

SPRING 2007

**Speech Etiquette Formulas in Translation
(English<>Russian)
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Every language has a number of speech formulas that are traditionally used in certain communicative situations. Our speech is interspersed with or framed by them. Thus they form a kind of a scaffold that supports the communicative act. Such formulas (words or ready-made clichés) are usually referred to as speech etiquette. They can be almost devoid of real meaning, yet they are extremely important as indicators of propriety of language and social behavior. Failure to observe rules "prescribed" by speech etiquette may create culture shock or even disrupt communication. This can easily happen within the same language community, and in intercultural contacts can turn into a virtual mine field. Trite and empty as they can seem, such formulas are often culturally bound and may vary significantly from language to language. The translator often deals with difference in usages of correlating (corresponding) forms of speech etiquette in the source language (SL) and target language (TL), or their different frequency and/or intensity of meaning, or the complete absence of an equivalent verbal reaction in the TL. This paper is devoted to translation problems arising from such differences and looks into possible solutions and strategies available to the translator.

I. Social & Cultural Aspects of Speech Etiquette

At first sight it may seem that there should be no problem in translating ready-made speech formulae that are used in support of recurrent and typical situations of everyday life. Most of these situations are identical for all humankind: addressing someone or attracting someone's attention, greeting people and saying goodbye, giving thanks or words of encouragement, expressing sympathy or inquiring about somebody's well-being, etc. Indeed, it would not be inappropriate to consider the category of speech etiquette (SE) as a language universal.

Speech etiquette is a mandatory and socially constructed product. We follow certain conventions in using its formulas on certain occasions and we expect no surprises. What we do expect is to hear these formulas in certain situations. They are verbal exchanges that we take for granted. We demonstrate complete conformity with the rules, and if we don't, we are considered rude or eccentric or even mad. We may not be able to start a conversation or to maintain it or to create a favorable atmosphere if we break these rules. This makes them pragmatically very important in the process of translation. The reaction a translated speech etiquette formula produces must be identical or very similar to that produced by the original phrase.

There is a good reason for calling speech etiquette words and expressions "formulas." They are standard. There is nothing peculiar about them, no imprint of

individual style or creativity. It's hard to imagine anything more traditional or more taken for granted in the language. Yet, it is precisely this factor of tradition that gives them a heavy imprint of cultural peculiarity, which comes to the fore when contrasted with a different language. This set of rules for the speech behavior called SE reflects the traditional norms, values, attitudes, and mindset of a certain language community and is an integral part of its culture.

Yes, people do address, greet, say goodbye or give thanks to each other, express their sympathy or support, make compliments, speak on the phone, etc.—they do all these things all over the world, yet they may well do them differently. We usually begin learning the language with such words as “Hello!,” “Goodbye!,” “Thank you,” “Excuse me,” and, unfortunately, that is where we, as translators and interpreters, usually stop as far as learning TL SE is concerned. Then, when we reach the level at which we are able to express and to translate complex, sophisticated ideas, we may discover that we are still prone to cultural shocks or may cause them ourselves through our language behavior. This problem is aggravated by the fact that bilingual dictionaries often ignore this staple language material or give incomplete or misleading translations. Thus, you won't find any acceptable equivalent to the English phrase “Take care!” said at taking leave. “Осторожно!” or “Береги себя” or “Будь умницей” which are more or less related to its initial lexical meaning, are said at parting in Russian only to a person we know very well and usually when some potential danger or trial is envisioned ahead. By contrast, the English cliché can be addressed to someone we hardly know in situations virtually devoid of its initial meaning of “Be careful!” So, a generic Russian formula of parting “Всего хорошего!” would serve better here than any other translation. The same “Всего хорошего!” may help us out when translating other English “goodbye formulas,” such as “Have a good day,” “Have a good evening,” “Have a good night,” and “Have a good one.” This “Take care” phrase is just one of many examples of dictionaries' limitations.

We will try to show that even such seemingly simple situations common to all societies may cause problems. It is natural to assume that in rendering SE units the SITUATIONAL model of translation is at work. Simply put, its recipe is: whatever the original word or expression literally means, say what is customarily said in the identical situation in the TL. True, in many cases it is best to just pick an appropriate cliché, which doesn't require a great deal of ingenuity or imagination on the part of the translator. Such “easy sailing” works in many cases, but not all. It turns out that SE is an understudied area of research in translation, although each of the situations in which it is typically used is worthy of special attention. When these ready-made blocks of speech reveal cultural specificity, the translator begins to have a hard time. Here are a few examples.

II. Verbal gaps: Silent Reactions—Omissions in Translations

When Silence is Better

Omissions can be partial or complete. Zero-translating is provoked not by the absence of a word or a phrase in the TL, but by the silent reaction (verbal gap) in certain situations or circumstances.

The classic example of ‘partial omission’ is a two-tiered English greeting “Hi! How are you?” which can be addressed to a complete stranger who in his turn is expected

to say nothing but “Fine, thank you,” even if his mother has just died. The best strategy here is to limit the whole exchange to the word “здравствуйте!” in order to avoid possible cultural shock. Unfortunately, no dictionaries take into account this cultural specificity, and many professors of Russian overlook it as well, never providing this information to their students. As a result, well-meaning Americans who are fluent in Russian can greet Russians they hardly know with *Как дела?* or *Как вы поживаете?*—phrases that, unlike their English dictionary counterparts, are real questions in Russian and can be perceived as an intrusion into private life if asked by a stranger. On the other hand, Russians communicating with foreigners can react to these greetings (*How are you?*) from mere acquaintances by starting to tell them a long story containing recent or not-so-recent news in their lives.

To illustrate a complete omission, we can refer to a situation in which an English speaker is asked about his/her ailing relative’s health or some other worrisome problem. The response will be most probably accompanied with the polite *thank you for asking* which can easily be translated into Russian but shouldn’t. It’s just not used in situations like this. A Russian would be no less grateful for his/her friend’s concern, but will most likely not react verbally. The reaction will be a “silent gratitude,” and his/her friend will know it. So, unless your purpose as a translator is to show English-speaking people “otherness” and different norms of behavior, you’ll resort to “situational equivalence,” which in this case means total omission.

Conversely, English speakers display silent reactions seeing people after they have taken a bath, while Russians may say “С лёгким паром!” (lit.: light steam/vapor), which simply acknowledges the fact that other person has bathed. This phrase can also be used to express the hope that the bath was pleasant.

The Russian ritual verbal exchange before taking an exam or an interview: “Ни пуха, ни пера!”—“К чёрту!” (literally: “neither down nor feather”—“go to hell!”) will be perceived as a rude gibberish by a foreigner, whereas in its native context it has a function similar to that of the phrase “break a leg” said to an actor before his/her performance, and the seemingly rude response (go to hell) is a “mandatory” answer which is said out of proverbial Russian superstition. In such cases, an explanation can always be provided by the translator or interpreter for the listener or reader who is interested in such ‘cultural peculiarities.’

Sometimes, our native language habits intrude even when we know that they are foreign to another culture. I remember an American friend’s reaction of fright when she invited me to her place on some occasion and heard me say: “Thank you, of course I will be there...if I am alive and healthy.” I added the last words against my better judgment and immediately heard her worried voice: “What’s wrong with your health? Are you sick?” The language habits die hard, and formulas of speech, perhaps, die hardest. This phrase “если будем живы и здоровы” (if we are alive and healthy), is a hackneyed expression, added rather out of habit than superstition when Russians speak about their plans for the future. The expression is casual and harmless, but it acquires a morbid ring when literally translated into English. I should have known better: sometimes silence is really golden, even when translating.

III. Differences in frequency/place and/or intensity of meaning.

There are many terms of endearment both in English and Russian, and it is no big problem to find equivalents among them, but should we? While Americans may lavishly use *honey, hon, dear, sweetie*, even when speaking to total strangers to make them feel comfortable, Russians commonly reserve their verbal expressions of endearments, such as *дорогой, милый, любимый, солнышко, лапонька*—in which the Russian language abounds—for private life. Russian kids hear their parents say *I love you* or *I am proud of you* much less often and almost never in public. Non-verbal signs of affection are not restricted, though.

The end-of-conversation-phrases, like *It was nice talking with you, Thank you for calling, It was nice seeing you again*, though easily translated into Russian—*Приятно было поговорить с вами, Спасибо за звонок, Рад(а) был(а) повидаться с вами опять!* are much less heavily employed in Russian communication than in English. The same is true about some words of encouragement or praise that in English are typically "sprinkled" through communications: *That's a good question, Good point! I like your idea!*—Russian equivalents of these phrases are used much more sparingly. As a result, they are less hackneyed and have much more semantic weight, which takes them out of the range of speech etiquette. By the same token, the phrase *If you know what I mean*, which can be used as a "connection test" or simply as a filler, has a weightier Russian equivalent—*Надеюсь, вы понимаете, о чём я говорю*. The latter can be pronounced in such a way as to signal the listener to search for a hidden meaning or 'hear between the lines.'

