

THE INTERPRETERS VOICE

Newsletter of the Interpreters Division
of the American Translators Association



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Dear colleagues and friends,

Autumn is almost here! Let's take time to admire the beautiful yellow and red foliage that will decorate our yards and sidewalks in the coming days. Hope that everyone had a nice, relaxing and enjoyable summer!

Looking forward to welcoming new members, as our membership continues to grow, we need to strengthen the Interpreters Division so that we become more representative of our respective professions and effectively attain recognition by increasing our own opportunities and the opportunities of our colleagues. We see the coming year offering our members, great opportunities to actively participate for the betterment of the profession; together we can strengthen and expand our core services. We welcome your ideas, your comments, and your energy so let's continue this year with renewed commitment to accomplish our goals and aspirations.

We are very pleased to report that the Interpreters & Medical Divisions Joint Mid-Year Conference was held on July 18, 2009 in Washington, DC. The success of this event became a reality with the extraordinary collaboration, teamwork and professionalism displayed by

Esther Diaz, Patricia Thickstun, Administrator and Assistant Administrator of the Medical Division, Thelma Ferry, ID Assistant Administrator, as well as the extraordinary ATA administrative support provided by Jamie Padula, throughout the planning process. We were honored to welcome conference presenters, Rosemary Dann, Katherine Langan, Virginia Valencia and Carola Green. These dedicated colleagues donated their time to share their professional expertise with interpreters and translators that came from as far as South Carolina and Florida to attend this event.

Now we are eagerly anticipating the celebration of ATA's Anniversary in the Big Apple. The ATA Conference Organizer ultimately approved a total of ten (10) of our selected interpreting sessions. The Interpreters Division will be honored to welcome its Distinguished Speaker Bruce T. Downing, professor emeritus of linguistics and Director of the Interpreting and Translation Program at the University of Minnesota, a program he founded in 1991. He will incorporate educational, training and skills development activities throughout his presentation.

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50th Annual Conference
American Translators Association
New York City October 28-31, 2009 New York Marriott Marquis





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Please send your submissions electronically in word format to the editor at NabilSalem@gmx.net. Articles should include the author's name, a short biography, any appropriate copyright notes and other notations.

For colleagues with ATA Certification as translators: Remember that publishing an article on translation and/or interpreting will earn you two (2) points of Continuing Education per published article, with a maximum of eight (8) points allowed per reporting period.

DISCLAIMER

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

Join our YahooGroup@
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Other presentations will offer hands-on workshops covering interpreting and translation in the Japanese language to include a role-playing simulated deposition. Presenters will address market trends leading to many successful careers as interpreters and translators in Korea. In addition, recognized speaker Holly Mikkelsen, together with Barry Olsen, Julie Simon, Katherine Allen and Marjory Bancroft will conduct and open dialog on National Interpreter Certification, exploring feasibility and sharing insights. So let's welcome conference expert presenters, learn from our colleagues, network and enjoy in camaraderie.

We will stay focused on membership growth, sponsoring educational development opportunities with the enthusiastic engagement of our members, as we now begin to brainstorm ideas and possibilities in the planning for yet more successful activities in 2010. This is an effort that will require our renewed commitment. We really want to encourage our members to consider getting actively involved by volunteering within the division.

We look forward to welcoming everyone in New York!

Editorial Staff

Editor's Note

وإبـرحـم أهـلا و سهـلا بكم.

Marhaba wa Ahlan wa Sahlan

Welcome to our Pre-Conference fall issue. As usual, we have included articles by well-respected peers addressing a variety of subjects of interest.

Please remember to [register for the Interpreters Division Networking Hour and Reception](#). This is an excellent social and networking opportunity for you to meet fellow interpreters from all over the world, share ideas and, of course, exchange business cards as you never know when you might need each others' services. So, if you have not done so yet, please go on-line, register and [place a check mark next to the ID Networking Hour and Reception](#). New York has a lot to offer and the local chapter will have tons of information available for you at the **hospitality desk** during the conference.

Considering the higher costs of staying in NYC, you are encouraged to take advantage of this special offer. Aiming at minimizing costs; we are looking into possibly renting apartments for attendees to share. Please let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in order to determine the number of units required and if this is a viable possibility. Please contact Nabil Salem at NabilSalem@gmx.com.

We have included a preliminary agenda for our ID Annual membership meeting. Please review it and e-mail us any suggestions or items you would like to add. Please attend the meeting, participate in the debates and be part of the decision-making to shape up our Division and advance our profession.

Take care and stay safe. See you in New York!

Best regards, Nabil Salem



Rosemary Dann, Esq. Chair National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) Challenges in Judicial Interpreting

The daily demands of courtroom interpreting are complex, and judiciary interpreters face numerous challenges in carrying out our role as the critical link between LEP individuals and the other participants in the judicial system. We must possess a high level of linguistic skills in both the source and target languages, including a broad range of vocabulary in various registers, a solid knowledge of grammar and the ability to maneuver around linguistic roadblocks. We also must have a solid knowledge of legal language and procedures and court protocol, cultural sensitivity, and an understanding of our role in the process, taking into consideration the Code of Ethics by which we are bound. This presentation will examine some of the challenges that take place in legal settings and suggest ways of meeting them, and will discuss how the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators (NAJIT) helps to support you, as professionals.

Carola Green, FCCI-Coordinator for Court Interpreting Testing Services & Operations, National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Ensuring Access and Equal Justice

When untested, untrained interpreters construe words spoken in the courtroom inaccurately, justice is denied. Faulty interpretation impacts the non-English speaker, the judge, the jury, and the justice system. The Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification was founded to provide standardized tests to measure the performance of language interpreters before using them in the courtroom. The Consortium is a multistate collaborative formed to increase the number of qualified state court interpreters. By increasing the number of qualified interpreters, the Consortium helps state courts reduce case time, increase interpreter professionalism, and ensure equal access for non-English-speaking citizens. Consortium members share resources in order to test, qualify, and uphold standards for court interpreters. The Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification.



Katherine Langan, Ph.D. Staff Interpreter/Trainer Interpretation Service, Mercy Medical Center, Des Moines, IA. Interpreting in Speech-Language Therapy: Considerations & Suggestions for Training

While speech therapy may not, at first glance, seem to present problems for interpreting, it can be one of the most challenging of situations. The goals and purposes of some assessments and exercises preclude using some of the fundamental protocols of interpreting, especially completeness. The multiple levels of complexity for culturally, phonologically, morphologically and syntactically appropriate stimuli, are made even more complex by lack of information about premorbid levels of bilingualism for patient, and variation regarding levels of bilingualism of parents and/or spouses, basic educational levels, language usage outside of therapy, etc. Using examples of these issues, I will show how incorporating linguistic and neurolinguistic tools and resources into interpreter training can prepare the interpreter not only to understand the assessments and therapy exercises, but also the patient responses. Additionally, these resources and tools can be used to clearly explain unexpected responses or lack of response to the Speech-Language Therapists.



