

## From the desk of the division assistant administrator

*P. Elana Pick*

Greetings to those who are enjoying a well deserved vacation and those who keep working despite the whims of weather, clients, kids at home and everything else that summer brings!

As promised, our “special” issue with a focus on interpreting is in your hands and/or on your screens. Many of the authors are well known in our community, and perhaps those who are not will soon be so. We hope these articles will be interesting both to translators and interpreters and will further inspire all of us to think more about interpreting and share our thoughts with each other. In spite of the absence of the word “interpreters” in our organization’s name the very first objective stated in ATA’s bylaws is to “promote the recognition of [both] the translation and interpreting professions.” And there has been increasing attention paid to interpreting over the years. To make it easier for us to share our thoughts (and, yes, feelings) about our profession there will be a Slavic Division panel discussion at the 2008 ATA Conference, entitled “Ask the Experts: Advice for Novice (and Not So Novice) Interpreters,” Saturday, November 8, 11 a.m.–12 noon. Please mark your calendar and either send me ([creativeserv@worldnet.att.net](mailto:creativeserv@worldnet.att.net)) your questions in advance or just ask panelist interpreters your questions on the spot. After all, such ad lib situations are similar to their working environment.

I have already asked two of the special interpreter authors in this issue one of my favorite questions: Do you feel it is necessary to do some translation in order to become a better interpreter? One agreed with this statement while one agreed only partially. But both conversations were extremely enjoyable and enriching for me.

Thank you and see you soon in Orlando!

Please send your suggestions and comments to:  
Elana Pick at [creativeserv@att.net](mailto:creativeserv@att.net)



## ADMINISTRIVIA

*Becky Blackley*



I am happy to have our assistant administrator take the lead spot in this issue. Elana has done a wonderful job in putting together this special issue focusing on interpreting and interpreters. Whether you are an interpreter, a translator, or both, you will surely find the articles interesting. And the interpreters’ session at the ATA conference in

Orlando should be informative and a lot of fun.

And speaking of Orlando, I hope to see many of you there. We have a terrific line-up of sessions for the Slavic Languages Division. You won’t want to miss any of them.

One of the highlights of each conference is the SLD banquet, an enjoyable evening of jokes, laughter, poetry, good friends, and good fun! As of this writing, we are still in desperate need of someone to help organize the banquet. We have some suggestions for restaurants, but we are looking for a volunteer to contact the restaurants for information on menus, prices, and the availability of a private dining room. Then once we have selected the location and worked out the details with the restaurant, the organizer will collect the money and keep track of the reservations. It is not necessary to live in the Orlando area to do this job. This can be done from any location. If you can spare the time to take on this responsibility, it will be greatly appreciated by all!

I look forward to seeing you all in November. Have a happy and healthy summer!

Becky can be reached at [beckyblackley@starband.net](mailto:beckyblackley@starband.net)

## Inside:

A T/I bard and his anthem .....	2,3
UN interpreters and others .....	5
Advice on agency hiring practices .....	8
Interpreter fitness exercises .....	10
Ethical interpreting dilemmas .....	11
Political history of Ukrainian .....	14
An introduction to the AICC .....	17
Conference review: The vs A .....	18
Dictionary reviews .....	19,20
Personality: T vs. I .....	21
Poetry in Translation .....	25

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## Переводчик

*Михаил Загот*

Ты людям должен помогать - внушал мне папа строго -  
И, вот увидишь, жизнь твоя впустую не пройдет.  
Однажды я старушку перевел через дорогу  
И понял, что мое призвание - перевод.  
С тех пор часы перевожу, когда в Сибирь летаю,  
И тоннами бумагу день за днем перевожу,  
И дух перевести я иногда не успеваю,  
Поскольку переводу как солдат служу.

Всегда и всюду между двух, все время в середине:  
То между нашим и чужим, то между двух огней,  
То между небом и землей, когда сидишь в кабине,  
А голова - машина между двух ушей.  
Легко свихнуться: взад-вперед таскай чужие мысли,  
А у тебя еще своих с тележкой вагон...  
И переводчик мне напоминает пианиста,  
В которого стрелять, конечно, не резон.

Ты переводчик - переводы, в первоисточник всегда гляди,  
За словом, милый, не лезь в карман, импровизируй - как музыкант.  
Родное ухо держи востро, не падай духом и будь здоров.  
Ни дня без строчки, всегда в пути, ты переводчик - переводы.

А переводчика легко обидеть может каждый:  
Мол, я не то хотел сказать, и переводчик врет.  
Он черным белое назвал, и даже не однажды,  
И никому такой не нужен перевод.  
Быть или не быть, известно всем, сказал бедняга Гамлет.  
А может, он имел в виду: была, мол, не была?  
А переводчик виноват, в него бросают камни  
Поскольку дом его построен из стекла.

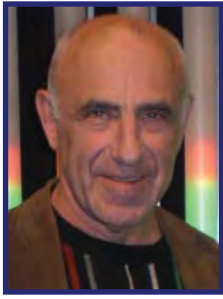
Ты переводчик - переводы, в первоисточник всегда гляди,  
За словом, милый, не лезь в карман, импровизируй - как музыкант.  
Родное ухо держи востро, не падай духом и будь здоров.  
Ни дня без строчки, всегда в пути, ты переводчик - переводы.

А если потускнел твой мир переводных картинок,  
И мыслями чужими неохота больше жить,  
Придет почтовый перевод - и станет жизнь малиной,  
Когда начнешь рубли в товар переводить.  
И не беда, что ты в тени - ты на переднем крае,  
И ничего, что ты свой бой всегда ведешь один,  
Зато наводишь ты мосты и людям помогаешь,  
Поэтому в крови кипит адреналин.

## Благодарность

We would like to call your attention to the large number of really excellent articles devoted to interpreting to be found in this issue of *SlavFile*. These articles are largely the results of the recruiting efforts of Assistant Administrator Elana Pick. The idea of a "focus on interpreting" issue was hers. We are very grateful to her for this and plan to continue active attempts to provide enhanced interpreting coverage in our pages.

**OFFERS OF WORK FROM EMPLOYERS AND CLIENTS ARE PUBLISHED FREE**



## INTERVIEW WITH MIKE ZAGOT

*Editors' note: We first became acquainted with Mike Zagot when a link to the film of his translators'/interpreters' anthem ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVJS9Sq36Dk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVJS9Sq36Dk)) was posted on the Russian translators' website. We highly recommend this short film to our readers; when you have seen it you will understand why we wrote immediately, asking Mike for an interview. The Russian text of his anthem is published on page 2.*

**SF: Can you tell us a little about your background? Aside from helping an old lady across the street (a reference to a line in the anthem), how did you decide to be an interpreter/translator and how did you actually become one?**

MZ: My background is definitely far from linguistic. My father was an engineer; my mother was—well, here comes something!—a musician. My father was one of those human encyclopedias: well read, constantly on the lookout for new information, broad-minded. My mother was more of a creative type. Both of them had fantastic senses of humor. My elder brother, Anatoly, was what we call in Russia a bard, quite a popular one; several of his songs have found their way into the treasury of so-called “author’s songs” of the past century. But instead of being a professional musician, he was an engineer, doing two things at the same time. In a way this reminds me of myself, although I have taken a serious turn toward music relatively recently. The real music pro is my son Eugene: his life is music and nothing else. As a matter of fact, my choice of the translating/interpreting trade was not obvious. At 15 my parents decided that it would be a good idea for me to go and study at a radio-engineering technical school, from which I graduated with a moderate degree of success at the age of 19. Only three years later, after serving in the army, I entered the interpreters’ department of the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages (the famous INYAZ, now the Moscow State Linguistic University). In the meantime I developed a serious liking for the English language, mostly through my love of English songs (Beatles, Rolling Stones, etc.) and my desperate attempts to make some sense of their lyrics—which were quite successful. Well, I definitely acquired some knowledge of English in this way, but it was quite haphazard and unsystematic. Anyway, by the end of my army time I already knew that I would have to be an interpreter. However I did not have the slightest idea of what the profession entailed, I just liked the idea of it. So I was optimistic enough and conceited enough to take the INYAZ entrance exams—and received an excellent on the English language exam! The rest was simple.