In rendering words and phrases that have different weights or frequencies of usage in the TL, the translator should practice a cautious and balanced approach: diluting the impact of speech etiquette phrases by using them less frequently or omitting them completely.

IV. Different Verbal Reactions

From the title of this section one might assume that the translator's task in this situation would be easy: to use the speech etiquette formula which is generally used in the same type of circumstances. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Let us deal with the following very short conversation. You run into a friend, or rather an acquaintance of yours and after the polite exchange of "Hi! How are you?" you ask, "How is your summer going?" If you happen to hear "Not very well," your reaction most probably will be, "Oh, I am sorry." and nothing further. The Russian *Мне жаль, Я сожалею* are rather accurate technical equivalents of the phrase, but chances are that they would create a small shock in a Russian listener (or reader) if used in a situation like this. If you know a person well enough to ask this question, be polite enough (from the Russian cultural perspective) to show some interest in your friend's troubles and ask him another question: "What's the matter?" or "What's wrong?" Omitting the inquiry about summer (or holidays, or anything for that matter), if the phrase is inconsequential, would probably be the best decision.

V. Transformations

1. Specification/Generalization of Meaning

In English, there is a stronger tendency to specify one's gratitude than in Russian. Where Russians would simply say *Спасибо!* there is a high probability that English speakers would go for *Thank you for your time, Thank you for understanding, Thank you for your cooperation, Thank you for your business, Thank you for having me, etc.*, etc.

2. Antonymous Translations

Here are some well known examples: *Hold on!--Не вешайте трубку! Keep in touch!--Не пропадайте!; Take it easy!--Не принимайте близко к сердцу; не расстраивайтесь; Не переутруждайтесь; не уставайте.*

3. Semantic Shift

How can I help you?—Чем могу быть полезен? I'll be with you promptly.—Подождите немного, пожалуйста. Look who is here!—Кого я вижу!

4. Total Paraphrase

Some well-known formulas may require using a contextual equivalent whose initial or basic semantics have nothing in common with the meaning of a SL unit. For example, when a teller in a bank says to a customer waiting in line “Can I help you?” the literal translation into Russian “Я могу вам помочь?” would be completely out of place, since it is only too evident that the customers are waiting for her help. The matter-of-fact Russian word “Следующий!” (Next!) would be about the only possible choice for translation here.

Another expression, actually a question, asked after a person has had a bad fall, was attacked, or was the victim of some other mishap, “Are you OK?” has been insistently translated into Russian by “Ты в порядке?” On many occasions this sounds bizarre to Russian ears, because the SL (English) question may be asked of a person who has been beaten to a pulp and it is only too obvious that he *cannot be OK* or “в порядке.” A more suitable translation for such occasions would be a question “Ты жив?” which sounds very natural under the circumstances. In milder or less traumatic cases, questions like “Ты не ушибся?” or “Ты цел?” would still be a better choice than “Ты в порядке?” since they do not smack of translation.

In analyzing SE formulas, we should do everything possible to avoid one mistake: reading our own cultural meanings into another language and thus, passing judgment on the national character of people whose language we explore. It is easy to jump to conclusions and say (even on the basis of the limited material presented above) that Russians are less polite than English or Americans, or that Americans or English people are more hypocritical than Russians. The truth is that “common sense” is not universal. What is felt to be “common sense” to someone with one cultural background may be “utter nonsense” to someone from another, with the same level of validity for their environment.”

In conclusion, I would like to repeat that SE as a whole, as well as each of its situational-based subcategories, is worthy of the translator’s and linguist’s attention. SE formulas reveal socio-cultural specifics that simply cannot be ignored in translation. Many, if not most, of them for various reasons are not included in dictionaries and require a creative approach and decision-making on the part of the translator.

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WINTER 2007

Some Thoughts on the Ukrainian Language: How Two People Can Speak Ukrainian, Yet Not Understand Each Other

Olga Collin, *SlavFile* Editor for Ukrainian

When I had just started to get involved with medical interpretation from/into Ukrainian, one of my colleagues tactfully inquired about my knowledge and understanding of the Polish language. Being new to the Ukrainian community in the Chicago area, I was somewhat surprised by this question. After all, my interpretation assignments were all from/into Ukrainian and not Polish. Soon enough I understood my well-meaning colleague.

Those of you who interpret at hospitals know that the majority of our clients are older, left Ukraine (or what was then the Soviet Union) many years ago and reside in Slavic-language communities in the U.S. Naturally these people speak the language they brought with them from the areas where they lived in Ukraine. Their children grow up bilingual, using both the Ukrainian they learned from their parents and at local Ukrainian schools and English.

One of my first assignments happened to be for a woman who had left Ukraine 28 years ago. We greeted each other and exchanged some pleasantries. That was about the time I realized that this assignment would be rather difficult as I spoke literary Ukrainian (which she has difficulty understanding), while she addressed me in the language spoken

by the Ukrainian diaspora, which is based primarily on the Galician dialect. Here I should mention that I am from the south of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian I grew up speaking is quite different from the language this patient used.

There is a historical as well as a geographical explanation of the phenomenon. Over the years various countries have called Ukrainian lands their own. Ukraine was divided into territories, which found themselves under the influence of different cultures and languages. Thus the western territories were very much affected by the Polish language. Some of the first documented contacts and language exchanges date as far back as the times of Kyivan Rus. Cultural exchange was bi-directional, and there are numerous Polish borrowings in the Ukrainian language, as well as many Ukrainian words that have entered Polish. As a result, the Ukrainian language gradually grew apart from other East Slavic languages, Russian in particular. Below are some examples of the Ukrainian language peculiarities typical for some Western parts of the country:

- usage of the word «правда» at the end of a sentence

Ця людина – твій знайомий, правда? (typical of Polish sentence structure, similar to the English isn't he/she?);

- reflexive «ся» in front of the verb

Щоби ся / сі не бояв (замість «не боявся») (from the song «Ой заграй ми, музиченьку»)

- words «газда» vs. «хазяїн» (typical for the South), greeting «Слава Ісус!» vs. «Добрий день!», «Як ся маєте? А як Ваш неньо?»

Let's look at the southern and eastern parts of today's Ukraine. These are the areas where people want Russian to have the status of a second official language. Historically the Ukrainian and Russian languages coexisted here in close proximity. After 1654, the year when Ukraine united with Russia, the two languages started to interact with even greater frequency. And while, during the 6th-7th centuries, both languages and cultures benefited from this exchange, starting in the 8th century, the process became predominantly one-sided, with Russian being the dominant language. Later this dominance intensified when a new "historical entity"--the Soviet people--was being created. Ukrainian, along with all the other national languages, impeded this grand creation. In the interest of Soviet national unity it was slated to be replaced with Russian. This plan was rather successful, as today thousands of people question their identity, culture and language.

It's said that the population of the southern and eastern regions uses a mix of the Ukrainian and Russian languages known as "surzhyk". Such language pearls as "конечно" pronounced with a Ukrainian accent instead of "звичайно" or "я рахую" instead of "я вважаю" (Russian "я считаю") and many others are commonly used phrases. For more examples please listen to any of the earlier Verka Serdiuchka dialogs (can be found online).

Linguists distinguish between three different dialects of the Ukrainian language: northern, southwestern and southeastern (see the map in Ukrainian: <http://litopys.org.ua/ukrmova/um184.htm>). Today the majority of people across Ukraine understand the literary Ukrainian language (closest to the dialect spoken in central

Ukraine, particularly in the Poltava area), the language of such prominent Ukrainian authors as Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko (although some of the words the latter used may have to be explained). On the everyday level, however, understanding may often be hampered by the vocabulary and pronunciation peculiar to one particular area.

The cultural and linguistic gap between the western and eastern parts of Ukraine has proved difficult to bridge. Those in western Ukraine accuse the easterners of having lost their language, assimilated Russian culture, and adopted a primitive mixture of Ukrainian and Russian (surzhyk). The other side returns the favor by making pretty much the same accusations regarding Polish. The language question has become a divisive political issue discussed in heated debates across the country. Today, this issue is still very much unresolved. But let us end on a hopeful note. Just a few days ago, I read about a civil movement in Ukraine called «Не будь байдужим» (“Don’t be indifferent”). This movement was started by several prominent Ukrainian musicians who have asked every person in Kyiv to give a New Year’s present to their country and learn/start to speak Ukrainian. They published a booklet with some success stories, resources and practical tips on how to switch to Ukrainian or how to become an active promoter of the Ukrainian language. Volunteers will distribute 5,000 free copies among the population of Kyiv in order to help those “who do not speak Ukrainian because nobody else around them does.” If you are interested in learning more about this initiative, please refer to the booklet link: <http://www.nbb.com.ua/fileadmin/files/final.pdf> (in Ukrainian).

And last but not least, I would like to ask all of you working with the Ukrainian language to give a New Year’s present to the *SlavFile* and share your professional experience and interesting cases on its pages. We are all very busy, but it is certainly a great way of getting to know your fellow interpreters/translators and having your name and language pair(s) publicized. Contributions of any size as well as topic suggestions are greatly appreciated. Also if you have any questions, ideas or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at olgacollin@msn.com.

