

## INTERVIEW WITH GREISS LECTURER NIKOLAI SOROKIN

Interviewer: Nora Favorov

*This year's Susana Greiss Lecture, the series' twentieth, will be delivered by Nikolai Sorokin, a former journalist for the Russian Language Service of the Voice of America who later worked his way up to being lead Russian<>English interpreter for the U.S. Department of State. Since his retirement from the federal government, he has been teaching interpreting at the University of Maryland and working as a freelance interpreter. He is also editor of the philatelic journal, Rossica. His Greiss Lecture, titled "The Long and Winding Road to Becoming a Presidential Interpreter" and of interest to translators and interpreters working in any language combination, is scheduled for Thursday at 3:30 p.m. His second presentation, which is focused specifically on Russian<>English interpretation, is titled "Wow! How Am I Going to Interpret That?" and scheduled for Friday at 10:00 am.*



**You grew up in a Russian-speaking family outside of Russia (in Turkey and then the United States). Can you tell us a little bit about how the Russian language was preserved in your family for multiple generations and share whatever advice you may have for our readers, virtually all of whom are working in Slavic<>English translation and/or interpretation? For all of us, preserving and improving our linguistic and cultural knowledge is a constant challenge.**

The word preservation has a static quality to it—to preserve is to maintain something in its original state. But languages are as alive as the people who speak them. They are not prized antiques. They change with the times, they sparkle with the ingenuity of their users, they live. In order to be truly fluent in a language you must feel alive within the culture of the people who speak it and use it in day-to-day communication. I was lucky because I grew up in relatively tight-knit Russian-speaking communities. Initially, but not for long, it was in Istanbul and then, during my formative years, in New York State. But it was not an insulated émigré colony, so I also was also able to internalize the American culture of Syracuse, NY, which I consider my hometown. Based on my own experience, the most important bit of advice that I can

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Daria Toropchyn

Jim Walker

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give about keeping a language alive is to suggest that people keep using it in day-to-day life and have friends and family who speak it all the time as well. There is more, of course, but I'll leave that for the Greiss Lecture.

**Your own academic degree is in Russian literature. How important is it, in your view, for aspiring interpreters, especially those hoping for a career in the field of international relations and government, to receive training in one of the highly respected interpretation and translation programs in Russia, Europe, or the United States? What should they look for in choosing such a program?**

Most of what we learn in life depends on how much we ourselves invest into the learning process. That goes for colleges as well. If you sit through a lecture with your nose in your Droid while texting it really doesn't matter whether you're doing it in a totally unknown community college or at the University of Chicago or Harvard. But if a student applies himself or herself, even a mediocre program can be quite rewarding. With that said, and assuming that the student is driven to learn, I think that a school with a solid Slavic department that has a good selection of literature and linguistic courses to offer would be extremely useful for anyone contemplating a career in translation or interpreting. By the way, from what I understand, quite a few of the Russian literature courses are taught by having the students read translations of Russian literary works. That of course diminishes the usefulness of such courses for future linguists. So if a student already has a working knowledge of Russian, perhaps it would be a good idea to choose schools which use texts in the original languages. Even if they don't, read the texts in Russian yourself. As for the college programs for interpretation and translation, my personal suggestion is to choose those in which lecturers with years of solid professional translating and interpreting experience balance out the theoreticians. The theory will probably come in handy while preparing for a job; however, the experience shared by grizzled practitioners will help on the job during tricky moments when you're not sure of what to do.

**Could you tell us a little about *Rossica*, the philatelic journal you edit, and how you became involved in it?**

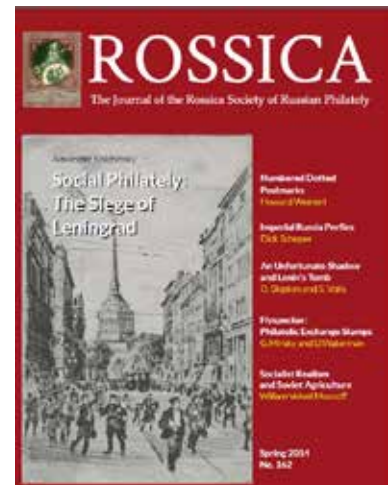
Sure. My father was a stamp collector, and I must have inherited his genes for that hobby. I've been a non-stop philatelist since I was about six years old. It has taught me patience, organization, history, geography, politics, geology, space exploration, zoology, etc., etc., and I'm STILL learning! So as I was approaching retirement from full-time work at the Department of State's Office of Language Services, I began planning for what to do after I stop sitting in morning and evening Washington rush hour traffic. I joined the all-volunteer *Rossica* Philatelic Society and became one of its board members. The Society was organized in the 1930s by a Russian White Army émigré in Yugoslavia. It went into hiatus during WWII, but was then resurrected in the US as a society of stamp collectors who specialize in Russian area philately. About four years ago the position of editor for the *Rossica* Society's semiannual English

language journal opened up, and I took the job. It is an internationally well-respected publication in the area of Russian philately and now postcard collecting as well (I've added that dimension because many philatelists, like me, are also deltiologists.) We have been consistently winning Large Gold, Reserve Grand, and many other top accolades at US and world philatelic literature competition events. (Strangely enough, there are quite a few!) It is a volunteer job that takes about 9 months of sustained effort on my part every year to get approximately 25 articles on various topics in each issue. I correspond and work with authors to get just the right articles, translate the Russian-language articles into English, edit them for content and flow, write some of them, use Photoshop to prepare hundreds of illustrations for publication, and then set it all into a publishing program (Scribus) both for printed paper copies and for the members-only on-line version. I said edit for content and flow because punctuation and some aspects of grammar are not my strong suit. Luckily, Kath, my wonderful wife who is good at such things, does that!

**According to your bio in the ATA program, you worked as “an editor and special correspondent for the Voice of America’s Russian branch.” What years were you at VOA and how did playing this journalist role help develop your skills as a translator and interpreter?**

I started working at VOA in 1977 and left in 1995. Working in the VOA’s Russian Language Service was like traveling to Russia every working day and then coming back home to America in the evenings. I could not have become a competent interpreter for people in top positions of the US government had it not been for that experience. The VOA vastly expanded the range of topics I had at least some familiarity with, improved my ability to organize my thoughts, raised my awareness of politics, prepared me for working with “important” individuals, and, most of all, refined my Russian language skills to the point that Russians in Russia assume that I’m a local. Obviously, there was a lot of translating involved in the work that I had to do at the Voice, and that helped with the transition to my next profession.

**Where would you advise someone to start who is interested in finding work interpreting for the U.S. Department of State or other government agencies? How do qualified candidates get a foot in the door?**



That’s a tough one. There are very few full-time government payroll positions for translators and interpreters. So being in the right place at the right time has a lot to do with it. Mostly, departments and agencies that occasionally need interpreters go through the DOS Office of Language Services, which has many vetted interpreters and translators on contract. Those who need interpreting support on a sustained basis, such as a couple of offices in the DOD, FBI, or CIA, do have a few of their own staff interpreters. Obviously, the State Department has a small group of staffers and often one staff interpreter at the embassy in Moscow. When I came on board in 1995, there were five Russian language interpreters in our office. But when I left in 2011 there were only two remaining. Some of the international organizations in Washington also have a small number of staff interpreters. So for most professionals today, the reality of interpreting for a living is becoming a freelancer. That is why contacts with other colleagues in the business are extremely helpful. We often work in pairs, so you always need a dependable partner to call when the need arises. Having your name in the databases of companies offering interpreting services is useful. Getting a contract, like the one that so many interpreters have with the Department of State, can be especially useful, because in addition to opening the door to jobs through DOS, interpreters obtain at least a Public Trust clearance, which will allow them to work on other jobs that require vetting. Of course, getting a contract with State means having to pass a pretty tough interpreting test there. By the time you realize that the interpreting world in your language combination is basically a relatively small group of competent individuals, most of whom you know, you’ve “arrived.”

## What tricks of the trade would you suggest for interpreters confronted with unfamiliar acronyms, cultural references, or idioms?

That situation occurs all too often. It is inescapable. The people whom we are interpreting know their subject and work with it every day. For us, this may be the first time we hear of it, and the learning curve will be really steep. There aren't that many "tricks" in getting through this situation. The best trick is probably to do sufficient work ahead of time in order to understand at least the basics of the subject. Read up on it in all the languages that you'll be working with. During that reading, create your own glossary. Luckily, it doesn't have to be huge. About 20 or 30 specialized terms is often sufficient. At least, that's true for many international conferences and meetings. Definitely focus in on the acronyms that are bound to come up. Write them down and know exactly where to find them on your one-page glossary. This advance preparation will cut down on the surprises during work. These days, "work" usually means simultaneous interpretation along with one or two colleagues. In that format, when a mysterious acronym appears, I usually repeat it exactly as it was spoken and keep going. Very often the target language side knows what it is anyway. In the meantime, your colleague may look it up in Google and write a note to you so that the next time it is spoken we'll both be ready. If a colleague is not around, look it up yourself at the first opportunity. That goes for new terminology as well. As for cultural references and idioms—either you know them or you don't. If you do—great. You'll be able to provide a close approximation. If you don't, it's best to skip them, since very often those terms simply reinforce a much clearer statement that has already been made or is about to be made. So just drop the color because you may paint yourself into a corner with it.

Back when we were attempting to persuade you to accept our invitation to deliver the Greiss Lecture this year, I was privileged to be part of an email exchange that included 2015 Greiss Lecturer Sergei Chernov (who suggested you as a speaker). It was a real treat to eavesdrop on your conversation about translating Putin's famous assessment of Donald Trump as a "яркая личность." You suggested avoiding trying to translate the adjective "яркая" and going with something like "he's quite a personality" (or "character"). Chernov pointed out that, in doing that, you'd be setting yourself a trap, since Putin proceeded to say: "яркая личность. Конечно, яркая. А что, не яркая, что ли? Кто с этим поспорит?" I was very impressed with the solution you came up with for escaping that trap: "He's quite a personality. No doubt about it. Wouldn't you say he stands out? Who'd argue with that?" Your second presentation at the ATA conference will focus on, among other challenges for interpreters, "idiomatic expressions used by Russian and American leaders, including President Vladimir Putin." Although we don't want to steal any thunder from your presentation, we'd love a little preview of the sorts of expressions you'll be discussing.

Well, I'm still working on that presentation. There are many things in each language that are difficult to interpret into other languages. So finding expressions that can stump just about anyone is not a problem. What I'm trying to do, however, is find examples from actual experience that my fellow interpreters and I have had to face over the years. For example, the word "вкусно" has just recently grown to mean a lot more than "tasty." Then there is the shortest toast in Russian: "ну..." Come to the presentation, there will be a lot more.

