendre compte de la préférence que semble avoir l'anglais pour le concret : *time zone* apparaît par exemple nettement plus concret que « fuseau horaire », son équivalent français, manifestement plus « technique ». En effet, l'anglais se place généralement sur le plan du réel tandis que le français se situe pour sa part sur le plan de l'entendement, ou de l'abstrait. J.P. Vinay et J. Darbelnet ne disent pas autre chose : « *D'une façon générale, les mots français se situent généralement à un niveau d'abstraction supérieur à celui des mots anglais correspondants. Ils s'embarrassent moins des détails de la réalité* ». Marina Yaguello, dans son article *La place des anglicismes dans la langue (in Tu parles !? Le français dans tous ses états, collectif, Flammarion, 2000, p. 356)*, fait la même constatation à propos de la langue de Shakespeare : « Les ressources de la métaphore et de la métonymie prennent le pas sur les formations savantes (*pain killer* par exemple pour *antalgique*). D'où un lexique fondamentalement imagé, concret et dépourvu d'opacité. »

Les composés construits autour de *time* permettent aussi de constater l'extrême concision qui caractérise souvent l'anglais par rapport au français : *time pressure*, par exemple devient « nécessité d'agir à bref délai » (*Guide anglais-français de la traduction, op. cit.*). *Time machine* (cf. le célèbre roman de H.G. Wells) devient en français « machine à remonter le

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

temps » (*Robert & Collins*) ou « machine à explorer le temps » (*Oxford Hachette French Dictionary*). Autre exemple, l'adjectif *time-saving*, qui fait partie des composés dont l'anglais raffole, ne peut se traduire autrement que par une relative : « qui permet de gagner du temps », ou, pour respecter la prédominance du substantif en français, « qui permet un gain de temps » (et que dire de *time-saver*, le substantif correspondant ?). Il en résulte, comme on peut le constater, une dilution importante en français, langue qui a souvent besoin de davantage de mots pour faire état de la même réalité. Dans certains cas, c'est toutefois l'inverse qui se produit et c'est alors le français qui fait preuve d'économie, pour preuve : *time clock* : « pointeuse », *time switch* : « minuteur », ou encore, *time-lag* : « décalage (dans le temps) ».

À un autre niveau, il convient de remarquer que l'explicite et l'implicite n'occupent pas la même place dans les deux langues : là où l'anglais va dire *within two weeks*, par exemple, le français va avoir tendance à préciser « dans un délai de deux semaines », explicitant ainsi un mot, *within*, qui fait défaut dans cette langue (les Belges francophones sont parvenus à combler cette lacune en utilisant le terme « endéans », lequel a le mérite de correspondre étroitement à *within* pris dans un sens temporel). En revanche, l'expression française « dans trois semaines » sera nécessairement étouffée en anglais, où elle deviendra *in three weeks' time*.

De la même façon, il est intéressant de constater que certains termes existent dans une langue et pas dans l'autre : « délai », par exemple, n'existe pas en tant que tel en anglais. Certes, les expressions *time limit* et *time scale* figurent dans les dictionnaires, mais sont bien moins courantes que *deadline*, vocable qui désigne toutefois spécifiquement l'expiration d'un délai. Une fois encore, c'est *time*, l'hyperonyme de « secours », qui intervient pour

combler la lacune laissée par la langue : ainsi, on traduira *within the time agreed upon* par « dans les délais convenus ». Curieusement, le français, langue qui manie avec dextérité le « délai », ne dispose pas d'un terme aussi concret et compact que *deadline* pour en désigner l'expiration. Là encore, la particularisation est nécessaire pour rendre l'original anglais : « date-butoir » et « date/heure limite » en constituent les traductions les plus courantes, l'anglicisme *deadline* étant réservé aux cercles « branchés ».

Dans le sens anglais-français, il est difficile de ne pas citer le dérivé *timing*, lequel a donné et continue de donner bien des sueurs froides aux traducteurs francophones, qui éprouvent souvent des difficultés à traduire ce terme, qui ne trouve pas d'équivalent exact en français. Le *Guide anglais-français de la traduction* en propose les traductions suivantes : « choix/détermination du (bon) moment, moment (choisi), date (retenue) ; échelonnement, planification, [...], calendrier... », et donne notamment la phrase suivante comme exemple de mise en contexte : « *The government lost the elections because of poor timing* » : « Le gouvernement a perdu les élections parce qu'il a convoqué les électeurs aux urnes à un moment défavorable ». On constate ici que le français est contraint de passer par une longue périphrase pour exprimer une réalité que l'anglais parvient à décrire en un seul mot. Il ne faut pas pour autant oublier le statut d'emprunt qui est reconnu à *timing* en français et qu'entérine notamment le *Dictionnaire Larousse des anglicismes* en ces termes : « *Timing* : action d'établir un emploi du temps ; prévision des temps correspondant aux diverses phases d'exécution d'une tâche ». Force est toutefois de reconnaître que l'emprunt *timing* relève de la langue courante et ne peut que rarement s'employer en l'état dans les textes traduits en situation professionnelle. Citons, pour finir, l'hyperonyme *timepiece*, qui est le « nom générique des appareils servant à indiquer l'heure » (*Le Grand Dictionnaire Terminologique*). Ce terme, qui regroupe les montres, les pendules, les horloges, les chronomètres, etc.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

fait manifestement défaut en français, où il doit nécessairement être traduit par un mot plus précis (donc, par hyponymisation) : pour s'en convaincre, il suffit de consulter l'entrée correspondante du *Robert & Collins* : « *timepiece* : (= *watch*) montre, (= *clock*) horloge ».