**SF: Now for the present: Can you briefly describe your professional activities in a typical year?**

If we consider the past year (2007) to be typical, I divided my time between interpretation, translation, teaching and... singing. Professionally I devoted most of my time to simultaneous interpretation for all sorts of conferences,

both in Russia and abroad. Suffice it to say that I was out of Moscow more often than once a month; my interpretation assignments included trips to Germany (3 times), Finland, Greece (twice), Austria, Turkey (twice), as well as inside Russia. Twice I worked as a simultaneous interpreter at film festivals, in Moscow and Khanty-Mansyisk. I also went out to Tomsk (twice) and Voronezh, where I delivered lectures to local interpretation students. In Moscow once or twice a week I teach simultaneous interpretation on a regular basis at my alma mater, the Linguistic University, in the факультет переводческого мастерства. I undertake some translations whenever I find them interesting and worth my while—for example, the reminiscences of Countess Sophia Tolstaya, whose translation into English was ordered by the British Council for the Leo Tolstoy Museum in Yasnaya Polyana. In addition I twice accepted invitations from music festivals—the Kaliningrad and the Adler—and in both cases was fortunate enough to receive awards. Speaking of music, in 2007 my second album, *Perevodchik*, was published and the video for the title song was made. So life has kept me pretty busy.

**SF: One of the difficulties that would arise in putting your anthem into English would be the fact that in our language we distinguish between interpretation and translation. I gather you do both. Do you think this strange English bifurcation is justified and that there are major differences between these two skills, aside from the obvious of course?**

I am sure there are indeed major differences. The interpreter and the translator have two different personalities, at least ideally. The former is quick, energetic, restless, even adventurous, and unafraid of people; the other is pensive, meticulous, thorough, and prefers the seclusion of his room. Being onstage is usually too much for him. Since he leaves a “paper trail,” he has to check and control what he writes over and over again; otherwise he will immediately be nailed. He works for posterity. On the other hand, the interpreter’s skill dissipates into thin air and leaves no trace. He lives and works in the present. He is an actor, even an entertainer. As to knowledge of a foreign language, the work of the translator may be more passive, since he has time to go through linguistic intricacies, which the interpreter, especially a simultaneous one, simply cannot afford.

*Continued on page 4*



## MIKE ZAGOT

*Continued from page 3*

Of course, life is not a chessboard, and there are many overlaps. I have a friend who is a pretty decent simultaneous interpreter, but he is tense every time he gets another assignment or invitation to do this job. “To face the audience again!” On the other hand, he is quite happy at home hammering away at his computer. As for me, I am fine with both translation and interpretation—I like to work with words, but not for too many hours in a row. Usually if I have a written assignment, I sit at my computer from 9 to 1; then I need a change of scene. I need company, I need people around me, I need “adrenalin boiling in my blood.”

**SF: Could you tell us the story of making your delightful video? My husband wants to know if all those gorgeous girls are really your students?**

First, thanks for your appreciation of the Perevodchik video, I definitely cherish enthusiastic comments from my colleagues. After all, it was done for them. Well, how was it made? I have to begin from the very beginning. I used to sing in my younger years, played a guitar and was a member of a rock group when I was a student. But then I became engrossed in my profession, which I came to like very much, probably finding it to be a creative outlet, so music was somehow left by the wayside, at least, for a while. Then my son Eugene grew up and displayed extraordinary music talents. In the long run he turned into a fine composer, pianist, arranger and even music director. Anyway, we started writing songs together—his music, my lyrics. We even released two records: And the *Light of Music and Dynasty ZA*, not too highly acclaimed, but still, those were steps on the ladder. After a while we went our own creative ways. He found new partners, and I also found new composers to work with. But relatively recently—no more than four years ago!—I began trying to sing myself and was told I wasn’t all that bad. I got easily carried away by the process, and this soon resulted in my first album, *Uriupinsk-Moscow*, which somehow attracted the attention of our Internet pirates and was popularized without my participation. So I decided to carry on and, in particular, got the idea of writing a song about our noble and reckless profession. So the song now has gained popularity among our colleagues in Russia, and evidently is making its way abroad.

As to the video version, the president of a small Moscow linguistic college—where I do not work—offered me support in filming the song. Thus, all the girls in the movie are not my students, beautiful as they are. I recruited a professional filmmaker, and we more or less collaborated on the script. The college’s facilities were placed at our disposal, the students were quite happy to be filmed, and we also used our music studio outside the city (that is where the lake you see is). To make the film more “weighty,” I invited the President of the Union of Russian Translators, Leonid Gurevich, to assist me in “professional” scenes. And that’s the story.

**SF: Clearly you have both very strong linguistic and very strong musical skills. What about the differences and similarities between these two activities? Do you think you would have been more, less, or equally satisfied with your life, if you had worked as a musician and played with words as a hobby?**

That is a tricky question since I am quite satisfied with my professional life. I have a chance to travel and see new places and people. I enjoy the company of my students at the University and get my kicks in the booth working as a simultaneous interpreter. Similarities? Definitely, you need a good ear to interpret well, and in this respect music is a great help to the process of interpretation. Both these professions are public, and I was never afraid of the stage or the audience. I have been working since the seventies at international film festivals in Russia and abroad, too. Twice I was in the U.S. in the capacity of an interpreter of films during some U.S.-Russian film events. When you interpret movies, you have to entertain the audience and in a way, you have to be an actor. I still work at film festivals because I enjoy it so much. As a matter of fact, this particular type of interpretation is my favorite, since it offers the opportunity to play with words, but to do it quickly and spontaneously—simultaneously.

I do not favor hypothetical questions: what might have happened in this or that case? I rather like a line from our popular poet Andrey Dementiev: “Никогда ни о чем не жалейте” (Never regret anything). As a matter of fact last year I have already answered this question, which was put differently by another interviewer: “What did the job of a translator/interpreter take away from you?” My answer was that I probably would have become a musician, but I am fine the way I am. On the one hand I like my current occupation; on the other, my song is not over yet (моя песенка еще не спета).

**SF: Obviously, writing verse holds no terrors for you? Have you translated any English poetry into Russian? If so what?**

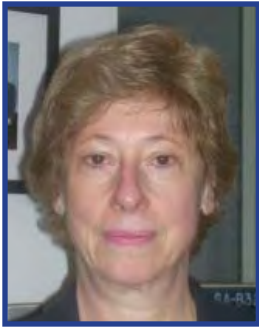
I am definitely not terrified by the prospect of writing verses or, rather, lyrics because I always imagine rhymed words set to music. But as to translation of verse... As a matter of fact, every now and then some Russian musicians ask me to translate their songs into English, or they want to sing some popular English (American) song in Russian, and I always say that I can do it, but it will not be a translation, but rather a variation on the theme. My impression is that if you try to translate poetry, you get either a piece of translation that is not poetic, or you get a piece of poetry that is not a good translation. The result should be something very creative in the target language, but there are all sorts of barriers to achieving this. And that is why I avoid translating poetry. In those rare cases when I come across some verse in my translation of prose, I always ask someone else to

*Continued on page 5*

# Interpreters in International Organizations

Dr. Lynn Visson

Monterey Institute of International Studies



“How many people work at the UN?” runs an old joke. “About half.” There is no question, however, that this “working half” includes the interpreters and translators. The same holds true for interpreters in international organizations, including all the many specialized agencies of the UN system (such as FAO, UNESCO,

WHO, UNIDO, IAEA. etc.), the World Bank and the IMF, the European Commission of the European Union, and the Council of Europe Parliament in Strasbourg.