### Mr. Sorokin's Lectures

Thursday, 3:30 p.m. SLD's Greiss Lecture

***The Long and Winding Road to Becoming a Presidential Interpreter***

Friday 10:00 a.m. Interpreting for Government Leaders:

***Wow! How Am I Going to Interpret That?***

## THE ADMINISTRATORS' COLUMN

Ekaterina Howard  
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Dear SLD Members,

As you are reading this column, the [ATA 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference sessions schedule](#) is already available on the website. We received many excellent proposals for a very limited number of slots. If your proposal did not make it into the Slavic Track program, please consider contributing an article on your topic to a future *SlavFile* issue or to the SLD blog.

Speaking of the SLD blog: along with the rest of the website, it has been moved to a new WordPress website to make it easier to maintain, add content, and distribute on SLD social media channels, as well as enable discussions of blog posts. Please note that the new URL is [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD). A huge thank you to our Webmistress, Zhenya Tumanova, who put a great deal of work into this transition! Zhenya will not continue as Webmistress of the new website, but Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya has kindly agreed to take on the website maintenance, monitoring of comments, and serving as Blog Editor once the website transfer is complete.

I am also delighted to announce that there is now an SLD Facebook Group. Thank you to Anna Livermore and Olga Maleko for taking on the admin duties! It is wonderful to see that the group is off to a great start with frequent posts and discussions. If you would like to join the group, please go to the ATA Slavic Languages Division Group on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/groups/225902787923738/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/225902787923738/)) and click "Join Group" in the top-right corner.

Looking ahead, perhaps some of the SLD members living in the D.C. area might have some tips to share, from advice on what to do while in town to a list of "hidden gems" of interest to those of us fascinated by all things Slavic. A brief Internet search has shown that there are several restaurants serving Eastern European food in and around Washington, and one of them is several minutes away from the hotel (Mari Vanna [www.marivanna.ru/washington/](http://www.marivanna.ru/washington/)).

For our annual SLD evening event/dinner, in our eternal quest to hit the ever-elusive "sweet spot" in terms of price, food, and noise level (or at least making sure that the SLD attendees are the ones making all the noise), this year we will be gathering at Meze, 10 minutes away from the hotel, for a Middle Eastern tasting menu.

Contact Fred Grasso ([frdgrasso@yahoo.com](mailto:frdgrasso@yahoo.com)) by 10/20 to reserve your place at the table.

See page 15 for details.

Of course, there will also be a chance to reconnect with old friends and meet new members at the SLD table during the Welcome Celebration, as well as during the Newcomers Lunch. Details about the lunch on Thursday, 10/27, can be found at [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/sld-newcomers-lunch/](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/sld-newcomers-lunch/).

In addition, for the upcoming conference we are offering an opportunity to sign up in advance to go out and explore different flavors of Slavic (and even Uzbek) cuisine with smaller groups of fellow SLD members during the conference: <http://bit.ly/2w9lvXA>. You can choose from several restaurants and various dates. For privacy reasons (and to add some suspense), you won't be able to see a list of participants. After the registration deadline, we'll send out a group email to all those selecting a particular restaurant on a particular date, and the participants will then decide whether or not to book a table, where to meet, and how to get to the venue. This is a new process for us, which we hope to continue if it proves a success.

Most of the new initiatives, from the ATA Certification Exam Practice Group and the website redesign to the Facebook Group and the smaller dinner groups described above, were discussed during the Annual Division Meeting. If you have any suggestions this year, or would like to offer your time and experience to the SLD, provide feedback, or simply meet our members and find out more about us, please consider attending this year's Annual Division Meeting (Thursday, October 26, 4:45–5:45 PM). Alternatively, you can email me at [ekaterina@atasld.org](mailto:ekaterina@atasld.org). The tentative meeting agenda may be found on page 24.

Hope to see you at the conference!

### A GREAT WAY TO SHOWCASE YOUR TRANSLATION SKILLS

**DO YOU KNOW OF AN ARTICLE  
(PUBLISHED OR UNPUBLISHED)  
THAT WOULD BE IDEAL FOR SLAVFILE  
IF ONLY IT WERE WRITTEN IN ENGLISH?**

Consider translating it for us: both you and the author will get full and conspicuous credit. (Reprint permission required for the original of course.)

## A Practical Guide to Passing the Ukrainian into English Certification Exam. Part II: Punctuation

Olga Shostachuk, ATA Ukrainian into English Certification Grader and Language Chair



In this article, the second of a two-part series, I would like to continue our conversation on how to pass the Ukrainian into English certification exam, with this article now focusing on punctuation. Needless to say, punctuation is not just a formal frill irrelevant to meaning. In other words, punctuation can show the author’s intentions when he or she created the text. Vivid examples of how punctuation completely changes the meaning of a sentence include the following from a 1930s-era English elementary school exam: “Charles the First walked and talked half an hour after his head was cut off”; the phrase “Eats,

shoots and leaves” (from *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, by Lynne Truss [Gotham Books, 2003]; or “казнить нельзя помиловать” (from a fairytale by L. V. Geraskina “В стране невыученных уроков” (*In the Land of Unlearned Lessons*), where a comma after “казнить” makes the difference between mercy and execution).

Ukrainian and English generally use the same punctuation marks to separate words or groups of words from one another and properly cluster them to promote clarity, but punctuation marks are not always literally “translatable.” The use of punctuation marks is mainly defined by the grammatical structure of the sentence, namely its syntax. Table 1 shows the most common punctuation marks that are used in more or less the same way in both Ukrainian and English.

**Table 1: Punctuation marks for which Ukrainian and English usage largely overlaps**

Punctuation mark	Common usage in Ukrainian and English	Example in Ukrainian	Translation into English
Period (full stop)	Marks the end of a sentence	Ця постанова набирає чинності з 1 квітня 2010 року.	This resolution comes into force as of April 1, 2010.
Question mark	Marks the end of a question	Чому суд іде, а будівництво на земельній ділянці не призупиняють?	Why is the court in session and yet construction on the land parcel has not been suspended?
Exclamation mark	Marks the end of an exclamation	Дивакуватий!	What a nerd!
Colon (usage 1)	Introduces a list	Захист обвинуваченого базувався на наступних трьох принципах: відмова від права, естоппель і мовчазна згода.	The defendant asserted the following three defenses: waiver, estoppel, and acquiescence.
Quotation marks (“inverted commas” and «guillemets»).	Enclose direct speech or titles of articles, songs, poems, etc. In Ukrainian and in some English style guides such marks can enclose the titles of books, journals, works of art, etc. (but in English, never company names).	Директор компанії «Світло» пояснив: «У нас є договір, і у договорі прописана вартість проїзду».	The director of Svitlo Co. explained, “We have an agreement and the fare is stated in that agreement.”
Parentheses	Enclose abbreviations, references, numbers, or letters in a text or set off parenthetical information	В описовій частині судового рішення викладається позиція осіб, які беруть участь у справі (сторін, третіх осіб, їх представників), а також докази, досліджені судом.	The description of the persons involved in the case (parties, third parties, and their representatives), as well as the evidence investigated by the court, is provided in the narrative part of the court decision.

Although Ukrainian and English use punctuation marks very similarly, punctuation presents many challenges for translators working in these languages. English and Ukrainian are very different in many important respects, and translators may tend to automatically copy punctuation marks from the source language, ignoring textual elements above the sentence level and focusing on the level of the word or phrase without considering the target text globally. English has a fairly fixed word order (subject, predicate, object), where meaning is expressed through the addition of words and the movement of words within limited boundaries. In contrast, Ukrainian conveys meaning largely through changes in the composition of words (e.g., by inflections or the addition of prefixes and suffixes); furthermore, its word order is very fluid.

I am unfamiliar with any comparative studies conducted on punctuation in the Ukrainian and English languages, but since Ukrainian is an East Slavic language, like Russian, I think some of the conclusions drawn from comparisons of Russian and English punctuation can also be applicable to Ukrainian. Some of the recent contributions to the research on punctuation differences between Russian and English include “Assessing Cohesion: Developing Assessment Tools on the Basis of Comparable Corpora,” an article written by Brian Baer and Tatyana Bystrova-McIntyre and published in *Testing and Assessment in Translation and Interpreting Studies* (eds. Claudia V. Angelelli and Holly E. Jacobson, 2009, pp. 159-183); and “Looking at the Overlooked: A Corpora Study of Punctuation Use in Russian and English,” an article by Tatyana Bystrova-McIntyre (*Translation and Interpreting Studies*, 2.1, Spring 2007, pp.137-162). Baer and Bystrova-McIntyre conducted a comparative quantitative analysis of punctuation in the Russian and English languages using two untagged comparable corpora of Russian and English editorials taken from leading daily

Russian and American newspapers—*Izvestia* and *The New York Times*. Based on the data they acquired, the researchers concluded that Russian uses exclamation marks, question marks, ellipses, commas, colons, em-dashes, and parentheses with significantly greater frequency than English, while the use of semicolons, hyphens, and en-dashes is not significantly different between the two languages. (Long-time attendees of ATA conferences may recall Baer and Bystrova-McIntyre’s 2006 ATA presentation of this research.)

Based on the research cited above and a quick corpus study using monolingual corpora of legal opinions in Ukrainian, I have compiled a table with punctuation marks that are widely used in the Ukrainian language and provided some tentative recommendations on how to deal with their translation into English. Please note that depending on the text type, the exact use of the specific marks may vary.

Keeping text type in mind, the norms of the target language should also be taken into account when dealing with the translation of punctuation from Ukrainian into English. Bystrova-McIntyre notes two types of punctuation: 1) conventional, obligatory, or prescribed by the accepted norms of the language; and 2) emphatic, that is, grammatically unnecessary or even inappropriate, but characteristic of a writer’s personal style. According to Baer and Bystrova-McIntyre, when punctuation is used emphatically, the translator must preserve or compensate for the stylistic intention of the author, which is sometimes difficult to accomplish because punctuation in Russian (and Ukrainian) is more grammar-driven than in English, whereas English seems to rely heavily on the concept of the “inseparability” of certain segments of meaning. The differences in punctuation usage outlined in Table 2 (next page) will help candidates avoid accumulating points for minor punctuation errors. Even a few points can make the difference between success and failure in achieving ATA certification.

### **SLAVFILE READERS: Do you translate literature? Write literature? Love literature?**

If you answered ‘Yes’ to any or all of these questions and will be attending ATA58 in Washington DC, come to the **Literary Division’s Annual After Hours Café** (coffee and tea provided), Friday October 27 9:00-11:00 pm.

The first 90 minutes are dedicated to readings in English, of original or translated work. The last 30 minutes are reserved for readings in languages other than English. The Literary Division welcomes poetry and literary prose. Feel free to accompany your selection on guitar or other instrument. Please remember that each speaker will have between 7 and 9 minutes to share, so keep that in mind when choosing your material.