Les quelques exemples données ci-dessus en disent long sur le fossé qui séparent l'anglais et le français, langues pour lesquelles le découpage de la réalité n'est de toute évidence pas le même. On a vu plus haut certains des principaux domaines dans lesquels les différences sont les plus flagrantes, mais il ne faut pas pour autant oublier les autres plans sur lesquels l'anglais et le français divergent.

L'anglais est ainsi connu pour son goût prononcé pour l'*understatement*, un concept si typiquement britannique que le terme n'a jamais trouvé de réel équivalent en français. Parmi les euphémismes dont l'anglais s'est fait une spécialité, citons par exemple l'expression argotique *to do time*, qui signifie « faire de la prison », « purger une peine de prison ». On admirera ici la manière dont l'anglais est parvenu à déguiser une réalité qu'il peut sembler difficile d'appeler par son nom.

Les exemples proposés permettent par ailleurs de constater que dans la plupart des cas, les constats établis

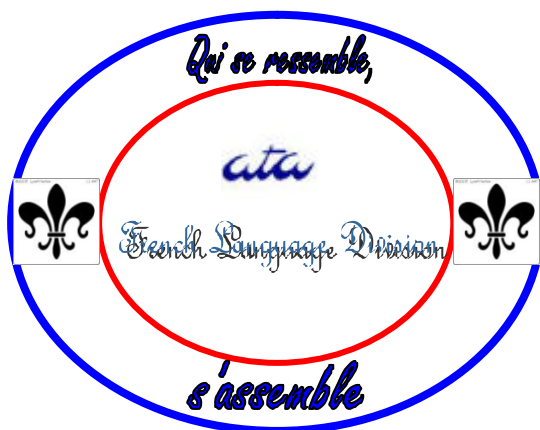
sont valables dans les deux sens (des lacunes lexicales, nous l'avons vu, existent par exemple en français, mais l'anglais pâtit aussi de certains manques) : il serait ainsi hasardeux de se livrer à des généralisations hâtives et d'affirmer, par exemple, que l'anglais est une langue plus souple que le français, ou que le français permet une précision impossible en anglais. Ces deux langues ont simplement leurs points forts et leurs points faibles et lorsque l'une semble céder du terrain devant l'autre, c'est souvent pour mieux imposer sa supériorité par la suite. Le plus important, comme l'a remarqué notamment la linguiste Henriette Walter, reste peut-être l'histoire d'amour qui unit les deux langues, lesquelles semblent avoir pour principal objectif de se séduire mutuellement, quitte à perdre un peu de leur âme. Le phénomène des faux emprunts, observé tant en français qu'en anglais (« zapping » n'existe pas en anglais, pas plus que « bon viveur » en français), n'est-il pas la preuve de la fascination réciproque qu'exercent les deux langues l'une sur l'autre ?

You can reach Frédéric Houbert at:

[f.houbert1@chello.fr](mailto:f.houbert1@chello.fr)

## Qu'en pensez-vous ?

Voici deux propositions, nous attendons les vôtres. Faites-nous part de vos suggestions et commentaires.



Michèle Landis et Corinne McKay



(Continued from page 1)

guess that because of the book's niche subject matter (bilingual people who want to become translators) and small size (150 pages), it was unlikely to appeal to a traditional publisher. I was also somewhat daunted by the idea of traditional self-publishing, which would have required me to invest several thousand dollars in my as yet untested idea. After a bit more research, I decided to publish the book through Lulu Press ([www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)), currently the fastest growing POD publisher in the United States.

*How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator*

([www.translatewrite.com](http://www.translatewrite.com)) was published in June, 2006, and I'm pleasantly surprised to say that sales are going well; on a good day the book has reached an Amazon.com sales rank of 35,000, placing it well within the approximately 100,000 titles that would be carried by the average large chain bookstore.

The idea behind POD is simple but intriguing. The POD author uploads the book's content and cover to the publisher's website, usually in PDF format (see [lulu.com](http://lulu.com) for more information about the publishing process). Rather than trying to estimate how many books to print and ending up with too many (think about the \$1 tables at your favorite bookstore!) or too few, the POD publisher prints and binds the books as they're ordered, so there's never a surplus or a shortage. In addition, a well-designed POD book is almost indistinguishable from a traditionally published book. An experienced author in my local freelancers group gave me an honest appraisal that the cover and print quality of my book is "maybe 5% less" than a traditionally published book. However, the true win for the POD author comes in the increased amount you earn from each sale. For example, my book is priced at \$17.99 from Lulu and \$19.95 from Amazon. Through a traditional publisher, I would probably earn a maximum of \$2.50 on each sale; with POD, I earn \$8.50 from each copy sold through Lulu and \$4.50 from each copy sold through wholesale distribution,

meaning Amazon, Barnes&Noble.com, and special orders from brick and mortar bookstores.

