

THE INTERPRETERS' DIVISION OF THE  
AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION  
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The logo for the American Translators Association (ATA) is displayed in a stylized, lowercase, cursive font. The letters 'a', 't', and 'a' are connected and fluid, with the 't' having a distinctive shape. The logo is centered within a white rectangular box.



# 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. The Interpreters' Voice was fortunate to receive such an interesting article from her, which came to us through Ms. Catherine Neyman, a member of ATA's Interpreters Division.*

The basis for the theory and practice of translation is the comparative analysis of the original language and the language of translation. Comparative cognitive analysis is no exception in this respect, for it allows one to see words and expressions of the language from a new angle - from the angle of conceptualization of the world embodied in them. Thus, it can give the translator some very useful information about the semantics of the two languages concerned.

Very interesting data can be obtained as a result of the cognitive analysis of English and Russian proverbs and the comparison of two proverbial pictures of the world.

It is well known that translation played a very important part in the development of proverbs of European languages. During the Renaissance, the translation of Greek and Latin proverbs and sayings gave life to many European proverbs. In some cases, what appears to be a folk proverb may have resulted from the effort to formulate an ancient proverb in the vernacular.<sup>1</sup> The use of a translated proverb in speech could result in significant structural and semantic changes, finally making a proverb indistinguishable from folk ones.<sup>2</sup> The famous Russian proverb collector, V.I. Dal, replied to the reproaches for his having included translated proverbs into the collection of proverbs by saying that he had not translated those proverbs himself but had written them down as used by the people.<sup>3</sup> If a proverb is accepted by the people, it means that it corresponds to the mentality of the people and the national "vision of the world."

Besides the proverbs borrowed as the result of translation, the original proverbs of various languages can have some common features due to the common historic, social, and cultural factors in the development of peoples and also due to the universal features in the world perception typical of man, whatever his nationality.

Thus, there are large groups of equivalent proverbs and analogous proverbs in many languages, as well as proverbs having no equivalents.

By this connection, a question comes up: What proverbs were translated and borrowed as a result? What proverbs from the original language may have parallels in the language of translation? In other

words, when is it advisable for the translator to look for a proverbial equivalent or analog, and when should he resort to other means of rendering the meaning of the proverb, without wasting his time on useless searches.

To answer this question, let us consider some examples. The vision of one and the same "section of the world" in English and Russian proverbs can be totally different. This is obvious in those proverbs having to do with "moving in space." This expression "moving in space" is used not accidentally, for English proverbs speak about travelling—the component "travel" and its derivatives are used in them, while Russian proverbs speak about going along the road from one point to another.

Travelling in English proverbs is connected with going abroad, educating oneself, which is possible for a person possessing enough money and hence occupying a certain place on the social ladder:

Travel broadens the mind.

He that travels far knows much.

A gentleman ought to travel abroad but dwell at home.

A traveler needs to have money and know languages.

The heaviest baggage for a traveler is an empty purse.

Nothing so necessary for travelers as languages.

Russian proverbs speak about going to some not very far-away place in one's native country, which generally does not take much time and embraces places within one's close neighborhood. The most important thing to take along is bread, as mentioned in a number of proverbs.

Хлеб в пути не тягость.

(Bread is not a burden on your way)

Едешь на день, а хлеба бери на неделю.

(If you are going somewhere for a day,  
take bread enough for a week)

Other important things are the knife and the ax.

Нож в пути товарищ.

(A knife is a companion on your way)

It is also important with whom you are going.

Умный товарищ – половина пути.

(A clever fellow traveler is half the way.)

Thus, though English and Russian proverbs describe the same thing (a man on the road (they reflect the vision of absolutely different sides of this situation. The only way out in rendering the meaning of these proverbs seems to be to translate their literal meaning (internal structure), as is done here with the above Russian proverbs. As Russian proverbs mostly reflect the mentality of a peasant, "going abroad," "knowing languages," and similar units of contents are irrelevant for the Russian proverbial picture. There are practically no equivalents, no translation parallels here.