**DON’T FORGET TO BRING YOUR MANUSCRIPT!**

Even if you feel timid about participating, you may be inspired by the rest of us — this often happens!

**Table 2: Punctuation usage where Ukrainian and English rules differ**

Punctuation mark	General differences	Example in Ukrainian	Translation into English
Period (full stop) or comma adjacent to a quotation mark	In Ukrainian, a period or comma follows the closing quote. In U.S. English, the period or comma precedes the closing quote.	Директор пояснив: «У нас є договір, і у договорі прописана вартість проїзду».	The director explained: “We have an agreement and the fare is stated in that agreement.”
Comma (1)	In Ukrainian, <b>і</b> (and) is not required before the last item in a series but a comma must be used. In English, <b>and</b> (or <b>or</b> ) is normally used before the last item in a series, optionally preceded by a comma.	Моє майно поділяється рівно між моїм племінником, сином, дочкою, зятем.	My estate is to be divided equally among my nephew, my son, my daughter, and my son-in-law.
Comma (2)	In Ukrainian, a comma is almost always required to separate the items in a list containing <b>і ... і (both ... and)</b> . In English, use of a comma in this position is incorrect.	Під час проведення і експортних, і імпортних операцій у розрахунках з іноземними суб`єктами господарювання застосовуються контрактні ціни.	The contract price shall be applied when conducting both export and import transactions with foreign economic entities.
Comma (3)	In Ukrainian, a comma is almost always required before conjunctions (e.g., <b>що, котрий, як, який</b> ) introducing subordinate clauses of any type. In English, a comma is incorrect before a restrictive clause introduced by <b>that, who, whose, if, what, where, when</b> .	Їй сказали, що їй потрібно «ходити більш жіночніше, говорити більш жіночніше і одягатися більш жіночніше» для того, щоб стати партнером.	She was told that she needed to “walk more femininely, talk more femininely, and dress more femininely” in order to secure a partnership.
Comma (4)	In Ukrainian, a comma is always required before the conjunction <b>but</b> . In English, a comma is required before any coordinating conjunction that links two independent sentences. Leave the comma out if <b>but</b> is connecting an independent clause to a dependent clause.	Якщо суд задовільнить клопотання, суд повинен повернути майно особі, яка подала клопотання, але може також накласти штраф.	If the court grants the motion, the court must return the property to the movant but may also impose a fine.  vs.  If the court grants the motion, the court must return the property to the movant, but the court may also impose a fine.
Comma versus semicolon	In Ukrainian, a comma is used to join independent clauses with no conjunction. In English, a semicolon must be used if there is no conjunction.	Природа дискримінації однакова, вона може відрізнятись за ступенем, але не типом.	The nature of the discrimination is the same; it may differ in degree but not in kind.
Colon	In Ukrainian, a colon is used to introduce a quotation. In English, a colon is correctly used only if the introductory phase can stand alone as a sentence.	Він закричав: «Втікай!»	He cried, “Run!”



<b>Punctuation mark</b>	<b>General differences</b>	<b>Example in Ukrainian</b>	<b>Translation into English</b>
Exclamation mark	In Ukrainian, this mark is often used after a salutation in a formal letter; in English, a colon is used for formal/business letters, but a comma is permissible in informal ones.	Шановний пан _____!	Dear Mr. ____:
Dash (1)	In Ukrainian, a dash may be used to link and/or separate grammatically similar parts of a sentence. In English, a connecting word or a semicolon must be used within the sentence.	Податкова інспекція працює – підприємці бідують!	The tax authorities are doing their job while business owners are feeling the pinch!
Dash (2)	Used in Ukrainian before a summarizing word or to set off or give special emphasis to a group of words	На нашому сайті ви знайдете інформацію про законодавство, історію, економіку – все те, що ви шукали.	On our website you will find information on law, history, and the economy: everything you have been looking for.
Dash (3)	In Ukrainian, a dash can be used to replace the verb є (to be)	Якість судового рішення – основний критерій якості правосуддя.	The quality of the court decision is the main criterion for the quality of justice.
Dash (4)	In Ukrainian, dashes are used in place of quotation marks to introduce quoted speech and dialogue; English requires quotation marks.	– Ти ще живий? – запитала вона, намагаючись віддихатися. – Ще живий, – сказав він.	“Are you still alive?” she asked, trying to get her breath back. “Still alive,” he responded.
Quotation marks (“inverted commas” and «guillemets»)	In Ukrainian, quotation marks are used for titles of books, newspapers, companies, etc. In English, quotation marks are not used around company names, and most style guides advocate using quotes only for parts of larger works (book chapters, songs within a show, poems, etc.).	Група «Нове життя» пропонує вироби з шовку і золота.	New Life Group offers silk and gold products.
Ellipsis Points	In Ukrainian, these marks are used for omitted text within and at the end of a quotation. In English, ellipsis points are generally omitted at the end of an excerpted quotation, even if it continues after the excerpt.	Навіщо було це все записувати, якщо знову треба ще раз розказувати про деталі аварії?...	Why did you have to place it all on the record if we have to talk about the details of the accident again?

This list of punctuation marks and the ways in which their usage differs between Ukrainian and English is by no means exhaustive. It is therefore important to remember that punctuation marks can be either grammar-oriented or more style-oriented, or both, and there are “gray areas” where style guides differ over punctuation usage. Keeping in mind text type and client preferences, translators should develop a specific translation approach in their work and consult specific style guides pertaining to their language combination in order to hone their writing and translation skills.

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# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

From the *Washington Post*, June 15, 2017: “[A] reporter asked Putin how he feels when protesters chant ‘Putin must go.’ ‘When I hear that, I look at what happens in other countries,’ Putin said. ‘It’s normal.’”

A friend of mine, a poet, is searching for words that, with the same core meaning, can have either a strong positive or strong negative connotation. Her best example is *downhill* as in, “We’re over the hump now; it’s all downhill from here,” or “What I recall as an elegant town center has really gone downhill recently.” I had not considered the English word *normal* to be an example of this until I read that *Post* article. Consider the contrast between, say, “I am delighted to tell you your baby is completely normal in all respects,” and the acronym *SNAFU*, signifying “*situation normal: all fouled (or synonym) up.*” Having essentially learned 19<sup>th</sup> century colloquial Russian (not surprising, considering the emigration dates of the people who taught me and the books I read), I did not encounter the Russian conversational phrase “Ничего, нормально!” (essentially translatable as “It doesn’t matter—it’s normal”) until I started working for NASA. Although I was hired as an R>E technical translator, part of my job was accompanying various Soviet, and then Russian, space scientists and science administrators to meetings with their American counterparts. At times I believed they were being treated quite disrespectfully and felt compelled to apologize for the fact that they had been made to wait so long or had been interrupted after the first 5 minutes of what they had anticipated to be a longer presentation. Invariably they would reply, virtually patting me on the head, “Ничего, нормально!”

At about that time I saw on TV a documentary about a reformatory for boys in Siberia. At one point some of the inmates were asked about the food they got there and they replied—you guessed it—“Ничего, нормально!” So from then on when I hear this phrase, I interpret it to mean, “No worse than the chow served in a boy’s prison in Siberia.”

Now for the Tolstoy/*War and Peace* file. Recently Jen Guernsey sent me a cartoon with the caption “The Literary Mafia.” It shows the stock cartoon urban pier with a couple of sinister looking guys and a man with a load tied to his feet about to be pushed into the water. One of the bad guys is saying “Let’s see how well you swim with two hardback editions of *War and Peace* strapped to your feet.” Well, I thought, Tolstoy’s masterpiece may not be read, but it is not forgotten!

Or maybe it is beginning to be. Partly as a way of filling this column, for decades I have been recording references to Tolstoy and/or his works in the funnies and press. It never occurred to me to think about what it would signify if the references grew increasingly fewer and farther between, as seems to have happened. Reference to *W & P* is no longer obligatory when

referring to a lengthy or weighty tome. For the express purpose of finding such a reference, I read every review I could find of the recent biography of Barack Obama, David J Carrow’s *Rising Star: The Making of Barack Obama*. The book is 1400+ pages, and yet none of the published reviews I found saw fit to compare it with the relatively puny *War and Peace*. And here is a quote from Steven Colbert referring sarcastically to the supposed significance of the comparative lengths of the Affordable Care Act and the American Health Care Act: “When it comes to writing anything down, shorter is always better. That’s why *Moby Dick* is much worse than instructions that come with a rice cooker.” I must say I feel a pang—even as recently as five years ago, Herman wouldn’t have had a chance against Lev Nikolayevich.

Aside from Jen’s variation on a Tolstoyan theme in the funnies, I have something else to report. Recent news about the relationship between our current and past governments and Russia has made things Russian a much more common topic in the comic pages. Of course, much humor involves distortion, if only exaggeration, of the facts; I only wish this distortion did not have to be accompanied by collateral damage to the great and powerful Russian language. The particular instance of this I would like to cite involves a conversation between two men, seemingly friends or relatives, about the job search of one of them seeking a position with the White House legal staff. The joke is that the job seeker has evidently concluded that speaking Russian at all times will help him land this position and he does so (sort of) in Latin letters, which his collocutor then translates on his tablet. Once again I cannot imagine how someone with a syndicated feature would be unable or unwilling to get an actual Russian speaker to produce or at least check supposed Russian dialog. Here are two examples: 1) Supposed English: *Not sure yet.*



Supposed Russian: *Ne uveren, chto esche*. Actual English translation of the Russian: *Not sure, what else.* 2) Supposed English: *Not sure, but it couldn't hurt*. Supposed Russian: *Ne uvern, no ponjal, on ne postradal*. Actual English translation of the Russian: *Not sure (misspelled), but I understand he did not suffer*.

Also on my desk is a (fairly) recent article from the *Washington Post* describing the fact and repercussions of Russian diplomat Vladimir Safronkov's having used the familiar form ты when addressing Britain's permanent representative to the UN at a Security Council meeting, in a remark translated by the newspaper as: "Look at me! Don't you look away from me! Why are you looking away?" According to the article, even RT, Russia's state funded media network, called the harangue an "extraordinary attack on his British counterpart, using some decidedly undiplomatic language" (although the tone pales in comparison to some of the quotes from US figures we have been seeing lately). Indeed, according to the *Post*, Russia's UN website, while not changing any other part of the speech, replaced the "heartfelt" familiar ты with the "emptier" formal вы.