Spring 2006 INTERPRETING CUSTOMER SERVICE PHRASES FROM ENGLISH INTO RUSSIAN

Svetlana Ball

You might have noticed that my title fails to include "and vice versa." Unfortunately, the reason for this is quite obvious. The concept of customer service is basically non-existent in Russian society. Perhaps you disagree. I myself recall the wave of anxiety that would sweep over me every time I had to make a phone call while living in Russia many years ago. I would repeat the question several times before dialing the number, utter the question very fast when I had a representative on the line, get some obscure response, and before I was able to ask anything else the line would be disconnected. This would happen again and again regardless of whom or when I was calling. I would always blame myself afterwards for not asking my next question fast enough or loud enough. (That’s why I

talk so fast these days. I experienced such psychological trauma over and over as an adolescent. Perhaps this article is a form of therapy to help me recover completely!!!)

I do not believe things have changed all that much. My last trip to the Ukrainian capital comes to mind. We had just finished our tour of St. Vladimir's Cathedral, and on the way out I politely inquired at a ticket booth if there was a place nearby we could grab a bite. The response would fit in the category of an R-rated movie due to "language content." At that moment I promised myself that while dealing with my former countrymen as an interpreter, I would do my best to go above and beyond to make sure they are treated the way I was not, but should have been.

What is customer service? These are just a few definitions I found:

Customer service is all about the way customers are treated and how they feel they are being treated. Customers like to know that they are appreciated, listened to and valued by the business.

Customer service is the way in which procedures are put in place to enable a business's clientele to get difficulties with products and services dealt with effectively, questions answered politely, concerns allayed quickly and access to any resources and services made available.

(http://www.clearlybusiness.com/marketing_sales/cs_what_is_customer_service.jsp)

After a lengthy search I found out there are organizations dedicated to the advancement of customer service issues and concepts. Some of the organizations are:

[International Customer Service Association](http://www.icsa.org) (ICSA) is a trade association that works to serve the needs of its members, who all share responsibility for helping to manage the customer contact function at their organization. (www.icsa.org)

[American Society for Training and Development](http://www.astd.org) (ASTD) is a worldwide organization dedicated to the advancement of training and HR issues. (www.astd.org)

[Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals](http://www.socap.org) (SOCAP) is an association open to all professionals who are in some way responsible for creating and maintaining customer loyalty. SOCAP provides the tools needed for corporations to reach their goal of maximum customer loyalty, excellent customer service and value-added innovations. (www.socap.org)

Whether as interpreters or just plain customers, we all have come across various levels of customer service. It starts in a Customer Care/Service Department (what used to be called the Sales Department). By the way, I think the most appropriate way to translate this term would be *Отдел обслуживания* (not *Отдел заботы о клиентах*, although I have heard this used). Customer Care Representative [*представитель отдела обслуживания*] is the person who gets on the line when we dial the number of the above-mentioned department.

I may be over-interpreting (after all I am an interpreter), but it has been my experience that there are certain stages customer care representatives go through when dealing with a customer. As a rule these stages are outlined in a script some companies have developed

to simplify their work with customers. I have named and outlined them below. If you disagree, please feel free to let me know.

Phase 1. Greeting.

During the initial stage of the conversation the following expressions are often used. I will take the liberty of providing my humble suggestions for Russian equivalents:

“Who do I have the pleasure of speaking with today?”

С кем я сегодня (сейчас) имею удовольствие разговаривать?

“How can I provide you with excellent customer service today?”

I remember how taken aback I was the very first time I heard this phrase. How can I translate it, I thought, in a way that sounds natural to a Russian ear? *Как сделать, чтобы услуги, оказанные Вам сегодня, были на высоком уровне?* This certainly does not sound normal, perhaps because such a phrase has never been uttered under any circumstances by a native Russian. How do you reflect the willingness (or at least create the appearance of willingness) of a customer service representative to go above and beyond what is normally expected to satisfy the customer?

Чем мы вам можем помочь сегодня? does not say anything about the “excellent service” referred to in the original phrase.

Phase 2. The Main Part.

At this point, we are past the initial niceties, the call is under way, and an exchange of information is taking place. Occasionally, there arises the need for a customer service representative to verify something or check with the supervisor or whatever. Then we hear something like:

“Would you mind if I put you on hold for a minute or two?”

Не могли бы вы подождать одну или две минуты?

или

Вы не против подождать минутку-другую?

or “Would you mind holding?”

Не могли бы вы подождать?

или

Вы не против подождать?

Then the customer service representative returns and we hear something like:

“Thank you for your patience.”

Благодарю вас за терпение.

“I apologize for such a long delay!”

Я извиняюсь за задержку.

или

Извиняюсь, что вам пришлось так долго ждать.

Some phrases are quite standard and therefore do not need to be reexamined; however, some of them are quite unusual, and definitely foreign to our countrymen.

During a recent virtual discussion, one of my fellow telephonic interpreters stated that Russian speakers are not accustomed to such niceties, and therefore such phrases should be avoided. I believe that, on the contrary, such expressions should find their way into the life of Russian-speaking LEPs (Limited English Proficiency person) living in or visiting this country.

Phase 3. Closing the Call.

At the end of the call, certain expressions are used that even now make me cringe. Try to find an equivalent to something like:

“Customer service is our highest priority!”

Для нас обслуживание клиентов стоит на первом месте!

или

Обслуживание клиентов является для нас приоритетом! Sure, you can say this, but does the Russian speaker take you seriously? I am not sure.

“You are number one with us!”

Вы для нас важнее всего!

“Our service is tops!”

Мы гордимся нашим обслуживанием!

или

Мы обслуживаем на самом высоком уровне!

“Thank you for being a valued customer!”

Спасибо, что остаетесь верным клиентом нашей компании!

или

Благодарю вас за то, что пользуетесь нашими услугами.

The phrase *valued customer* (*ценный клиент*) implies the company providing services thinks highly of the customer and is grateful to him/her for being there. However, while rendering the word combination into Russian one has to avoid sounding sarcastic.

“Is there anything else I can help you with?”

Могу ли я вам еще чем-нибудь помочь?

или

Как еще я могу вам помочь?

“Have I provided you with excellent customer services today?”

Довольны ли вы тем, как вас сегодня обслужили?

или

Считаете ли вы, что сегодня вам были предоставлены услуги высокого уровня?

I know I have not covered all those wonderful customer service expressions that are out there, and I know there are many more that the resourceful representatives from the Customer Care/Marketing Departments will come up with. As interpreters and translators let us try to keep up with them, finding that perfect equivalent for each of them, and ensuring that our countrymen are receiving the same, high-level customer service through us, their messengers.

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Fall 2005

POLISH TRANSLATION IN AUSTRALIA

Aleksandra Horn

A short time after I joined the ATA and the Slavic Division earlier this year, Mary David of ATA headquarters kindly sent me some issues of the *SlavFile* to get me acquainted with the Division and topics of interest discussed there. Then a warm email from Lydia Razran Stone, the editor of the *SlavFile*, arrived in my inbox welcoming me and encouraging me to write a few words about myself or about translating in Australia, where I used to live before moving to the US this past year. I was quite overwhelmed and not certain whether to stick out my neck.

I pored over the *SlavFiles* with great excitement, enjoying the wit, observations, and breadth of knowledge displayed by many regular contributors. I checked out the recommended websites, internalized tons of advice and warnings, and pondered my chances of breaking into the new, American market with increasing trepidation. How much easier it was to be part of the familiar structure in Poland and then in Australia!

I thought back to the 1970s, when I was still in Poland, working on my Ph.D. in linguistics and teaching undergraduate courses in the English Institute at the University of Poznan, proofreading two linguistic journals, translating articles for other university publications, translating art pamphlets and other texts into English, interpreting at conferences. Life was very busy indeed. Then my new American husband was offered an academic position at the University of Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia, and we relocated Down Under for what was to be a few years but stretched into twenty-five (talk about Australia growing on you!). There was no choice but to begin anew, far away from the comfort of my beloved adopted city of Poznan.

As sometimes happens, the new country made it necessary to revise my work plans and ambitions. I was thrilled to do some tutoring and then part-time lecturing in

second language acquisition and applied linguistics in the Linguistics Department at the University of Newcastle. However, initially, I did not see any opportunities for translating or interpreting, let alone using Polish.

Soon enough, I found out that there was a sizeable Polish community in Newcastle, and while traveling around the country I found that my compatriots were everywhere. Following World War II, Australia welcomed hundreds of thousands of displaced persons from many war-ravaged European countries, including Poles. It offered them a safe haven and work. In the post-war assimilation-policy days, languages other than English were discouraged, I was told. It was assumed that, with time, settlers would acquire English and adopt the values of their new country. In the meantime, however, in times of need, many had to rely on their relatives, friends and children who knew some English. For a number of years it was such individuals who acted as “interpreters” in hospitals, doctors’ offices, police stations, and courts of law. This was inadequate and at times embarrassing, but the recipients were always grateful.

