

THE INTERPRETERS DIVISION OF THE  
AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION  
[www.ata-divisions.org/ID](http://www.ata-divisions.org/ID)

American Translators Association  
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590  
Alexandria, VA 22314

## Come Join Us!

The National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators presents NAJIT's 24th Annual Meeting & Educational Conference Sheraton Music City Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee — May 23-25, 2003

### >> Confirmed speakers at the conference include:

- > Duard Bradshaw, Esq., president of the National Hispanic Bar Association
- > C. Carol J. Patrie, Ph.D., author of "The Effective Interpreting Series"
- > Bethany Dumas, Ph.D., chair of Linguistics Program, University of Tennessee
- > D. Daniel Giglio, J.D., freelance interpreter and translator Thomas L. West, Esq., "Spanish-English Dictionary of Law and Business"
- > Alex Rainof, Ph.D., professor, California State University, Long Beach
- > Cristina Castro, M.A., freelance interpreter and translator
- > Lois Feuerle, J.D., Oregon Judicial Department
- > C. Sebastian Aloom, Esq., Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice

More information about these and other speakers, seminars, and pre-conference workshops is available on the NAJIT website at [www.najit.org](http://www.najit.org).

NAJIT has obtained the remarkable rate of \$79/night for this event, with complimentary parking and airport transportation. Come join us, and take a Tennessee vacation afterwards! The dogwoods will be beautiful in the spring.

## Coming Soon: Summer Issue of The Interpreters Voice

"On Cognitive Analysis and Translation"

by *Elizabeth Ivanova, St. Petersburg, Russia*

Ms. Elizabeth Ivanova is a professor of philology at St. Petersburg State University in St. Petersburg, Russia, and is also a practicing translator. We'll hear, among other things, about the role that translation played in the development of European proverbs.

We will also present the second half of the "Interpreting in Spain and Colombia: Two Perspectives" article from a 1999 NAJIT-sponsored Interpreters Roundtable.

Our quarterly newsletter, *The Interpreters Voice* (TIV), is up and running again! We plan to publish four quarterly issues annually. For the June issue, please submit your articles to Cathy McCabe at [cathspan@mindspring.com](mailto:cathspan@mindspring.com) by the end of May.

# THE Interpreters Voice

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*Send any notices or news about training and certification seminars and training to appropriate editors.*



*Visit the Interpreters Division website for updates, events, and news:  
[www.ata-divisions.org/ID](http://www.ata-divisions.org/ID)*



*Advertise in The Interpreters Voice! (rates on page 2).*



## We're Back!

*by Cathy McCabe, Editor*

At long last, some of you might be thinking. Yes, The Interpreters Voice is back, and as the newsletter editors for the spring and summer editions, we are pleased to present this first edition to you. Just as a little background: Priscilla Padrón and I worked together for two-three years as the editors of *Bridges*, the newsletter of the Atlanta Association of Interpreters and Translators. We appreciated that opportunity and aim to carry on the collaborative effort with *The Interpreters Voice*.

We plan to bring you articles of interest from interpreters in different areas of the world and with different areas of expertise. Occasionally we will include articles from other interpreter newsletters that might be of interest to those of you who didn't have the opportunity to see them. In this inaugural edition, an interpreter from Argentina presents some insight into psychological and linguistic aspects of language professionalism, and we've also included some interesting perspectives on court interpreting from our colleagues at the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators.

We weren't able to accomplish one of our goals—to include an article from a Russian interpreter; we'll need a bit more time to work out the quirks with Cyrillic characters in our software. Next edition! We've also compiled a list of information that might be helpful for your future reference. And, like all newsletter editors, we ask you to either contact us or send us the article directly, if there is something you'd like to submit. We look forward to hearing from you and to receiving any suggestions or comments.

One last thing. ATA's Annual Conference will include a get-together and dinner for the Interpreters Division. Don't forget to mark it on your calendars. Look in the column entitled "Administrators' Perspective" (page 2) for more information. ■

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## The Interpreters Voice

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**Membership** in the Interpreters Division is \$15.00 per year in addition to the ATA membership fee. Please make your check payable to the ATA and send it to the ATA address noted above.

### Submission Guidelines

Please e-mail articles in Word 97 or text format to the appropriate editors: Cathy McCabe (spring/summer) cathspan@mindspring.com Nurit Shohom (fall/winter) nilufer@citilink.net

Submissions, limited to 1,000 words, are published on a space-available basis and may be edited for brevity and clarity. Articles appearing in The Interpreters Voice may also appear in other ATA media, such as its website.