Does anyone remember that something similar happened nearly 10 years ago, when King Juan Carlos of Spain addressed President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, who certainly had not himself been showing high diplomatic etiquette, in the Spanish familiar

form, saying ¿*Por qué no te callas?* (Why don't you [familiar] shut up?). Now, (Central American) Spanish is my third language, as Russian is my second, and I in no way pretend to anything like near-native competence in either of them, but somehow the two deliberate and disrespectful uses of the familiar form contrary to the rules of etiquette seemed to me somewhat different. Partially this may be due to my varying and perhaps unfounded expectations of the normal public conversational tone of the Spanish King vis-a-vis that of a Russian diplomat. Is there a reader with a deeper knowledge of the two languages who might confirm or refute this hunch?

All this puts me in mind of Pushkin's famous short poem *You and Thou*, in which a woman slips and addresses the poet with ты, giving rise to all kinds of ecstatic thoughts in his lovesick breast. Believing that this simple but beautiful poem is simply untranslatable into English in any way worthy of the original, I decided to search the Internet to see if any English translations were available—and the ones I found seemed to confirm my original premise.

For the sake of laughs, I am providing below the Russian, the literal translation, and the poetic ones found on various literary websites (none of which was identified as amateur). Those of you who consider any misrepresentation of Pushkin cause for horror rather than amusement, stop reading NOW.

<p>ORIGINAL</p> <p>Пустое вы сердечным ты Она обмолвись заменила, И все счастливые мечты В душе влюбленной возбудила. Пред ней задумчиво стою, Свести очей с нее нет силы; И говорю ей: как вы милы! И мыслю: как тебя люблю!</p> <p><i>Iambic tetrameter, ababcdc, alternating masculine and feminine rhyme</i></p>	<p>LITERAL</p> <p>Affectionate thou for empty you She, misspeaking, substituted. And all kinds of joyful dreams Awoke in (my) lovesick soul. I stand pensively before her, Without the strength to take my eyes off her, And I say to her: how nice you are And think: how I love thee.</p>
<p>An empty you for heartfelt thou She, in a slip of tongue had taken And all the dreams upon my brow In an enamoured soul awakened. Near her in thought still stand I now, To take eyes off her I've no power And say to her: aren't you a flower! And think: how much I do <i>thee</i> love!</p>	<p>Sweet thou for an empty you She humorously substituted And every happy dream anew In the enamored soul recruited I'm facing her, the eyes don't see A thing beside her smile disarming, And lips recite: "You are so charming!" And fancy echoes: "I love thee!"</p>

<p>The empty you for thee...so mild  By chance she swapped in dialogue  And all the dreams that I've compiled  Within my loving soul evoked.  I stand before her very humbly,  To look aside—I do not dare;  I say to her: "you" are so fair!  And gravely think: How much I love "thee!"</p>	<p>The heartfelt thee for empty you  She did replace by slip, I noticed.  All providential dreams right blew (sic)  Into my loving soul unnoticed.  Of (sic) her alone can't take me (sic) eyes,  I'm standing pensive front her beauty.  And as I say: "You are so nice!"  Think to myself: "I love thee, sweety!"</p>
<p>The heartfelt Thee for empty Ye  She did replace unplanned  And all the providential dreams  Arouse in the loving man.  And as I stand before her, pensive  She sure knocks me off my feet  And I exclaim, "You're so sweet"  To think, "I love you immensely"</p>	<p>She substituted, by a chance,  For empty you—the gentle thou;  And all my happy dreams at once  In loving heart again resounded.  In bliss and silence do I stay,  Unable to maintain my role:  "O, how sweet you are!" I say—  "How I love thee!" says my soul.</p>
<p>That empty you by hearty thou  Unwittingly she substituted,  And all the happy dreams somehow  Into the amorous soul enrooted.  I stay and gaze at her; I'm so  Enchanted by the precious present;  I say to her: "you are so pleasant!"  And mutely think: "I love thee so!"</p>	<p>The empty <b>you</b> with heartfelt <b>thou</b>—  That slip she made, so accidental—  And all my happy dreams were now  Bestirred by soul's love fundamental.  I faced her, by the moment caught;  To hold her gaze I had not power:  I said to her: "<b>You're</b> precious flower!"  But "How I love <b>thee</b>" was my thought.</p>

P.S. After all this, enlisting my friend and colleague, Larry Bogoslaw, as collaborator, I decided to see whether we could come up with a version that is at least an improvement. Here is what numerous email exchanges have produced, so far at least.

### **You and Thee: By Alexander Pushkin**

*Translated by Lydia Stone with Larry Bogoslaw*

She called me thou, instead of you.  
(Mere slip, perhaps, not love's confession.)  
Yet, oh what joy within me grew  
To hear her use this fond expression.  
I stand transfixed, gaze in her eyes.  
(How could that phrase be uttered lightly?)  
"You are too kind," I say politely;  
"I love thee so!" my mute soul cries.

Hope to see many of you in DC!

## **TRANSLATORS/INTERPRETERS OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES OTHER THAN RUSSIAN**

We are eager to publish articles pertaining to your languages. Please send articles, ideas for articles, or suggestions for articles to reprint to the following.

Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian: Paul Makinen, [makinen\\_20712@yahoo.com](mailto:makinen_20712@yahoo.com)

Polish: Christine Pawlowski, [pawlow@verizon.net](mailto:pawlow@verizon.net)

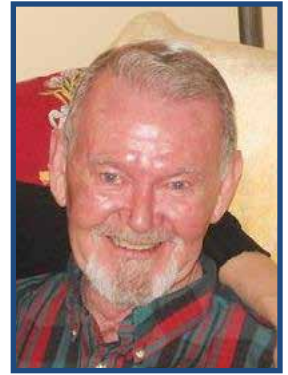
Ukrainian: Olga Shostachuk, [olgalviv@yahoo.com](mailto:olgalviv@yahoo.com)

**In regard to languages not listed above contact Editor Lydia Stone, [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net).**

**She would also be delighted to receive offers to edit and coordinate articles pertaining to those languages.**

# MY PATH TO BEING A RUSSIAN TRANSLATOR

*Jack Slep*



I'm 86 years old, born in Trenton, New Jersey. My path to becoming a Russian translator, interpreter, and interrogator began when I was 19, shortly after the start of the Korean War (the "Forgotten War") on June 25, 1950, and only five years after the end of WWII. After graduating from Bolles Military School in Florida in 1948, I was gung ho to join the military, having experienced WWII via John Wayne and other heroic movie actors. Of course I went to join the Marines, but the recruiting office was closed for lunch. Dadgum! So I went next door and joined the Air Force, the good old USAF, newly founded as a separate branch in September 1947. The next stop on the path was Basic Training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas, at the end of which I was interviewed for skills in various positions. (Being young and dumb, I originally wanted to be a tail gunner, whose life expectancy was very short. If I had known that, via the then-non-existent Google, I would have chosen to be a cook.) At any rate, the interviewer, paying no attention to my expressed desires and seeing that I had taken Latin, Greek, and Spanish in school, assigned me to learn Russian. Okay, anything to get out of San Antonio in the middle of summer. We recruits all packed into buses, later transferring to trains and planes, and proceeded to various AFBs to learn our careers—aircraft mechanics, cooks, radio operators, etc. With glee in my heart at having gotten the hell out of Dodge, I rode the bus all of 20 miles down the road to newly reopened Brooks AFB for assessment of my language-learning aptitude. Having passed the tests, I became a member of the USAFSS, the USAF Security Service ["Composed primarily of airmen selected from the cream of the Air Force's enlisted recruits (the top 1/2 of 1 percent), the USAFSS was a secretive and tight-knit branch of Air Force cold warriors tasked with monitoring, collecting and interpreting military voice and electronic signals of countries of interest (which often were Soviet and their satellite Eastern bloc countries)"—Wikipedia].

I arrived at the Army Language School (now the Defense Language Institute), Monterey, CA, in December 1950. I began by learning the Russian alphabet, then went on to *Капитанская Дочка* and finally *Наша кошка нашла мышку*, and—I was Russianized! (Many, many years later I called my Himalayan cat *Koshka*.) One of our favorite instructors was Prince Nikita Romanov, educated in England and nephew of the last tsar, Nikolai, who, among other subjects, taught us how to swear in

Russian, the first lesson universally enjoyed by a bunch of Army and USAF "kids." (Actually, since you always remember "dirty words" in any language, this knowledge came in useful later, during nonphysical interrogations, as there weren't that many family-friendly responses to some of the things they told us. I graduated in December 1951 with a top secret codeword clearance (a real biggie!) ["These jobs, which required top secret codeword clearance, were extremely high pressure and were considered essential to U.S. Cold War efforts. Members of the USAFSS were not allowed to discuss their jobs with outsiders—in fact, USAFSS members could not talk amongst themselves about their jobs unless they were in a secure location. Because of their value as targets (in Cold War Berlin, the capture of a USAFSS member was worth several thousand dollars), their off-base travel was severely restricted. Many adopted "cover jobs" to more easily conceal their real work"—Wikipedia]. I was assigned to the Armed Forces Security Agency, Arlington Hall Station, VA (now the National Security Agency (NSA), Ft. Meade, MD), where I translated "stuff."

In 1953, the Korean War was still in progress with heavy involvement of Russian-piloted aircraft, but never below the North-South 38th parallel. I was sent to St. Lawrence Island, Bering Sea, Alaska, 36 dogsled miles from Chukotka (Chukchi) to do my "thing." Thirteen months later, I returned to my Headquarters, now Kelly AFB, San Antonio, Texas—Aarrgh, right back where I started! But at least the Texas weather thawed my butt out. Shortly thereafter, I took my next step, when ten of us Russian linguists collected from stations/assignments worldwide were selected to have another language training year (as though we weren't already Russianized!), at a special course established for us at the Russian Institute, Columbia University, NYC, from August 1954 to August 1955—another 12/7 "brainwashing" to smooth out the rough edges. Among our instructors was the lovely and gracious Alexandra Tolstaya, the youngest daughter of you-know-who, who had us read the Russian classics—longer and with more characters than the NYC phone book—in Russian. To my knowledge, both Nikita "the Potty Mouth" and Alexandra "the Elegant" died in their 90s in NY State.

The next step after completion of that very rigorous course was new assignments. I was assigned to Tripoli, Libya. (I guess my butt still needed thawing after Alaska; the USAFSS was kind that way.) My nine other classmates went worldwide; I never heard from or saw them again despite our having been so close for a whole year, but I guess they were busy. The Baikonur Cosmodrome had started operations in March, 1955; I arrived at Wheelus AFB, Tripoli, in August 1955, and from there I did some more of my “thing.”

