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## *Year-End Resolutions*

*by Danilo Nogueira*

I must say I am sick and tired of hearing final clients, agency owners and project managers criticizing translators and editors. On the other hand, I am equally sick and tired of hearing translators and editors criticizing final clients, agency owners and project managers. Finding fault with our neighbor's work is very easy, but not very useful, for at least two reasons: first, we gain very little from criticizing others and, second, other people usually do not give a damn about our criticism.

That said, I do hereby solemnly undertake no longer to engage in criticizing final clients, agency owners and project managers. But I will certainly criticize myself and my own tribe, that of independent translators and editors. A bit of self-criticism, a bit of

mea culpa, doesn't hurt – provided it is honest and involves a certain degree of effort to abandon the ways of the sin. No, I think I will do better: instead of self-criticism, I will write a list of decisions. We are far from New Year's, but that is not matter. Any time in the year is a good time to make decisions. My midyear decisions, if you will. I have always seen myself as an innovator.

**I promise the last thing I will do before delivering a job is spellchecking it once more.** Once, I decided to make a last-minute change in a translation for a U.S. agency where nobody understood a word of Portuguese. I did a global “search and replace”, as a consequence of which, I changed not only the word I wanted to change but also the innards of a longer word as well. Don't ask me which: I prefer to forget those things. Then the DTP people formatted the text and submitted it to the final client, who knew Portuguese and almost had a heart attack. Had I spellchecked the job once more before delivery, I would

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**Editor**

Tereza Braga

**Assistant Editor**

Ines N. Bojlesen

**Design**

Ines N. Bojlesen

**Final proof**

Tereza Braga

**PLData** is a quarterly publication

**Portuguese Language Division - PLD**

Administrator

Tereza d'Ávila Braga

Phone: (972) 690-7730 Fax: (972) 690-5088

[terezab@sbcglobal.net](mailto:terezab@sbcglobal.net)

Assistant Administrator

Arlene M. Kelly

Phone: (617) 698-3216 Fax: (617) 698-1874

[XinguKelly@aol.com](mailto:XinguKelly@aol.com)

Secretary

Gladys Wiesel

Phone: (720)748-4926

[gwiesel@msn.com](mailto:gwiesel@msn.com)

Treasurer

Thelma Leoni Sabim

Phone: (512) 837-5708 Fax: (801) 740-1115

[thelma@portuguesetranslator.net](mailto:thelma@portuguesetranslator.net)

Web Master

Nelson Laterman

[info@webmastering.ca](mailto:info@webmastering.ca)

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**American Translators Association**

225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 683-6100 Fax (703) 683-6122

<http://www.atanet.org>

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***Are you a PLData reader in Brazil?***

***Have friends interested in the ATA or ATA certification?***

Read the article by our administrator Tereza Braga: "An update about ATA and its outreach in Brazil" (basic information about ATA for beginners)

Available online, beginning December 15th, in the Ccaps newsletter:

<http://www.Ccaps.net/newsletter/newsletterpt.htm> ♦

**Check out our site!**

The website of the Portuguese Language Division is:

[www.ata-divisions.org/PLD](http://www.ata-divisions.org/PLD)

**Many thanks to our Webmaster  
Nelson Laterman ♦**

## FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

# *The Year of Languages, calendar changes, jobs of the future and holiday wishes*

Did you know that 2005 has been declared “the year of languages”? I only read about it this week and immediately thought of Senator Paul Simon (who died last year). I remember reading his 1988 book “The Tongue-Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis” and his emphasis on human understanding as the key to real security.

The website of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has excellent information about “2005 - The Year of Languages”. Several state governments and many universities have jumped on board. There will be a summit next month and I found the promotional materials excellent, including a great PowerPoint presentation and a calendar of related events. Visit <http://www.actfl.org>.

Speaking about calendars, we have agreed not to host the PLD Spring Meeting in 2005. A few ATA divisions, including the Spanish division, are also altering their calendars to host it every two years, instead of every year. ATA is offering an increasing number of events throughout the year, making it even more difficult for us to attend all the offerings. Our Providence meeting got superb reviews and we had record attendance but our audience was mostly local. We will concentrate our efforts to promote presentations to benefit a greater number of our members at the ATA annual in Seattle.

There was one conference I really hated to miss this past year, which was “Global Security: Implications for Translation and Interpretation”, hosted by New York University. I got my favorite teacher in college invited to speak and I could not be there! The Fall issue of the NAJIT newsletter, though, featured an excellent summary of the event.

English may be the lingua franca of the world today, but “changing world alliances and the rise in multilateralism has resulted in an abundance of language activity, with the proliferation of tens of thousands of NGOs and public interest groups”, said one speaker (Frank Gómez). The result is a “huge knowledge management problem”, according to another, the CEO of a company called Transclick. Machine translation can now produce 5,000-10,000 words a minute, he said, and it can “fill gaps in unusual language combinations and well-defined subject fields”. What we really need, however, are “linguists working in conjunction with computer analysts and information specialists”. According to the speaker, we are witnessing the birth of the industry of “customized linguistic data”. The new job areas for linguists, he says, will be “gisting tools, language editing tools, artificial intelligence, language analysis and dictionary creation”.