The situation is totally different in the proverbial fragment "family." The proverbial vision of the family depends to a significant extent on the universal human experience. Besides, the formation of the proverbs from this group was influenced by the Bible and by

Christian moral views. For this reason, it is possible to find many proverbial equivalents and analogous elements here.

A lot is said in the Bible about the necessity to punish a child for his misbehavior. (Pr.19.18; 22.15; 23.13-14; 29.15; 29.17):

He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. (Pr.14:24)

Punishment is widely mentioned both in English and Russian proverbs.

Spare the rod and spoil the child.

The rod breaks no bones.

Кто больно сечет, тот нежно любит.

(One who whips painfully, loves truly.)

За дело побить – уму-разуму учить.

(To beat for a good reason is to teach some good things)

These proverbs reflect a similar view of the problem of upbringing and can be used as translation parallels. Some portion of knowledge will be lost though. For example, when using the above English proverbs for translating the Russian ones, we inevitably lose the knowledge concerning the attitude of the one who does the whipping in the first proverb and the knowledge about the reason and result of the punishment in the second. However, despite this loss, these proverbs can be looked upon as certain markers of a common mentality and can be used as translation parallels.

The same similarity can be traced in other proverbs of the group "Family"-in the proverbs about children taking after their parents, about the importance of parents, the necessity to respect them properly, etc. At the same time, the unit of knowledge (cognitema - the notion of "cognitema" is defined by E.Ivanova) "mother weeps" can be found only in Russian proverbs.

Мать плачет не над горсточкой, а над пригоршней.

(The mother weeps not over a handful but over a pile.)

Молода жена плачет до росы утренней,

сестрица до золота кольца, мать до веку.

(The young wife weeps till morning dew,

the sister till a gold ring, and the mother till her death.

The perception of the world typical of Russian proverbs can be characterized as more grave and desperate than that of English proverbs.

For example in Russian proverbs about work, work is seen as very hard and undermining of one's health. In a number of proverbs, we can reconstruct the same unit of knowledge (cognitema): "work gives one a hump."

От работы не будешь богат, а будешь горбат.

(You won't get riches through work,

but you will get a hump.)

In English proverbs, the prospect of becoming rich through work is also doubted.

Good workmen are seldom rich.

"Sweat", "pain," and "hard work" are mentioned:

No pain, no gain.

Hard work never hurt anybody.

But "надсаживать пупок" (overstraining), "колоть руки" (pricking one's hands), "гнуть спину" (bending one's back), encountered in Russian proverbs, are "out of the question."

Не отрубить дубка, не надсадя пупка.

(One cannot cut down an oak-tree without overstraining)

In Russian proverbs of different semantic groups we can find components relating to the semantic field "Grief/Trouble".

In the proverbs about time, for example, we come across "горе" (grief), "беда" (trouble), "забота" (care), "плач" (weeping), "напасть" (misfortune), "кручина" (sorrow), "тяжесть" (burden), "похороны" (funeral), "смерть" (death), "умереть" (to die), "плакать" (to weep), "терпеть" (to suffer), mentioned not once.

День к вечеру – к смерти ближе.

(The closer the day to the evening - the nearer to death.)

In English proverbs about time, the components of these semantics are concentrated mostly in the group describing worries about the future. In them, "evil (n.)," "weep," "death," "misfortune," "sorrow," and "trouble" are mentioned.

Don't meet troubles halfway.

However, on the whole, the components of this semantic field are rare. This is true not only for the group "Time" but for other proverbial groups as well.

Another important feature of the Russian proverbial picture of the world is its more concrete and detailed description of various "areas of the world." In the practice of translation, it means the loss of contents to this or that degree, when a proverbial parallel is used, and difficulties in finding this parallel in general.