The first interpreters I came in contact with, in 1979 in the industrial port of Newcastle, a city of 262,000 inhabitants, were community interpreters, a rather new concept for me. Most did not have tertiary education or proper training. Their command of English and their native languages varied, depending on their age and educational background. Young and cocksure, I did not want to identify with them. I knew it took more than being bilingual to be a translator/interpreter in Europe, and it was hard for me to accept any less.

As it turned out, there was a great deal for me to learn. Newcastle had heavy industry that I was not familiar with, and accidents at work occurred with alarming frequency. Immigrants suffered a wide range of ailments that, as a healthy individual, I had never heard of. There were compensation cases, criminal cases, divorces, and coroner’s inquests—in Poland I had never been to court! People needed to have their wills sight-translated, entered into contracts, applied for housing loans, needed to have treatment and surgical procedures explained. It was a world of new experience to absorb, and time to learn some humility.

Starting in the mid-1960s, the “White Australia” policy of the post-war years began to weaken, to be totally scrapped by 1973. Australia began accepting larger numbers of immigrants with various non-European backgrounds. In a society that was already a rich mixture of cultures, the assimilation policy of earlier years had to give way to the philosophy of multiculturalism, which better reflected the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australian society. In 1978, the year we settled in Australia, the multicultural policies were officially implemented with far-reaching consequences: ethnic media, ethnic language programs in high schools, and the provision of interpreters in all government-funded institutions (hospitals, courts, schools, employment agencies, etc).

The era of untrained bilingual speakers acting as interpreters was slowly coming to an end. There was an increased awareness of standards to which translators and interpreters should adhere. Government language service providers launched extensive training programs for their panels of translators and interpreters. They also encouraged them to have their language skills tested by the newly formed body, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), whose purpose was to set, monitor, and assess professional standards. In 1980, I applied to NAATI and was granted a professional rating (level 3) as a translator and interpreter.

For the first couple of years I was in Australia, I focused on university work and translations. Most Polish interpreting was done by a few individuals who had arrived before me and had their spheres of influence well-mapped. It was hard to imagine that Polish would ever be popular enough to keep both them and me busy. Then, the unthinkable happened. The political situation in Poland began deteriorating, and large numbers of young Poles filled refugee camps in Austria, Italy, Germany, and other Western European countries. In the early eighties, Australia opened its doors to thousands of them, and suddenly there was a flood of Polish documents to translate, as well as many publications, announcements, pamphlets, and brochures, produced by government bodies for the benefit of new and previous immigrants.

Among the bigger assignments I remember were a diabetes information booklet and a NSW Drivers Education Manual that has since been replaced by an updated version that was not translated. There was also a long series of “first of a kind” interpreting assignments that multiplied with time: the first rape case and counseling, the first “head-on collision” with the traditional last Will and Testament (legal plain English documents were not used yet), the first negligent death and a coroner’s inquiry, domestic violence, sexual assault, mental health hearing, aggravated assault, divorce proceedings, etc. And there was the wonderful experience of telephone interpreting that covered the widest range of situations. Telephone Interpreting Service calls used to hijack many free moments of my days, making them unpredictable, sometimes tense, and always interesting.

In later years, the bulk of my interpreting involved legal matters, and I worked not only in Newcastle, but accepted assignments in various courts in the Sydney metropolitan area and rural New South Wales. I would also receive calls to interpret in public hospitals and clinics, many of them being emergencies at odd hours of the day and night. When we started a family, I decided to concentrate exclusively on freelance translating and occasional interpreting, as it offered more flexibility than teaching. I could work to my own schedule and say “No” when the going got tough.

In the meantime, the situation in Poland continued to evolve, and by the late 1980s and early ‘90s Poland began attracting foreign investors, including some Australian companies. In the ensuing years, I translated substantial amounts of material relating to business, accounting, operational instructions, executive presentations, legal matters, and other areas.

Apart from qualifications documents, many of my previous translations had been from English to Polish. In early 2000, I translated a few feature articles from Polish magazines into English for a website that, sadly, has since ceased to exist. Another opportunity came in 2002, when the Polish Association in Newcastle celebrated its 50th anniversary. The committee, of which I was a member, compiled a history of the organization and the community it served in book form, which—as a gesture of gratitude towards the community—I edited and also translated into English for the benefit of the English-speaking descendants of the post-war immigrants.

In 1992, a year after a Saturday School of Community Languages was established at the Merewether High School in Newcastle, I began teaching Polish (grade 7 through 12), which I continued for 11 years. I found the experience very rewarding and educational. Teaching kept me in touch with my first language in a way that translating and interpreting did not quite achieve.

Having stepped into a teacher's shoes again, I found myself teaching not only Polish, but also training many interpreters from a variety of language backgrounds through courses and professional development workshops conducted in Newcastle and other locations in New South Wales. I tested the language skills of numerous bilingual Polish speakers on behalf of various agencies as well as graded translation assignments and provided feedback to Polish students taking translation courses at the University of NSW. My fondest memory is of the language screening of candidates for volunteers at the Sydney Olympics, an event that galvanized the nation and brought out the best in hundreds of bilingual citizens who volunteered their time and language skills to help the Games run smoothly.

The interpreting and translating scene I was leaving behind when I moved to the US in 2004 had undergone many transformations since the 1970s. For several years now, colleges and universities throughout Australia have been offering diploma and degree courses in translating and interpreting. Many practitioners are highly qualified, and most have sound training these days. A minimum requirement for interpreters and translators seeking employment with Government agencies has been raised from the "Para-professional" to the professional "Interpreter" and "Translator" level. The image of a community interpreter and translator has also changed, thanks to more stringent quality controls, and the efforts of AUSIT, Australia's national association for the translating and interpreting profession, which has been raising public awareness about the profession since 1987. Together with NAATI, it has been monitoring and supporting excellence in the field.

In February 2004, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) established a new telephone facility enabling English-speaking professionals to automatically access interpreters in 18 high-demand languages. ATIS (the Automated Telephone Interpreting System) has proven quite popular, saving customers time and money. Interpreters speaking other languages are also accessible, but through the sometimes less efficient TIS system.

The number of qualified translators/interpreters nationally runs into the thousands. However, not all are equally busy. The demand for languages changes constantly, and ties in with Australia's humanitarian programs and new immigrant intake. According to DIMIA, the top 10 languages enjoying the highest demand for translation at present are Arabic, Serbian, Chinese, Croatian, Bosnian, Russian, Spanish, Persian, German, and Indonesian.

Not all the translating and interpreting services are fee-free any more. Over the years, the number of documents translated free of charge has been reduced to a few relating to settlement (birth certificates, marriage certificates, qualification/employment documents and drivers' licenses). Likewise, the number of "on-site" interpreting assignments has decreased in favor of telephone interpreting, mainly due to the high cost of on-site jobs. The "Doctor's Priority Line" makes it easy for a medical practitioner anywhere in Australia to access an interpreter from the national pool of 2000, which is of particular importance in rural areas. Courts, however, must rely on "on-site" interpreters who need to be booked in advance.

Many say that the work of a translator is lonely. Wrestling with words in the privacy of one's own home can become somewhat isolating. However, intertwining translations with interpreting as well as teaching and training offered me plenty of variety

to keep loneliness, boredom, and frustration at bay. I feel privileged to have been able to use my bilingual skills and linguistic knowledge for the past 25 years. I feel privileged to have been part of the ever changing translating and interpreting profession in Australia. Hopefully, my experience in the US, although no doubt quite different, will be as rich and satisfying.

Aleksandra Horn now lives with her family in Baltimore, Maryland, and continues to do both translating and interpreting between Polish and English. She can be reached at olahorn@yahoo.com.

Fall 2004

MEDICAL INTERPRETING IN THREE CULTURES

Irina Markevich

For 11 years I have been working as a Russian<>English medical interpreter for various hospitals and medical offices of the State of Massachusetts. Three years ago I joined the Massachusetts General Hospital (“Mass General”)and Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Interpreters teams, which offer services in 168 foreign languages. Working for these hospitals has proven to be the most rewarding experience of my career as a medical interpreter. I found myself surrounded by people of various medical professions completely dedicated to all aspects of high-quality patient care. This experience inspired me to expand my horizons and learn another language so I could help more than one community.

The work of Spanish interpreters fascinated me. Because of the characteristics of the different communities, Spanish medical interpretation tends to provide more variety with respect to medical situations than does Russian. Spanish interpreters are routinely needed in the areas of labor/delivery, pediatrics and venereal disease treatment; they assist female patients who have been raped or battered, as well as patients suffering from AIDS and drug addiction—situations that the Russian interpreter scarcely ever encounters. Another thing that fascinated me was that the patients were from virtually every Spanish-speaking country of the world and differed in culture, dialect, and way of life.

So, I decided to master Spanish, went back to school, and completed a Bachelor’s degree in it. Aside from my course work at the University, I participated in several programs that took place in Valencia, Spain, where I studied at the University, lived with Spanish families, and improved my conversational skills. I also went through an internship program at Mass General that gave me the opportunity to work closely with Latin American patients, learn about their cultures and traditions, master different dialects, and be mentored by excellent Spanish<>English interpreters until I felt ready and secure working on my own.