Virginia Valencia, FCCI – New York and New Jersey State approved Court Interpreter Note-taking for Consecutive Interpreting

Why is note-taking so important to interpreters? Consecutive interpretation demands a skill that no other mode requires: efficient note-taking. Relying only on memory alone can lead interpreters to leave out very important details. Even though most interpreters take notes, many have an "on the go" approach: they jot down whatever images, words, or abbreviations they can come up with on the spot. Many lack the knowledge and mastery of an established system, which allows the interpreter to take systematic notes and therefore render longer messages with fewer interruptions and more precision. This note-taking session will provide methods to improve your skills.





Interpreters & Medical Divisions Joint Mid-Year Conference

18 July 2009 Washington DC



"The conference was held in a very accessible venue although the meeting room space could have been larger, presumably the attendance was higher than expected, which is another indication of the successful efforts of the organizers. I would suggest adding additional time to the presentations since the participants were eager to have more questions and answer opportunities. Overall, I congratulate ATA for its efforts in promoting collaborative approaches to meeting the needs of our ever growing LEP community. Kudos to everyone who made this conference a successful event."

***"It was great
to share
experiences
and network
with other***

Following are comments from attendees to the ATA-Interpreters and Medical Divisions Joint Mid-Year Conference

"The Interpreters-Medical Divisions Mid Year Conference held on 07/18/09 in Washington DC, in my opinion was a very well organized affair, which brought together professionals from both the interpreting and translation fields in a concerted effort to demonstrate how both of these fields are meeting the needs for the LEP communities. It was a very good mix of presentations, which covered the gamut of what was already being done in the field as well as skill building opportunities for attendees in their respective fields. Thanks for a great time!"

"It was a wonderful conference. We came all the way from Charleston, SC. and it was well worth it. Thelma Gomez-Ferry and Jamie Padula's attention to detail and helpfulness made it one of the BEST ATA conferences I have attended. Thelma kept everybody HAPPY at each of the sessions and Jamie directing people to the different sessions. And we all loved the door prizes too and also the networking reception. Thanks."

"Presenters were outstanding, especially the Note-Taking presentation by Virginia Valencia was the best presentation, very dynamic and interactive; Rosemary Dan was very informative and connected with the audience. We got much information from Carole Green, National Center for State Courts (NCSC). We definitely needed more time for Q&A."





Interpreters & Medical Divisions Joint Mid-Year Conference

18 July 2009 Washington DC

"I appreciated all the presentations and also just loved the great neatly presented sessions handouts and the helpful glossaries that the Interpreters Division provided to the attendees. I recognize that lots of time and effort went into this task." Kudos to all!!!!

"Good choice of speakers and varied topics. Katherine Langan is an experienced, knowledgeable, educated interpreter, trainer and language expert. Totally learned a lot and also enjoyed her session. Indeed worthwhile too."

"Thumbs up for a great conference. I really enjoyed the sessions immensely. They were very informative, educational and language specific for translators and interpreters."

"I want to express my appreciation for all of the hard work that went into organizing the conference. Great presentations and it was great to share experiences and network with other interpreters, to exchange insights and questions and just "talk shop."





50th Annual Conference

American Translators Association
New York City October 28-31, 2009 New York Marriott Marquis



Celebrate
ATA's 50th
Anniversary
in the *Big*
Apple



The ATA Annual Conference is the essential event for professional translators, interpreters, and language services providers.

Professional development specific to your needs

Choose from over 150 educational sessions, including a selection of three-hour, in-depth seminars.

Listen to speakers from all over the world who volunteer to share their experience and expertise with you.

Attend sessions featuring more than a dozen languages and a variety of specializations.

Networking opportunities necessary for your success

Connect with over 1,800 translators and interpreters from throughout the U.S. and around the world.

Take advantage of a multitude of opportunities to promote yourself and your services.

Visit the Exhibit Hall that brings companies together in one place to fit your unique needs.

Meet with professional-interest groups providing specialty-specific networking events.

Reunite with colleagues, enjoy listen to music and just have fun!





INTERPRETING SESSIONS

AT THE 50TH. Annual Conference
New York City - October 28-31, 2009

SEMINAR B

Beyond 40 Hours: Matching Extended Training with Interpreter Needs

Bruce T. Downing,
ID Distinguished Speaker

(Wednesday, 9:00a.m. - 12:00
Beginner/ Intermediate;
Presented in English)

Many available interpreter training programs have been designed to cover the basics of interpreting in about 40 hours or less. In this seminar, we will consider desirable content elements, skills development activities, and the organization of interpreter training that goes beyond the basics to prepare interpreters for certification and a professional career. After reviewing the characteristics of a range of extended educational programs focused on conference, court, medical, or "community" interpreting, we will compare and evaluate pro-program design, content, and methods from the varied viewpoints of participants.

Intermediate/Advanced;
English) Presenters and participants will review statutes, rules of law, and policies of the judicial system as they relate to the performance of the interpreter's professional responsibilities and ethical standing. Working in teams during trials and lengthy court proceedings helps interpreters provide effective communication and preserve the accuracy, quality, and uniformity of the interpreting, ensuring adherence to regulatory guidelines. We will examine the degree of trust placed on court interpreters.

A New era of Rhetoric: Interpreting the Inauguration

Franz Poechhacker

(Thursday, 11:30a.m. - 12:30p.m.
All Levels; Presented in English)

The inauguration President Obama was a worldwide media event, and Obama's speech was broadcast live in many countries via simultaneous interpreters. This presentation will offer background information on presidential rhetoric and an analysis of Obama's speech, with special reference to its challenges for simultaneous interpreters. The presentation will focus on a comparative analysis of six versions of simultaneous interpretations into German that were broadcast live, highlighting professional's strategies.

That Crucial First Step: Pre-Assignment Preparation and Research

Kelly Moudy-Gomes (Thursday, 2:00p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Presented in English)

While some interpreters have been known to bemoan the need to prepare before an assignment, others are sometimes at a loss as to how to proceed. This workshop will first examine why pre-assignment research and preparation is so important to ensure quality interpreting (particularly with regard to mental processing capacity) Tips and strategies will be discussed. Areas of focus will include creating glossaries, a short discussion on longer-term terminology and background research.