### Deadlines

Articles submitted to The Interpreters Voice in 2003 should be submitted according to the deadlines announced by the Division Administrator or Editor and posted on the Interpreters Division website.

**Advertising** in The Interpreters Voice is \$80 per page; \$40 per half page, \$20 per quarter page, and \$10 per one-eighth page (card size). Submit ads to the appropriate editors cited above.

Opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, the Interpreters Division, or the American Translators Association.

# ADMINISTRATORS' PERSPECTIVE: ID Highlights and Updates

*Compiled by ID Administrators, Helen D. Cole and Beth Tu*

*Dear ID Members,*

*Highlights of updates regarding ID committees and activities, the majority of which were results from the November 2002 ID Annual Meeting, follows:*

**Website:** Check the ID website periodically for updated information. Send any news of training opportunities to Webmaster Margareta Ugander at margareta@ugander.com for postings.

**Listserve:** Listserve master Teresa Roman, PortadaLLC@aol.com, has done a terrific job as the moderator of e-voice4ATA-ID Listserve Master. Listserve is a wonderful tool for us to share information, ideas, questions, concerns, etc. There are many options that you can choose to receive your listserve e-mails without feeling overwhelmed by daily postings. To better use the ID Listserve, check the ID website for Teresa's instructions.

**Interpreters Certification Committee:** Izumi Suzuki, izumi.suzuki@suzukimyrs.com, will compile a list of interpreters' certification programs that are already in existence and will work with ATA to establish some type of recognition program for ID members. As a result of the discussion during the last ID Annual Meeting, the exhaustive amount of time and investment required to develop certification for one language pair made it unfeasible for ATA to establish an "Interpreters Accreditation" program. Rather than reinventing the wheel, we propose to have ATA acknowledge the existing certification programs.

**ID Directory Committee:** Virginia Perez-Santalla, virginiasps@comcast.net. Financially, it is not feasible to publish an annual paper ID directory. However, some interpreting agencies expressed the usefulness of a condensed paper directory. We encourage everyone to better use ATA Translators and Interpreters searchable directory on the website. ATA is open to suggestions regarding the modification of its electronic database.

**ID Nomination Committee:** Maria Carolina Paraventi, mcp6@prodigy.net, and Inés Saraver. All active ID members are eligible to run for the ID Administrator, Assistant Administrator, and Treasurer positions. Please submit any recommendations you might have for candidates to Maria and Inés; ballots will be mailed and elections held during our next ID Annual Meeting in November 2003.

**The next ID Annual Meeting Reception** will be held in the conference hotel restaurant, called Aunt Chilada's, November 6, 2003, 7-9 p.m. Because the restaurant is at the conference site, all administration related to this reception will be handled by ATA. Cost: TBA. Please check the ATA Chronicle, pre-conference schedule, ID website, and the listserve for updates regarding reservations. Contact person: TBA. A heartfelt thank-you to Karin Isbell of Phoenix for the wonderful "advance work."

**The next ID Annual Meeting** is scheduled for November during the ATA Annual Conference in Phoenix, AZ. ATA President-elect Scott Brennan invited suggestions and initiatives from ID members regarding interpreting sessions and activities at next year's ATA Annual Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. The proximity of the federal court-interpreting program at the University of Arizona provides a "rallying point" for an enhanced interpreting lineup next year. ATA will solicit participation from the U of A interpreting faculty. Scott also aired the idea of ID, NAJIT, or other groups scheduling training seminars in conjunction with the ATA conference.

**ID buttons are still available.** New members should contact Mary David at mary@atanet.org for your free button and flags (max. 3). ID buttons are a wonderful fundraiser for our division and a great advertisement for your profession. To order more buttons, please download the order form from the ID website.

Many volunteers came forward and have made this division greater. Please accept Beth's and my heartfelt appreciation. You have made this division a productive one and the Administrators' work easier and satisfying. Thank you all and have a wonderful spring.





be compared to a ballet dancer in need of maintaining muscle tone (why) by means of a self-designed plan for making progress and exercising (how) in order to master the interpretation techniques necessary (what for) with the aid of the right people for consultation in specialization fields (who).

Learning to learn should become second nature in the life of the interpreter.

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## TEXT, CONTEXTS, AND THE INTERPRETER

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The term “context” is rich in more than one sense. It is difficult to imagine a life without context. No doubt, there must be the notion of text in its broadest scope for understanding the various types of context; in particular, the main circles of context with which an interpreter is involved: verbal context, cognitive context, and physical context. Personally, I envision context as a circle within a person is, say, enclosed. There might be smaller circles or wider ones. Text as discourse is ultimately always the source.