In November 1955, now a member of Air Intelligence, I was transferred to Frankfurt, Germany—or, rather, to an outlying town, Bad Soden, and a hotel there that housed 12 of us sergeants, each with different language skills, for the interrogation and translation of documents of selected “persons of interest.” These “persons” had volunteered to be fed, housed in a hotel, interrogated/questioned (this is where Nikita’s “cuss words” came in handy), supplied with two beers a day, and eventually given money and transportation to any place in Western Europe. Meanwhile, just a few blocks away, our Russian counterparts were performing analogous information-gathering activities.

After almost seven years and four continents, and with much left unsaid, I burned out and got out in late 1956. I graduated from the University of Florida in two years and got a job as a Russian translator at the Foreign Technology Division, Wright Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio, and as evening instructor of basic Russian to Strategic Airforce Command pilots and crew. Later I was hired as a “computational linguist” (whatever that meant) by Itek Corp., Ossining, NY, to work on the development of machine translation. After three years of wasting their money and my time, I became a full-time Russian>English translator in 1966 for Consultants Bureau/Plenum Press, doing several scientific/technical journals. I was paid

promptly and the deadlines were reasonable. My workload increased as the number of translated journals increased until, in all, I was translating, mostly by dictation, some 70 different sci/tech journals for various publishers. Resources at first were very slim, but gradually the number and variety of R>E dictionaries increased, the main source being Victor Kamkin Bookstore. (To read about the tragic end of that bookstore, see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor\\_Kamkin\\_Bookstore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Kamkin_Bookstore).) Of course at that time there was no Google, Wikipedia or other such finger-tip resources. If you were translating, say, Magnetohydrodynamics, you had to scrounge for terminology. Now the translator has all kinds of purportedly useful, expensive, time-consuming and error-laden tools, which in no way are able to cover and keep up with the vocabularies of the multitude of subjects required to make a living as a translator. Can CAT resources provide, for example, what can be found in my E<>R dictionary of machine elements containing 10,000 terms, my E<>R food industry dictionary with 42,000 terms, or my R>E aerospace dictionary with 40,000 terms? I doubt it. Rely on your brain, not that of someone or something else.

But my path hasn’t ended. I retired two years ago, but very recently was asked by an editor/publisher for whom I translated for many decades to “un-retire” and return to translating. At 86, after translating for 66 years, it was a compliment and an ego booster to still be needed, wanted. The pay was good, the deadlines generous, no CAT-type tools required, so I said yes. Besides, it’s better than sitting on the potty doing crossword puzzles, even Russian ones.

Jack Slep resides in Ellijay, Georgia, and may be reached at [slep@ellijay.com](mailto:slep@ellijay.com). Despite his recent return to active translating, he may still have some of his 500+ volume dictionary collection to sell at 1950s prices, so readers may want to contact him.



Picture of Jack Slep on St. Lawrence Island, Bering Sea, where he had been sent by the US Air Force.

# Reprint of Jim Walker's Translator Profile

(from a 1997 issue of SlavFile)

*In lieu of a biosketch, which Jack has more or less already given us, we are publishing an excerpt from a profile submitted to SlavFile in 1997 by another recently retired Russian>English translator, Jim Walker, describing how he (Jim) went from Yalie to itinerant fruit picker to technical translator and (after this was written) to SLD Administrator. The Jack mentioned in the article is this selfsame Jack Slep!*

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But gradually my *непутевая жизнь* began to catch up with me. Two children imposed certain financial needs, and the opportunities for decent paying work in Southern Appalachia were limited, to say the least, particularly for someone like me with no obvious skills. ...In desperation, I even began to consider returning to the big city (Atlanta).

Here comes the miracle part. My wife and I are Catholic, and at that time the Catholic mission in town [Ellijay: where Jim and Jack still live] consisted of six families. Just before Christmas 1984, a new couple showed up at church. The man, Jack, did not look old enough to be retired, so I asked what he did. "I translate scientific journals from Russian to English," he replied. "That's interesting," I said. "I used to know Russian."

That winter was particularly harsh. At the park where I was working the temperature got down to  $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$  (in north Georgia, believe it or not!), and snow lay on the ground for weeks. In January and February I worked only two days. At home, I got out my old Russian grammar book (Pulkina) and read it from cover to cover. I went to see Jack; he gave me a few old dictionaries and the address of a publisher. The test translation arrived in April; I passed it with Jack's help and became a translator.

Miracle, good luck, or random event? Here's how I figure it. The odds of any one American taken at random being a Russian scientific translator—approximately a million to one. The odds of a person moving

to a specific small town in North Georgia—100,000 to one. The odds of my meeting this translator who has arrived—five hundred to one. So I figure the overall odds of this particular event are roughly  $5 \times 10^{60}$  to one; call it what you will. For me it was an answer to a prayer.

Why would Jack think that some stranger he met at church could possibly translate? Why would I think that I could? I certainly had serious doubts, but was driven by desperation. At first I worked in a tiny camping trailer away from the house, writing out the translation by hand for my wife to type; soon I bought a computer and built an office. Every Friday evening for a couple of years, I would go to see Jack with a list of questions. I was constantly afraid that some editor would discover my ignorance—ignorance of Russian and, especially, ignorance of the scientific material. I felt like I was taking a final exam every day without ever seeing the results. The only indication I had that my work was satisfactory was that checks kept coming in the mail. It took at least five years for me to gain even the slightest confidence in my ability to translate.

Of course, I was aware of ATA, but afraid to spend the money and fail the test. Last year [i.e., in 1996], after ten years of full-time nonstop translation, I was ready. After passing the accreditation (now renamed certification) exam, I finally considered myself a professional. And thanks to my membership in ATA, my income is now at a much more professional level. I love reading *SlavFile* because I feel that I understand and belong to this group of people whom I have never met.

That's my story. It is not meant to be inspirational or instructive; it's just my way of saying hello.

*Reprinted with kind permission of Jim Walker.*



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# A TRANSLATOR'S TALE

*Michael Ishenko*



I met N. in San Francisco in the early 1990s. He was a translator, too—in fact, our backgrounds were pretty similar. His family had moved to California as political refugees just a week before the collapse of the Soviet Union. “The old country just couldn’t survive my departure,” he joked. He found a job with a mortgage company three months later. The company owner was Russian and he needed someone who spoke fluent English; the owner himself didn’t. Two weeks later, a friend of the owner’s who ran a translation agency in San Francisco “bought out” N. by supplying the mortgage company with two potential English-speaking employees in exchange.

N. had been a translator most of his life. His wife was very upset when he decided to give up what she believed was a “real American job” in favor of an occupation that wasn’t even half as lucrative. After the two weeks he had been employed by the mortgage company, N. still didn’t understand what the meaning of “mortgage” was, so he accepted the new job offer without a moment’s hesitation. Translation was his trade—translation was his element. He had never felt so inept as he did during those two humiliating weeks.

The reason N. was wanted so urgently was that the translation agency—let’s call it “ABC”—had just been contracted by a major multinational oil company, “XYZ,” for a multibillion-dollar project in Central Asia. So before he could say “drilling rig,” N. was taking part in brainstorming sessions shoulder to shoulder with XYZ’s CEO, chief financial analyst, chief petroleum engineer, general counsel, etc., who treated him as an equal and engaged him in their discussions of the upcoming negotiations with their ex-Soviet partners-to-be. He couldn’t believe what was happening to him: all he had done was sign a nondisclosure agreement with ABC and there he was, at the very top of a major international company’s hierarchy talking about top-secret strategic matters on a par with senior corporate executives.

His previous experience in the Soviet Union had been somewhat different. Among his other jobs, he had worked as an interpreter and translator with a huge international steel project in West Africa, where he had to do more than just interpreting and translating. His was not an office job at all; what he did involved traveling and troubleshooting, so on more than one occasion he would be caught in the bush in a heavy tropical storm, watching the oversaturated soil turn into a quagmire that sucked in his vehicle. Life in the bush was a great adventure—he loved it and called

his two years in Africa his “second life” (his third was in the United States). When he returned to his home town in Ukraine, he thought he might as well try his hand at something more exciting than a desk job. With his experience, he believed he could become a UN translator and/or interpreter. The most natural way to achieve this was to be accepted into a special UN translators program run by a leading foreign languages institute in Moscow.

His former university professor and scientific advisor for his candidate’s degree program (a rough equivalent of PhD) introduced and recommended him to the man in charge of the UN training school, one of the top Soviet authorities on the theory and practice of translation and author of many books. But in order to be admitted, N. had to pass a test that covered knowledge of English and French and the ability to translate between those languages and Russian, and the test had to be taken in Kiev, Ukraine, because Ukraine was a full member of the United Nations, along with Belarus and the USSR (as a result of a ploy used by Stalin after World War II to have more Soviet seats in the UN). But French was N.’s weak point, because he had never had any working experience with it.

Back in his home town, N. met a French professor employed by the local university as part of a teacher exchange program. He invited the Frenchman to his home; he took him on city tours; he socialized with him as much as he could, primarily because he wanted to practice his French. As a result, he was almost immediately contacted by the almighty national security organization feared by all in the Soviet Union—They-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, not unlike Voldemort in the Harry Potter books.

It should be noted that the infamous Organization was not entirely new to him at the time. He had first been approached by them shortly before he turned 19. He was a university student of foreign languages then. He remembered that day very well. For no immediately obvious reason, he was summoned to the university’s personnel department and shown into a room where a short stocky man, with black hair and a pair of small shifty eyes, was waiting for him. The man talked to him for an hour or so and he realized he was being recruited. He was unprepared; he was nervous; he didn’t know what to do. The short stocky man told him he wasn’t supposed to speak to anyone about their



conversation. N. was just a kid at the time; his father had died a year before, and he wasn't about to tell his mother because he didn't want to alarm her. The black-haired man had scheduled a follow-up rendezvous in a city square; N. showed up as instructed.

When the man saw N. from a distance, he turned around at once and started walking. N. was supposed to follow him—those were his instructions, but he still felt like a complete idiot. The man gave N. his telephone number and told him to write it down so as to make it look like a shopping list, something like “shoes—25 rubles; shirt—13 rubles,” and so on. He also brought books for N. to read, all bearing the Organization's library stamps and all dating back to the mid-1930s spy frenzy—primitive Stalin-era espionage books that made a stark contrast to the contemporary Western literature N. was studying in the university at the time.

Their rendezvous continued for several months until one day a doll-like blond guy, with a pair of blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and a smiling round face, showed up for a meeting in place of the black-haired man. Beaming and benign, he told N. his previous “instructor” had been found to have mental problems, and he apologized on behalf of the Organization. By that time, N. was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He was too young and innocent to realize that he was just being manipulated according to the classic carrot-and-stick strategy.

Pretty soon, the smiling blue-eyed operative insisted that N. sign a document to confirm his willingness to cooperate. N. refused, as gently as he could. He said he just didn't have the guts to do such an important and highly responsible job. He would be happy to report if he saw anything serious happen, but he was just not tough enough and would most likely *spill the beans* to someone.