Interpreters in international organizations are either permanent staff interpreters or freelance or contract interpreters. There are approximately 120 permanent staff interpreters at the UN, while dozens of freelancers are hired to work during periods when many meetings are added to the organization’s schedule. All of these are trained simultaneous (conference) interpreters. Like the US State Department, the World Bank and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) have a very small staff of permanent interpreters, and hire primarily contract interpreters for their biannual plenary meetings, missions and on-site field trips. The European Commission also has an enormous database of interpreters working in some 16 languages to cover all possible combinations, though Russian is used only for occasional bilateral negotiations. The Vienna-based OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) usually hires interpreters on six-month contracts, and its languages include Russian, French and English. Both the Council of Europe and its Strasbourg-based European Parliament (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of

Europe /PACE/) have English and French as their official languages, with most interpreters working in both directions, as well as in Russian, German and Italian as working languages; here the interpreters work both bi-directionally and, at plenary meetings, into their native languages.

At the World Bank and the IMF, interpreters most frequently work in both directions, i.e., Russian-English and English-Russian, or French-English and English-French.

At plenary sessions of major international bodies, the booths generally work only into one language, usually the interpreter’s native language. The United Nations has six official languages: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. Since readers of *SlavFile* are primarily interested in Russian, and since the author worked at the United Nations for more than 20 years as a permanent staff interpreter (English booth, from Russian and French), and continues to work there as a freelance interpreter, that will be the focus here.

At the United Nations the general policy is for interpreters and translators to work into their native language. While for years the “Russian school” (Chernov, Komissarov) of interpretation posited that it is easier for an interpreter to work from his native language into a foreign language—since by definition the interpreter understands everything said in his native language—UN policy has been the opposite. What good is it if the interpreter understands everything said if he is unable to produce a grammatically, lexically and stylistically correct interpretation into the target language? While there are a few bi- or even trilingual interpreters at the UN who can and do work in two or three booths, the basic assumption is that an interpreter works

*Continued on page 6*

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## MIKE ZAGOT

*Continued from page 4*

translate it. I have translated several of my own songs into English, but it involved a rather free interpretation of the text to make it sound good and easy to sing.

**SF: Do you have any anecdotes to tell us about how your sense of humor has affected (positively or negatively) your interpreting/translating performance?**

Well, sense of humor definitely helps. I cannot now remember any particular case when it really helped me out of trouble, but I recall a couple of examples when funny things were said or written by translators. Here is one: a foreign speaker was presented to a Russian audience by another foreigner of Russian origin, and the latter said, referring to the speaker’s wife: “Наш уважаемый докладчик родом из Копенгагена, а его жена – выходка из Парижа”. The audience, as you may imagine, found this hilarious, because in

Russian you can say “выходец” (by birth) about a man, but “выходка” is a prank, a trick, an escapade and a freak—and nothing else. Another brilliant mix up: “The Russian Tsar Ivan Grozny was called Vassilievich because of his fierce temper”. (Царь Иван Грозный, которого за его буйный нрав прозвали Васильевичем.)

**SF: Do you have a message for the approximately 500 Slavic interpreters and translators who are members of our organization?**

Translators and interpreters constitute the subset of the human species I feel most at home with. These people understand me, my life and my problems! Therefore my message to colleagues anywhere in the world would be very simple: be of good cheer, eat, drink and be merry, and do your best to enjoy life. All this is pretty biblical, of course, but true. Also: always be professional, take care of your reputation—which is the only thing you have—and respect your colleagues.

## International Organizations

Continued from page 5

into his or her native language. Under the pressure of the booth and of simultaneous interpretation, the interpreter all too often finds that the grammar and syntax of a non-native language quickly start to break down.

An interpreter in the English booth, i.e., working into English, must be a native speaker of English with excellent passive comprehension of French and of either Russian or Spanish. An interpreter in the French booth must be able to work into French from English and Spanish or from English and Russian. An interpreter in the Russian booth, i.e., working into Russian, must have an excellent passive command of English, good passive comprehension of French or Spanish, and a native command of Russian. At most meetings, there will be two interpreters to a booth, covering the different language combinations. This means that there is one interpreter from Russian and French and one interpreter from Spanish and French in the English booth, and in the French booth there is one interpreter working from Russian and English and another interpreter working from Spanish and English into French.

The relay system used by the UN is the reason for these combinations. At a three-hour meeting, the generally accepted length for gatherings of most UN bodies, the interpreters in the English, French, Spanish and Russian booths work in half-hour shifts. In the French and English booths the interpreters coordinate their half-hours to ensure that each language for which interpretation must be provided is covered at all times. The interpreter in the English booth who interprets from Russian and French will therefore be working during the same half hour as the interpreter in the French booth who works from Spanish and English. In this situation, if the Russian delegate takes the floor, the French booth interpreter—who does not know Russian—will “take relay,” or listen to the interpretation of the Russian into English, and will then render that into French. So, too, the interpreter in the English booth who works from Russian and French—and does not know Spanish—will take relay from the French booth, and render that interpretation (from Spanish into French) into English.

Interpreters in the Spanish booth need to work from English and French into Spanish; in the past, there have been some interpreters in the Spanish booth who had an excellent working knowledge of Russian. In the Chinese and Arabic (known as the “exotic” languages) booths, all interpreters, who sit three to a booth, work both into Chinese or Arabic and into English or French. (i.e., unlike the others, they interpret in both directions.) Since they are working more than their colleagues in the other booths—because they are constantly working into Chinese and Arabic as well as into English or French—they work twenty-minute shifts rather than half hours. A delegate who wishes to speak in a language that is not an official UN language must either bring his own interpreter, who usually interprets into English, with the other booths taking relay, or must provide

### What do interpreters mean by “booth”?

For those not familiar with all the meanings of the term “booth” (Russian *кабина* or *будка*), it refers to the language into which the simultaneous interpreters work, the individuals who are working into that language at a particular meeting, and the small area where the interpreters sit, which contains the equipment—consoles, headsets, microphones, etc. So the question, “Where is the English booth?” means both “where are the physical premises in which the interpreters working into English can be found?” and “where are the interpreters who work into English?” The statement “I do the English booth” means “I work from a foreign language into English.”

a text in a UN language to be read out by the UN interpreters. In the latter case someone from the delegate’s mission arrives with the text and “points,” i.e., sits next to the interpreter, usually in the English booth, and “points” with a pencil as the speaker goes through the text so that the interpreter can simultaneously read out the English text.

Though more than 90% of the work of UN interpreters involves simultaneous interpretation, consecutive interpretation or *chuchotage* (whispered interpreting) is used at some informal talks and negotiations. (Not all UN interpreters have training in consecutive, and the department head keeps a list of those who are able and willing to do this.) At small bilateral negotiations, the interpreter may be required to work in both directions, e.g., into Russian and into English; for somewhat larger groups using formal consecutive interpretation, there may be interpreters from two booths, such as the Russian and the English booths.