From Asylum Interviews to Immigration Court

Miarianne Teleki
& **Anna Maria Varela Gill**

(Thursday, 4:00p.m. - 5:00p.m.
All Levels; English)

The speakers, both immigration court interpreters for over 15 years combined, will provide an overview of the asylum process. Topics will include the three different types of asylum applications, an overview of the immigration court, and the two main types of relief sought. They will discuss the role of the interpreter working in both settings and unique challenges including interpreting indigenous and rare languages during asylum interviews and immigration proceedings. They will also discuss how to prepare for a hearing in immigration court, including specialized terminology.

Interpreters Division Annual Meeting

Robert K. Brara

(Friday, 11:00a.m. - 12:00
Presented in English)

The Interpreters Division Annual Meeting offers division members a chance to meet and network with other interpreters. We will review the division's activities during the past year and plan for 2010. Members and non-members are invited to attend.

Mental Health Interpreting: Unique Challenges & Practical Solutions

Arianna M. Aguilar

(Friday, 11:00a.m. - 12:00

All Levels; Presented in English) The issues encountered in Mental health interpreting intersect both medical and legal interpreting theory and the code of ethics. It also involves complex and intimate interpersonal communication with those who may act, speak, or think in unusual ways. There are laws that may even require the interpreter to break confidentiality or intervene. How can mental health interpreters face these issues successfully while maintaining impartiality in order to diminish potential emotional/ethical challenges? Real life case studies and practical solutions.

SEMINAR E

Stories from the Booth: The Practical Side of Simultaneous

Ulisses Wehby de Carvalho

(Wednesday, 9:00a.m. - 12:00
All Levels; Presented in English)

The speaker will give an eyewitness account of the life of the modern conference interpreter based on his 16 years of experience working as an interpreter and interpreter trainer. Topics will include interpreter education, marketing strategies, how to pre-prepare for different environments, what to do when you draw a blank, work ethics, professional standards, conference variables, equipment, potential pitfalls, and how to manage interpreter teams. Professionals working in any language combination and at any level of experience will take home pointers to help boost their careers.

Team Interpreting in the Courtroom: the Code of Ethics, and Personal Responsibilities

Thelma Ferry & **Bonnie Rangel**

Wednesday, 2:00p.m. - 5:00p.m.

SESSION I-1

SESSION I-2

SESSION I-3

SESSION I-4

SESSION I-5

SEMINAR M

INTERPRETING SESSIONS

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Beyond Control: Interpreting the Spanish No-Fault *Se* Construction in Cases of Domestic Violence

Magdalena Sanchez Zampaulo
(Friday, 4:00 p.m. - 5:00p.m.
Beginner/ All Levels; Presented
in English)

As many Spanish<>English interpreters are aware, the pronoun *se* in Spanish passive verb constructions does not address a specific agent as responsible for an action. This construction can prove difficult to interpret, and result in an inaccurate interpretation. In cases of domestic violence in particular, this linguistic phenomenon may alter the message to the point of placing blame on the innocent or allowing the guilty to go free. We will examine the importance of accurately interpreting agentless passives from Spanish to English and vice versa.

Sight Translation & Written Translation by Interpreters: New Guidelines

Bruce D. Downing,
ID Distinguished Speaker
(Saturday, 9:00a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
All Levels; Presented in
English)

Interpreters are not translators, yet health care interpreters are often asked to read and orally transmit written texts or write out care instructions in the patient's language. We will discuss appropriate & ethical responses to such requests while taking into consideration interpreter and patient literacy & the roles of both provider & interpreter. This presentation will reference guidelines on sight translation and written translation by interpreters that were recently published by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. It will also consider expectations and practices in legal, educational, & medical interpreting. Participants' experiences and views on the issues involved are welcome.

Telephone Interpreting Goes Global

Nataly E. Kelly
(Saturday, 11:00a.m. - 12:00
Intermediate/Advanced; English)
All Levels presented in English)

By 2012, the worldwide market for telephone interpreting will reach an estimated \$1.2 billion. Today, some of the largest providers are based in the Netherlands, Sweden, Canada, and the U.K. Telephone interpreting is also growing in Ireland, Japan, Korea, India, South Africa, and Israel. We will learn about the global nature of the telephone interpreting industry, along with the possibilities offered and challenges presented as this delivery method continues to expand its reach.



Cultivating a Successful Career as a Korean Interpreter & Translator

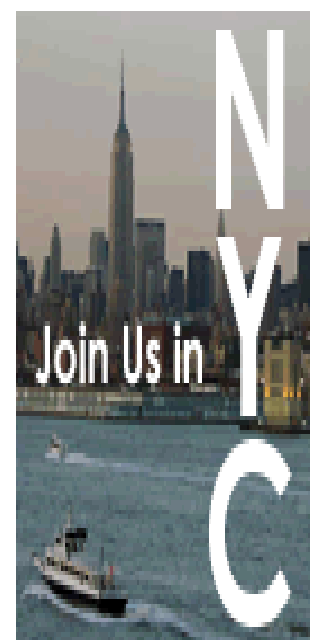
Vania H. Haam (Saturday,
11:00a.m. - 12:00
All Levels; English and Korean)

The speaker will address what it takes to launch and cultivate a successful career as a Korean interpreter and translator. How do you develop skills and set yourself apart from the crowd as a competent professional? The presenter will share experiences of translators and interpreters, along with insights from her own experiences.

An open Dialogue on National Interpreter Certification: Possibility or Pipe Dream

Barry S. Olsen, Holly Mikkelsen, Julie H. Simon, Katherine Allen, Marjory A. Bancroft
(Saturday, 2:00p.m. - 3:30p.m.
All Levels; English)

With the need for qualified interpreters growing across the U.S., the demand for national interpreter certification has gained momentum. No single national body certifies all interpreters. Five panelists will share insights on what a national certification process should entail. The bulk of the session will be a dialog with attendees about the future of interpreter certification.



SESSION I-7

SESSION I-8

SESSION I-9

SESSION K-6

SESSION I-10



Interpreters Division Distinguished Speaker at the ATA 50th Annual Conference

**PROFESSOR BRUCE
DOWNING, Ph.D.**

Bruce T. Downing, Professor emeritus of linguistics, is the director of the Interpreting and Translation Program at the University of Minnesota, a program he founded in 1991. He has published numerous articles on linguistics, refugee resettlement, translation, and interpreting. A founding member of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, he serves on its Committee on Standards Training, and Certification. He received the Distinguished Teaching Award from the College of Continuing Education, University of Minnesota in 2007.