*Continues on page 4*



Sérgio Xavier Ferreira, interpreter to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, with PLD Administrator Tereza Braga – Rio de Janeiro, Sept. 2004.

*The interview was featured in the last issue of the PLData - Sept. 2004.*

From prophecies to resolutions, we bring you a few of the latter, too – in this new issue of the PLData, courtesy of Danilo Nogueira.

To all our readers anywhere in the world, I wish you a Happy 2005 or at least, paraphrasing from a wonderful message circulating in the Internet these days:

“Many days of ordinary miracles – a fresh pot of coffee you didn’t make yourself... an unexpected phone call from an old friend... green stoplights on your way to work... your keys right where you left them”. And many of those mornings when you first open your dictionary, and there it is, right away, no need to turn a single page – the word you were looking for. I paid attention this past year: it happened to me at least 5 times.

Talking about good things, something harder to believe happened this year: a translation company called to tell me they had found a mistake and were sending me money. I said “my spreadsheet says you don’t owe me anything”. It turns out that I had delivered a job to them 8 months earlier, invoiced, but mistakenly marked as “paid”. I cross my heart. I could only gasp and say “bless you”.

**Tereza d’Ávila Braga**

Administrator ♦

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**New!**

## **Legal-Finance Dictionary**

Livraria Cultura is announcing a new Portuguese/English/Portuguese dictionary:

**“Dicionário Jurídico e de Finanças” by Ricardo Pignatari and Mauricio Faragone.**

You can buy it online at Livraria Cultura, or visit Casa dos Tradutores to find out more about it:

[www.casadostradutores.com.br](http://www.casadostradutores.com.br) ♦



# Survey on Bicultural Parentage - Anyone?

*Here is a request we received from Freiburg, in Germany. The ATA Chronicle will also be featuring it.*

Dear Ms. Braga:

I am a sociolinguist who is currently writing a book on people with bicultural bilingual parentage. For this project, I have interviewed more than 200 people from more than seven different countries around the world, but I have had a great deal of difficulty locating people from the United States who might be willing to participate. For that reason, I am contacting you and your organization to ask if there might be members of the ATA who might be interested in taking part in this investigation. In particular, I am looking for people who fit the following description:

- 1) are 18 years or older
- 2) have a mother whose native language is different from that of their father, irrespective of which language(s) were spoken in their home. Thus, the participants do NOT have to be bilingual themselves.
- 3) have a mother whose native culture (i.e. nationality, ethnicity, and/or “race”) is different than that of their father.

If you or someone in your organization know of someone who fits this description and would be willing to complete a survey about their lives growing up, please do contact me. I may be reached either through the German email address listed above or through my institutional address here in Germany. Please feel free to pass on this email to anyone whom you feel may be interested in participating in this project. In closing, I thank you for your time and attention. Sincerely,

Dr. I.M. Laversuch  
English Department  
Albert Ludwigs Universität Freiburg  
Kollegengebäude IV  
D-7800 Freiburg i. Br.  
tel. 0049-761-292-1505  
[mavi.yaz@web.de](mailto:mavi.yaz@web.de) ♦

# Canto Legal (The Legal Corner)

by Enéas Theodoro



## O Zé Carioca na tradução: Deficiência lingüística ou síndrome de psitacismo? ( Ninguém merece... )

*Customer complaining at petshop: “Look, matey, I know a dead parrot when I see one, and I’m looking at one right now.”*

*Shop owner: “No no he’s not dead, he’s... he’s restin’! Remarkable bird, the Norwegian Blue, isn’t it, ay? Beautiful plumage!”*

(Monty Python’s Flying Circus, circa 1969)

Às vezes, parece piada de papagaio... Como se não bastassem certas filosofias como “nada se cria, tudo se copia” e a nivelação por baixo com a transposição de conceitos alienígenas (*government agency, eligible, etc.*), ainda existem aqueles que querem explicar o inexplicável.

Ou seja, emular situações tão jocosas quanto o *sketch* do Monty Python, onde o freguês vai à loja de bichos de estimação reclamar terem-lhe vendido um papagaio cujos sinais vitais são absolutamente questionáveis.

Em pauta, a aceitação e institucionalização de estrangeirismos. A “explicação” mais comum é aludir à propalada superioridade das instituições dos países de direito anglo-saxão. Já que as “agências” – os órgãos públicos – têm mais autonomia naqueles países, que assim seja no Brasil também. Havendo precedente jurisprudencial, este deveria ser vinculante (*binding precedent*). Daí, extrapola-se para uma “melhor” terminologia.

Law is not justice, and a trial is not scientific inquiry into truth. A trial is the resolution of a dispute.  
(Edison Haines)

Sem entrar no mérito da questão, nem nos interesses políticos e econômicos subjacentes, vale destacar essa bendita síndrome, assistida com excelente *bedside manner* pelos doutores tupiniquins. Isso não significa barrar a evolução lingüística e a emergência natural de neologismos, muitos deles salutares. Afinal, a linguagem é dinâmica, e nós tradutores somos agentes diretos da sua evolução e enriquecimento. *You be the judge...*

Passando de pato para ganso, que tal uma papagaiada? Não seria “irado” – como está na moda dizer – instituir o prêmio *Le Perroquet d’Or* para as dez melhores expressões psitacísticas do ano? Com os comentários da crítica pseudo-especializada, *the nominees are:*

**corte** – aceitável em referência à autoridade judiciária poligárquica (colegiado) ou de grau recursal; senão, conota bajulação ou denota estrangeirismo.