What does it really mean, at the UN, to “know” a language? This means perfect or near perfect passive comprehension, the ability to process a language quickly and produce a fluent interpretation into the native language. It does not mean an ability to speak the passive language. While some UN interpreters are extremely gifted linguists, many have only limited speaking ability in the languages from which they work. In the UN training program, trainees are constantly told to keep working on their native language, which means expanding their vocabulary, range of idiom, and stylistic repertory. They need to have an ear for register, and to keep up with the “buzzwords” of the day.

Interpreters wishing to work at the UN must take and pass an exam, consisting of the simultaneous interpretation of several tapes, working from their passive languages into their active language. Freelance exams are set up on relatively short notice (a few weeks), while exams for permanent staff posts are by competitive examination, organized well in advance by the Department of Training and Examinations on the request of the booth which is experiencing vacancies. A B.A. or equivalent is a requirement for

Continued on page 7



## International Organizations

*Continued from page 6*

employment in all booths at the UN. Many, but not all, UN interpreters have a degree from a professional interpretation school, such as ESIT in Paris or GSTI (Graduate School of Translation and Interpretation) at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (California).

Interpreters working from Russian and French into English and from Russian and English into French come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some are of Russian origin; others have studied Russian in college or graduate school; some have lived and worked in Russia. Even though there is a real need for interpreters with these language combinations, some 80% of the work of the interpreters in the English booth is from French rather than from Russian into English. This is a result of the huge number of French-speaking countries (France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, French-speaking Canadians, Francophone Africa and Asia) vs. the very limited number of Russian-speaking countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union (the Russian Federation, Belarus, and an occasional older delegate from a country such as Kirgizia or Kazakhstan). Interpreting from Russian into English can be particularly stressful since many Russian delegates feel compelled to monitor and to “correct” the interpretation. Depending on the delegate’s command of English, these “corrections” range from righting genuine errors to demands for the use of English words or constructions that may or may not be appropriate to the given context.

For decades nearly all the interpreters in the Russian booth, who must also pass competitive examinations, were graduates of the former Maurice Thorez Institute of Foreign Languages (now MGLU – Московский государственный лингвистический университет) and of a special 10-month post-institute preparatory course for interpreting at the UN. Until quite recently all the Russian booth interpreters were men, who have now been joined by two women colleagues.

UN interpreters are assigned to work at a wide variety of meetings and negotiations at headquarters (UN duty stations include New York, Geneva, Vienna, Bangkok and Nairobi), as well as at international conferences. Meetings range from formal and informal meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council, the six standing committees of the GA, peacekeeping commissions and missions; the Disarmament Commission and other disarmament bodies working on issues of nonproliferation, chemical weapons, small arms and light weapons and antipersonnel mines; the Economic and Social Council, committees and commissions working on the peaceful uses of outer space, sustainable development, AIDS, stem cells, cloning, and drug abuse; the International Civil Service Commission, the Pension Board, the Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Law Commission and groups dealing with commercial law; the UN specialized agencies such as UNI-

CEF, UNDP (the UN Development Program) and UNEP (UN Environmental Program), drafting groups, bilateral negotiations and press conferences. There is a wide range of subjects and themes, and interpreters constantly need to keep up with changing terminology. At formal meetings the interpreters may receive texts (and possibly translations of these texts, which vary tremendously in quality), and at most meetings they are given documents relevant to the topic under discussion.

The interpreters also need to be fluent in another language, or rather sub-language, namely UNese. The interpreter must be familiar with such UN favorite terms as “implements, urges, encourages, invites, reiterates, underscores, deploras, deeply regrets, gratified, stakeholders, proactive, robust.” Et cetera, ad infinitum.

The workload for permanent staff interpreters is 7 meetings a week, for a total of 21 hours; for freelance interpreters the average is 8 meetings a week, for a total of 24 hours. Most meetings take place between 10:00 and 1:00 and 3:00 to 6:00, with a two-hour lunch break. Most of the UN document and terminology data banks are now easily available in the six official languages, and interpreters often keep their laptops readily available for quick access to these. Assignments to meetings are done by a program officer, working with a computerized system that calculates the number of meetings per interpreter and takes into account the interpreters’ various language combinations and preferences. Interpreters can check their assignments through a voicemail system and an Internet site.

In a sense, signing up with the UN means going to school for life. Yes, the UN has its problems, including a huge and cumbersome bureaucracy. Interpreters need iron nerves. But they have ringside seats to international policy decisions and learn new things and terms every day. (In addition, they have the right to free language courses in all of the UN official languages.) They also meet extremely dedicated people, travel to conferences around the world, facilitate communication and see the instantaneous results of that communication. While this is not the job Nicole Kidman made famous in the film *The Interpreter*, it is certainly a worthwhile and rewarding option for a simultaneous interpreter with the appropriate language combinations.

A UN staff interpreter for more than twenty years, Lynn Visson holds a Harvard PhD and taught Russian language and literature at Columbia University. She is now teaching interpretation and translation at MIIS in Monterey and in Moscow. Her many publications on Russian language and culture, published in the US and Russia, include works on Russian-English simultaneous interpretation, *Wedded Strangers: The Challenges of Russian-American Marriages*, and *The Russian Heritage Cookbook*. SlavFile’s editors would like to add that at the ATA conference in Orlando (2000) when our scheduled Greiss lecturer had to cancel at the last minute, Lynn stepped in and, on very little notice, gave one of our best Susana Greiss lectures ever.

# INTERVIEW WITH BLANKA NOVOTNA

BLANKA NOVOTNA, INTERPRETER MANAGER  
ASET INTERNATIONAL SERVICES CORPORATION, ARLINGTON, VA



*Note from the Editor: We wanted to be sure that our “Focus on Interpreting” issue contained the most useful advice we could find for beginning interpreters attempting to build a career. With this in mind, we contacted ASET International, which we knew to be a successful firm specializing in Slavic languages*

*and hiring many interpreters. Ms. Blanka Novotna was kind enough to answer our questions.*

## **SF: For what languages are you most often asked to provide interpreting services?**

BN: Interpreting between English and Spanish, of course, is requested the most in the United States and throughout Latin America. In the United States, we also have a demand for French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. We have filled conference-level jobs in many other languages, either in the United States or abroad. This includes most languages of the EU plus languages that are requested sporadically, such as Turkish or Ukrainian, or rarely, such as Thai, Hindi, Cambodian, and Malay. Clients sometimes inquire about languages of the former Soviet Union, such as Azeri, Georgian, or Armenian, but conference-level jobs including these languages hardly ever come through.

## **SF: How much of the interpreting you do is done by staff interpreters and how much by freelancers?**

ASET International works almost exclusively with independent contractors.

## **SF: How many times a year do you call on an interpreter in your database you have never worked with before?**

About 30% of ASET’s jobs are filled by interpreters who have never worked for us before. This includes mostly jobs that require a certain language in a location where we have not provided it before. We strive to assign qualified local interpreters whenever possible. Interpretation services are expensive to our clients, so we prefer the overall cost to be primarily for our language services rather than going to cover travel expenses.

## **SF: What is the best way for an interpreter to make his or her way into your database?**

The best way to get into our database is to respond to our queries through proz.com, yahoo groups, translatorscafe.com, and emails sent to interpreters listed on atanet.org, aiic.net, taals.net, and national interpreters’ organizations.