For example, in the Russian proverb "Красота приглядится, а щи не прихлебаются" there are two cognitemas on the level of meaning: "beauty for the wife is not important," "a wife must be a good housewife." The latter is illustrated on the level of the internal structure of the proverb by a very concrete unit of knowledge "жена варит щи" (a wife makes a cabbage soup). It is not possible to find an English equivalent or equivalent for this proverb. As a kind of translation parallel, we can use "Choose a wife by your ear rather than by your eye." By doing this, we lose the unit of knowledge of "a wife must be a good housewife" and add another unit – "it is important to listen to what other people say."

Another way out, more advisable, maybe, in a number of contexts, is to translate the literal meaning of the proverb (its internal structure): You may grow tired of the wife's beauty, but never of the cabbage soup she makes. As the image in the proverb is quite transparent, it can be understood by non-native speakers without any difficulty.

A great number of features making up Russian proverbial concepts also mean the existence of Russian proverbs, having no English parallels. In the group "Family," for example, there are proverbs based on the cognitema "a wife is for a long time." These proverbs (continued on page 5)

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# Interpreting in Spain and Colombia: Two Perspectives

(continued from the Spring edition of *The Interpreters' Voice*)

*Reprinted with permission from Proteus, the newsletter of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (Vol. 8, Nos. 3-4, Summer-Fall 1999)*

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## NAJIT ORGANIZES INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE

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by Daniel Sherr

On August 12, 1999 NAJIT sponsored an Interpreters Round Table at the federal court in the Southern District of New York. Speaking were Josep Peñarroja Fa, President of the Association of Sworn Translators and Interpreters of Catalonia, and Dr. Cecilia Plested Alvarez, from the School of Languages at the University of Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia. Both gave a historical overview of the profession in their countries. Peñarroja spoke mainly about the market for sworn interpreters and translators in Spain, while Plested viewed the discipline of judiciary translation and interpreting from the academic perspective. The highlights follow.

(cont.) Plested:

### **Tomorrow is Too Late**

Plested pointed out that translators and interpreters have been present at key moments in Colombian history. She cited the role of Catalina the Indian (la india Catalina), a contemporary of la Malinche, the more well known native American who served as an interpreter for Cortés and facilitated the conquest of what would later become Mexico. "La india Catalina was the daughter of the chief of a Caribbean tribe. Shortly after Cartagena was founded, she served as an interpreter for the Spanish. It is said that she also fell in love with a Spaniard, which was another reason for her learning Spanish."

In the 19th century, translation played a pivotal role in the movement for independence from Spain. Antonio Nariño, a contemporary of Bolívar's, translated the Declaration of the Rights of Man from French into Spanish for the criollo class of Gran Colombia as part of an effort to "explain to the people why it was important to struggle for independence from Spain."

The translation of such a revolutionary document contributed to Nariño's arrest and imprisonment. In their struggle for independence from Spain, Bolívar and his colleagues received help from Jamaica and England, and all correspondence had to be translated from

English into Spanish and Spanish into English.

Sworn interpreters in Colombia are called "traductores oficiales" or "intérpretes juramentados". They must take an exam administered by the National University in Bogotá and are then admitted as sworn interpreters by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Many university professors, Dr. Plested explained, are sworn interpreters, but all university professors at national universities in Colombia are "justice experts" (peritos de la justicia). "At the trial itself, the sworn interpreter or translator must be present," she pointed out.

"However, if a judge wishes to understand the content of a file, as long as no evidence is to be presented in court, he can request an expert analysis (un peritaje). That means that we can be called to perform an expert analysis, which could include any task of translation or interpretation... and if we refuse, the Dean of our university has to spend 24 hours in jail. Furthermore, we are not paid for our work as an expert. If you work for the University system in Colombia and you are a justice expert, the justice system calls upon you and your only consolation is that of having served the Republic."

Like Peñarroja, Plested believes that society is unaware of the challenging and important task of the translator/interpreter. "When you stop to think about how serious problems of legal translations stem from the difference in legal systems, you understand that oftentimes we are using the same words, but the other party is understanding something totally different."