**corporação** – junto com corporativo, já está integrado ao economês; em textos não estritamente jurídicos, é compreensível usar-se, pois nem todas as conotações de *corporate* são traduzíveis por empresarial ou societário.

**planta** – há décadas “vegetando” na cabeça de certos engenheiros e tecnocratas, é

Continues on page 6

plenamente evitável; usina, unidade industrial, etc. suprem bem essa necessidade.

**franquia** – com o sentido de *franchise*, já arraigado na linguagem comercial, o termo logo vai constar dos melhores dicionários; igualmente interessante é a aceitação da versão de concessão de serviços públicos como *concession* em vez de *franchise* e de *concessionaire* em vez de *franchisee* (inclusive em outros países).

**competição** – inaceitável quando o sentido estrito é de concorrência; idem quanto a *competitor* e concorrente.

**agência** – neologismo brutal, porém já consagrado na esfera do direito administrativo brasileiro com as várias “agências” (Telecomunicações, etc.) do Poder Executivo (suas sucursais e filiais?).

**writ** – segundo De Plácido e Silva, “...se aplica comumente ao mandado de segurança e ao *habeas corpus*”; estrangeirismo desnecessário, pois existem equivalentes no vernáculo, além de *writ* ter outras conotações; serve para o redator mostrar que é troglodita, quer dizer, poliglota...

**evidência** – mancada grave de muitos jornalistas e até advogados, nunca deve ser usado em lugar de prova ou elemento de prova; mãsh, sacumé, neguinho fica tanto tempo no exterior que volta falando meio diferenciado...

**elegível** – é comum ver colegas traduzindo *eligible* dessa maneira, quando existem termos como habilitado, qualificado, etc. que seriam bem mais “elegíveis”.

**evento de falta** – forte concorrente ao *Perroquet d’Or*, senão ao Mico de Platina; alguns tradutores ainda não entenderam que para traduzir *event of default* existe caso de inadimplência ou caso de inadimplemento, além de outras variantes corretas.

## QUOTABLE QUIPS

Law is not justice, and a trial is not scientific inquiry into truth. A trial is the resolution of a dispute.

(Edison Haines)

The law is fair to all. In its fairness for equality it forbids the rich as well as the poor to beg in the streets and to steal bread.

(Anatole France)

## REAL-LIFE COURT TRANSCRIPTS

**Q:** How did you happen to go to Dr. Cherney?

**A:** Well, a gal down the road had had several of her children by Dr. Cherney, and she said he was really good.



\* \* \*

**Q:** Officer, what led you to believe the defendant was under the influence?

**A:** Because he was argumentary and he couldn't pronounce his words.

\* \* \*

**Q:** Mrs. Jones, is your appearance this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?

**A:** No. This is how I dress when I go to work.

\* \* \*




*Enéas Theodoro Jr. is based in Tucson, Arizona, and has 20 years of experience in legal translation. From 1980 to 1990 he was a partner with several attorneys in São Paulo's first specialized legal translation agency. Any questions or suggestions? Just write to: [theodoro@attglobal.net](mailto:theodoro@attglobal.net) ♦*

have spared the agency a great deal of embarrassment and myself a great financial loss. Since I am at it, **I also promise I will never do global changes again.**

**When editing someone else’s job, I promise I will never make a change I cannot justify with something better than “because it looks nicer this way”.** One of the most irritating things to any professional is to see their work full of changes for which there does not seem to be any reason or purpose. The Project Manager, who often cannot read Portuguese if the client is foreign, cannot understand what is going on and does not know what to do. The translator gets angry and all the editor has to say is “*well, it looks better this way*”. You cannot justify all changes with grammar and dictionary, but, at least, try for things like *to maintain consistent syntax*, or *to improve coherence*. I started doing this and, little by little, am developing a set of very clear and precise rules on how to improve the quality of the translations I edit – not to mention the ones I do myself.

**I will not run amuck over editor’s changes.** If an editor makes an acceptable change in my work, I will accept it. If the change is unacceptable, I will contact the Project Manager and try to explain very clearly why I don’t agree with it. No reason to start every comment I make with something like “that stupid nit-picker...”. I will just try to quote evidence to support my position. For instance, *Brazilian spelling is regulated by law (2623/55, as amended) and the applicable regulation is shown in every dictionary. Have a look at rule 53 and see that it fully supports my punctuation.* If you have not read rule 53, open your dictionary and have a look at it now. You may be in for a surprise.



I won’t listen to claims it is an easy job either, because I know there is no such a thing.

**I will check my translations for correct formatting.** Long ago I decided I would learn to properly format a document using Word. Nothing fancy: Word is not QuarkExpress and I do not provide DTP services. But things like using tabs and tables appropriately, formatting indented paragraphs as they should, instead of using paragraph marks and spaces, things like that. If you do not understand what I mean, that means you should spend a good afternoon with an introductory book on the use of Word for Windows. When you finish the translation, search for two consecutive spaces. Except in the case where the two consecutive spaces are used at the end of a sentence (and *all* sentences) and the text is in English, there should be none in

the entire text. We often hit the spacebar twice or more between words and many of us do not delete the supernumerary spaces before delivering the job, with the result that the text looks like so much Emmenthaler cheese. Spaces in the beginning of lines or before paragraph marks or tabs are also bad practice. By all means, learn to use tabs.