## **SF: What qualities and experience are most important to you, and how do you assess whether a particular applicant has them?**

When hiring conference interpreters, we are looking for strong interpreting experience of at least 10 years. This applies mainly to interpreters of languages for which there is a great deal of demand in the United States. For U.S.-based interpreters in low density languages, a combination of translation and interpretation experience or solid interpretation experience over a shorter period of time may be acceptable depending on the experience and booth time. For highly technical jobs, we also look for any background in the particular field, even outside language services work, such as a degree or first career. Many interpreters have had other careers before entering the field, whether it was medicine, social work, or sports journalism. If they mention this, even briefly, on their resumes; it helps us make the best matches between interpreters and jobs. Subject matter expertise is a key ASET hiring criteria.

## **SF: Aside from behaviors and qualities that would be undesirable for any job, is there any particular thing that interpreters seeking work with you or a similar agency should definitely avoid?**

What initially counts is that interpreters follow instructions in our queries. When we send an email requesting a resume and rate, simply send that to us instead of calling different managers at the company and asking for an interview.

## **SF: If an interpreter has to turn down the first job or even the first several jobs offered, does that count against him or her for further work?**

We assign interpreters based on qualifications and location, not short-term availability. Many interpreters who are unavailable for work when we first contact them, but still send us their resumes and rates, get a job from us later, perhaps interpreting for the same event at the same location a year later.

## **SF: How important is it for an interpreter being contacted for the first or second time by an agency to accept work under less than ideal circumstances, e.g., during a holiday weekend, or a job involving a very inconvenient travel schedule or other conditions?**

Client requests are very diverse. Our conference staff must be flexible at every job, so an interpreter who is flexible will fit right in. It is hard to tell what circumstances are less favorable, since some interpreters may welcome working during a holiday weekend or traveling to a city where

*Continued on page 9*



## BLANKA NOVOTNA

*Continued from page 8*

they can visit family or friends or do sightseeing after the job is over.

### **SF: Should an interpreter being interviewed make it explicit that he or she is willing to work under less desirable conditions at first in order to “get a foot in the door”?**

Again, we assign interpreters based on qualifications, and there are conditions that some interpreters consider more or less desirable.

### **SF: Is there any particular format of a resume/CV that makes a better impression and opens the door for an interview?**

We ask for resumes to find the best match between a particular job and the interpreter's background. For this reason, the more subject area expertise an interpreter lists on a resume, the more likely we are going to consider him or her for a job. Some interpreters provide a one-page resume and then a supplement with a list of jobs they did. We do not need to know particular clients or conferences, but specific topics are important. Even if an interpreter works only for a handful of major clients, it is still important for us to see a list of specific topics he or she has worked on. We look for a well rounded mix of certifications, such as those from state and federal courts or the State Department, and membership in professional organizations, such as

ATA, NAJIT, AIIC, TAALS, and national organizations for interpreters based outside of the United States. For some of our contracts, we also require language proficiency test scores such as DLPT (Defense Language Proficiency Test) or equivalents. A good profile on websites like Proz.com does not guarantee quality, but indicates the interpreter's commitment to the profession, especially with interpreters in low-density languages, who do not make their living by interpreting alone.

### **SF: Do you have anything else you would like to advise our readers about?**

Especially since we are in the business of helping people communicate, it is important that interpreters communicate with us about any potential issues that might affect the job. For example, if an interpreter is going on vacation and will be hard to reach before a job, we need to know that, so we are not concerned that our email and voicemail messages remain unanswered. We are happy to fax or mail information to interpreters when they do not have access to email, but in order for us to do that, the interpreters have to communicate.

Blanka Novotna, M.A., has worked as Interpreter Manager at ASET International since 2004. She also specializes in recruiting linguists in languages of lesser diffusion. She has a background in translating and interpreting Czech and is also fluent in Russian.

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## HOW TO FIND OUT WHEN THE NEXT SLAVFILE ISSUE IS AVAILABLE

As a result of a change in ATA policy, notification that the newest SlavFile issue is available on our web site is no longer being sent directly to SLD members with some mention of our division in the subject line. Instead this information will be made available in the ATA Notes, embedded, some might say buried, among other news of interest to ATA members and language professionals in general. Chronically overloaded translators and interpreters may fail (and as we have learned, have failed) to open this message while it is timely and may even miss out altogether on reading our increasingly stellar publication. One solution for such readers is simply to request a paper copy from headquarters. We have worked out a greener alternative solution and have formed a Google Group that will be used to notify

readers of SF's availability and possibly (but, we promise, rarely) of other matters of specific interest to our membership. To request an invitation to join, please go to <http://groups.google.com/group/ata-divisions-sld-slavfile> and follow directions. If you do not have a Google account, you will have to open one. Unfortunately, because of ATA policy, this group is only for ATA members. In addition we will be posting news of an issue's availability on the Yahoo Russian Translators Yahoo Club, which anyone can join. We will be pleased to post this information on other groups suggested by readers as well. Finally, if you write to me at [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net) and ask, I will put you on my own personal notification list.



# Mental Pilates for Interpreters

Yulia Tsaplina

“So, you’ve got your driver’s license. You’re still a danger on the road.” With these words Professor Mins opened our farewell ceremony at ESIT (School of Interpretation and Translation) at Sorbonne University in Paris. The

fifteen of us, having just proven our worth in a highly competitive graduation examination, the culmination of years of endless interpretation drills, were taken aback. We felt invincible. After all, hadn’t we just gone through the trials of arguably the most difficult and prestigious interpretation school in the world? Hadn’t the jury, consisting of the heads of the interpretation departments of international organizations—our future employers—approved us as “good to go”? How could we possibly still be “a danger on the road”?

To this day I am grateful to Professor Mins for that short lecture. While at the time I took it as a rebuke, that lecture helped me to maintain and develop my interpreting skills and become a professional. Now I feel that it is only fair to share with my colleagues those few words of advice professor Mins generously gave us. Not all of the exercises listed below are a part of my daily routine, but I firmly believe that it is my loss when I slack off, as from my own experience I know they are valuable.

I take it for granted that the readership of *SlavFile* keeps abreast of the daily news in each of their working languages by listening to the radio and reading the newspapers. The exercises I list below are designed to fit into a busy interpreter’s schedule and are easy to do on the go when stranded at an airport or stuck in a hotel room. I have come to think of these exercises as an interpreter’s “stay in shape” routine. They can be grouped into three categories, defined by the goal they are intended to achieve. These goals are: maintaining an A language, enhancing a B language, and sharpening interpretation skills. (See the AIIC webpage for a definition of language combination and an explanation of A, B, and C languages:

[www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm?page\\_id=1403](http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm?page_id=1403))

## Maintaining an A language

When living abroad it is not always easy to maintain native crispness and variety even in one’s own mother tongue. Without this richness, however, it is impossible to work at conference level, which sometimes requires ease at juggling synonyms and the ability to produce scripted text on the fly. So, the first area requiring continuous work is maintaining linguistic variety in one’s A language. As it is impossible to ever know a language fully, this is truly a bottomless quarry to mine.

**Exercise 1.** Pick an article from a newspaper or a magazine on a topic that you rarely read about or know little about. Read it very carefully, noticing all the words that you can’t immediately and clearly define. Look up the definitions of the words that caused difficulty and write them down in a special notebook that you should always have on you. Read the article the second time aloud and notice all unusual or strange expressions that don’t naturally roll off your tongue. Repeat the expressions a few times; that way when you need to use them in a booth, they will come to you effortlessly.