The idea to make that statement had come to him in a flash like a true light-bulb moment. Apparently, it worked. The madness went on and on for years: he was still contacted on a regular basis and more attempts were made to recruit him, but he always brought the “bean-spilling” argument into play—and it kept on working! The Organization would leave him alone, at least for a while.

Now back to the Frenchman and the UN training program. It was during *perestroika*, in the late 1980s. The two agents who contacted him then didn't summon him to any administrative offices, or hotel rooms, or safe houses. In a more civilized manner and in the spirit of the times, they invited N. to a café. Yes—and they even bought him a cup of coffee. They also reassured him they had nothing to do with the ops

guys who had tormented him all those years. No, they were counter-intelligence people, they said to him proudly. And N. could do them a great favor by becoming a part of their game with the Frenchman—who was an “enemy,” of course. (“You should have seen that pathetic little French guy—he was more like a clown. A spy? Ridiculous!” N. told me.)

N. accepted, of course. How could he *not* accept? But he stopped seeing the French guy at once. A month later, they invited him to another café to hear his report on what he'd been able to learn from the Frenchman—only to hear that, regretfully, he had been too busy working on his dissertation and hadn't been able to find a minute to spare. They contacted him two more times after that, with the same result. Finally, they got the message and left him alone. After all, it was, as N. said, *perestroika*, and things had changed for the better. No threats ensued, as they had in the past. The only person who was left completely unwitting as to what was going on was the poor befuddled Frenchman. *Ces habitudes russes qui étonnent les étrangers.*

In the winter of 1988, N. did pass his French test. The test was administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. N. was told to wait for the Ministry's telephone call. The age limit for participation in the UN training program was 35, so he asked the Ministry people what would happen when he turned 35 in the fall. They told him not to worry, because he had passed his test when he was 34, and said he would be contacted in a couple of months.

He never was. He waited until September and called the Ministry. They told him to wait a little longer. He called them again in late November. This time they asked him how old he was. Thirty-five, he said, and they said, well, what did you expect? You're no longer eligible, having exceeded the established age limit. Goodbye, United Nations!

Just four brief years later, after N. and his family had been admitted to the United States as refugees and after he had been employed as an in-house translator/interpreter by ABC, he was thinking about the UN episode on a flight to an Arab state with his XYZ clients. He wasn't even a green card holder yet—all he had was what Soviet immigrants called a “white passport,” a.k.a. a Refugee Travel Document. The Arab consulate didn't know where to put their visa stamp on that questionable little piece of paper, so XYZ had had to intervene and persuade the Arabs. On the plane, N. was wearing a \$70 dull-greenish suit and a pair of somewhat unconventional light-brown shoes he'd been able to buy at a considerable discount. He still owed about \$3000 for the airfare he had had to

pay to bring his family to the United States. But he was happy. He didn't know yet that this particular gig would take him to a kind of an *Arabian Nights* world, with palaces and minarets and terraces all around populated by exotic birds and animals; James Bond-movie-type evil characters surrounded by dazzling models; government ministers and sheikhs putting rice on his plate at receptions, because that's what an Arab host is supposed to do; and young Arab boys wearing turbans, embroidered sashes, and shoes with upturned toes and carrying tiny coffee cups on heavy gold trays. He also didn't know his next work day would last 36 hours because of the different time zones he would have to cross; or that his gig in the

Arab state was going to resume at the EBRD offices in London and continue at an international conference in Washington, D.C. It was his first successful "mission accomplished" in his new job. As the corporate jet he was flying in was about to land at San Francisco International Airport on his way back, the pilots invited him to their cabin and he saw myriads of lights glimmering below. Somehow, they looked like home. That was only the beginning of his new translation career in a new world.

Michael Ishenko translates from English into Russian, from Russian into English, and from Ukrainian into English. He lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area and can be reached at [ishenko@aol.com](mailto:ishenko@aol.com).

The *Lite* column on page 10 notes a decrease in mentions of Tolstoy and *War and Peace* in the English popular press. Yet, LNT and his masterpiece have not been totally abandoned in the more erudite media.

The summer issue of *SOURCE*, the publication of ATA's Literary Division, in an article by Patrick Saari on Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, contains the following perceptive paragraph(s):

*The center and main idea of War and Peace is not the subject Tolstoy discusses at the end of the novel—the point of history and the role of the individual in history—but the intense and compassionate attention the characters give to the details of everyday life, and the clear, all-encompassing gaze that unites the various life stories in the novel. When we've finished reading the book, what remains in our mind is not history and its meaning, but our thoughts on the fragility of human life, the immensity of the world, and our place in the universe...*quotation from Turkish writer Orhan Pamouk.

[Mahfouz] not only repeats the theme of freedom but insists on social justice as the core of his fictional universe. Nevertheless, despite his depiction of a world far different from that of nineteenth-century Russia, Mahfouz was doing what Tolstoy did: portraying the intensity with which each individual lives life, the depth of feeling involved in even the slightest of experiences, the vulnerability that this entails, and how ingeniously, and sometimes tragically, everyone maneuvers their way in the larger world of family and kinship, neighborhood and school, work and society, country and world, and ultimately the cosmos.

Reprinted with kind permission of Patrick Saari and *SOURCE* (quarterly publication for ATA's Literary Division).



Cartoon by Tony Beckwith, reprinted with permission from *SOURCE*.

## PRESENTATIONS PERTAINING TO SLAVIC AT ATA58

<b>L-1</b>	<p><b>The Russian Revolution in Spanish Translation: The Forgotten Revolution of the Ukrainian Anarchist Benjamin Abramson in Argentina</b>  <a href="#">Adel Fauzetdinova</a>            (Thursday, 11:15am-12:15pm; All Levels; Presented in: English)</p> <p>The speaker will draw from her research in literature, history, politics, and translation studies to examine the translations of an anarchist from the Russian Revolution. This session will focus on the work of a historic but mostly unknown translator, Benjamin Abramson, a Ukrainian-Jewish anarchist who fled to Argentina in 1910. Abramson became a prolific translator of Russian literature and the Russian Revolution. The speaker will discuss the connections between Abramson’s translations of revolutionary writings, the context into which they were inserted, and the caricatured and parodied revolution portrayed in Roberto Arlt’s work.</p>
<b>L-2</b>	<p><b>How to Mix Business with Poetry</b>  <a href="#">Shelley Fairweather-Vega, CT*</a>   <a href="#">Katherine Young</a>            (Thursday, 2:00pm-3:00pm; All Levels; Presented in: English with Russian examples)</p> <p>Sometimes an administrative nightmare has a happy ending. Last year, in a rushed attempt to produce English versions of 100 Russian poems, an editor assigned two translators to translate the same two pieces. Which versions would be published? Who would get paid? What do real professionals do in a situation like this? The speakers will discuss their translations and share their insights into this thorny aspect of the business of literary translation. Source texts are in Russian, by Mikhail Lermontov and Anna Akhmatova, but knowledge of Russian will not be necessary to join the discussion.</p>
<b>SL-1</b>	<p><b>Susana Greiss Lecture: The Long and Winding Road to Becoming a Presidential Interpreter</b>  <a href="#">Nikolai Sorokin</a>            (Thursday, 3:30pm-4:30pm; All Levels; Presented in: English)</p> <p>This session will trace the path that led the speaker to become the U.S. Department of State’s lead Russian-language interpreter for five years during the administrations of Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. It will touch on the speaker’s educational experiences, work as a journalist for the Russian Language Service of the Voice of America, and joining the Department of State’s Office of Language Services. The speaker will offer anecdotes and lessons learned that could benefit aspiring interpreters working in any language combination.</p>
<b>LAW-1</b>	<p><b>The Role of Translation in the Immigration Process</b>  <a href="#">Olga Shostachuk *</a>            (Thursday, 3:30pm-4:30pm; All Levels; Presented in: English)</p> <p>All documents filed with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must be presented in English. Thus, the role translation plays is pivotal. Translating these documents requires an understanding of the process and specific subject matter expertise. In this session, attendees will learn how to properly prepare and authenticate official documents that are used in the immigration process. Attendees will also learn about the legal discourse pertaining to official document translation and improve their terminology management and research skills.</p>
<p><b>SLD Annual Meeting</b> (see agenda on page 24)            (Thursday, 4:45-5:45)</p>	
<b>SL-2</b>	<p><b>Wow! How Am I Going to Interpret That?</b>  <a href="#">Nikolai Sorokin</a>            (Friday, 10:00am-11:00am; All Levels; Presented in: English and Russian)</p> <p>This session will feature examples of idiomatic expressions used by Russian and American leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin. We’ll consider techniques to handle difficult moments, the level of significance that such expressions play in interpreted speech, and the advisability of adapting texts for cultural compatibility. We’ll also discuss, from an interpreter’s perspective, the types of expressions that seem to matter most in interpersonal communications. While examples will be in Russian, this session is designed to benefit to interpreters working in other languages.</p>