1. Why did you pursue a career as an educator?

As kid I planned to become an engineer like my father, who helped design and build the first highways out west in Idaho. But I've always enjoyed learning and, when I could, helped others who were eager to develop their own knowledge and skills. So I became a teacher instead.

I progressed from teaching math in middle school, to teaching English in high school; then English as a foreign language in Istanbul, Turkey, before completing a Ph.D. in linguistics at the University of Texas and becoming a professor. All this before I became interested in translation and interpreting.

2. What motivated you to become involved, and what have been your contributions to interpreting and translation issues?

At the end of the war in Vietnam a large number of refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia came to the U.S., and many settled in Minnesota where I was. As a linguist I became interested in what I call the linguistic adaptation of refugees, who very often don't speak the language of the country where they find asylum. With my background in teaching English to speakers of other languages I worked with ESL (English as a second language) organizations such as TESOL to develop adult language classes. The contributions I was able to make have been mainly to work with others to establish and improve interpreting and translation services and to organize educational programs for community interpreters who had been drawn into service without much prior training, and others eager to prepare themselves to become language professionals. My focus has been on how to make sure that everyone who does not fluently speak the national language has the best possible access to health care, the judicial health system, and public services.

3. What advice do you have for a beginner, intermediate and advanced interpreter, regarding the importance of education and availability of educational opportunities?

Beginners, justly proud of their ability to speak two or more languages fluently, often don't realize how much more there is to professional interpreting. In any profession, basic knowledge and skills are learned through education and training as well as lots of practice. Think of what it takes to become a professional athlete: natural talent is the starting place; then you are introduced to the rules of the game and successful strategies, and to exercises that strengthen separate muscles and skills, and finally you put it all together in actual competition. A good interpreter training program is like that.

Intermediate and even highly experienced interpreters can benefit from what the classroom, workshop or conference can offer, such as the chance to strengthen skills such as memory or note-taking, to share experience in handling specific linguistic, cultural, or interpersonal problems--and the feeling of being part of a professional community. In any service profession there is always more to learn, both on the job and through communicating with other professionals.

4. What do you consider your professional success to be and what do you like the most of your profession?

My profession is linguistics. As a university professor my duties have included teaching, research, public service, and, in my case, administration. I'm grateful that my position at the University of Minnesota has allowed me to chart my own path to a large extent, so that I was able to organize and direct a pioneering Refugee Studies program in the 1980s and start the Program in Translation and Interpreting in the 1990s. I owe a very large part of whatever success I have had, as well as the pleasure I've derived from this work, to the dedicated and talented people I've had the opportunity to work with in these programs, including especially some outstanding interpreters who are also expert trainers.

5. Why would you recommend attendance to your pre-conference seminar at the 50th ATA Annual Conference?

My pre-conference workshop on interpreter training programs is intended for people who run training programs or teach or study in them will have a chance to hear about how a few selected programs compare in terms of organization, content, level, methods, and extent. We hope will raise questions about ways that training can be adapted to different needs and venues. See you there!

Tips for Attending Conferences



By Thom Singer

Attending conferences might be as much fun as it is work, but there are things to remember if you want to make the most of any event. I have forgotten one or more of these at nearly every conference I have attended, and it always leads to a missed opportunity, so creating a checklist of these points is always a good idea before packing up and heading out.

Business Cards

Even if you only be promoting yourself and not the company you work for, having business cards with some key details can mean the difference between being contacted, and being forgotten about. You can pick them up relatively cheaply from a variety of online and offline businesses, and so there is almost no excuse to be without them. In that same vein, make sure you have enough business cards for the event you are attending. The most I have ever given out is twenty-five per day at a three day event. Had I not brought over one hundred cards with me, I might have had to hoard my business cards, and be selective to whom I gave them out to.

Get to Know the Key Players

Look at the speakers and attendees list, and decide who you would love to meet. Make a list, and do some basic research on them. Who are they? What do they look like, and what do you have in common with them? When it comes to introducing yourself to them, it will make you seem much more interested, and more able to quickly build a relationship with them that goes much deeper than the random handshake in the hall.

While I don't suggest being obsessive about such things, trading cell phone numbers can be a great way to organize a meeting later on.

Find Out About Events Happening Before/After the Conference

Many of the after parties are set in motion long before the conference starts, and making sure to find out about them can mean the difference between getting in, and waiting in line, as some after party venues fill up fast, and if you aren't one of the early people to find out about it, you'll find yourself waiting outside.



Don't Cling to the Familiar

Hanging around with someone you already know can be fun and more comfortable, but it can limit your ability to meet new people. Those that might want to talk to you are less likely to do so if they see you are already engaged in a conversation with someone else, and if that conversation runs through the whole conference, they might never make their move and interject. This means a loss in networking opportunities, and reduces the value of the conference in many ways.

Strike out on your own and meet new people, or split up, and each bring back someone new to the conversation. Optimize your ability to network with other people, as that is most likely why you are there.

Keep a Drink on Hand

I don't mean alcohol, but having a drink on hand can help you keep talking when your throat gets dry or keep you from suffering the symptoms of dehydration. The excitement of conferences can sometimes be a distraction from the other things we need to do, and especially if the event is being held somewhere hot, you will want to keep hydrated.

Schedule Which Sessions You Want to See

Having a good idea of which sessions you might want to see at a conference can help you pre-plan your time, and also make certain that you get to see the things that you want while at any event. While this might change once you arrive at the conference, it is a good bench-mark of how useful the speakers topics will be for you. I avoided a conference because I couldn't find more than two sessions that interested me in the two day event. On the flip side, I sometimes have conflicts due to wanting to see more than one panel at any one time.

Leave Free Time for Networking

In addition to scheduling where you want to be and what you want to see, I recommend leaving some vacant time to spend networking with people. You might want to schedule meetings with people or just hang out in the hallways as many of the conferences I have attended included a great number of people having amazing conversations in the halls.

Conclusion

Conferences can be a great time, but with a little preparation, you can make your time at the event much worthwhile.



Passage to Literary Translation by a Judicial Interpreter

By Diane E. Teichman

The setting was the large conference room of a law firm filled with dark suited attorneys. I was the interpreter of record in the midst of a deposition in a high profile lawsuit against two major multinational corporations based on several fatal vehicular accidents. Having interpreted for over twenty-five years and in countless depositions, I knew to expect particularly sensitive testimony when surviving family members were deposed. It is common for plaintiff lawyers to elicit testimony demonstrating the extent of the loss suffered by the family as part of laying a foundation for placing a financial figure on pain and suffering. I was accustomed to adhering to my oath to render a verbatim and accurate translation of testimony without alteration or emotional affectation. This witness was a South American woman who, along with her mother, had been in an accident. She survived but her mother died in her arms at the scene. In very respectful tone, the witness was asked to describe her relationship with her mother and how her loss had affected her life. After tearfully talking about her own children losing their beloved grandmother, she eloquently pointed out the very special and close bond she had had with her mother. She then produced a two page poem written in her native Spanish and I was asked to sight translate it into the record. With trembling hands she tendered to me pages revealing delicate words

that flowed with passion, pain, and honor.