Linguistic or verbal context is immediately brought to mind if we think in terms of interpreting and the interpreter’s *raison d’être*. Although text is not to be taken as either verbally or written expressed language, it is ordinarily linked to its use. Verbal context for the interpreter is the vehicle—the conveyor belt of the forms and sounds that language takes—and should be associated to short- and long-term memory, most particularly to STM and not very long spans. It is this context that renders the sounds that reach the cognitive system, and it is also this context that provides the written source to do the required research for prediction in interpretation. Verbal context is linked to STM in particular because it is the main vehicle for input material in the construction of the target discourse. Linguistic context eventually fades down and actually dies out to give way to concepts.

Cognitive context opens the door to the ideas and knowledge fields managed in the interpreting situation, plus one’s world of overall knowledge that necessarily operates as cultural background. It is related to long-term memory since conceptualizing and gathering the information that will be used at

the time it must be brought to mind is its main role. We can, then, infer we can speak of two separate kinds of cognitive contexts: one that provides the specific knowledge required in technical and specialized fields when having to interpret in any given specific situation and the general background context thought of as the interpreter’s safety net and closest friend in case of having to bridge the unbridgeable in terms of LTM functions and general education. Cognitive context renders either the support or data-base for gathering ideas and forming concepts.

Physical context actually intervenes at the moment of interpreting and having to decode correctly its different meanings, i.e., from an interpreter’s or speaker’s possible headache to an unforeseeable delay to a situation of war. This implies that the range for physical context is indeed broad. The personal or subjective, as well as the collective or international interests and concerns, are ever present. The interpreter’s and the source speaker’s well-being are essential and influence language and cognitive performance—the economic and political conditions of a country, natural phenomena like earthquakes and floods, terrorism and disasters—all are factors that play a crucial role in an interpreting situation. September 11, 2001 may be cited as one of the most relevant cases, and more recently, when the space shuttle Columbia fell apart, the spirit and frame of mind of everyone throughout the world was directly touched...or suffice it to mention the tense relations between Iraq and the rest of the world and the fear of an all-out war.

There are, then, situational constraints to which speech events are subject. The socio-cultural variables that characterize any given speech event may be said to be setting, participants, purpose, key, content, and channel. “Setting” refers to the time and place of the speech event and the form the speech takes—talking to the lecturer during the lecture in the conference room will necessarily differ from chatting to him/her after the lecture, over a cup of coffee perhaps. The participants determine certain hierarchical patterns of language use and performance to which the four participant roles—addressor, lecturer, addressee, audience—must adapt. The purpose should be reflected in features such as

the presence or absence of persuasion, advice, greetings, warning, commands, and endless other possibilities. By “key” is meant the “tone or manner” in which a speech act has been or is performed. It may be a friendly key or a stern, distant one. “Content” relates to subject matter and, along with other factors, co-determines the language form to be used: register and style depend on content. Taboos, prejudices, and banned subjects are generally not dealt with mindlessly. And then, there are two basic “channels” of verbal communication: speech and writing.

**T**he six variables mentioned above may be summarized as follows: who says what to whom, where and when, how and why. This might well become the macro-linguistic principle for an interpreter in self-training.

Personally, I think we can find there are two moments in an interpreter’s attitude that relate to exercising the interpreting abilities and excellence. There is a time for looking inward and for looking outward in self-training.

Looking inward is the time when the self-training interpreter must become clearly aware of personal individual resources, how to use them to the best of his/her knowledge and ability, and how to develop and actually implement self-help at the right time, with the goal being one of polishing and perfecting all areas to become a strong interpreter. Getting rid of fears and possible flops is also part of self-help. This looking inwardly should be thorough and merciless, in order not to leave any inner nook or cranny undisclosed before our own eyes. Stretching to the limit to keep in good interpreting shape is a powerful tool that prepares the interpreter for the unexpected and the unpredictable, which is the bread ‘n’ butter of the interpreting profession. Looking inward helps keep the gears well tuned and also aids in clearing up those jitters that irremediably are always present. It may become a way to achieve reasonable freedom from the stage fright all interpreters are at risk of suffering.

Looking outward, as I see it, connects directly with “other” and “otherness”—the world around us as “otherness” and the existence of the “other”—which has been dealt *continued on page 7*

# When is a Team Not A Team?

by Nancy Festinger

Reprinted with permission of *Proteus*,  
The Newsletter of the National Association of  
Judiciary Interpreters and Translators.