There are tremendous demographic differences between the Russian and Latin American populations. The first important factor is age. While most of the Russian-speaking patients are between, say, 65 and 90 years old, the Spanish ones are all ages, and most of them are young. An interpreter is likely, for example, to work with young mothers bringing children to a Pediatric Unit, OBGYN, Labor/Delivery, and Prenatal

Care Units are filled with young women from Latin America who either know only a tiny bit of English or do not understand anything at all.

Another difference is family status. Considering that most of the Russian-speaking patients are elderly, there are numerous widows and widowers among them; at the same time, one can meet couples who have been married for over 50 years. The Spanish-speaking population is much younger. In Spanish interpreting, I have worked with many teenage girls giving birth as single mothers, as well as with young traditional families consisting of a very loving mother, father, and children.

In general, since the Russian population is older and more likely to suffer from serious ailments, Russian patients tend to be more gloomy and pessimistic, while Hispanics are more cheerful, smiling, and, if not optimistic, at least fatalistic. For that reason, an interpreting session in Spanish is apt to be a more cheerful experience for the medical interpreter.

A further major difference between Russian and Latin American patients involves education. The average Russian-speaking patient has a university degree and is quite knowledgeable about a number of subjects, including medicine. On the other hand, university degrees are considerably rarer among the Hispanics a medical interpreter encounters, and some patients have been to school for only a few years, if at all. The more educated and cultured patients tend to come from the countries of South America rather than from Central America.

Although education and income level are usually closely associated, the incomes of Russian- and Spanish-speaking patients seem to be about the same, because most of the former are retirement-age and receiving SSI. Many of the Latin American patients also receive various subsidies. The majority of Hispanic patients require Free Care Services, which are provided by the hospital, whereas Russian patients are covered by either Mass Health or Mass Health in conjunction with Medicare, which gets them better coverage and more convenient access to prescription drugs. Most Hispanic patients can receive prescription drugs at no charge only at the hospital pharmacy, where they have free care.

The attitudes of medical personnel to the two different populations are more or less the same. The Russian patients, however, tend to develop closer relationships with their physicians, initiate social conversations, tell jokes, and give them gifts for the major holidays. Quite often, physicians have considerable respect for those patients who have had successful careers in science, medicine, and engineering. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for a former Russian doctor (or even a non-doctor) to feel that he/she is more knowledgeable in medicine than his/her own physician, and this may lead to an unpleasant situation, with the interpreter in the middle.

In contrast, Hispanic patients are very appreciative, respectful, and trustful of their doctors. They do not question treatment plans and are easy to deal with. Doctors treat them with care and kindness, but may be paternalistic. Often, Spanish-speaking patients have very little familiarity with the formal Spanish names of illnesses or simple medical terms. For example, the word “diabetes” would not mean much to them. In such cases, clarifications by interpreters are invaluable. Often, in order to facilitate communication, the interpreter might say “sugar in your blood,” which would be more meaningful to the patient than a translation of the term the doctor used. In general, it is common for Spanish interpreters to use language with adults equivalent to what Russian interpreters would use talking to children. Another classic example is the verb “to urinate.” If a doctor asks a

Hispanic patient whether he/she had urinated and the interpreter interprets it literally, the chances that the patient will know what the doctor is talking about are very small. Knowing this, interpreters do not wait for a puzzled look but immediately use the term “peed.” Conversely, if a Russian interpreter working with an adult were to ask, «вы сегодня писали?» instead of «вы сегодня мочились?» it would be perceived as totally inappropriate and embarrassing. If I were interpreting for a 70-year-old Russian man and the doctor asked (as he very well might) if he had peed, I would still use the term “urinate” to avoid awkwardness.

Usually, I have a very good relationship with both the Russian and Hispanic populations. It is just as interesting for me to listen to WWII stories from Russian patients as stories of the rain forests of Central America, the beauty of Machu Picchu, or the dictatorship in Cuba. I love all of them and give a hundred percent of myself in order to provide them with good interpreter service. Overall, I find the Spanish-speaking population to be tolerant and easy-going in their attitudes to both medical staff and interpreters, while Russian patients can be more demanding and may tend to complain.

I would advise new interpreters to be friendly to all patients but to stay neutral. Step in when you notice that the medical staff is having difficulties with the patients as a result of cultural differences and offer your help in clarifying matters.

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Fall 2002

The status of Polish court translators in 2003

Danuta Kierzkowska

Translated from Polish by Urszula Klingenberg

In Poland, as is the case in other countries, the group of translators with the longest “documented” history is the literary translators. In past decades literary translators became members of the Polish Writers Association and many of them remain in this organization today. The history of Polish nonliterary translators is shorter and more dramatic because of their efforts to establish their own professional association during times of political hardship. They were greatly aided by the International Federation of Translators (FIT), which decided to hold the Federation’s 9th World Congress in Warsaw. Shortly before the opening of the congress, which took place in May 1981, the Polish authorities granted permission for the establishment of the Polish Translators Association (STP) in order to show the FIT guests how “democratic” the country they came to visit was. After 1990, in the newly liberated Poland, the Polish Society of Economic, Legal and Court Translators (PT TEPIS) came into being without a great deal of bureaucratic opposition. Thus, there are now two translator organizations in Poland: STP and PT TEPIS, both members of the International Translators Federation FIT.

The establishment and activities of TEPIS

TEPIS was created at the initiative of the members of the sworn¹ translators division, which had been a part of the Polish Translators Association since 1981. There was a need for decisive actions to be taken to benefit the interests of court translators and interpreters in particular, as well as other translators and interpreters working in the legal, business, and other specialized settings. Additionally, there was an urgent need to train legal and specialized translators as a result of the unexpected changes that were taking place in the political system. After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the lifting of travel restrictions, there was an increase in the number of crimes committed by foreigners in Poland and, consequently, in the need for court translators. At the same time, preparations were being made for Poland to join the European Union (EU), and this necessitated the urgent translation of a great many EU legislative texts from English, French, and German into Polish. Thus the founders of TEPIS were highly motivated to take action, and such motivation remains a hallmark of this organization today.

As part of its statutory activity, TEPIS petitions the Ministry of Finance for tax relief for translators and the Ministry of Culture with regard to authorship laws; it also negotiates with the Ministry of Justice concerning details of the new law governing the institution of court translators. Additionally, the TEPIS Publishing Company was founded under the auspices of the society, and for the last 13 years has been involved in producing and publishing literature for translators, such as works on the theory and practice of translation, glossaries, parallel texts, and high quality translations of Polish legal texts.

TEPIS also organizes national conferences to provide translators with opportunities for continuing education. On the last weekend of September of this year we are planning to hold the 15th Workshop on Legal and Specialized Translation, which will take place, as usual, on the occasion of the International Translator's Day at the National Library in Warsaw. In Warsaw, Szczecin, and Krakow monthly workshops are organized for different language divisions. At these sessions terminological and related issues in specific types of legal and business texts are discussed. The demand for such workshops is extremely high so we are constantly striving to increase our range of continuing educational opportunities.

TEPIS is also active in the international arena. From the very beginning we have been aware of the urgent need to join international efforts to improve the professional and social status of court translators, share diverse experiences, and work toward creating uniform work conditions in this difficult profession.

NOTE: THE NEXT TWO PARAGRAPHS MAY BE CUT IF SPACE IS LIMITED

In 1992, TEPIS, under the auspices of FIT organized the 1st International Forum on Legal Translation in Warsaw as the first event in the biennial cycle. A 2nd Forum took place in 1994, also in Warsaw, while the 3rd Forum was organized in 1996 collaboratively with the oldest Polish university, the Jagiellonian University of Krakow. In 1998, at the instigation of the "Regional Centre Europe," TEPIS began cooperating in organizing events of this type. The 4th Forum took place in the Austrian university town of Graz; while the next one—the 5th—in 2000 again occurred in Poland, this time in collaboration with Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan. In 2002 the Forum traveled to Paris and the one in 2004 is to take place in Magdeburg (Germany).

¹ *A sworn translator is someone who has graduated from a university with a language major, who has been appointed for life by the head of a district court to perform the duties of court translator/interpreter.*

In 1997 at the initiative of the European Commission the “EU Grotius” was set up with the aim of creating uniformity in the appointment and training of court translators and interpreters in EU countries. In 2003, “Grotius” work was taken over by the “Agis” program and the president of TEPIS represents Poland on the program’s steering committee.

Training for translators

Poland still has few specialized schools which, unlike regular language studies departments, focus on the practical training of professional translators. Although the latest trend is for every university language department to offer classes in translation, the Council of Polish Translators (comprised of representatives of the two professional translators organizations—STP and TEPIS—and the four schools of translation) maintains that only training received at the post graduate level is sufficient preparation for this profession. The curricula of language departments do not generally provide for the systematic training of translators. The schools that actually do provide professional level translation and interpretation training are the postgraduate departments at four Polish universities: Krakow, Poznan, Łodz, and Warsaw.