Furthermore, argues Plested, translation and interpretation in Colombia have too often been taught by language instructors, who erroneously think they know about translation and interpreting because they know about languages. "The mental process an interpreter works with is very different than that of a foreign language instructor. The teacher can tell his pupil, 'Tomorrow I'll bring you the answer.' The interpreter, in a court or in a notary's office, does not have that luxury. He cannot tell the judge, 'You know what? I'll come back tomorrow. I still haven't understood what the gentleman said.' You either know it or you lose your job."

Plested shared with the audience a novel approach she has developed to help students improve their interpreting performance. The exercise consists of standing in front of a mirror and establishing visual contact with the pupils of one's own eyes. "This is an exercise that forces you to take yourself into account and start talking with the other person you have in front of you," she observed. The idea is to look oneself in the eye, study the facial expressions and mouth

movements while speaking first in one language, then the other; and finally, to say three or four sentences at a time, repeating them once again in the same language and then rendering them into the second language. All the while, visual contact with the pupils is maintained.

What does this help accomplish? Plested says, "It helps in the cognitive process, in memory storage, in rapid response, and above all, it gives you that inner calm you need when you interpret. It seems simple, but it isn't. You have to be able to see how you are reflected in your own eyes. That means you have to have a high level of concentration, and you have to get over things like the fear of making a fool of yourself, or of being embarrassed at what other people might think of you (*pena ajena*). Being able to converse with yourself in a state of conscious concentration makes you better able to pick up, store, process and reproduce [information]."

Perhaps the most controversial comment Plested made was that although not an ideal situation, simultaneous interpreters can and sometimes should be willing to work for periods of up to four hours alone without relief. She pointed out that she is the only Spanish/German simultaneous interpreter in the Medellín area, and if she refuses to work, the job will not be done. What about bringing in someone from Bogotá? "That would be viable, but rather utopian," she replied. It seems that the country's top interpreters in Bogotá would sooner travel to a conference abroad than accept work in Colombia outside of Bogotá.

In her view, a conference interpreter must be able to go it alone for long stretches at a time. "Physical conditioning is too often overlooked in interpreter training," maintained Plested, who herself was once Colombian national champion in the 100 meter dash. "An organism that is not trained for endurance starts to tire after 20 or 30 minutes. An organism that has physical conditioning can hold up for three or four hours. Then, if you combine memory capacity and physical conditioning, you can pass the 30-minute barrier in simultaneous interpreting. That doesn't mean that there aren't any pauses, because you do have physiological needs, or breaks of 15-20 minutes to 'refresh your brain.' But when you face the reality of working without being relieved, you must look for an alternative." ■

## NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS

ATA's Interpreting Division is now accepting nominations for the Division's Administrator. Assist fellow interpreters in continuing to have a voice on the T & I scene!!! Send your nominations to Maria Carolina Paraventi at [ncp6@prodigy.net](mailto:ncp6@prodigy.net) or to Inés Saraver.

## On Cognitive Analysis and Translation

(continued from page 3)

are built according to one semantic model: a wife is not an object you can easily get rid of.

Жена не сапог, с ноги не скинешь.

Жена не рукавица, с руки не сбросишь.

The only way out is to translate the literal meaning of these proverbs: A wife is not a boot, you cannot throw it off your foot; A wife is not a mitten, you cannot throw it off your hand.

This paper touches upon only some typical features of English and Russian proverbial pictures of the world, which can cause difficulties in finding equivalent or analogous proverbs for translation. They are:

1. A different perception of the same "areas" of the world. These proverbs reflect the specific national vision.
2. A more detailed and concrete description of the world in Russian proverbs than in English.
3. The vision of life as grave and sad, characteristic of Russian proverbs.