I looked up into her tear stained face and then to the expectant eyes of the attorneys.

In the obligatory third person I said, "The Interpreter respectfully declares that she is not qualified to sight translate this poem as it requires the expertise of a skilled literary translator."

Court interpreters are bound to a Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities stating that we should not perform services that we are not qualified to perform. Our oath prohibits any paraphrasing or synopsis of testimony. Sight translating this poem was the function of a separate profession with its own set of skills and parameters. As I carefully stated this, on the record, it became clear to the lawyers that I was well within my rights to ask to be released from this task. If they refused my request the defense would have the option to move my translation be excluded since I had declared myself not qualified to provide such a translation. I knew I was taking a risk that the lawyers would be angry at me for the delay plus having to learn that all translation wasn't the same. To my relief, both sides demonstrated a genuine respect for the integrity of this woman's expression of grief. The more respect demonstrated by the defense the happier the plaintiff's

attorneys were. When asked for the correct procedure to follow, I recommended that the plaintiffs hire a proven literary translator and attach the resulting translation and the original to the deposition. The plaintiff's lawyers expressed gratitude for my clarification, noting the added value bestowed upon

***This event
rekindled in
me the
legendary
allure of
literary
translation***

this exhibit called for its careful handling. Still on the record, I was asked for and I provided professional resources of literary translators - all the while simultaneously interpreting this for the plaintiff, who smiled as she stroked the poem with her fingers. To this day I still work with the lawyers from both sides. Codes of Ethics and rules aside, I feel that both judicial interpreting and literary translation earn respect through skill development and market education. I was not going to lower myself to the level of "taking a stab at it" just to save face in front of my clients as so many untrained people do. I also know how much we judicial interpreters are set back when unqualified people interpret in legal settings.



However, this event rekindled in me the legendary allure of literary translation. Before logic prevailed, I too fantasized of spending months on a tropical island while effortlessly translating the latest Pulitzer winner. The reality is that the literary translator's path mirrors the writer's journey, which is driven by passion for the creative expression. Not money. Not financial security.

Mr. Clifford E. Landers, a prize winning translator of many books, confidently answers questions instinctive to translators in a personal and friendly tone that puts the reader at ease. The author covers an orderly progression of practical steps to lead to being respected as a translator and to enjoy the experience. The distinction I faced in my transition between judicial interpreting and literary translation became clear when he noted that "how one says something can be as important, sometimes more important, than what one says." He factually informs translators about the publishing industry, how to approach getting your work published, securing rights,

How one says something can be as important, sometimes more important, than what one says

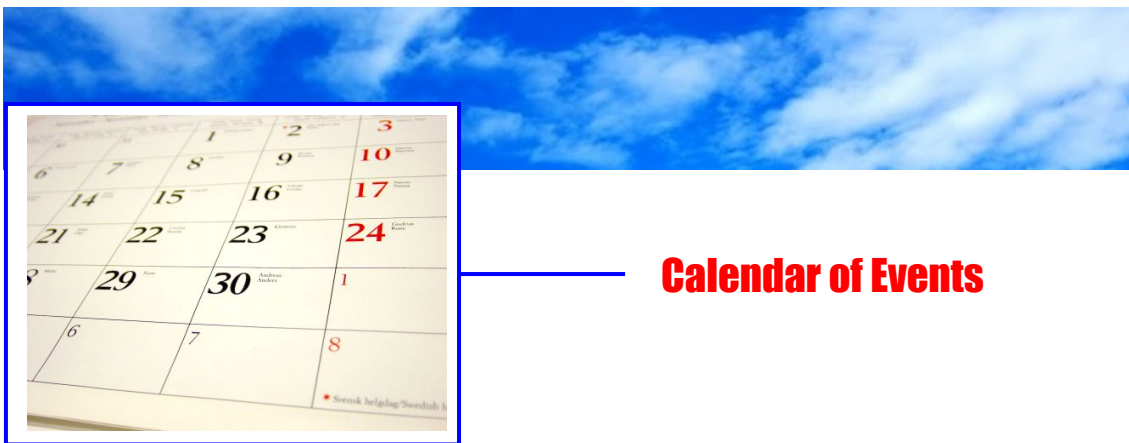
and permissions including detailed information on advice about the unpredictable terrain of the translator - author relationship is well heeded. His translation techniques prove instrumental to navigating challenges such as dialect, register, tone, cultural cues, puns, word play and restricted source or target language vocabulary. They are supported by solid examples from literature and enhanced with alternative translations, a freedom that this judicial interpreter rarely encountered. He demonstrates both empathy for the translator and respect for the profession. Now a mainstay of my translation training, this book serves as an excellent guideline for successful maneuvering while quenching my passion for literary translation.

Having been offered to translate a children's book, I knew I needed to learn the conveyance of meaning to the child reader, a process well activated by the excellent essays in Gillian Lathey's *The Translation Of Children's Literature*. The issues examined cover the historical transformation of perceptions of children's literature, narratives for children, translating the visual, cross cultural influences, geographical border crossings of stories and the translator's voice. The discussion of the issues brought focus to my training. I have to consider the reader's attraction to specific components of a children's book, not because it is a translation of a famous original work, as may be the case for an adult reader.



As noted in Ms. Lathey's introduction, Austrian scholar Richard Bamberger supports the primacy of children's literature, noting that the child reader is interested in a book because of the power of the narratives. I was surprised to learn that historically, they were sometimes redrawn for the translated version. I also learned about the transferability of the socio-economic values and morals of the 19th century author. Still working as a court interpreter, I have now translated two children's books by a self published author and I have three more translation projects under consideration. I am also working on my own writing. I am not quite looking at tropical island property but I thoroughly love the process. My experience led me to these books revealing real expertise about the translating process. I can now state, even under oath, that I will honor an original work of literature with an equally compelling translation.