And never use a hyphen where you should use a dash, please. And never use two hyphens where you should use a dash.

The nice people who will edit your work or DTP it will be grateful and, perhaps, remember you in their prayers. And there is a better chance of the client remembering you for future jobs.

**I will respect the typographical conventions of the target language.** Numbers in English follow the xxx,xxx.xx rule, in Portuguese it is xxx.xxx,xx, no matter whether we are counting dollars, reais or camels. I will also respect conventions regarding capitalization and punctuation.

**I will not accept jobs I cannot handle.**

Let the clients (or the project managers) bang their several heads against the wall, if they so want, but I will not accept a deadline that is too tight. I won't listen to claims it is an easy job either, because I know there is no such a thing. I will not listen to claims

that a "draft" will do, because I know that the guy who says he wants the job "for information only" is exactly the guy who will later say I did a lousy job – and charged good money for it, too. Of course, this means that **I will learn how to make realistic estimates of the time required to complete a job.** Never more looking at it and saying "oh, well, looks like I can make it."

**I will make a point of having everything agreed in writing.**

I don't mean clients are dishonest. But the best way to prevent misunderstandings is to have everything agreed in writing before you start working: rates, delivery dates and quantification. If the count is based on the original, have the count made and agreed to before you start. If the client insists on a count that is a bit lower than yours, don't quarrel: different Word for Windows versions give different word counts. Just take small differences as a fact of life. If the difference is large, investigate the matter. If the rate is high enough, sometimes even a low word count will be acceptable. In that case, do not complain. If the final pay will be too low, do not accept the job. But the main point is that things must be in writing and very clearly stated. When you receive the client's instructions, read them very carefully. Horrible monsters often hide behind apparently harmless verbiage. And, finally, never accept anything that the client says is there just "as a matter of form". This is exactly the paragraph the client will ask you to read very carefully

“And, in any case, people who read the translation are entitled to know what the authors said, not what I believe they ought to have said.”

when there is a disagreement. Then, if the final agreement is an e-mail, print it and hang the printout where you can see it. Having everything agreed in writing, checking the agreement very carefully and having it before your eyes all the time are one of the best ways to

ensure customer satisfaction. And, as you know, the happy customer is the customer that returns.

**I will always charge as much as possible and do the best possible job.**

I will always try to get the highest possible pay for any job that comes my way. But, once I accept the job, I will forget about the rates and do the best translation I can. I will never provide a second-rate translation on the grounds that it is already too good for the rates I am getting. This is counterproductive because later on, when somebody is looking for a good translator, they will probably offer the job to the guy who submitted the best translation, not to someone who submitted a translation "compatible with the price paid".

**I won't lie.** If I cannot deliver the job on time, I will just say "Sorry, I underestimated the time I needed for this translation." Nobody will believe that brand new HD crashed once more yesterday. Or that my mom died a second time this year.

**I will double-check my translation for translationese.**

Translationese is that strange language you only see in translations. There is no reason for a translation to look weird. If you are working into English, for instance, look for things like "*The legislator of our fatherland found it to be a good thing to*

*allow such action, being that under the previous legislation it was held to be illegal*". If you are working into Portuguese, you should try to find stuff like *Suficientes dados não estão disponíveis para que pudéssemos tornar nossas ações consistentes com...*

There is no justification for that. Also, look for things that do not make much sense to you, because if it does not make much sense to you, probably it won't make any sense to the reader.

**I won't try to "improve" the original.** I am very proud of my work as a translator and I do not feel the urge to show those who read my translations how good an author I am. So, I do not try to "improve" the originals entrusted to me for translation. In the beginning, I often tried to improve originals, even adding something when I found it of interest or deleting stuff I considered useless. I no longer do it. With the deadlines I have, I hardly have the time required to turn out a decent translation. And, in any case, people who read the translation are entitled to know what the authors said, not what I believe they ought to have said.

**I won't quarrel with my client because of different preferences as to vocabulary or syntax.** If the client wants to change the text, let them do it. I have sold it to them and now it is theirs. That is one of the reasons why I don't like to sign my translations. Finally, I reserve the right never to work for that client again – provided I can find a better one, that is.

**I will not contradict my client.** If the client says his sister could do the translation, I will keep my mouth shut. If the client says his cousin has a program that can translate it, I won't disagree. If the client says that, if I insist on charging unreasonable prices, he will ask his teen daughter to do the job, I will very politely say "sorry, that is the absolute minimum I can charge, sir" without a shadow of irony in my voice, disconnect and let him fry in his own lard.

**I will not bad-mouth my colleagues, but I will point out errors in translation.** I will never say, "you should not entrust Mary Doe with this

translation: she is practically illiterate" even if I know for sure she is the mother of all jenny asses. However, I will tell the client I don't consider *mandate of security* a decent translation for *mandado de segurança*, no matter who said it was.