<p><b>SL-3</b></p>	<p><b>Localizing President Trump’s Statements into Russian</b>  <a href="#">Alexey Rumyantsev</a>  (Friday, 2:00pm-3:00pm; All Levels; Presented in: English)</p> <p>As a language expert working in U.S.-Russia bilateral relations, the speaker will analyze the localization of President Trump’s use of language in social media and interviews in Russian media outlets. The direct textbook translation cannot be applied here, and translations in Russia frequently employ embellishment. It’s useful to be aware of the required register while keeping the English original in mind. The speaker will share advice on handling these issues. Challenges include the use of colloquialisms, cultural references, truncation, and buzzwords. Interactive exercises will be included.</p>
<p><b>SL-4</b></p>	<p><b>Russian&gt;English Translation Slam</b>   <a href="#">Jennifer Guernsey</a>, <a href="#">Shelley Fairweather-Vega, CT</a>, <a href="#">Lydia Stone, CT</a>  (Friday, 3:30pm-4:30pm; All Levels; Presented in: English and Russian)</p> <p>What do you get when you hire two different translators to translate the same passage? Two different translations, of course! In this session, an academic and literary translator and a scientific and medical translator will try their hand at identical passages that are outside of their usual subject areas. The discussion will compare and contrast the translators’ results and their different approaches to thorny passages. How did their different specialties and backgrounds affect their choices? Which solutions worked best? Participation is encouraged.</p>
<p><b>SL-5</b></p>	<p><b>Russian Submarines: How They’re Built</b>  <a href="#">Robert Burns</a>  (Saturday, 10:00am-11:00am; All Levels; Presented in: English)</p> <p>Prowling undetected beneath the sea is any nation’s worst nightmare: nuclear-powered fast attack submarines. With the ability to launch nuclear-tipped missiles, lay bottom-moored mines, and conduct surveillance near enemy shores, submarines pose a significant threat to naval forces and maritime shipping across the globe. Where these sharks of steel patrol is known by only a few, but understanding how they’re built and operate is accessible to everyone. The speaker will present a brief history of submarine construction in Russia and the Soviet Union before covering the multiple stages of construction, sea trials, and commissioning.</p>
<p><b>SL-6</b></p>	<p><b>CANCELLED</b>  <b>Criminal Law Terminology in Polish and English</b>  <a href="#">Magdalena Perdek</a>  (Saturday, 11:15am-12:15pm; Advanced; Presented in: English and Polish)</p> <p>The speaker will examine criminal law terms in Polish and English. We’ll start with an overview of certain legal concepts used in criminal law and procedure in Poland (civil law system) and selected common law jurisdictions in the U.S. Then we’ll discuss various strategies that can be applied when dealing with nonequivalence when translating the most problematic terms and phrases in various documents filed during a criminal trial (e.g., indictments, motions, and judgments).</p>
<p><b>GOV-8</b></p>	<p><b>Trust Me. I’m a Certified Interpreter!</b>  <a href="#">Emma Garkavi, CT</a> *   <a href="#">Milena Calderari-Waldron</a>   <a href="#">Monique Roske</a>  (Saturday, 11:15am-12:15pm; All Levels; Presented in: English)</p> <p>The marketplace for interpreting services varies wildly. Federal and state government agencies have created their own interpreter tests, but many don’t officially recognize each other’s credentials. The medical community has at least two different sets of exams to certify interpreters. To these efforts, one has to add vendor “certification” by language companies. The wide array of interpreter credentials baffles interpreters and requesters alike. This session will provide a comprehensive list of credentialing opportunities for U.S. interpreters hoping to clarify the reigning confusion. It will also include an overview of the future ASTM standard guide for testing interpreting skills.</p>
<p><b>T-11</b></p>	<p><b>To "thē" or Not to "thē": An Article on Articles</b>  <a href="#">Paul Gallagher, CT</a> *  (Saturday, 3:30pm-4:30pm; All Levels; Presented in: English)</p> <p>The English system of articles (the, a, etc.) bedevils nonnative speakers, who often see it as designed purely out of sadism with no useful purpose. However, native speakers know that this system conveys useful information and helps them understand English texts. This session will explore the rules for English articles, focusing on the information they convey about content, focus, and topic. The speaker will compare the English system of articles with those of several other languages that either lack articles or use them differently. Audience participation is strongly encouraged.</p>

# A Modest Proposal to ATA (for Future Conferences)

Lydia Ston

(the opinions expressed are hers alone)

It would be hard to fault the appeal and range of the Slavic-related sessions to be presented at our upcoming conference (see page 19). However, we will have relatively few sessions in the Slavic track: a total of five, after one of the six scheduled was canceled when the presenter withdrew. Of the six originally scheduled, two are by our Greiss speaker (the Greiss lecture and one additional). This compares to about six plus the Greiss lecture in recent years. Both our administrators were asked to read all proposals received (15) and forward six as their suggestions to the conference organizers. Ekaterina tells me that she was left wishing we had more slots. Ultimately the decision on acceptance is in the hands of the organizers.

There seem to be three reasons for the fewer than usual Slavic Track sessions to be presented by our members this year. 1) A new rule as of last year requires Guest Speakers (invited non-ATA members who receive honoraria) to give a total of two talks. Both of our Greiss speaker's talks were counted against our six. 2) Emphasis seems (at least to me) to have shifted toward the increasingly numerous specialization tracks. With the understandable exception of Spanish, and of German with seven sessions, no language track, is presenting more than six. However, seven specialization tracks, including a number not associated with a Division, have been allotted between 8 and 13 sessions each. 3) Those submitting proposals are now instructed to submit in a specialization track unless they believe that knowledge of their particular language is necessary to benefit from the talk. Four of our members (marked with \* on the schedule on pages 18 and 19) who did so had their proposals accepted.

I can cite two reasons why some potential presenters would be reluctant to submit their proposals in a specialization track rather than the Slavic track: 1) not infrequently a Slavic-related presentation in a specialization track is scheduled in conflict with a Slavic track proposal (such as a Greiss lecture), and 2) even if non-Slavic speakers are likely to benefit from the proposed presentation, it is frequently difficult to provide sufficient explanations for them without shortchanging some of the subtle and/or important points we would like to discuss with our fellow Slavists.

Well, there is no use crying over spilled kefir. However, I am hoping to submit the following proposal to the Board. Its adoption might give us a precious additional Slavic presentation (or even two) to attend next year. I hope that this effort will be supported by *SlavFile* readers. This is what I would like to suggest.

- 1) Since the Greiss lecture is given in English and provides insight into one or more specializations, perhaps one of the invited speaker's lectures could be allotted to a specialization track and not count against the limited number of Slavic track spots. SLD members would thus have one more slot to present in, ATA would still get extra value for the honorarium, and, potentially, more non-Slavists would have their attention drawn to the uniformly excellent and erudite speakers we invite each year. Indeed, meeting schedulers have already, I am told, recognized the more general interest of our Greiss lecture and put these talks in a larger room than other Slavic presentations.
- 2) Only Spanish and German have been allocated more than six sessions. Yet, with the exception of the track associated with the small Nordic Languages Division, none of the other language tracks cover multiple languages. Is it fair to give all of our Slavic languages the same number of slots as single-language divisions of comparable size, e.g., Japanese? Might Slavic be granted, for example, two more slots for languages other than Russian? I have not been able to obtain official ATA records or estimates of how many members we have in our division relative to those in some others. I will, however, point out that there are eight Slavic->English language pairs represented within certification program while other language tracks (with the exception of Nordic) are associated with at most two. To me, at least, this supports an argument that we are indeed a special case. Readers, please let me know what you think at [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net).

# CAT SCAN: CONCORDANCERS: AN INTRODUCTION TO ANTCONC

Daria Toropchyn



In this article, I would like to introduce readers to a piece of software that they may not previously have considered relevant to translation work. However, programs such as this can prove useful to anyone who works with terminology and needs, for example, to extract terminology or find appropriate translations. So, permit me to introduce you to AntConc. Use the following link for information, downloads, and tutorials: [www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/](http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/).

AntConc is a concordancer. According to Wikipedia, “a concordancer is a computer program that automatically constructs a concordance. The output of a concordancer may serve as input to a translation memory system for computer-assisted translation, or as an early step in machine translation.” Or to put it more simply: such programs scan all the words in a document, list them, and calculate the frequency of each word used. After that, it is up to the user to decide what to do with this information. Let’s see how this might benefit us translators.

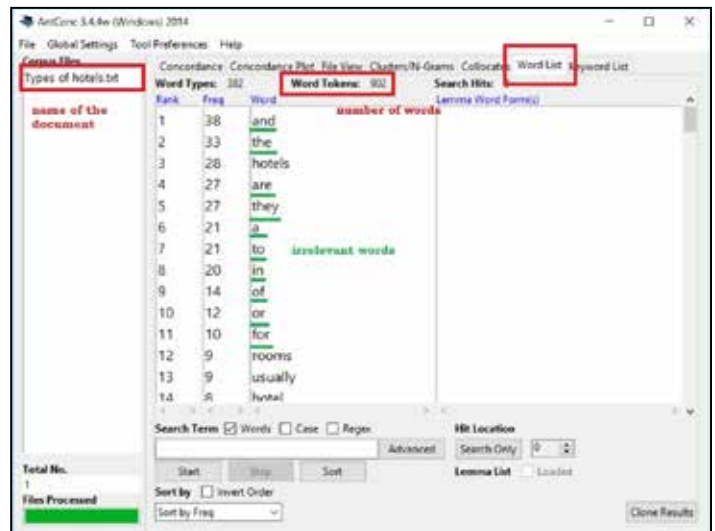
A brief history: AntConc was developed by the AntLab, which is led by Laurence Anthony, a professor at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan. It was first released in 2002, and its most recent edition came out in 2014. The downloadable software is designed for Windows 64-bit, Macintosh OS X, and Linux 64-bit. It is available free of charge. The program does not require installation and can be downloaded and run on a PC, laptop, external hard drive or USB flash card.

After it has been downloaded, it does not require an internet connection to work. I myself downloaded AntConc on a laptop with Windows 10.

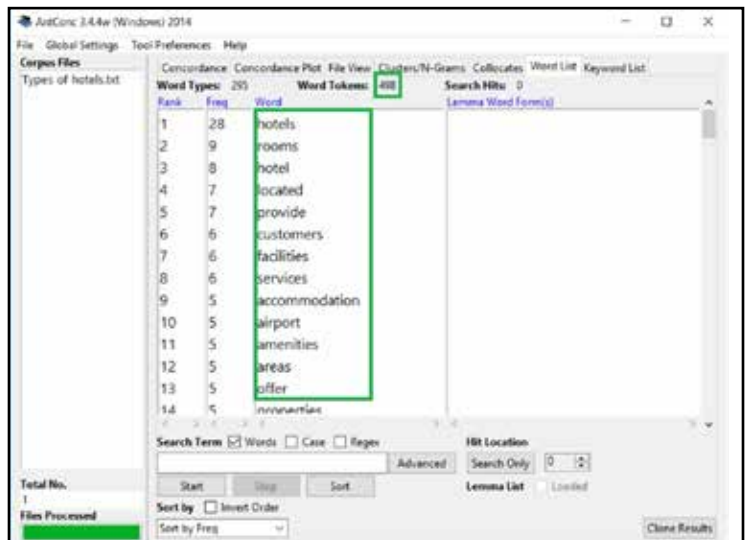
I performed a small experiment to demonstrate how AntConc might be useful to a translator. First of all, I located two documents with similar content in English and Russian: descriptions of types of accommodations—hotels, motels, hostels, cabins, apartments and such—in a particular geographic area. I transferred the text to Notepad and saved each language as a separate file in text format. When I opened the English document, AntConc analyzed the word list and gave me the following result (see Screenshot 1 on the right).