A licensed court interpreter in Houston, Texas, Diane's articles and lectures can be found at www.linguisticworld.com. A founding member of White Oak Writers and Critique group, she is completing a collection of original short stories and a book of original poetry. She can be reached at speakeasy@pdq.net



Calendar of Events

October 2009

- 9-11** California Federation of Interpreters
7th Annual Continuing Education
Conference San Francisco, CA
www.calinterpreters.org
- 10-11** International Medical Interpreters
Association (IMIA)
Global Perspectives on Professional
Medical Interpreters
Cambridge, MA www.imiaweb.org
- 28-31** American Translators Association
ATA 50th Annual Conference
New York City, NY
www.atanet.org
- 29-31** Mediterranean Editors & Translators
(MET) Mediterranean Editors and
Translators Meeting 2009
Translation, Editing, Writing:
Broadening the Scope Setting Limits
Barcelona, Spain www.metmo09.org

November 2009

- 5-7** Court Interpreter Workshop
Consortium for Language Access in the
Courts

The National Center for State Courts
www.ncsc.org
- 9-13** Nevada Interpreters & Translators
Association (NITA)
Connecting Worlds: Training for
Health Care Interpreters
Reno, NV www.nita.org
- 14-15** El Paso Interpreters & Translators
Association (EPITA) El Paso, Texas
Certified Court Interpreters Workshop
www.metroplexepita.org
- 11-14** American Literary Translators
Association (ALTA)
2009 ALTA Conference
Pasadena, CA www.alta.org

November 2009 (cont.)

- 11-14** American Literary Translators
Association (ALTA)
2009 ALTA Conference
Pasadena, CA www.alta.org
- 20-22** American Council on Teaching of
Foreign Languages (ACTFL)
Annual Convention and World
Languages Expo
Speaking Up for Languages,
the Power of Many Voices
San Diego, CA
www.actfl.org
- 28-29** Organización Mexicana de
Traductores (OMT)
13th Int'l Translation and
Interpretation Congress
San Jerónimo
Translation: The Borderline
Between Cultures
Guadalajara, Mex.
www.occidente.omt.org

December 2009

- 5-6** Fourth Annual TAJIT Workshop
University of Texas at
Brownsville
Brownsville, Texas
www.tajit.org
- 27-30** Modern Language Association (MLA)
125th Annual Convention
Philadelphia, PA
www.mla.org



Agenda

AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION INTERPRETERS DIVISION ANNUAL MEETING

**Friday, October 30, 2009
New York Marriott Marquis Hotel**



Call to Order

Welcome Remarks

Presentation of ID 2009 Distinguished Speaker

Acceptance of 2009 agenda

Approval of Minutes (11/07/08)

Old Business

- 1.- Feasibility of adding the word "Interpreters" to ATA
- 2.- Health insurance coverage for ATA members
- 3.- Consider interpreter certification by ATA

Overview of 2009

- 1.- ID Division Website: new look
- 2.- ID Division Newsletter: update
- 3.- Report on ID Mid-Year Joint Conference (07/18/09)
(Interpreters-Medical Divisions Joint Mid-Year Conference)

New Business

- 1.- ID Division plans for 2010:
- 2.- Elections for 2010
 - A. Review Officers Duties and Responsibilities
 - B. Review Nominating Committee duties
 - C. Call for volunteers for committees and candidates
- 3.- ATA's 51st. Annual Conference (Denver, Colorado)
 - A. Discussion of possible topics and distinguished speakers
 - B. Encourage ID membership participation

Adjournment



National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators

1707 L Street, NW Suite 570 Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-293-0342 Fax: 202-293-0495 www.najit.org

July 13, 2009

Hon. Herbert Kohl Senate Judiciary Committee
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building Wash., DC 20510

Re: S. 1329 to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to State courts to develop and implement State courts interpreter programs.

Dear Senator Kohl:

On behalf of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, a professional association of language specialists in the legal interpreting and translation field, we write in support of S. 1329 to authorize the Attorney General to award grants to states to develop and implement state court interpreter programs.

Court interpretation is a highly-skilled profession requiring specialized training and experience. Even bilingual individuals who speak languages at a high degree of fluency are not qualified thereby to provide legal interpreting or translation services in judicial or quasi-judicial settings. In a courtroom, language and the law combine to demand excellence and full command of technical language, nuance, register, and vocabulary. In addition, there are skills that an interpreter must possess to interpret in the modes of interpretation already established by federal statutes, court rules, case law, and the profession, including knowledge of strict ethical requirements in these settings.

NAJIT members interpret every day in federal, state, and municipal courtrooms, jails, prisons, attorneys' offices, law enforcement agencies, and in other justice agency settings. We strive to provide services of the highest quality and invest time, energy, and money in improving our skills because court interpreting is such demanding work. We see first-hand some of the challenges that our courts and other justice partners are experiencing in the use and misuse of interpreters.

NAJIT is aware that even states that have established otherwise solid interpreter programs have been hampered by diminishing or non-existent funds to recruit, train, test, and retain certified and qualified interpreters. Other states are still struggling to organize and provide reliable language services to the limited English proficient population. Still others have been forced to rely on a scattershot approach to providing language service, often using interpreters who lack linguistic competence or skills, or are unaware of courtroom protocols and their role and professional responsibilities due to lack of orientation and training. We encounter numerous cases in which interpreters have not been provided, or where untrained bilinguals, friends, family members, bystanders and even children have been utilized because the court is either unaware of what constitutes minimum standards of competency or does not have funds to pay for competent interpreter services.

Haphazard use of untrained and uncertified individuals ultimately costs the judicial system much more than seed funding for court interpreter programs that include reliable standards and certification. The lack of competent interpreter services also negatively impacts the efficient administration of justice and affects the court's ability to function effectively. The use of untrained and uncertified individuals as interpreters has resulted in cases being reversed, dismissed, re-tried or being brought to conclusion with reduced charges—all at considerable cost to the courts and the public.

The United States is a diverse country. Every day, thousands of citizens and residents who have not yet mastered English come in contact with a judicial system that they cannot fully understand nor effectively access due to language barriers. We are well aware that this diversity poses unique challenges in providing effective delivery of government services, particularly in the courts.

The continuing shortage of qualified interpreters has been widely reported in the media. Many have expressed their concerns about this shortage in legislative hearings. September 11, 2001, and other disastrous events have alerted us to our urgent language needs and the need to organize our certified and qualified interpreters and translators. Hurricane Katrina and other tragedies remind us of our deficiencies in this area. Yet, there have been few incentives and no funding to recruit, train, and test aspiring interpreters and/or to retain existing certified and qualified interpreters.

Serious communication problems not only affect people's rights, equal access, equal protection, health, life, and safety, but also our national security. Too many officials at the national and local levels miss the critical link between legislated interpreter and translator credentialing and our country's compromised ability to respond to national disasters. Only through legislation and appropriation can we improve access to services throughout all levels of local and state government. For all of the above reasons, NAJIT commends S. 1329 for its recognition that court interpreter programs need support, and strongly urges its passage.