**I will not play games with rates and terms of payment.** I will not accept a job unless the client and I are in perfect agreement as to rates and terms of payment and the client understands exactly what they are paying for. Agencies know exactly what they are doing, but many a final client does not have a clue. For instance, if you are dealing with Brazilian clients, there is a very good chance they think a *lauda* is equivalent to a page of their text, which it is not. Some agencies pay based on the original, others pay based on the translation and this is something that must be agreed on beforehand. And when something is agreed, I will stick to it very carefully and strictly. For instance, if the agreed payment is not in my account on the agreed date, the client will hear from me first thing in the morning on the following day.

And, finally, **I shall not grumble.** I am very sick and tired of translators, editors, agency owners and project managers who keep complaining about everything, long hours, low pay, uncomprehending dishonest clients and/or suppliers, everything. I consider complaining a waste of time and energy. Let's invest all the time and energy we have in improving our lot.

*Danilo Nogueira is a financial and accounting translator, lecturer and dictionary author based in São Paulo. E-mail address:*

[Danilo.tradutor@uol.com.br](mailto:Danilo.tradutor@uol.com.br)

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# AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE DIVISION TREASURER'S REPORT - Toronto, Canada

In August 2004, the Portuguese Language Division had 373 members, compared to 391 in August 2003 — a reduction of 5%. This percentage was used to calculate our membership for November (see Table below). Since November 2001, when we reached a high of 431 members we have had a reduction ranging from 3% to 5%.

On the other hand, our mid-year conference in Providence, RI was attended by 53 participants, an encouraging increase compared to previous conferences:

**PLD Members by Year**

2001	2001	2002	2003	2004
398	431	427	403	383

**PLD Spring Meeting - 00-04**

San Antonio	Charleston	Santa Fe	Miami	Providence
30	43	25	39	53

This success was due to the attendance of local (mostly Massachusetts) and nonmember European Portuguese court interpreters, amounting to 46% of the attendees. The revenue was the largest so far, at \$2,680 (see figures I and II).

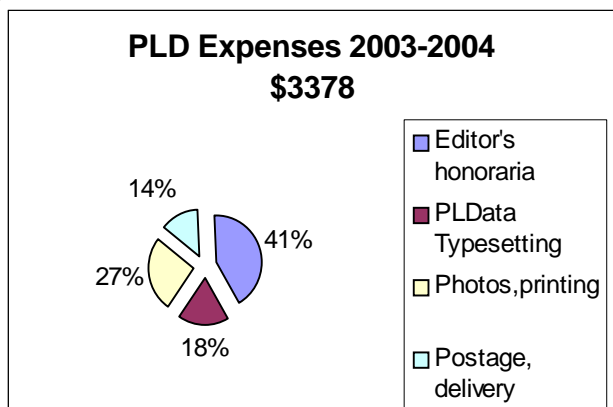
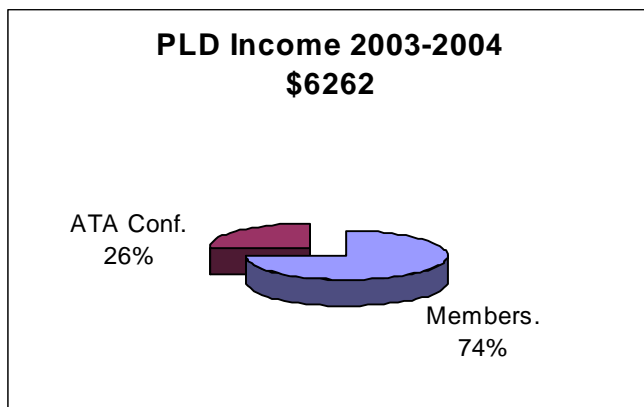
*Note:* since this conference was atypical (high attendance and high earnings), it is shown here apart from the PLD Financial Summary 2003-2004, so that members can have a feel for our numbers.

The PLD has been conservative in its spending. Total expenditures for July 2003 – June 2004 were \$3,378 and income was \$6,264, of which \$4,788 came from member dues. The surplus for 2003-2004 was \$2,886.

The budget for 2004-2005 prepared by ATA shows \$5,746 from membership dues and \$8,000 from the PLD Meeting, totaling \$13,746 for income. The budget expenses are \$11,595, resulting in an estimated surplus of \$2,151. This number may not be attained considering the decreasing membership and the fact that the 2005 PLD Meeting may not replicate the unusually large revenue of over \$2,000 — never accomplished before Providence.

The Treasurer will discuss the 2004-2005 budget with the ATA Chapter and Division Relations Manager to review figures and bring the forecast into a more realistic scenario.

Thelma L. Sabim  
PLD Treasurer ♦



# TECHNICAL TOOLS FOR TRANSLATORS

*Jost Zetzsche is an ATA-accredited English-to-German translator and a localization and translation consultant. A native of Hamburg, Germany, Jost earned a Ph.D. in the field of Chinese translation history and linguistics in 1996. He began working in localization and technical translation in 1997, and in 1999 co-founded International Writers' Group on the Oregon coast ([www.internationalwriters.com](http://www.internationalwriters.com)). At the beginning of 2003, he published a computer guide for translators and a bi-weekly newsletter in January 2004. Contact: [jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com](mailto:jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com)*

“So, what’s Unicode again?” asked the project manager. “And how am I supposed to handle it?”