At present the number of translators who have graduated from these programs is small, and it might be surmised that Polish translators are, for the most part, self-taught. A questionnaire sent out in 2002 showed that 76 % of translators are graduates of language studies programs, 18% hold degrees in other fields of study, and 6% are graduates of applied linguistics programs. Yet there are indications that the *status quo* might soon change.

This year, at the initiative of and in collaboration with TEPIS, the Warsaw Institute of Applied Linguistics initiated a specialized training program in legal and court translation. This pioneering program is, to date, the only one of its kind in our country, but it is a safe assumption that, in light of proposed changes in legal regulations, postgraduate translation studies will soon gain popularity.

Legal status of Polish court translators

A “sworn” translator is appointed for life by the head of a district court. A decree by the Justice Minister sets the qualifications for sworn translators to be: completion of a course of university studies in a foreign language or graduation from a postgraduate translator training program. STP and TEPIS have always argued that those criteria are too low and that translators and interpreters should also be tested directly on the ability to work in legal and court settings before appointment.

Sworn translators work on court and business documents, and the latter make up the bulk of their translation load. Jobs from courts and the police comprise only about 10% of the work, as compared with jobs from private parties and institutions. Despite this, the sworn translator has been required to charge the rates officially set by the Ministry of Justice for all assignments. These official rates are approximately 30% lower than the recommended minimum open market rates. For this reason, Poland’s translator organizations have been engaged in a continuous struggle with the Ministry of Justice to require the official rates only for translation jobs performed for courts and the police. A new draft law regarding public translators finally adopts this proposal, resulting in fair market rates for the 90% of non-court work translators receive.

Representatives of PT TEPIS and STP spearheaded the movement to change the rules governing the appointment of court translators starting in 1994. In 1999 a first draft of the new public translator law was produced. The rationale for replacing the old title of “sworn translator” with the new one, “public translator,” is the following: First, 90% of the jobs such translators perform are commissioned not by courts or police, but by the public at large, Second, the sworn translator has always been officially considered to be what is called „an individual of public trust.” Because of this, in accordance with Article 17 of the Constitution of the Polish Republic, translators officially can claim the right to establish a so called “professional self-governing organization,” analogous to such organizations of lawyers, doctors, court officers, and many other professions. Despite a great deal of argument from translators and others, the latest draft law does not make provisions for a self-governing body that is empowered to test new candidates, resolve debates over the quality of translations, or impose penalties. Sadly, despite pressure exerted by the Council of Polish Translators, such functions as testing and deciding on matters of professional ethics will not be performed by the translators themselves. The draft law stipulates that translator certification examinations will be administered by a State Examination Board appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education; resolution of complaints and conflicts pertaining to professional ethics will be the domain of the Professional Responsibility Committee, appointed by the same ministry. While both bodies are to consist exclusively of translators and interpreters, only two out of ten members will be named by Poland’s translator organizations. The other eight will be appointed by the Ministries of Justice and Higher Education.

Translators continue to have many serious objections to the draft law. However, all the power to influence the content of the law and present it to the Polish Sejm (Legislature) rests with the Legislative Legal Department operating at the behest of the Ministry of Justice. The legal status of translators allows them to participate only in an advisory capacity, and their voice is rarely heeded. The new draft law is to be presented to the Sejm for deliberation in the Fall of 2003. If the law is passed in the form currently proposed, the status of the Polish public translator would be as follows: A public translator may be either a Polish citizen or a citizen of another EU country with a command of the Polish language. He or she should have knowledge of the law and the legal system, have no criminal record, hold an MA degree from a university language department, and pass a specialized exam for public translators administered by the State Examination Board. University graduates majoring in subjects other than language studies would be required to complete a course of postgraduate translation studies. (The exemption from graduate training for undergraduate language majors has met with vehement objections by the translators’ community, but to no avail.) Once he or she has passed the state exam, a candidate has the right to work as a public translator, is issued a certificate by the Ministry of Higher Education, and his or her name and other data are entered in a registry of public translators. This registry will be made available online to the public.

A public translator will be able to charge market rates for his or her work, except for jobs commissioned by the court, the public prosecutor, the police, and other institutions of public administration, the rates for which will be specified by the Ministry of Justice. This is a major victory for translators since it means they will receive market rates for about 90% of their jobs.

The most controversial aspect of the new law pertains to the disciplinary measures that public translators could be liable to. First, they will not be permitted to turn down jobs from the courts, the public prosecutor, or the police without giving a valid reason; second, a record of previously completed jobs, which they are legally required to maintain, must be made available for review by provincial governors; third, if a complaint about the quality of a translation is judged to be valid, a penalty will be imposed at the discretion of the Professional Responsibility Committee. This

penalty could range from an admonition or reprimand, to the suspension of the right to practice the profession for a period of from 3 months to 1 year, or complete revocation of that right with the possibility of applying for reinstatement after 2 years have elapsed and the translator examination is retaken.

Translators object not as much to the harsh penalties, which, if too severe, may detract from the dignity of the profession, but rather to the membership of the Committee. In the draft law, only two members of the Committee will be appointed from among organized translators; the other eight members are officially described as individuals “with substantial knowledge of foreign languages and translation techniques,” and this does not necessarily mean that they will be translators. As many as four out of the total of ten Committee members will be “academic teachers employed at language departments of universities,” two of whom will be appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education, and two by the Ministry of Justice.

Despite these objections, there is another victory for translators organizations here: graduates who have majored in all fields of study will soon be required to take a highly specialized state examination to test their ability to translate and interpret court documents and legal texts.

Another success will be scored if PT TEPIS, as a professional organization of translators, finds a worthy place for itself in the environment created by the new law. It is clear today that, if it is not permitted to be a self-governing body established in accordance with Article 17 of the Constitution, TEPIS could perform the function of a guild, i.e., set up standards of professional conduct for its members, and have a voice in how these standards are followed. With this in mind, the organization is working on an amended version of the Code of the Polish Court Translator, which was first passed by the TEPIS Supreme Council in 1991. The new code, which is a collection of principles of professional ethics, is to come out at the end of 2003 or beginning 2004.

Additionally, the new law requires translators to continue to improve their professional qualifications and it seems clear that such opportunities for continuing education can be provided only by a “guild” type organization. We can thus rest assured that the translator organization TEPIS will continue to always have great tasks to perform.

Danuta Kierzkowska has a Ph. D. in linguistics and is a legal, and court translator of English. She was Deputy President of the Polish Translators Association, and is chairperson of the Sworn Translators Division STP, founder of the Polish Association of Business, Legal and Court Translators (TEPIS) , President of PT TEPIS. Editor-in-chief of TEPIS Publishing House, an author and University lecturer. She can be reached at tepis@tepis.org. The TEPIS websites are www.tepis.org.pl and www.polishlaw.org.pl.

Summer 2001

Excerpt from SlavFile Lite by Lydia Stone

We at the SlavFile consider it our duty to provide practical advice to SLD members regarding all potential professional dilemmas, no matter how unusual. Here is one we have never seen described in print. What if you were to wake up one morning having forgotten whether you are an interpreter or a translator; how could you figure it out before getting out of bed and facing the world? Here in handy tabular form are some

simple guidelines that can be used to solve this problem. Our thanks to our interpreter friends, whose way of life, quite different from ours, inspired these musings.

HOW TO TELL IF YOU ARE AN INTERPRETER OR A TRANSLATOR

You are an interpreter if...	You are a translator if...
You can rise at 6:30 a.m. many days in a row	You are miserable unless you can get up 11 a.m. and go to bed at 3:00 a.m.
Your working wardrobe consists of suits, which you keep wrapped in plastic to avoid wrinkles and expedite packing	Your working wardrobe consists of jeans (shorts) and sweatshirts (t shirts), which you store conveniently on the floor of your closet
You are prone to sore throats and foot problems	You are prone to carpal tunnel syndrome and backache
You talk all day; in your leisure time you frequently just want to be quiet	You are alone with a computer all day; when you are with other people you tend to jabber
Your bathrobe has been to hotels all over the globe and in half the cities in the U.S.	Your bathrobe is what you are apt to be wearing at 2 in the afternoon
You are sick of hotel and restaurant meals and are dying for home cooked food	You are sick of looking at four walls all day and are dying to go out to dinner
You know many words in your second language that you have never seen written down	You know many words in your second language that you do not know how to pronounce
You have met most of the professional colleagues you know on interpreting assignments (or at ATA conferences)	You have met most of the professional colleagues you know through e-mail or Internet chat rooms (or at ATA conferences)
You are always traveling and long to be at home more so you can spend quality time with your family	At home you are always working or thinking about work, so the best way to spend quality time with your family is to travel together.
You struggle not to gain weight from constant exposure to banquet and catered meals and your work leaves you little time for exercise	You struggle not to gain weight from spending all day sitting on your duff and the constant availability of your refrigerator and your work leaves you little time for exercise
You stay up half the night stewing about the way you interpreted a term	You stay up half the night stewing about how you'll translate a term the next day
Your favorite dictionaries are battered from rough treatment by baggage handlers	Your favorite dictionaries are battered from the rough treatment they get on your desk when you are in a "term search frenzy"
It drives you nuts to have the work you do referred to as translation	It drives you nuts to be asked if you ever did "simultaneous translation" for a celebrity
You are chronically tired and short of money and you suspect that the world underrates how hard you work and how much you contribute	You are chronically tired and short of money, and you suspect that the world underrates how hard you work and how much you contribute
The <i>SlavFile</i> is your favorite reading matter	The <i>SlavFile</i> is your favorite reading matter