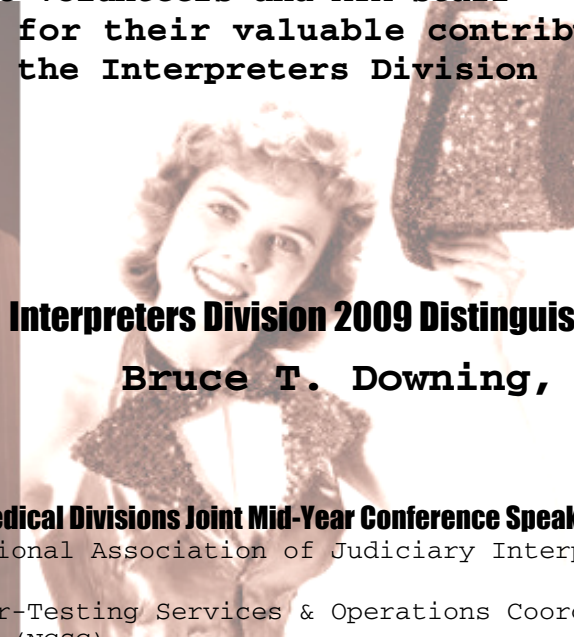
Sincerely yours,

Rosemary Dann, Esq. Chair, National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT)

HATS OFF TO OUR VOLUNTEERS AND ATA STAFF



Special thanks to all the volunteers and ATA staff
for their valuable contributions to
the Interpreters Division



Interpreters Division 2009 Distinguished Speaker
Bruce T. Downing, Ph.D.

Interpreters and Medical Divisions Joint Mid-Year Conference Speakers and Volunteers

Rosemary Dann, Esq. Chair, National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT)

Carola Green, FCCI, Coordinator-Testing Services & Operations Coordinator-National Center for State Courts (NCSC)

Virginia Valencia, Federally Certified Court Interpreter (FCCI)

Katherine Langan, Interpreting Services Trainer-Mercy Medical Center

Esther Diaz, Medical Division Administrator and Coordinator of the ID-MD Joint Mid-Year Conference

Patricia Thickstun, Medical Division Assistant Administrator and Assistant-Coodinator of the ID-MD Joint Mid-Year Conference, Washington, DC

Mary David, ATA Member Benefits and Project Development

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Louis M. Kelly, Foreign Languages, Superior Court of DC



By Frank Johnson

Being Bilingual is Not Enough

Many people consider bilingualism a requirement of any good translator. For instance, Roger Chriss states, "A good translator is by definition bilingual."¹ Some persons go even further and counsel that the "best translators are those who were raised bilingual or multilingual."² Many good translators, including some who do not consider themselves bilingual, probably would disagree with both of these statements. When we consider bilingualism in relation to translation and interpreting, the issue is usually whether being bilingual is enough to be a good translator or interpreter. Can almost anyone with high-level bilingual skills do a good job of translating or interpreting? The natural assumption of many people is that translation and interpreting are inherently bilingual activities. After all, both activities involve communicating in two languages; therefore, the persons who engage in the activities must be bilingual. Thus, the implied question asks whether bilingualism by itself is enough.

Two Distinct Tasks

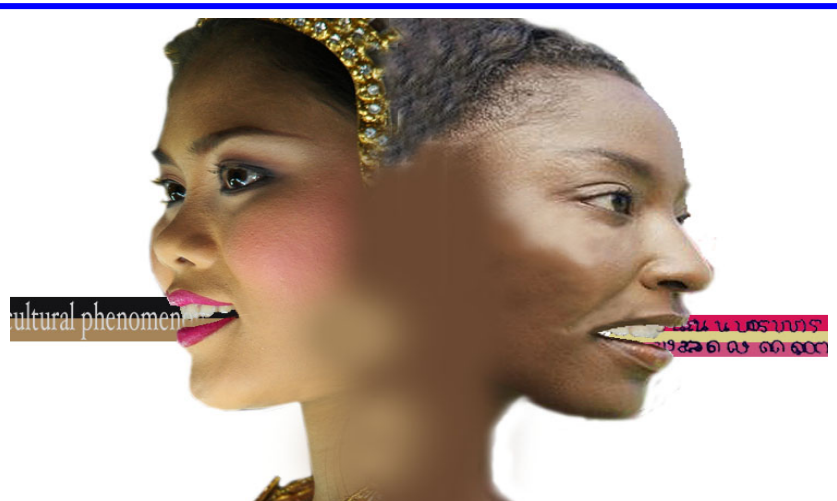
Including both translation and interpreting in a discussion of bilingualism can be confusing. Although some translators interpret and some interpreters translate, the two activities are distinct. When we speak of bilingualism, we are usually making a judgment about some perceived level of oral fluency in two languages. Since

interpreting is an oral activity, most people would agree that a certain degree of bilingualism is a requirement for an interpreter. At first glance, defining bilingualism seems like an easy task. A simple definition is that bilingualism is "using or being able to use two languages, especially with equal fluency."³ Another definition that adds the oral element is "the ability to use either one of two languages, especially when speaking."⁴ This last definition opens the door to acquiring bilingualism at just about any stage of life by eliminating the requirement that one's speaking ability be the same in both languages. On the other hand, true bilingualism can be described as a skill that relatively few people possess. "[A] true bilingual is someone who is taken to be one of them by the members of two different linguistic communities, at roughly the same social and cultural level."⁵ In other words, when among native speakers, a true bilingual can "pass" as a native speaker in either language. This degree of bilingualism is usually obtainable only by people raised in a bilingual household in which both languages and cultures are active. These definitions of bilingualism are not very

helpful in discussing the bilingual skills of interpreters and translators. The first two are not specific enough and the third is too restrictive. In assessing student readiness to take my introduction to interpreting course, I have found the following definition helpful as a minimum acceptable level of bilingualism. For the beginning interpreting student, at a minimum, a person who is bilingual is able to carry on (to understand and be understood) "adult" conversations (conversations about matters of daily living using language normally used by adult speakers) in a second language with a monolingual adult speaker of the second language.

Bilingualism is No Guarantee

Students who enter my course with this bare minimum level of bilingualism quickly discover that being bilingual does not guarantee success. In fact, even students who enter with a higher level of bilingualism eventually discover that being bilingual by itself is not enough.