I stifled a groan of frustration on the phone and launched into yet another explanation. I hoped I still sounded patient, but inside I was growing increasingly perplexed.

In my job as a technical translator and localization consultant, I’d been growing more and more surprised at the lack of technical expertise and software tool knowledge among many translators and project managers. I watched as countless hours were wasted on tasks that could have been done automatically or in a fraction of the time. And as an editor, I often struggled to improve texts that were translated with an adequate level of linguistic or subject-matter expertise, but whose quality was sub-par because the translator didn’t know how to use the necessary tools or formats.

I finally developed my own theory about what had happened: some time after translators began routinely using computers for their work, many of us convinced ourselves that we weren’t smart (or technical) enough to become proficient computer users. The irony is that many of us translate highly technical and complex subject matter every day. There’s no lack of intelligence among us—just a prevailing not-smart-enough-for-computers fallacy that we’ve bought into.

I became convinced that it was time to adopt a new paradigm for our profession: not only is it acceptable to use computers well—it’s critical to our success. And to achieve that success, we have to educate the non-technical fuzziness out of our lives.

My first contribution toward this goal was to write an e-book, *The Translator’s Tool Box: A Computer Primer for Translators*. Written in plain and simple English, it’s essentially a compendium of suggestions based on what has worked well (or not so well) for

me. I like to think of it as a tool box from which translators can choose the tools that may be appropriate for them at any certain time.

As the book caught on and translators and project managers began asking for more frequent updates, I started to publish a free bi-weekly e-mail newsletter called *The Tool Kit*. If I ever had any doubts, the snowballing success of this newsletter has proven that my theory was indeed firmly rooted in fact—there is a great need for targeted technical education among translators, and *The Tool Box* and *Tool Kit* are beginning to bridge that gap between our technical paralysis and our potential.

Both publications provide translators with an overview of the technical issues that most of us are regularly confronted with. They include basic activities such as zipping and unzipping files and file management with Windows, as well as more complex tasks such as working with desktop publishing applications and conversion issues.

I’m as convinced of the need for this technical education now as I was when I first began writing, and spreading the word continues to be my passion. If you’re interested in sampling these tips and tricks for yourself, you can read more about both the Tool Box book at [www.internationalwriters.com/toolbox](http://www.internationalwriters.com/toolbox) and the free Tool Kit newsletter at: [www.internationalwriters.com/toolkit](http://www.internationalwriters.com/toolkit).

Finally, here’s my pep talk that I conclude my workshops with: Read these resources and then forge ahead with courage and creativity! Computers and the plethora of specialized software programs are powerful tools for translation, tools that are more accessible and affordable than ever before. With these tool boxes at your disposal, the only limits to your craftsmanship as a translator are the boundaries you set for yourself. ♦

**LÍNGUA – VIDAS EM PORTUGUÊS**

*We announce a rare occurrence in the movie world – a cinematic tour of the countries where Portuguese is spoken and how the language is transformed in each country. The editors cannot inform at the time of printing whether this film will be shown in the U.S.*

*We are talking about a brand new (2004) documentary by director Victor Lopes, born in Mozambique and living in Brazil. The film is Mr. Lopes' debut.*

*Cast of interviewees: Mia Couto, José Saramago, Martinho da Vila, João Ubaldo Ribeiro, Teresa Salgueiro, Edinho.*

*The movie was shot in the following countries: Portugal, Mozambique, Índia, France, Japan and Brazil.*

*Here are some comments and their internet sources, in Portuguese, for our PLData readers:*

“Todo dia duzentas milhões de pessoas levam suas vidas em português. Fazem negócios e escrevem poemas. Brigam no trânsito, contam piadas e declaram amor. Todo dia a língua portuguesa renasce em bocas brasileiras, moçambicanas, goesas, angolanas, japonesas, cabo-verdianas, portuguesas, guineenses. Novas línguas mestiças, temperadas por melodias de todos os continentes, habitadas por deuses muito mais antigos e que ela acolhe como filhos. Língua da qual povos colonizados se apropriaram e que devolvem agora, reinventada. Língua que novos e velhos imigrantes levam consigo para dizer certas coisas que nas outras não cabe.”

<http://adorocinema.cidadeinternet.com.br/filmes/lingua/lingua.htm>

“**Língua - Vidas em Português**” é um documentário de 105 minutos co-produzido por Brasil e Portugal e filmado em seis países (Brasil, Moçambique, Índia, Portugal, França e Japão). Dirigido por Victor Lopes, o longa-metragem é um mergulho nas muitas histórias da língua portuguesa e na sua permanência entre culturas variadas do planeta. Em “Língua”, a lusofonia é sobretudo fala, surpreendida do cotidiano de personagens ilustres e anônimos de quatro continentes. Em cada um deles, o português amalgamou deuses, melodias, climas, ritmos. Misturou-se aos alimentos e às paisagens. Foi reinventado centenas de vezes e alimentado por sucessivas de colonizadores, imigrantes e descendentes.

Em Portugal e Moçambique, no Brasil e em Goa, desenham-se os quadrantes de uma herança portuguesa, sempre surpreendente e permanentemente renovada. Acompanhando as trajetórias de seus personagens, e ouvindo suas experiências e sensações, suas memórias e esperanças diante do futuro, o documentário reproduz o movimento de uma língua que ganhou o mundo e que refaz seus caminhos na expectativa de se reencontrar.