**Exercise 2.** Choose a concept, such as “grow” or “fear” and write up a list of synonyms expressing different shades of meaning for the concept. For example, for “grow” the list may include develop, increase, inch up, climb, progress, expand, enlarge, etc. Sure, a thesaurus will produce a long list of synonyms for you in a second, but you will hardly be able to consult one when in the booth.

## Enhancing a B language

If it can be said that there is no limit to developing one’s mother tongue, the same is doubly true for a foreign language—B or C. However, the exercises are different, as they stress the development of different skills an interpreter needs when using a B or a C language. For a B language, the focus is on expression, while exercises for a C language aim to enhance immediacy of language comprehension.

**Exercise 3.** The simplest things are sometimes the ones that present the most difficulty. Take a printed ad from a newspaper or a magazine in your A language. Find an advertisement of the same or similar product in your B language. Carefully compare the two, noticing the creative solutions found by copyeditors.

**Exercise 4.** This is an exercise that is best done with a colleague or a willing friend. Take a well-written magazine in your B language. If your B language is English, I would suggest the *Economist*. If your B is French, my choice is *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Ask your colleague to select a difficult paragraph about 3 to 5 sentences in length. Have your colleague read the paragraph to you slowly 5 times. As you listen to the paragraph, try to memorize it as best you can. Then write down the paragraph from memory. As you compare what you wrote with the original, notice the differences. Things you didn’t remember properly are your weaknesses – expressions with which you’re unfamiliar or grammatical structures with which you’re not sufficiently at ease. Put the article aside and ask your colleague to read it to you again once more. Write it down, paying attention to the expressions that caused difficulty the first time. Repeat the exercise as many times as needed to get it perfect.

*Continued on page 11*

# “To Act or Not to Act:” An Interpreter’s Dilemma

Janja Pavetic-Dickey

Janja and her husband, Stephen M. Dickey, are *SlavFile’s* Contributing Editors for *Bosnian, Croatian and Serbia*. A native of Croatia, she served as a field interpreter for the UN ICTY from 1994 to 1997, then accepted a position as staff interpreter and translator at The Hague from 1997 to 2003.

One of the challenges interpreters face on a daily basis is the issue of ethics. Although the idea of a passive and invisible interpreter has long been abandoned in favor of a more discourse-based approach that recognizes the role of interpreters as facilitators of communication, ethical demands for neutrality, impartiality and professional distance are still the order of the day and rightfully so.

In the setting of international war crimes tribunals, the issue of ethics looms even larger and can present interpreters with formidable challenges. This is closely connected with the nature of war crimes, which, since 1945, include crimes against humanity. Representing the highest level of criminal offence, these crimes are defined as large-scale atrocities committed against a body of people rather than individuals. While most crimes tried in domestic courts are committed by individuals against other individuals, crimes against humanity are committed against members of a certain racial, ethnic or religious group. Interpreters working for international criminal tribunals thus often have more than a linguistic/cultural connection with either the victim/witness or the perpetrator of the crime. Indeed, there is a great likelihood that, because of their own ethnic background, interpreters will be part of the large body of

people who have been affected by the crimes in one way or another. In some cases, their own family members, friends, or other people they know have been wounded, tortured or killed if not by the perpetrator himself, then by the troops or armies acting on his orders.

In the case of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (UN ICTY or Hague Tribunal), all parties to the conflict had committed war crimes. This created a situation where South Slavic interpreters who were hired to interpret at interviews with victims and witnesses of war crimes or at trials of war criminals could always be associated with one of the ethnic groups involved in the conflict on the basis of their last name, place of origin, or the variety of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian they speak. Because of this, the ethical demands placed on interpreters were even greater, demanding high levels of professional reserve as well as emotional stamina on a daily basis.

Emotional stamina is something that interpreters rarely take into account when applying for jobs at international criminal courts. Many are thus unprepared for the emotional strain that comes from prolonged exposure to harrowing stories of other people’s suffering. In some cases, this can even lead to secondary trauma, also known as compassion fatigue, which is defined as the emotional residue of working with people suffering from consequences of traumatic events. What happens is that after prolonged exposure to stories describing the suffering of others, people helping the victims of trauma (and interpreters fall into that category)

*Continued on page 12*

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## MENTAL PILATES FOR INTERPRETERS

*Continued from page 10*

### Sharpening interpretation skills

With speakers rushing at 100 miles per hour, interpretation often becomes an extended tongue-twister. Shadowing may help.

**Exercise 5.** As you listen to the news on radio or TV, repeat everything the anchor says. Do this for 30 minutes (the usual interpretation “shift”). As you’re doing the exercise, listen to yourself for clarity of pronunciation, and make sure you pay attention to the meaning!

**Exercise 6.** Sight translation—a mode of interpretation in its own right—can also be used to stay in shape. Out of all the exercises on this list, this one is both the most difficult and the most useful. When you’re doing a sight translation exercise, you should sound as if you were reading the text, although in a language different from the original. Don’t allow yourself to slack off; as you’re beginning to train, it is better to select a shorter article and finish it than to select a long one and abandon it after the first paragraph or stop

repeatedly searching for words. After you finish the sight-translation, go back to the sentences that sounded awkward and find a more elegant way to express the idea.

**Exercise 7.** Attention-splitting or multi-tasking are at the very core of interpretation. Tune in to a meaningful radio show, pick a large number in the hundreds or thousands, and as you listen to the radio, count down from the number you picked in a loud voice. After about 10-15 minutes, repeat the story from the radio show, trying to remember as many details as possible.

This list of exercises is by no means exhaustive, and I am sure there are many more that I haven’t thought of that are used by other professionals in the field. It would be helpful if others submitted the drills they find useful to *SlavFile*, to be published in a later issue. And I would be remiss if, in conclusion, I didn’t stress again that the exercises are helpful only to those who take the time to do them. Good luck, and see you in the booth!

Yuliya may be reached at [www.nyc-interpreters.com](http://www.nyc-interpreters.com)



## AN INTERPRETER'S DILEMMA

*Continued from page 11*

begin internalizing some of the trauma themselves. At present, secondary trauma is mostly discussed with respect to emergency personnel (firefighters, policemen, medical professionals) and care workers (counselors, humanitarian workers, clergy). Rarely is there any mention in this context of interpreters who assist the aforementioned personnel in war zones. However, the risk for interpreters is very real and should be included in the briefing of interpreters hired for such assignments. Until any official steps are taken by institutions hiring interpreters, interpreters accepting such assignments need to make sure that they are familiar with the symptoms and causes of secondary trauma prior to going out on assignment. Another good way to avoid compassion fatigue is to schedule short breaks between potentially traumatizing assignments or ask to be re-assigned to a different type of interpretation if you notice that you have become too emotionally involved. Not only can emotional involvement compromise the interpreter's ability to maintain professional distance and neutrality during an assignment, it can also cause job performance to suffer and, in extreme cases, cost an interpreter months in therapy afterwards.