The cognitive comparison of proverbs is important not only for the translation of proverbs itself that, in practice, happens not so often; it is important for understanding the two world visions, in the end, of two mentalities. It helps to foresee, where the maximum preservation of the "world view" and "manner of seeing the world" is not liable to cause any misunderstanding and where this misunderstanding can arise. The concrete and detailed description of the world is typical not only of Russian proverbs but of Russian texts on the whole. The description of differences in the proverbial pictures of the world, and broader - of the language pictures of the world ( is important, both for the theory of translation, as well as the practice of translation. Taking these differences into account may help the process of intercultural communication. ■

### Summary

The results of the comparative cognitive analysis of English and Russian proverbs relevant to translation are described. Several characteristic features of the English and Russian proverbial worldview, having a direct bearing on the difficulties in translation, are considered. These features include differences in the vision of the world, typical of some proverbial groups, a more detailed and concrete description of the world in Russian proverbs, and a grave outlook reconstructed in the analysis of Russian proverbs.

### Literature

<sup>1</sup> Sullivan M. Bruegel's proverb painting: Renaissance art for a humanist audience // *Wise words* / Ed. by W. Mieder. 1994, P.257-258.

<sup>2</sup> Аникин В.П. Теория фольклора. М., 1996, С. 370

<sup>3</sup> Даль В.И. Пословицы русского народа. Предисловие. Т.1 СПб 1996, С. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Иванова Е.В. Пословичные картины мира. СПб, 2002.

# Court Interpreting

Reprinted with permission from *Proteus*, the newsletter of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators

Of possible interest to fellow court interpreters is the struggle of Hawaii's court interpreters. In a past edition of *Proteus*, the newsletter of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (Vol. XI, No.4, Fall 2002), authors M. Alohalani Boido and Patricia J. Harpstrite presented a report on working conditions for Hawaii's free-lance state-court interpreters. Their struggle culminated in the following hand-delivered petition signed by 64 free-lance interpreters. The petition itself offers a synopsis of rates and working conditions that might be of interest to state-court interpreters in other jurisdictions.

The following petition was delivered by a delegation of interpreters on September 19, 2002.

*To the Honorable Chief Justice*

*Ronald T. Y. Moon:*

We respectfully ask you to take action immediately to increase court interpreter pay to at least match AOUSC rates, with the first half-day ending at noon and the second at 5:00 p.m., and no half-day to exceed 4 hours.

The Judiciary has not raised the minimum court interpreter pay for two decades. At the current rates of \$40 to \$50 per half-day, the Judiciary cannot compete effectively for the services of competent court interpreters needed to provide equal access and linguistic due process for Hawaii's limited English Proficient population.

In 1995 the Subcommittee on Fees of the Hawaii Supreme Court Committee on Certification of Court Interpreters suggested a higher pay scale, a clear definition of when a half-day ends, and pay for overtime, late cancellations and appearances. The Honorable Melvin K. Soong, previous Chair of the Committee, recommended pay increases on four different occasions, but no action was taken. Some crucial financial realities must be faced.

**Table 1: HALF-DAY & FULL-DAY RATES IN CONSORTIUM STATES**

CONSORTIUM STATE	RATES	
	Half-day	Full-day
North Carolina	\$100-\$160	\$200-\$300
New Jersey	\$85-\$160	\$125-\$160
California	\$147	\$265
New Mexico	\$120	\$240
Florida-13th Judicial Circuit	\$75-\$90	\$125-\$150
Illinois-Cook County	\$60	\$120
Michigan	\$75	\$154
Hawaii	\$40-\$50	\$80-\$100
Idaho	\$50	\$70-\$75

Source: <http://www.ncsc.dni.us/RESEARCH/INTERP/SurveyCompContract.HTM>

**Table 2: AOUSC RATES BY INTERPRETER CATEGORY**

AOUSC INTERPRETER CATEGORY	RATES				
	Half-day	Full-day	Overtime	Cancellation	Appearance
Certified	\$165	\$305	\$45/hr.	\$165 min.	\$165 min.
Professionally Qualified	\$165	\$305	\$45/hr.	\$165 min.	\$165 min.
Language-skilled	\$80	\$145	\$25/hr.	\$80 min.	\$80 min.

Note: Overtime is any amount of time above 8 hours in a day; late cancellation is any cancellation with less than 24 hours advance notice; an appearance is any time the interpreter is called to and appears in court, but their services are not used. Source: Interim Regulations of the Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts Implementing the Court Interpreters Amendments Act of 1988. Effective Nov. 17, 1989.