Por isso, o filme é um documentário permanentemente em trânsito. Ao entrar e sair da vida dos personagens, o filme desvia-se das suas rotas cotidianas para encontrar cerimônias, casais, locais de trabalho, esquinas e paisagens, traçando retratos reveladores da cultura de cada um dos países visitados.

<http://www.almacarioca.com.br/lingua.htm>

### **Um documentário para ser visto e ouvido 29/10/2004**

**Ricardo Calil**

[www.tecnopop.com.br](http://www.tecnopop.com.br)

“A frase que melhor define o documentário “Língua – Vidas em Português” é dita no filme pelo escritor moçambicano Mia Couto: “No fundo, não se está a viajar por lugares, mas sim por pessoas”.

“Língua” não tem a pretensão de ser uma análise histórica ou sociológica do português. Quer apenas fazer uma série de retratos afetivos de pessoas que amam o idioma, cada uma à sua maneira. Esse objetivo fica claro na frase de divulgação do documentário: “Todos os dias, 200 milhões de pessoas sonham em português. Algumas delas estão neste filme”.

O desafio proposto por “Língua” não era pequeno: abordar o rico e vasto universo da lusofonia com pouco menos de 100 minutos de projeção e pouco mais de 20 personagens. Ao final, o documentário vence esse desafio com o carinho que cada personagem trata o idioma, e também com o afeto do próprio filme por seus entrevistados. Quem ama a língua portuguesa não deve deixar de assisti-lo. ♦

# HUMOR

## Dicionários Português/Português

*Brazilian humorist Millôr Fernandes translates a passage from European Portuguese into Brazilian Portuguese, with the help of two Portuguese/Portuguese dictionaries.*

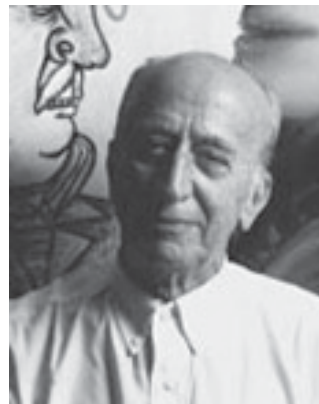
(...) Ah, Portugal não fala língua estrangeira? Então vejam se entendem este texto: “Estava a conduzir meu automóvel numa azinhaga com um borracho muito gira ao lado, quando dei com uma bossa na estrada de circunvalação que um bera teve a lata de deixar. Escapei de me espalhar à justa. Em havendo um bufete à frente convidei a chavala a um copo. Botei o chiante na berma e ordenamos ao criado de mesa uma sande de fiambre em carcaça eu, e ela um miau. O panasqueiro, com jeito de marialva paneleiro, um chalado da pinha, embora nos tratando nas palminhas, trouxe-nos a sande com a carcaça esturrada (e sem caganitas!), e, faltando-lhe o miau, deu-nos um prego duro”.

Não entenderam. Preferem javanês? Então eu traduzo para a língua que se fala no Brasil: “Eu dirigia meu carro por um caminho de pedras tendo ao lado uma gata espetacular, quando vi um lombo na estrada de contorno que um escroto teve o descaramento de fazer. Por pouco não bati nele. Como havia em frente uma lanchonete, convidei a gata a tomar um drinque. Coloquei o carro no acostamento e pedimos ao garçom sanduíche de presunto com pão de forma, eu, e ela sanduíche de lombinho. O gozador, com jeito de don Juan bicha, muito louco, embora nos tratando muito bem, trouxe o sanduíche com o pão queimado (e sem azeitonas!) e não tendo sanduíche de lombinho, trouxe um de churrasquinho duro.”

Vou confessar: só me foi possível traduzir o trecho acima por ser o rico possuidor de dois dicionários de português/ português. O primeiro é de 1981; Dicionário Lusitano-Brasileiro, Edições Plaque, Rio. Um livreto artesanal, de Eno Teodoro Wanke. Contém pouco mais de 1000 palavras. O segundo, Dicionário Contrastivo Luso-Brasileiro, da Guanabara, é de Mauro Villar. Já está feito com todo o approach científico-linguístico e tem, calculando por alto, mais de 12.000 verbetes. Além de português/português, é também um dicionário de português/português, se é que percebem.

(...) Ah, outra glória minha em Portugal foi o dia em que Salazar, o Fidel Castro Luso, lendo minhas páginas, disse a um embaixador: “Este gajo tem piada - pena que escreva tão mal o português.” O panaca sabia das coisas.

(from *Dicionário Português/ Português*, by Millôr Fernandes). *Thanks for this contribution by PLD member Sula Jensen, in Miami.* ♦



# Humor is no laughing matter overseas

**NEW YORK (Reuters) — Pssst! Did you hear the one about the American businessman whose tame joke drew a hilarious response from his Japanese audience?**

The American, curious why they liked the joke so much, later asked his official translator, who replied: “The joke was not appropriate, so I did not translate it. I simply said: ‘The gentleman has told a joke. Please laugh.’”

It is not uncommon for interpreters to avoid translating humor.