Spring 2001

SOME ASPECTS OF RUSSIAN INTERPRETING

Marina Braun

Introduction by Lydia Stone: Ever since I started editing SlavFile I have been reluctant to reprint articles, especially articles that have appeared in ATA-affiliated publications. However, as soon as I read Marina Braun's article in the WITS Newsletter, the organ of the Washington State Court Interpreters and Translators Society, I knew I wanted to reproduce it in our pages. As both a translator and someone trained in Cognitive Psychology (Ph.D., University of Colorado, 1979) I knew, based on my translator's intuitions and my knowledge of research results, that everything Marina says here about the importance of considering pragmatics in translation/interpretation is the gospel truth. It is not merely permissible to include pragmatic information not present on the linguistic surface of the original in a translation, but to do otherwise is to subvert the very purpose of translation--to communicate the meaning of the original utterance.

Very briefly, the research results I am referring to amount to the following. First, there is no sharp or even real distinction between word knowledge and world knowledge; it is not possible to have an accurate "linguistic" understanding of a sentence or other language unit without the appropriate semantic (and this includes pragmatic) understanding of it. Even more important, an incontrovertible body of empirical research demonstrates that language understanding is an interaction between the linguistic unit, e.g. the sentence being understood, and knowledge contributed by the understander. The information in the sentence acts as a cue or trigger to allow the listener to construct meaning on the basis of knowledge in his or her head. Understanding is accurate if the listener's constructed representation more or less corresponds to the representation intended by the speaker. In cross cultural communication, (of which translation/interpretation is a prime example) the information in the heads of the listeners, which they must draw upon if understanding is to occur, is likely to differ significantly in nature and structure from the knowledge of the speaker. Thus, it is completely natural that various pragmatic adjustments may have to be made in the surface structure of the message if accurate comprehension is to occur.

The following article is reprinted with the kind permission of the WITS Newsletter.

Among the many challenges an interpreter faces is that of "meticulously conserving the SL message" (*Fundamentals of Court Interpretation*, p. 275). Even though conservation of the message, or meaning of the entire text, is one of the basic

rules of translation/interpreting, it is quite frequently misunderstood by translators/interpreters. One of the regrettable outcomes of this misunderstanding is literal translation. One of the aspects, or subsystems, of language that presents most difficulties is pragmatics.

Pragmatics, as a branch of semiotics, deals with the causal and other relations between words, expressions, or symbols and their users. Different background knowledge of native speakers of SL and TL may serve as an illustration of what falls within the sphere of pragmatics. For example, it can be safely assumed that native speakers of English, specifically American English, would have no difficulty understanding the following sentence: “Our congressman is just a screwball. I should’ve written to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. That guy is definitely smarter.” On the other hand, chances are that native speakers of TL (be it Russian, Spanish or any other language) lack the necessary cultural/extralinguistic knowledge that 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is the official residence of the President of the United States, the White House. The interpreter may conscientiously try to conserve the lexical and grammatical elements of the sentence, as well as its style. But if he/she fails to take into account the pragmatic meaning of the sentence, the result will be a disruption of communication, for the listeners will remain in the dark as to who “that guy” is.

Many interpreters are wary of “adding” to or “omitting” from the SL message for fear that it would violate the basic rule of “conservation.” I would like to allay these concerns by pointing out that there is a tremendous difference between “ad hoc” additions/omissions and systematic manipulations with the text in SL, which are known as “techniques of translation.” The following are several such techniques that leading scholars in the theory and practice of translation/interpreting recommend be used when dealing with pragmatics.

I. Addition

a. “Where you girls from?” I asked her again... “Seattle, **Washington...**”

- Девочки, вы откуда приехали? – Из Сиэттла, **штат Вашингтон.** (Бархударов, 1975).

b. It was **Friday** and soon they’d go out and get drunk.

Была **пятница, день полочки**, вскоре эти люди выйдут на улицу и напьются.
(Комиссаров, 1973)

с. на берегу **Оки** – on the bank the **Oka river** (Бархударов, 1975).

The following are some illustrations of this technique in the courtroom setting:

d. the Fifth – Пятая поправка к Конституции США

e. “How does the defendant plead?” – «Каково ваше официальное заявление: виновен, не виновен или не оспариваю предъявленных обвинений»

II. Omission

a. ... There were pills and medicine all over the place, and everything smelled like **Vicks’ Nose Drops**.

... Везде были какие-то пузырьки, пилюли, все пахло **каплями от насморка**.
(Бархударов, 1975).

And here is an example of an interchange quite common during a jury selection.

б. “Do you **work outside of the home**?”- “No, I’m a housewife.” - «Вы **работаете?**» - «Нет, я домохозяйка».

III. Substitution

a. Я окончил десятилетку. – I finished high school.

b. Мы с ней были на ты. – She and I were on a first-name basis.

IV. Compensation

a. “It cost him **damn** near four thousand **bucks**. He’s got a lot of **dough** now.”

«**Выложил** за нее чуть не четыре тысячи. Денег у него теперь **куча**».
(Бархударов, 1975).

Thus “addition,” “omission,” etc. may be important techniques of translation/interpreting and do not have to be banned from an interpreter’s vocabulary or his/her arsenal of professional skills. What is unacceptable are omissions due to interpreter’s failure to find an equivalent in the TL or additions as expression of his/her own position.

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TRANSLATING TEXTS, INTERPRETING CULTURES

Борис Зильберштейн

«Как Вам понравилась Конференция?» - спросил я землячку-флоридианку, которая недавно стала членом АТА и для которой 41-я ежегодная Конференция АТА в Орландо была первой.

«Очень понравилась. Вы знаете, только ради того, чтобы услышать выступление Линн Виссон, уже стоило приехать.»

Я не мог не согласиться. Действительно, очередная Лекция имени Сюзаны Грейсс (по-моему, она произносит свое имя Сусанна Гройс, насчет фамилии я не так уверена, а имя у нее старое русское библейское) стала гвоздем программы Отделения славянских языков АТА на Конференции. И здесь я должен сказать о той роли, которую во всем этом сыграла Лора Вольфсон. Не знаю, как ей это каждый раз удается, но она обладает удивительным умением найти (и уговорить выступить перед нами) лингвистов самого высокого калибра.

Линн Виссон не была исключением. Ее «анкетные данные» вы найдете в статье Алекса Лейна в предыдущем номере «СлавФайла». Добавлю только, что, кроме поваренной книги об узбекской кухне, она еще и автор такой же книги о кухне русской (не советской, а настоящей русской).

Я впервые узнал о Линн Виссон из рецензии Лоры Вольфсон (надо бы Лору спросить о том, как она пишет свою фамилию по-русски) в на книгу Линн *From*

Russian Into English: An Introduction to Simultaneous Interpretation (Second Edition), опубликованной в «СлавФайле» №4 за 2000 год. Я редко покупаю книги, будь то словари или учебные пособия, заглазно. Но рецензия была настолько, я бы сказал, восторженной, что я тут же снял трубку и заказал экземпляр. И не пожалел (I am glad I did). (Если Вы вводите английские обороты в качестве примеров из книги Виссон, то это надо как-то оговорить) На мой взгляд, для устного (и не только устного) переводчика каждая страница в этой книге – на вес золота (worth its weight in gold). Я читал ее с хайлайтером в руке. Так что, огорченный несчастным случаем с Пэт (смотрела в справочнике имен) Ньюмен и отменой ее выступления, я обрадовался, узнав, что ежегодная Лекция имени Сюзаны Грейсс все же состоится и что докладчиком будет Линн Виссон. Забегая вперед, скажу, что для меня Лекция стала как бы продолжением книги.

Алекс Лейн достаточно подробно рассказал о Лекции, так что не буду повторяться. Остановлюсь лишь на нескольких моментах.

Тема Лекции - «Переводя текст, интерпретируй культуру» - перекликалась с известной (а если процитированной, то где?) гипотезой известного американского лингвиста Бенджамина Уорфа о том, что язык формирует наше представление о культуре, а культура, в свою очередь, влияет на развитие языка.