POD sounds like a great option for an entrepreneurial author, and it is. Besides the advantages mentioned above, some additional benefits of POD include the fact that your book never goes out of print, the fact that you work on your own timetable rather than a publisher's timetable, the fact that you have no inventory, storage, or shipping costs (these tasks are handled by the POD printer), and the fact that you as the author own all of the rights to your book. However, there are some differences as compared with traditional publishing. First, with no publishing house marketing department to rely on, 100% of the responsibility for marketing the book rests on the author's shoulders. Second, POD books are marketed and purchased mainly online, rather than through brick and mortar bookstores, which are often reluctant to stock POD books. Third, most POD publishers, including Lulu, charge a fee to provide an ISBN number for your book and to make it available to retailers such as Amazon. Lulu charges \$150 for this service, but it is free to publish a book on Lulu if you do not want an ISBN or wholesale distribution. Additionally, as a POD author you are responsible for all of the layout and design work on your book, or for paying someone to do this work for you.

POD publishing is an excellent route if you have a clear idea of where to find people interested in your book. I theorized that *How to Succeed as a Freelance Translator* could appeal to bilingual people looking for a supplemental job or career change (high school foreign language teachers, bilingual graduate students, college foreign language students, bilingual at-home parents, foreign service spouses, etc.) and to existing translators who would like to manage their businesses more efficiently. Once I had identified these core groups of potential readers, I searched the web for places where these kinds of people would be found: translators association newsletters, foreign language teachers

(Continued on page 11)

*(Continued from page 10)*

associations, college career centers, work-from-home websites, translation blogs, bilingual family associations, etc., and offered them review copies of the book. This type of targeted marketing is critical to the success of a POD book, since the average bookstore browser is unlikely to buy the type of niche book often published using POD. I also sought out the help of friends who have connections in the media, and these resulted in an interview with the business section of my local newspaper, profiles in my college alumni association magazines, a suggestion to leave books on consignment at a local bookstore, and an interview and book review with a work-from-home newsletter, *The Rat Race Rebellion* ([www.2secondcommute.com](http://www.2secondcommute.com))

Now that we've covered the basics of the POD process, it's time to decide what your book will be about! Literary translations are obvious candidates for POD, although probably harder to market than nonfiction books. As translators, we are often all too modest about packaging and marketing our expertise, and the ease of POD publishing can help to remove some of the obstacles to this. As a start, here are some translation-related books that I would like to read:

Well-written dictionaries and glossaries of any type. Since these are informational works, they also offer the advantage of requiring less layout and design work than other types of books. Even a glossary produced with a free PDF creator such as CutePDF ([www.cutepdf.com](http://www.cutepdf.com)) could work.

A book on working for direct clients. How to find and keep well-paying direct clients; special legal concerns of working with direct clients; ideas about marketing to direct clients; case studies on successful and unsuccessful direct client projects.

Basic translation software user manuals. Poor or inscrutable software documentation is a hot topic at ATA conferences; instead of

complaining about it, write something better (make sure to research copyright permissions for items such as screen shots).

A book on financial management for freelancers. Collaborate with your accountant or financial planner and write about tax planning, incorporation, saving for college and retirement, home office deductions, and more.

An overview of translation memory software. CAT tools are one of our biggest business investments, but how many of us really understand the differences between programs or feel that we are definitely using the tool that's best for us? Include some case studies of projects that are best accomplished with a certain tool.

A book on translation quality assurance. Other than proofreading our work many times, how can freelancers apply the types of QA steps that large agencies use? How can we solicit meaningful feedback from our clients?

These are just a few suggestions to help you let out that book that's been lurking in the back of your mind for so long. To learn more about the POD process, take a look at Lulu.com's extensive "Help" section, "A year in the life of a POD book" by Morris Rosenthal ([www.fonerbooks.com/pod.htm](http://www.fonerbooks.com/pod.htm)), "12 Pros and Cons of POD publishing" by Regina Paul ([www.authorsden.com](http://www.authorsden.com)) or "Advantages of POD," ([www.writersservices.com](http://www.writersservices.com)). As an additional incentive, if any FLD members are inspired by this article to publish POD books, I will personally purchase a copy of each one!

*Corinne McKay* ([corinne@translatewrite.com](mailto:corinne@translatewrite.com)) is an ATA-certified French to English translator in Boulder, Colorado, and the Assistant Administrator of the FLD.

***À propos* is published four times a year. Letters to the editor, articles, and other information relevant to the FLD are welcome. Submissions are subject to editing. The copyright on all articles remains with the authors. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editor or the French Language Division of the ATA.**

Newsletter of the French Language Division  
of the American Translators Association  
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590  
Alexandria, VA 22314