“You have to be careful about jokes. They do not translate from culture to culture,” said Sheida Hodge, worldwide managing director of the Cross-Cultural Division for Berlitz International Inc. in Princeton, New Jersey.

The American trademark is to start a speech with a joke, she said. “When foreigners speak here, they also want to start with a joke, but that never works because the worst thing you can do is mimic other people or the nuances of their culture.”

The dos and don'ts of cultures can get complicated for travelers, who need to beware of taboos dealing with gender, colloquialisms and body language.

“Humor is something we all need to make the world a better place, but it can also make life worse, if mishandled,” said Steve Norcliffe, commercial director of the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Center in London.

“You may think you know a nation after spending a lot of time there, but you cannot be fully up to speed with the latest happenings, thoughts, etc,” said Norcliffe. “And, sure as heck, you'll choose a no-go subject matter for a humorous quip just when you are near to closing the deal.”

## **Cultural differences**

In some cultures, humor can be seen as aggression or dominance, so it would be a faux

pas for a woman to tell a joke, said Patti Wood, an international speaker and trainer.

A smile, often the best ice breaker, is not necessarily a sign of approval, said Wood, also known as the Body Language Lady. “For Chinese, Japanese and Malaysians, a ‘masking smile,’ with corners of the mouth turned down, is a polite way of letting you know what you are doing is not appropriate.”

The eyes also play a role in cross-cultural communication.

Ed Ruggero, an author and keynote speaker on ethical leadership, admits to having anxious moments while addressing the Choctaw Nation at a casino complex in Mississippi.

“Whenever I tried to make eye contact with someone, he or she looked down. It was very unsettling,” he said. Later, a woman explained that Choctaw do not look strangers in the eye.

In some Asian cultures, an entire audience might close their eyes, said Berlitz's Hodge. “But it only means they are concentrating on what is being said and is a sign of respect.”

It's important to make an effort to understand other cultures, but trying too hard to fit in with the locals can result in embarrassment on both sides.

During his work stint in the United States, Englishman Norcliffe, eager to show he knew the local lingo, glibly suggested a sales prospect could “brown bag” a brochure.

“I thought it meant throw it in the trashcan. I didn't find out until after the meeting that I was way off the mark.”

## **National differences**

Wood agrees that humor varies from country to country.

“Americans, because we are individualistic and confident, tend to do a lot of put-down humor,” she said.

“It's a big deal for the British; they believe it breaks tension,” said Hodge. “But their sense of comedy is different. They use more irony, which Americans may mistake for sarcasm.”

Ethnic or gender-related humor is still acceptable in some parts of the world, but in U.S. business meetings and presentations, you've got to keep it clean.

"That means no off-color jokes," said Hodge. "Sometimes Europeans make sexual innuendo jokes, but that doesn't go over well with Americans. And ethnic jokes are out."

The solution is simple, says Ruggero: "Don't use jokes. Use humor. A joke requires a response. If I make a humorous comment, at least some of the people will laugh."

If a joke bombs, body language speaks louder than words.

"Basic arm folding is seen as putting a barrier between you and the person who is talking," Wood said.

There are still times, however, that no matter how hard you try to do the right thing, it gets lost in translation.

Ruggero tells the story of a newly promoted American soldier at an embassy party celebrating the Allied victory at the end of World War II.

"A Frenchman stood up to give a toast and a British officer followed suit. The young major, who had studied French at West Point, was pushed front and center to represent the U.S. "Unable to think of a toast, he chose a poem intended as a tribute to a child and his mother. 'The best years of my life,' he recited, 'were spent in the arms of another man's wife.'

"His vocabulary was a bit rusty, however, and he confused the French words for arms and legs.

"Needless to say, the hosts were offended and the mortified young officer was "spirited away to his troopship... just before the dueling pistols came out."

In a social setting, it makes for a very funny story. But in the context of global business, that kind of gaffe can be fatal.

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## A Christmas Poem from a Fado Lyricist

### NATAL À BEIRA-RIO

David Mourão-Ferreira

É o braço do abeto<sup>1</sup> a bater na vidraça?  
E o ponteiro pequeno a caminho da meta!  
Cala-te, vento velho! É o Natal que passa,  
A trazer-me da água a infância ressurecta.  
Da casa onde nasci via-se perto o rio.  
Tão novos os meus Pais, tão novos no passado!  
E o Menino nascia a bordo de um navio  
Que ficava, no cais, à noite iluminado...  
Ó noite de Natal, que travo a maresia!  
Depois fui não sei quem que se perdeu na terra.  
E quanto mais na terra a terra me envolvia  
E quanto mais na terra fazia o norte de quem erra.  
Vem tu, Poesia, vem, agora conduzir-me  
À beira desse cais onde Jesus nascia...  
Serei dos que afinal, errando em terra firma,  
Precisam de Jesus, de Mar, ou de Poesia?

<sup>1</sup>Abeto = any kind of fir.

David Mourão-Ferreira wrote the lyrics for some of the fados recorded by legendary fado singer Amália Rodrigues. Born in Lisbon in 1927, he died in the same city in 1996. Poet, playwright, fiction writer, essayist, literary critic and translator. Source: Centro Virtual Camões. Visit the Instituto Camões: <http://www.instituto-camoes.pt> ♦



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