*Although the following article was written specifically with the courtroom setting in mind, some of the pointers expressed might be of interest to all interpreting professionals.*

*The co-pilot is trying to get the pilot's attention, but the pilot isn't listening; annoyed, he growls, "Don't interrupt me now. Can't you see I have a plane to get off the ground?" Later, the plane crashes.*

Unlikely? Hardly. It turns out that 95% of airline crashes are caused by communication failures in the cockpit. These failures are not traceable, as some might think, to machine malfunction, such as headphone or microphone failure, but to human miscommunication, the way that information is conveyed by crew members to one other.

In the example above, the co-pilot was trying to tell the pilot of an aircraft problem. But in the pilot's rush to get underway, he silenced his subordinate, who then clammed up, perhaps doubting his own judgment. Some pilots have better safety records than others, but what distinguishes the best from the rest? Wanting to find out, the airlines commissioned a study to find out what pilots with the lowest error rates were doing that the others weren't. Surprisingly, the price of success in this instance was measurable in time, not money. Successful pilots, it was discovered, always took extra time to establish team rapport before taking their positions in the cabin. Most flight teams are newly created groups of co-workers who have seldom worked together before. It was the pilot's approach to teamwork that really mattered; no matter how experienced the crew. The successful pilot always introduced himself, invited questions, and reminded crew that the number one priority was passenger safety. This seemingly banal routine was shown to have a decisive impact

on the team's performance.

Interpreter supervisors have a lot to learn from this model. While I frequently choose the team members who will work together on a trial, too often I have taken for granted that they will be courteous in giving advice and support to one another. I have usually spoken to each one separately, but often do not have the occasion to sit down with the team together prior to "take-off." Disasters, of course, have a way of unfolding without warning: terrible chemistry between teammates; sniping; indifference; correcting a colleague to a third party without telling the colleague first; disappearing acts; burdening one's colleague with the lion's share of the work or exhausting the colleague with chitchat; endless uncertainty about when to take turns, or excessively detailed timekeeping schemes; high-and-mighty attitudes; failure to answer colleagues' questions; or outright derision at others' ignorance. Jealousy and in-fighting are particularly common among interpreters of lesser-used languages, who may perceive each other as competition for relatively few jobs.

Although the combination of personality traits is infinitely variable, an introductory routine would be an excellent approach to limit the potential for disaster. It is a good idea for a supervisor to make a habit of talking to teams before a trial begins. While scheduling these sessions may be difficult to manage, team orientation should be a priority. The idea is to communicate directly and personally with the team members before they start, setting the tone for the trial.

A handout on Effective Interpreting Teams can be given, and then the interpreters would hear (with variations depending on the experience level): "Thank you for accepting this assignment with the court, and I hope your experience here will be rewarding. In my role as supervisor, I care a great deal about the quality of interpretation provided to the court. The judges are very mindful of the interpretation because they are used to high quality. I consider every interpreter an ambassador for the profession, and we are

lucky to enjoy an excellent reputation because those we work for respect our skills. The team on this trial and in all trials has an important role to play. I am going to review what will be expected of you while this trial is pending so there is no misunderstanding about each one's responsibility.

Our priority here is the accuracy of the interpretation and consideration for your teammate. As team mates you both have equal responsibility, even if your experience levels are different. Before the trial commences, you should agree on when to take turns with the microphone, keeping in mind that the person on the mike should be the one to pass it, not the other way around. Experience has shown that a flexible attitude toward switching is more effective than strictly timed half-hour intervals. If an opening statement lasts 40 minutes, the "on" interpreter may want to finish it before passing the mike. While interpreting, you may pass notes to each other on vocabulary questions, or assist each other with names, numbers, and other details. The relief interpreter's role is to validate accuracy with the partner and to be available for attorney-client consultations, as well as for any emergency that may arise. Keep a record of case information in the event someone else comes in on the case who has not been here from the beginning. Do not absent yourself from the courtroom for more than a few minutes without warning because you have no way of knowing what may occur while you are out of the courtroom. Be friendly and available to one another without being overly judgmental. Share resources, knowledge, and information and treat your teammate as your parachute: to be most trusted in times of emergency.

*>>Your attitude is as important as your language ability.*

The interpreters are part of a much larger process, and should strive to remain in the background. I cannot stress enough the importance of punctuality: the interpreter may wait for others, but others should never wait for the interpreter. Both interpreters are

expected to be in the courtroom at the appointed hour, unless previous arrangements have been made. Interpreters should not offer an opinion about trial strategy, witness credibility, or someone else's translation; and if you are left alone in the presence of a defendant move a distance away so he will not be tempted to talk to you.