Один из главных тезисов Лекции – устный переводчик должен переводить только на родной язык. Линн отвергла приводимый некоторыми довод, что благодаря хорошему знанию родного языка переводчик лучше поймет говорящего и сможет, таким образом, лучше передать содержание речи на приобретенном языке. Хорошо ей: она выросла в Нью-Йорке в семье, в которой свободно говорили на четырех языках – русском, французском, немецком и английском. Она «пожаловалась» нам, что родители с раннего детства заставляли ее – методом кнута («Ты потом пожалеешь!») и пряника («Ты будешь нам потом благодарна!») - поочередно говорить на этих языках. . Несмотря на- отчаянное сопротивление ребенка, родители победили. Так что для Линн три, по крайней мере, языка – родные. А что делать нам, бедным, у которых только один-полтора родных языка? И как быть, когда ты один переводишь на деловой встрече или сопровождаешь иноземных гостей в Америке (или американцев за рубежом)?

Впрочем, Линн и сама признала, что – жизнь есть жизнь - простым смертным переводчикам часто приходится работать в обоих направлениях, и никуда от этого не денешься.

Приводя неожиданные, часто юмористические, но всегда убедительные примеры, Линн многократно подчеркивала необходимость все время быть начеку, все время помнить разницу между культурами, по-разному выражающими одни и те же понятия, и не попадать в западню правильного, на первый взгляд, перевода, искажающего идеи говорящего и зачастую ставящего переводчика в смешное и(или) неудобное положение. Как кому (I don't know about you), а мне такие ситуации знакомы не понаслышке.

Не обошлось в Лекции без сетований на непонимание и, как следствие, пренебрежительное отношение к труду устных переводчиков, особенно синхронистов, со стороны некоторых пользователей их услугами, даже в ООН. Эти люди не понимают, всей сложности работы синхронистов, которых можно сравнить с: а) солдатом, который учится долгие годы и должен применить свои знания в самый нужный и ответственный момент, не имея второго шанса на успех; б) сороконожкой (делает 50 дел сразу, но не может объяснить, как она это делает); в) авиадиспетчером (должен за доли секунды расставить все слова и интонации точно по местам); г) пожарником (не успеваешь потушить один пожар, как тут же возникают несколько новых) или д) поваром (должен приготовить съедобное блюдо из случайного набора сырых ингредиентов).

Небольшой экскурс в историю осветил многогранную роль переводчиков – они выступали в роли посланцев, посредников, советников; вели переговоры; интерпретировали «чужую» культуру и язык, объясняя значения слов и понятий.

Всего, о чем еще говорила Линн Виссон, пересказать мне недосуг (может, заменить менее игривым выражением?). Как же быть тем членам нашего Отделения, которые не присутствовали на Лекции, но хотели бы ознакомиться с ней? Им повезло: в январском номере *ATA Chronicle* за этот год опубликована статья Линн Виссон, в которой изложено содержание Лекции.

Winter 2001

Линн Виссон

«Практикум по синхронному переводу с русского на английский»

(с аудиоприложением)

Москва, «Р.ВАЛЕНТ», 2000 год.

Reviewed by Razilya Todor

Формальное образование студента факультета иностранных языков в России, как правило, заканчивается после окончания высшего учебного заведения. Повышение профессионального уровня в дальнейшем строится в основном на совершенствовании знаний и навыков на практике, пользовании хорошими словарями и чтении литературы на иностранном языке. Нелегко было найти хорошие словари в России. Даже в Америке хорошие словари, составленные на базе американского варианта английского языка, найти трудно. Полки книжных магазинов изобилуют учебными пособиями для изучающих английский язык, некоторые из них очень даже неплохие, но хороших учебных пособий для профессиональных переводчиков практически нет. Книга Линн Виссон «Практикум по синхронному переводу с русского на английский» была для меня

настоящей находкой и является лучшим учебным пособием для переводчиков из попадавших когда-либо мне руки.

Небольшое по объему (200 страниц), но емкое по содержанию пособие соответствует по своей значимости и полезности практическому курсу синхронного перевода на дневном отделении университета. Это все равно что иметь одного из лучших переводчиков ООН в качестве персонального наставника! Тот факт, что не каждый из нас может позволить себе учиться на дневном отделении, т.к. мы вынуждены зарабатывать на жизнь и растить детей, делает эту книгу особенно ценной. Работая 40 часов в неделю и имея 4-х летнего сына на руках, я смогла пройти курс самообучения по сборнику примерно за два с половиной месяца.

«Практикум по синхронному переводу с русского на английский» рассчитан на начинающих переводчиков, которые хорошо знают английскую грамматику. Учебное пособие состоит из двух частей: текстовая (учебник) и устная (аудио кассеты). Основой учебных материалов являются речи и заявления на заседаниях ООН и других международных организаций, выступления ораторов в университетах на самые разные темы: политика, экономика, искусство, экология и многое другое. Тексты для сборника были отобраны с точки зрения их лингвистической пользы. Материал был адаптирован так, чтобы убрать все то, что может отвлечь внимание от главных проблем перевода: исключены редкие или необычные слова, опущены сугубо технические термины, заменены не очень распространенные сокращения. Слова и выражения, создающие для переводчика наибольшие трудности, выделены жирным шрифтом.

Линн Виссон создала великолепную методику освоения курса. Читателю предлагается перевести русский текст, обращая внимание именно на перевод слов и выражений, выделенных жирным шрифтом. Таким образом, перед обучающимся ставится конкретная задача: тщательно продумать и перевести выделенные слова и выражения. О том, насколько хорошо выполнено задание, можно судить, сравнивая свой перевод с черновым переводом текста в учебнике. В учебнике, кстати, предлагается несколько вариантов перевода вышеупомянутых слов и словосочетаний. Комментарии, разбор лексических, грамматических и синтаксических приемов перевода, объяснение того, почему тот или иной вариант перевода предпочтительнее, а также анализ проблем, связанных со стилистическими вариантами подачи материала, следуют за черновым переводом текста. В завершении работы по каждому тексту предлагается предпочтительный вариант перевода. «Именно выбор этих вариантов является неистощимым источником ошибок, проблем, головоломок, ловушек для переводчика, если тот не знает, когда и при каких условиях перевод требует не официального оборота речи, а, к примеру, разговорной фразы», - отмечает Линн Виссон.

Аудио сборник содержит 25 русских текстов и их английские эквиваленты. Как русские так и английские тексты записаны носителями языка и читаются мужскими и женскими голосами в двух темпах речи – медленном и быстром. Английские тексты исполняются не только представителями Англии и США, но и представителями других стран, акцент и характерные черты речи которых отличаются от стандартов британского и американского английского. Слушая текст на кассете и сверяя его в случае необходимости с письменным текстом, вы

постепенно «вживаетесь» в разные типы чужой речи. Наибольшей эффективности в освоении материала я достигала тогда, когда работу над текстом из книги я продолжала устным, по возможности синхронным, переводом того же самого текста, озвученного на кассете. В предисловии к книге Линн Виссон перечисляет наиболее важные аспекты перевода. Этот перечень может служить критерием оценки ваших успехов, в особенности если по совету Линн Виссон вы будете прослушивать свой перевод в записи.

Практический курс даёт информацию о том, на что нужно обратить основное внимание при переводе: что необходимо перевести, а чем можно пожертвовать; приводит примеры сочетаний и оборотов речи, которые просто необходимо знать и уметь правильно применять; знакомит со стилистическими особенностями слов и выражений. В качестве иллюстрации привожу примеры комментариев к текстам.

- Разработать - while “work out” is the dictionary translation, “draw up”, “produce”, or “develop” are often better renderings.
- Уважаемого – if translated – and it can often be dropped – should be rendered as “distinguished”, “never as “respected”.
- За любезные слова, сказанные в мой адрес – the form of this cliché is “kind words addressed to me “ If the speaker is going too quickly, “addressed to me “ can be safely dropped.

Автор несомненно обладает великолепным чувством юмора, и её яркие и остроумные комментарии помогают запомнить материал без особого труда.

Можете представить, какое это наслаждение после напряженной работы над текстом читать комментарии, юмор которых достоин пера Джерома К. Джерома! Судите сами:

- Кончина – “passing” is euphemistic and a softer term than “death” – unless of course, Smith was assassinated or committed hara-kiri! “Demise” has a slightly literary nuance, and is sometimes used sarcastically, so one should be careful with this word.
- Я считаю – can safely be omitted. If the speaker didn’t think this was his duty, why on earth would he be doing it?

Stop deleting here.

Хотя максимальную пользу из курса извлекут переводчики, работающие в области политики и международных отношений, главное достоинство книги состоит в том, что она знакомит читателя с методами и приемами самообразования. Все, чему учит Линн Виссон, может быть использовано переводчиками любой специализации. Знание приемов, особенностей, тонкостей и секретов нашей профессии значительно облегчит тяжелый труд любого переводчика.

Я настоятельно рекомендую всем переводчикам, для которых русский язык является родным, но в силу сложившихся обстоятельств приходится переводить как с русского на английский так и с английского на . Если Линн Виссон решит

организовать интенсивные (одна неделя) курсы синхронного перевода *по методу погружения* с последующей сертификацией, я буду первой в числе желающих пройти этот курс. Американская ассоциация переводчиков должна взять на себя инициативу и предложить Линн Виссон разработать такой курс.