Screenshot 1 shows the display identifying the document worked with (left top corner); the number of word “tokens,” 902; the number of word types (different words), 382; and the frequency of occurrence of each type in the text. I have underlined in

green the words that would probably be considered irrelevant for extracting terminology. AntConc provides the option of applying a prepared “words stoplist” for each language (which can be downloaded at no charge from [www.ranks.nl/stopwords](http://www.ranks.nl/stopwords)). Apparently, it is possible to add additional words to this list. The software deletes all irrelevant words on the stoplist. Screenshot 2 shows the result (see below):



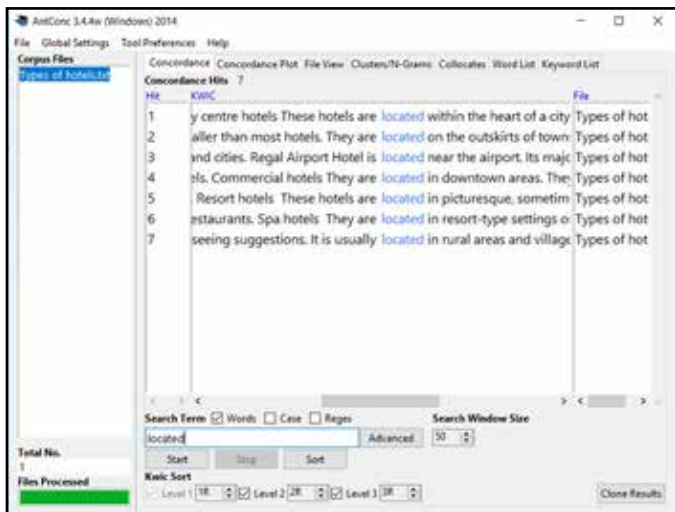
Screenshot 1



Screenshot 2

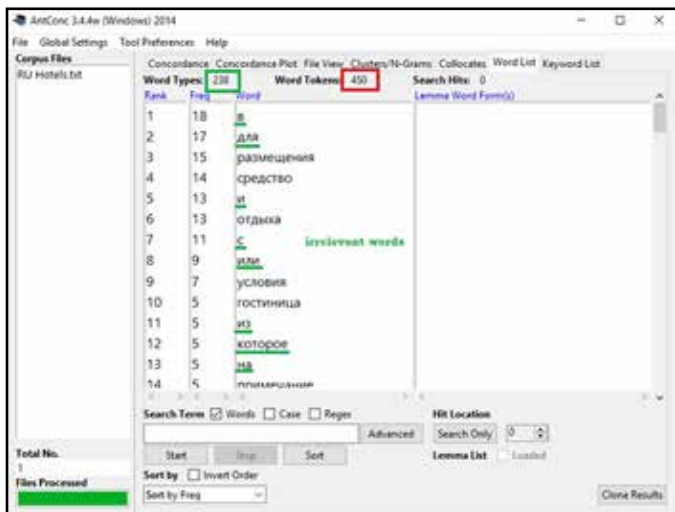
Now we see only the more relevant terminology, and the number of word tokens has been reduced more or less by half (to 498). AntConc is able to list not only single words, but also the words that appear

adjacent to specific words. This capability is helpful for identifying recurring phrases:

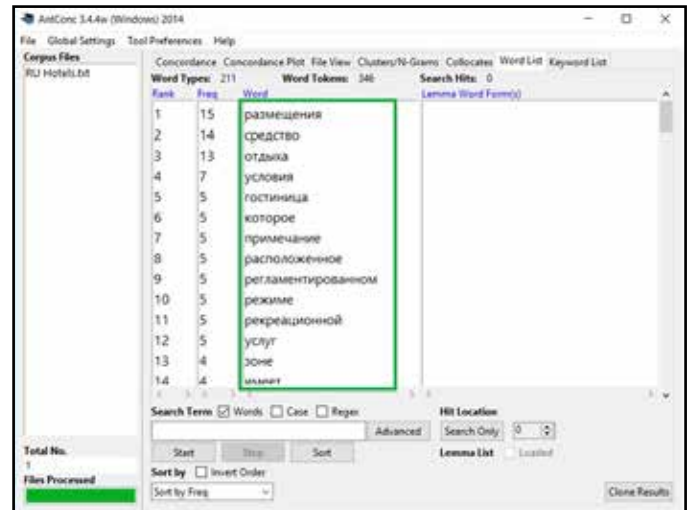


The Concordance option allowed me to find phrases that contain the word “located” in the original text. Why would that be useful in translation? Well, let’s do the same with the Russian document and see what happens.

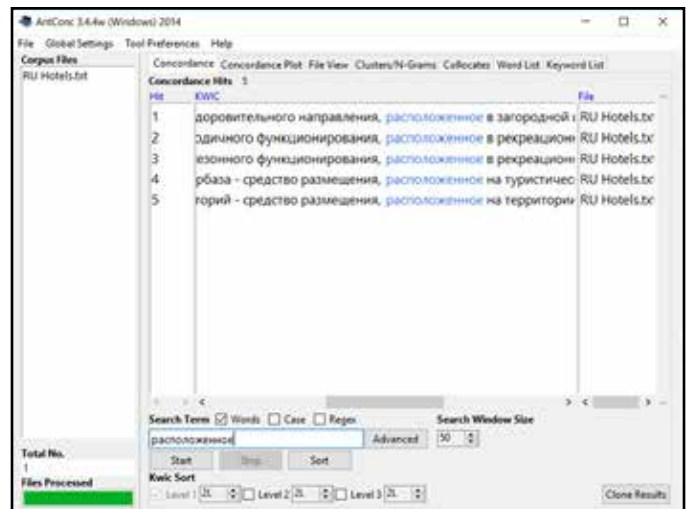
Initial analysis of the document by AntConc resulted in:



Again, there are irrelevant words in the word list. I applied the stoplist for Russian words, producing a list of the more relevant terms. Here is the result:



I used the Concordance option to find phrases that included the word **расположенное**, my choice for the optimal Russian equivalent of the word “located.” There were several matches:



Since texts with similar content and purpose most likely use equivalent words similarly, comparing the phrasing surrounding “located” and “расположенное” shows us equivalent wordings in the two languages. These paired phrases can be extremely useful in making our translations sound natural in the target language, by confirming our “guesses” as to the best translation of a frequently used word in a text.

This is a simple example of how this tool can be used in translation. Imagine a situation where a client has provided you with previous translations, asked that you keep your translation consistent with the terminology of the previous ones, but not provided you with the relevant termbase. You would be able to quickly create one using this program.

This particular tool helped me in an editing job. The client had been sending me about five pages of similar information letters every week. All of the documents contained the same terminology. I was acting as editor and faced the problem that some terms had not been translated consistently. I uploaded the source documents in AntConc and extracted the terminology. Then I repeated the process for the target documents. I was able to extract more than 100 English terms and to identify the desired translations for more than 75% of the English terms, all in less than 2 hours. I certainly benefited as an editor: I didn't have to search for term translations over and over again, since I had a table of term translations

ready to use. My client benefited greatly by integrating the glossary I created into its CAT tool, enabling other users to get matches during translation as well.

Given my experience, I encourage you to take this concordancer for a test drive. Although it is a little-known tool, I found it very helpful.

**Readers: Would you like to ask Daria to review a type or particular piece of software, or answer one or more questions? Would you like to review or discuss one or more CAT tools for this column? Send requests and/or suggestions to [info@dt-translations.com](mailto:info@dt-translations.com).**

**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE  
SLAVIC LANGUAGES DIVISION OF THE  
AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION**

Thursday, October 26, 4:45pm - 5:45pm  
WASHINGTON HILTON  
1919 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20009 USA

Ekaterina Howard, Administrator  
Fred Grasso, Assistant Administrator

**AGENDA**

1. Call to order
2. Acceptance of agenda
3. Approval of 2016 minutes
4. Election results
5. Past year's activities: summary
6. Discussion of SLD activities for 2018:
  - a. 2018 conference
    - i. Greiss Lecture and Slavic Languages track slots
    - ii. SLD events: Newcomers' lunch and annual event
    - iii. Advanced skills & training day: Process description and call for volunteers to present ATA certification prep tracks
    - iv. Additional activities
  - b. SLD publications: *SlavFile*, blog
  - c. SLD website and social media
  - d. Possible new activities: call for volunteers
7. Additional business / Open discussion / Introduction of new members
8. Adjournment



# SEE of Dreams?

## Another Online Community That's Worth Your Time

*Liv Bliss*

I know how it is. You're blogged out, webinarred out, podcasted out, Yahooed out, Linked Out, and Facebooked to distraction. It's a regular tsunami of ... stuff, with nuggets of value bobbing around here and there like the flotsam from a major maritime disaster. But if you haven't heard of SEELANGS yet, please stick with me; maybe you'll thank me later. (And if you *have* heard of it—well then, this is just something else you really don't have to read.)

SEELANGS is the acronym of the Slavic and East European Languages and Literatures List. It's a long-established online discussion board hosted at the University of Alabama that is populated by academics, librarians, translators, and a motley crew of others with an interest in the field. It is lightly and adeptly moderated, and the posts and discussions are almost unfailingly civilized, not to mention engaging and informative.

Posts range across a wide array of subjects of interest to *SlavFile* readers: practical matters such as the rules for visitor visas, offers of short-term in-country accommodations, and job opportunities; scholarly minutiae such as the details of the Orthodox liturgy and arcane issues of linguistics; requests for suggestions for new course materials; calls for conference papers; inquiries regarding difficult-to-source books, magazines or quotations; and (most fun of all?) translation head-scratchers (from experienced translators who aren't afraid to admit when they're stumped).

SEELANGS is free to join and, when I signed up back in the Dark Ages, no one contacted me to check my eligibility or even my sanity. Once your membership has been accepted, you can arrange your account settings to receive every message as it comes in (!!!) or get a daily Digest or Index of postings. Occasionally, you'll get two of those a day but usually just one. You

can also shut down receipt of messages altogether, by checking the "Mail delivery disabled temporarily" box on your "Join or Leave the SEELANGS List" page (which is where you will manage all your subscription settings).

I prefer the "Index (HTML)" format, which, on a day not so very long ago, looked like this:

Index	Date	Lines	Subject and Sender
<a href="#">054262</a>	06/xx	57	Re: Searching for a convincing equivalent From: xx [poster's name email and address]
<a href="#">054263</a>	06/xx	32	Great Soviet Encyclopedia give-away! From: xx
<a href="#">054264</a>	06/xx	89	Seeking Nominations for <a href="#">AWSS's Mary Zirin Prize</a> From: xx>
<a href="#">054265</a>	06/x	73	RHINO Poetry - call for poetry translations From: xx

I just click on the number at the left to bring up the full message. Nothing there looks even remotely interesting, but you still have a pressing issue you could use some help with? Not to worry—SEELANGS has a fully searchable archive or you can, of course, post your own inquiry. Responses often come back at dizzying speed.

Now, how do you join? Send an email to [LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UA.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@LISTSERV.UA.EDU). You can put anything (or nothing) in the Subject line and in the main body of the text, write only the following:

SUB SEELANGS FirstName LastName  
(using your own first and last names, obviously.)  
SEE you around the water cooler!

Questions? Comments? (With due respect for the author's utter lack of technicality, please!)

Liv may be contacted at [bliss.mst@gmail.com](mailto:bliss.mst@gmail.com).