Continues from Page 17

Generic interpreting is not a generic activity. Interpreters work in specific contexts and use specific vocabularies whose meanings and usage change from context to context, both between subject areas (medical, legal, etc.) and within subject areas (folk medicine, advanced cancer treatment, etc.). The specific advantage the interpreting student with a higher level of bilingualism has over a lower-level student is that the higher-level student can more readily acquire necessary vocabulary and cultural understanding. That acquisition is more of a struggle for the lower-level student. Even the acquisition of vocabulary and cultural understanding is not enough to turn a beginning interpreting student into a skilled interpreter because bilingualism alone does not address communication between languages. Bilingualism is usually defined in terms of communication in two languages, not as the ability to communicate between two languages.⁶ A bilingual person is able

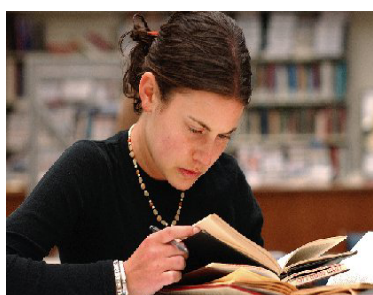
***An interpreter,
or a translator
...has to take
someone
else's ideas...***

to express his or her own ideas in either of two languages. Sometimes he or she will prefer one language to another in specific context.

The ability to take another person's ideas, which are expressed in that person's own idiolect, and transfer those ideas to another language while faithfully communicating the message in all its aspects is the crucial element that separates translation and interpreting skills from mere bilingual skills.

Oral Communication

When we turn from interpreting to translation, we face a significantly different situation. In addition to the inter-linguistic communication skills that are common to translation and interpreting, interpreters have to be able to communicate orally in both languages at the level required by the interpreted context. For bilateral interpreters, their source and target languages are constantly changing. This demands a high level of oral productive ability in both languages. Translators, on the other hand, usually only translate into their native or dominant language, and do not need written or spoken skills in their source language.⁷ Thus, even if we expand bilingualism to include reading and writing skills as well as listening and speaking skills in both languages, complete functional bilingualism is not a basic skill for translators.



Reading Skills

The one part of an expanded definition of bilingualism reading that is a required basic skill for translators is a high-level reading skill in the source language. However, this linguistic skill must be combined with subject area of expertise in the target language. The best translator for a specific text would be one who is an expert in the subject matter and who knows the source language well enough to know when the foreign text says something other than what the individual's expertise would lead him or her to expect it to say.⁸

I have heard it said that a good translator must know his or her specialty well and be a good writer in the target language, and that it is also helpful to know the source language.⁹ Perhaps this is a bit of hyperbole because in-depth knowledge of the source language within the context of the subject area and source text is very valuable for a translator.

Many times regional differences and nuances in how matters are expressed in the source language can change considerably how a statement should be translated. A translator needs to be a very good reader in the source language in his or her field.

Basic Skill Level Differences

For translators, bilingualism is not the basic skill that it is for interpreters. The basic foreign language skill for translators is the ability to read and understand the source language in the specific translation context to the extent required to be able to render faithfully the message of the source text into the target language.



Continues from Page 18

Even when there is an acceptable level of bilingualism on the part of the interpreter or high-level reading skills on the part of the translator, along with the development of bicultural competencies and inter-language communication skills, the professional skills of translation and interpreting (including technical skills) still have to be developed. For the translator, the most important professional skill is to be able to write well in the target language.

Aside from the obvious requirement that the translator be able to read and understand the source

prerequisite is the ability to write the target language with far better fluency than the average native speaker. Whereas the native speaker or writer needs to express only his own thoughts in his own language, the translator is expected to render in the target language any idea that anyone can formulate in any of the languages he translates.¹⁰

Above all else, a good translator is a good writer. It does not matter how much subject expertise or high-level foreign language reading skill a translator has if the translator cannot express the message well in the target language. We could say that just as an acceptable level of bilingualism is a basic requirement and a starting

point for an interpreter, acceptable level of writing skill in the target language is a basic requirement and a starting point for a translator.

A Starting Point

Being bilingual is not enough. For interpreters, bilingualism is a start and a requisite skill, but by itself, bilingualism is not enough for interpreters to be good interpreters. For translators, bilingualism is helpful. For one thing, it enables translators to communicate better with direct clients who may be reluctant to entrust a job to a translator who cannot speak their language.¹¹ Having a combination of subject area expertise, high-level reading skills in the source language, and excellent writing skills in the target language.

NOTES

1. Chriss, Roger. "Professional Language Translators" (Kwintessential Cross Cultural Solutions), www.kwintessential.co.uk/translation/articles/professional-language-translators.html.
2. Hutchins, Jennifer. "Preserving Your Words in Translation," www.wrwritingworld.com/international/hutchins.shtml
3. Merriam-Webster OnLine Search, <http://mw4.m-w.com/dictionary/bilingual>.
4. U.S. Department of State, <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/geography/glossary.htm>.
5. Thierry, Christopher. "True Bilingualism and Second Language Learning," quoted in Burce, Kaya. "The Role of Bilingualism in Translation Activity." *Translation Journal* (January 2007).
6. For instance, Lam discusses bilingualism as "competence and communication in two languages [emphasis added] (93)." Lam, Agnes. "Bilingualism," in *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Edited by R. Carter and D. Nunan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 93-100.
7. Conference interpreters who primarily interpret from their second acquired language (L2) to their first language (L1) probably fall somewhere between bilateral interpreters and translators. That is, they primarily need to understand spoken L2 in order to be able to produce spoken L1.
8. Tinsley, Royal L., Jr. "Translation as a Career Option for Foreign Language Majors," www.mla.org/udfl/bulletin/V07N4/074025.htm, quoted in

Wanwei, Wu. "Productive Bilingualism and Translator Education,"

www.translation-services-usa.com/articles_bilingualism3.shtml.

9. This is my paraphrase of a statement made by ATA President-elect Nicholas Hartmann during a conference session I presented at the 2008 Annual Education Symposium of the Mid-America Chapter of ATA at Southern Nazarene University, March 29, 2008.

10. Tinsley, op. cit.

11. McKay, Corinne. "Keeping Up Your Source Language Skills," www.thoughtsontranslation.com/2008/04/01/keeping-up-your-source-language-skills.

Frank Johnson is chair of the Modern Languages Department at Southern Nazarene University (SNU) in Bethany, Oklahoma. He is also a partner in MultiLingual Communication Services LLC, a language services company based in Oklahoma City. In addition to teaching Spanish and Spanish into English translation at SNU, he teaches Spanish into English translation at Oklahoma City Community College and translation and interpreting at Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City. He is a director of the Mid-America Chapter of ATA (www.ata-micata.org) and is an ATA-certified Spanish-to-English translator.

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Featured Article from *The ATA Chronicle* (July 2008)