>> *Refer all questions to the attorney*, even questions you know the answer to, such as "Where does the jury sit?" Courtroom protocol should be respected at all times, in body language as well as appearance. Do not

slump in the chair or betray facial reactions to anything happening in the courtroom.

>> *Do not try to do anyone else's job but your own.*

If asked to do something you are not sure is within your responsibility, please consult with your colleague and with me. If there are schedule changes in the trial, please convey them promptly to the office. We will also get any incoming message to you. In communication I may have with the judge, I represent the interpreter's point of view and can advise the court of potential problems. If you have

any questions or concerns, we can discuss those now."

A meeting of this sort would take about 15 minutes. It is likely that fewer problems will present themselves once the team is put on notice that their cooperation is not only devoutly to be wished but expected. It's not hard to be a good solo act when no one is watching, but the best interpreters, and those most valued by their supervisors, are those who are considered desirable teammates by their colleagues. Like a successful duet, a good interpreting team makes beautiful sense together. And the enjoyment factor increases twofold. ■

## Interpreter Self Discipline and Training *(continued from page 5)*

with thoroughly in other disciplines. There can be no interpreter without "other." Opening up and self-effacing in order to make room for the other may be taken as the attitude components of reaching out and meeting other meanings and other worlds. The move of self goes outward and forward to decode and encounter different ideas and views. Opening up involves a readiness to accept what is different, that "otherness" which is so difficult to penetrate. Acceptance does not necessarily mean a conversion to foreign ideas but rather the appropriation of the source speaker's ideas, of other cultural and intellectual systems which may be the only way to temporarily become the "transmitting rod" needed to reach out to the targeted audience in an attempt to establish the magic of direct communication. Text appropriateness fuses horizon lines for the interpreter needing to become one with the source material and source speaker. Looking outward may even turn into an adventurous cruise to surf through other worlds and cultivate or discover other peeks at the world.

**M**any of the possible combinations of the word "self" serve to describe and condense the interpreter and his/her work:

>> An interpreter's self-confidence springs from his/her self-discipline and helps one become self-effacing.

>> Self-effacing suppresses judgment and helps eliminate personal issues that might be hovering around the mind and haunting the soul.

>> Self-effacing carries an interpreter away from self-centeredness and towards acceptance of other worlds hitherto unknown.

>> Self-assurance arises when self-esteem and self-respect feed an interpreter's soul; it forms part of the effort to become self-effacing.

>> Self-monitoring is recommended so that a self-exploration of one's strong points as well as one's flaws will help boost self-image and develop self-correction.

A formally trained interpreter can pursue further self-training by way of self-exploration—this being the main personal tool to face and solve the demands of professional performance with self-assurance. Interpreters usually seek self-perfection. It may perhaps be by means of the personal—from the wide range of combinations the word "self" offers—that an interpreter can finally be freed from the feeling that "one's ultimate opponent is oneself."

Master the facts of the situation; listen actively to all participants; read the signs and make out the contexts involved. Only now are you ready to serve the purpose for which you have been called upon in your work. ■

### About the Author

*After a long career as a conference interpreter, Ms. Inés Drallny currently teaches Interpreting full-time at both the Escuela Superior de Lenguas of the University of Córdoba (Argentina) and at the Escuela Superior de Idiomas de la Universidad Nacional Del Comahue in Neuquén (Argentina).*

## BOOK NOOK

Ms. Inés L. Drallny, author of this month's article on Self-Training for Interpreters, recently published a book (in Spanish) entitled "La formación del intérprete de conferencias" (trans., Training Conference Interpreters). Published in 2000, it is a welcome addition to the world of conference-interpreting literature. Ms. Drallny specifies her intent in writing this book in the Introduction: "(trans.) There is practically a total lack of adequate information about this profession. And what is even more serious is that not only is this profession unknown but also poorly understood, even by those who need interpreting services or who would be served by using these services." With that in mind, the author begins with an interesting history of conference interpreting itself, which leads to a concise explanation of different interpreting modes (consecutive and simultaneous) and their characteristics. The author continues by explaining differences between translation and interpretation, while including a chapter on different types of discourse with which a language professional should be familiar. The last chapter of the book (in English) is entitled "Discourse Analysis, Text Linguistics, and Interpreting," which presents a complete analysis of discourse in interpreting and translating contexts.

La formación del intérprete de conferencias, Inés L. Drallny, Ediciones del Copista (ISBN987-9192-51-6, Ediciones del Copista, Lavalleja, 47-Oficina 7, 5000 Córdoba, Argentina)