■ In 2001, the National Center for State Courts Consortium for Court Interpreter Certification (which Hawaii joined in 1997) surveyed its member states about pay. Of the states which pay on the half-day/full-day system, only Idaho pays less than Hawaii (Table 1).

■ Fifteen states pay mileage. Mileage is important in assuring competent interpreter services, especially to Neighbor Island and rural Oahu courts.

■ Berlitz, the local service provider for Immigration and Naturalization Service courts, pays \$25-\$40/hour, with a 2-hour minimum. Private attorneys generally pay rates which begin around \$80/hour, with a

1-hour minimum, and sometimes go to \$150/hour. Conference rates usually run \$550-\$750/day, and sometimes higher.

■ The AOUSC systematically, periodically reviews rates and adjusts them for inflation and changes in pay for similar work in other government agencies. A raise in January 2003 is expected. Since January 2000, the rates for U.S. District courts are as shown in Table 2. The Judiciary needs to match these rates now. When the AOUSC raise comes through, a matching Judiciary raise will be necessary.

We, the undersigned interpreters, request your prompt attention to these matters. Thank you. ■

# Noteworthy

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## NAJIT SENDS RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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For those of you interested in community interpreting and linguistic aspects of Title VI and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, you might be interested to know that NAJIT has sent a response to the Department of Justice's request for comments on its policy guidance document. To whet your appetite for further reading, the correspondence begins by NAJIT's applauding Executive Order 13166 and the DOJ's new emphasis on enforcing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in order to ensure that federal rights or services not be denied

to those with limited English proficiency (LPE). Because over 1,000 NAJIT members work daily to bridge the language gap in schools, hospitals, jails, offices, and court-houses across the country and are in a unique position to see how often essential communication is garbled, overlooked, misdirected or lost in the shuffle, NAJIT's participation in this effort is admirable and to be appreciated. For those of you interested in further information, you can find the entire response on NAJIT's website, i.e., [najit.org](http://najit.org). ■

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## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

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### July 14-18, 2003, Barcelona, Spain.

IV International Summer Symposium of Terminology. For further information, contact Gemma Martinez, email: [iuladocum@grup.upf.es](mailto:iuladocum@grup.upf.es).

### August 16, 2003; Omaha, NE.

"Many Voices, One Message," organized by the Nebraska Association of Translators and Interpreters. For further information, e-mail: [janbonet@neonramp.com](mailto:janbonet@neonramp.com).

### August 16-18, 2003; Córdoba, Argentina.

3rd Translation & Interpretation Conference. For further information, [info@imtt.com.ar](mailto:info@imtt.com.ar).

### September 11-13, 2003; Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic.

10th International Conference on Translation and Interpreting. The conference will focus on the role of translation in different cultures as well as on the contextual factors that influence both the selection of source texts and the make-up of translations. Information: Zuzana Jettmarová, Institute of Translation Studies, [jettmar@ff.cuni.cz](mailto:jettmar@ff.cuni.cz).

### September 23-28, 2003; New Orleans, LA.

9th Machine Translation Summit of the International Association for Machine

Translation (IAMT). MT Summit IX will provide a forum for everyone interested in using computers to help with language translation: developers, researchers, users, students, and people who love languages. The Association for Machine Translation in the Americas (AMTA) is organizing the event on behalf of the International Association for Machine Translation (IAMT).

### November 5-8, 2003; Phoenix, AZ; Pointe South Mountain Resort.

44th Annual Conference of the American Translators Association. For further information, e-mail: [conference@atanet.org](mailto:conference@atanet.org) (or also [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)).

Check out [www.aquarius.net](http://www.aquarius.net) for further T&I conferences!

### FYI: NATIONWIDE AGENCY SEEKS INTERPRETERS OF ALL LANGUAGES

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## The Interpreters' Voice

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Submissions, limited to 1000 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.

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