Other situations that could pose unexpected complications, with associated ethical or emotional challenges for interpreters working for international criminal courts, are: 1) The witness or the victim of the crime may identify the interpreter with the perpetrator(s) on the basis of his/her ethnic or religious background and mistrust the interpreter, refuse to testify, or become hostile to the interpreter during the interview/trial; 2) Despite the code of professional ethics by which all interpreters working for the UN ICTY abide, when faced with indicted war criminals in up-close situations, interpreters may become overwhelmed by a complex set of emotions beyond their control, i.e., fear, resentment, and/or aversion, and be forced to withdraw from the assignment; 3) Investigators or trial attorneys working on a case may ask for an interpreter of the same ethnic background as victims and witnesses in order to avoid alienating those capable of providing valuable information; 4) Victims of rape, which was recognized as a war crime for the first time by the Hague Tribunal, may be too ashamed to discuss what happened to them with an interpreter of the opposite sex and demand one of the same sex, or, because of the cultural stigma associated with rape in some societies, they may refuse to talk to an interpreter of the same ethnic/religious background and feel more comfortable with an interpreter of a different ethnic background, as long as it is not the same as that of the perpetrator; 4) Finally, indicted war criminals on trial in The Hague may use the interpreter as an excuse to delay proceedings or to gain more time to prepare their defense by claiming that their rights as detainees have been violated because they cannot understand the interpreter or that the interpreter is deliberately misinterpreting the content of the trial because he or she belongs

to a different ethnic group. Finding an interpreter who meets all the requirements for each and every interpreting assignment was obviously not an easy task. Not only were interpreting skills and experience an important criteria, things such as which version of Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (B/C/S) they speak—*ekavian* or *jekavian*—their ethnicity, gender, and sometimes age were often equally important for ensuring smooth communication during an interview or trial.

Another challenge for interpreters were the so-called suspect interviews, which lasted a long time (often more than a day), were audio- and video-recorded, and sometimes required close physical proximity between the interpreter and the interviewee to ensure optimal audio conditions. The prepping of defendants for testimony, which was at times conducted in small cubicles just outside the courtroom, could also involve an uncomfortable proximity. Many interpreters who assisted in these situations reported that they replayed such encounters with indicted war criminals in their dreams afterwards.

Fear for one's own safety and the safety of one's family members was experienced more than once by interpreters working for The Hague Tribunal. Field interpreters, who traveled with investigation teams to areas of the former Yugoslavia no longer affected by the fighting, were particularly at risk, as the fighting was still going on in many other areas of the country when The Hague Tribunal began operating. Lack of physical comfort was also a common challenge for field interpreters, who were often sent on missions to areas devastated by the war and sometimes had to stay in accommodations with no running water or electricity. Their assignments took them to former detention centers, barracks or police stations, where traces of torture and recent fighting were still clearly visible. Interpreters with medical backgrounds were sent to mass graves, where they assisted medical examiners in their work. Even in such difficult conditions, they had to maintain the highest possible linguistic standards as well as a well-groomed and professional appearance, which was sometimes a challenge of its own.

There were many other situations in which field interpreters working for The Hague Tribunal were presented with ethical dilemmas to which there are no easy answers. One interpreter unwittingly went to an interview only to realize that she had interpreted for the same family a few years before when working for a different organization. She was demoralized to see the effect of years of refugee life on the family, who were now being asked to repeat the whole story yet again with no guarantees that those responsible would soon be brought to justice. During the interview, details came to the surface of which there was no mention during the first interview. One involved a daughter's attempt to hold on to the memory of her detained father

*Continued on page 13*

## AN INTERPRETER'S DILEMMA

*Continued from page 12*

by keeping his shirt unwashed so that she could still smell him. At this point, the interpreter broke down in tears and the interview had to be stopped. One could argue that by allowing herself to become emotionally involved in the interviewee's experience, the interpreter violated the Interpreter's Code of Ethics. However, because of the interpreter's prior experience with the family and her own olfactory experience with her father's shirts when he was away on business, a very personal connection was suddenly established between the interpreter and the interviewee without the interpreter being prepared for it. One could therefore say that the interpreter's reaction, even if not in keeping with the Interpreter's Code of Ethics, was a normal human reaction triggered by something too intimate to be predicted or prevented. This reflects the simple truth that interpreters are human just like everyone else. While the ethical demands for truthfulness, accuracy and impartiality should by all means be the gold standard to which every interpreter must aspire, situations like the one described can never be completely avoided.

In another situation, an interpreter interpreted at an interview between an old Bosnian man and a young female attorney during which the attorney was asking very specific questions to which she expected direct answers. However, in the cultural tradition of Bosnians of an older generation, the man spoke in a storytelling manner, using long sentences overflowing with detail but leaving the questions unanswered. Through the interpreter, the attorney tried to explain to the witness the importance of obtaining direct answers but was unsuccessful. Finally she tried to ask questions in a yes or no manner, i.e., "Did you or did you not...?" The interpreter interpreted, but the witness, not having encountered this mode of communication before, responded by giving even longer answers. He did so not to be uncooperative, but to show the attorney that talking to her was valuable to him. He responded the only way he knew how, based on his own cultural presuppositions. The attorney, who could only decode the man's conduct on the basis of her own set of cultural codes, was beginning to show signs of irritation. At this point, the interpreter realized that communication between the witness and the attorney was not progressing well and was indeed threatening to break down. He knew this was because he was interpreting only the witness's words and not the cultural meaning of his message. Strictly speaking, he was doing everything he was supposed to according to the code of ethics, i.e., interpreting only what was being said and not adding anything. Yet it was clear from the situation that he was doing a poor job facilitating communication between the two parties. The ethical dilemma for this interpreter was: Should he continue to interpret only the words as required by the code of ethics, or should he intervene by adding a cultural message that was likely to defuse the situation but at the same time would represent a violation of the Interpreter's Code of Ethics?

The easy answer is obviously that the interpreter should not intervene but let the interviewer and the interviewee figure it out by themselves. It is not the interpreter's responsibility to explain why either party is acting the way they are; our task is only to interpret what is being said. The more difficult answer takes into consideration the fact that communication is always a social as well as a linguistic act. Participants in communication are not machines nor do they behave as such. Communication does not progress automatically or in a linear fashion; it is much more a process of trial and error with miscommunication occurring all the time. In fact, the only reason two speakers are able to communicate at all is because they each have a certain level of accumulated cultural experience that enables them to decode the linguistic codes that are being exchanged. Without this cultural content, miscommunication would occur much more frequently than it does, even between two people who speak the same language. In situations where two people are trying to communicate over a linguistic barrier using an interpreter, they also need to bridge a cultural gap, because, as anyone who has ever tried to learn a foreign language knows, linguistic knowledge is nothing but cultural knowledge encoded into a system we call language. People who do not speak the same language often lack the cultural content shared by members of the same linguistic/cultural group. Interpreters are the only people who can help them bridge that gap. However, as the above example illustrates, this cannot always be done by interpreting only the words that are being said.

What, then, is an interpreter to do? To act or not to act remains the eternal dilemma we all face as we go about our daily work. Our role is never easy, and the consequences of our actions can affect many people in far-reaching ways. In any interpreting situation, but especially those involving vulnerable populations, interpreters are likely to face ethical dilemmas to which there are no easy answers. The Interpreter's Code of Ethics demands from us that we only interpret words and do not intervene in communication, and we should embrace it as such because it shields us from taking responsibility that is not ours to take. However, there will always be extreme situations that are not covered by the rules, in which interpreting only what is being said without the cultural content will not be enough. When two speakers who are trying to communicate have reached a dead end because of a lack of cultural knowledge that the interpreter can provide, taking an active role by supplementing that cultural knowledge or incorporating it into the message that is being communicated may be justified as long as it is done solely in the interest of facilitating communication and with absolute impartiality and respect to both parties.

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# The Current Language Situation in Ukraine: Some Historical Background

Roman B. Worobec

## Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet-dominated Eastern Bloc, as well as of Yugoslavia, has provided an object lesson on how political and socioeconomic changes may determine linguistic landscapes.

An important factor during the emergence of the new independent countries was the desire to reverse language policies that fostered language discrimination and were incompatible with the linguistic diversity and multilingualism actively promoted in the European Union as essential components of the continent's multicultural heritage.

Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, there has been ongoing interest in the country's linguistic shifts. Many such discussions lead nowhere because the use of language as the sole criterion accounting for recent linguistic trends has proved problematic and as confusing as Ukraine's turbulent history.

The Ukrainian language had been under attack for centuries, and its legitimacy has been questioned. Since language is the key to learning and is generally an inherent component of individual and group identity, its loss threatens ethnic identity, promotes historical amnesia, and may lead to anomie with its devastating sequelae on people whose destiny is not in their own hands. Such has been the historical fate of the Ukrainians.

So what is the language situation like in Ukraine today? Despite some vehement opposition from the entrenched old guard, Ukrainian is undergoing a revival in a pluralistic society, a phenomenon that is one of the key indicators of democratization.

## Historical Antecedents

In 1667 Poland and Russia divided Ukraine between them to guarantee "eternal peace," and Tsar Aleksei called for the burning of Ukrainian books and prescribed the death penalty for anyone printing them. This set the stage for centuries of cultural repression and Russification, with the Ministry of Internal Affairs going so far as to issue a circular in 1863 decreeing that "there never was, is not, and cannot be" a Ukrainian people or a Ukrainian language. Ironically, job postings for censors continued to require knowledge of Ukrainian.

The net result of such measures was that by 1897 literacy in Ukraine had fallen to 13%. By contrast, in the 18th century, the level of general education had been a source of pride for Ukrainians, with one elementary school per 764 inhabitants. And in the 17th century Paul of Aleppo, a widely-traveled chronicler, marveled that in Ukraine "everyone or almost everyone, including most women and girls, can read... even the orphans receive instruction..."

Finally, in 1905, the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg intervened in defense of the Ukrainian language. The academy declared that Ukrainian was a mature, independent language and condemned the "scornful attitude" to the language as having a "most grievous effect on the moral constitution" of the Ukrainian people.



## Soviet Language Politics in the 1920s and -30s

After a decade or so of considerable tolerance of the Ukrainian language, the Soviet government reversed its stance and by 1933 extreme repression and terror in Ukraine set in, including a forced famine. Some 80% of Ukrainian intellectuals, including most linguists, perished in the 1930s, and what cultural life Ukrainians were allowed in Russia was extinguished.

Concomitantly, a policy was implemented to Russify the language as much as possible. Some easily perceived examples of orthographic changes—based on words in general European use—involved the conversion of feminine nouns to masculine, or elimination of the feminine form if the two coexisted, e.g., *фльота* to *флот* (fleet), *ідиота* to *ідиот* (idiot), *вітамiна/вітамiн* to *вітамiн* (vitamin), *атлас* to *атлас* (atlas), *роля* to *роль* (role), *діяліза* to *діаліз* (dialysis), *діягноза/діягноза* to *діагноз* (diagnosis), *сая/зая* to *зала/зал*, then to *зал* (hall).

Other "improvements" called for so-called "onomatopoeic adjustments"—*соціалiзм* to *соціалiзм* (socialism), *iмперiалiзм* to *iмперiалiзм* (imperialism), etc. In addition, use of the vocative case was discouraged, some words underwent phonemic alterations, and the grapheme for the hard *g* sound, *г*, was abolished.

Such manipulations also favored the spread of various varieties of *surzhyk*, a Ukrainian-Russian language mélange that arose in the mid-19th century in Ukrainian marketplaces as an attempt to emulate bureaucratic speech. The issue of *surzhyk*—originally a miller's term for flour made of a grain mix—became so sensitive that for a time the word itself was banned from dictionaries.

## Demographic Changes in the 20th Century

Between 1918 and 1945 Ukrainian population losses approached 20 million as a result of fighting related to the Bolshevik Revolution, the independence struggle, wholesale genocide and World War II. A team headed by a French demographer found that in 1933, at the height of Soviet

*Continued on page 15*



## UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE

*Continued from page 14*

repression, life expectancy at birth in Ukraine fell to 10 years for females and 7 for males (Vallin J, et al., *Popul Stud (Camb)*. Nov. 2002;56(3):249-63).

During World War II Ukraine's loss of population exceeded that of either Russia or Germany in absolute numbers and, as the American journalist Edgar Snow noted in the January 27, 1945 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, "No single European country has suffered deeper wounds to its cities, its industry, its farmlands and its humanity" than Ukraine. After the war, deportations and purges continued to take their toll, although not on such a massive scale.

This horrific loss of life placed the survival of the Ukrainian nation, its language and culture at serious risk.

### Post-World War II Soviet Language and Educational Policies

After World War II Soviet language policies aimed at creating Russian linguistic hegemony across the USSR were intensified. The percentage of Ukrainian-language general-education schools fell from 85% in 1961 to about 14% in 1989. By the end of the 1960s only 61% of the students in Ukraine's institutions of higher learning were Ukrainians, and a secret order issued in 1974 limited local Ukrainians to 25% or less of the freshman class at universities in Western Ukraine where the Ukrainian language predominated in urban use. Print runs of Ukrainian-language publications, and the number of titles published, were constantly being cut back, while those in Russian kept increasing.

There was also a rapid increase in the number of pre-school institutions teaching Russian, including kindergartens and nursery schools, a development that was a much more serious threat to Ukrainian than requiring university dissertations to be in Russian.

The net result of these policies was that millions of Ukrainians reached adulthood without any formal education in Ukrainian, or only the bare minimum. The future of the Ukrainian language was clearly in doubt because educational and professional success often depended on proficiency in and/or preference for Russian, and Ukrainian was definitely the "low" language in the state-sponsored diglossia.

### The Linguistic Profile today

Although Ukrainian still remained the native language for the majority on the eve of independence in 1991, a significant portion of ethnic Ukrainians were Russified as to language and, across the board, Russian was the dominant vehicle of communication except in Western Ukraine, which had escaped the worst of Soviet linguicidal practices. With independence, previously repressed Ukrainian and other ethnic languages in Ukraine have begun to come into their own, but it is often a rocky road with old-style officials

and certain "entrepreneurs" resisting the use of Ukrainian and other ethnic languages (other than Russian, that is).

Some statistics should help clarify what is going on: in the 2001 census, 67.5% of the population gave Ukrainian as their native language (a 2.8% increase over 1989), while 77.8% identified themselves as Ukrainians by nationality. Russian was given as the native language by 29.6% (a 3.2% decrease from 1989). In 1924, 95% of the Ukrainians had identified Ukrainian as their native language, and even in 1959 that percentage still stood at 87%.

Today Ukrainian is the only official state language and policies have been implemented to broaden its use. Education has become overwhelmingly Ukrainian, and Ukrainian is gaining ground in the media and commerce. Although the percentage of Russians in the population has fallen to 16.5%, about 23% of the schools are still Russian. Most importantly, these transitions lacked most of the vehemence and controversies that de-Russification evoked in some other former Soviet Republics.

It is very important to understand that language in Ukraine is not a marker of ethnic identity, and that the majority of Russophones in Ukraine are ethnic Ukrainians. While Western commentators often speak of a bilingual Ukraine, a more realistic picture is that the population actually consists of three groups: approximately one third are primarily Ukrainophone, another third Russophone, and a final third bilingual and tend to list Ukrainian as their native language.

The Russian language still dominates the print media in most of Ukraine and private radio and TV broadcasting. The state-controlled broadcast media became Ukrainian but have had little influence because of their low quality. There are few obstacles to the usage of Russian in commerce, and it is still occasionally used in the government affairs.

### Conclusion

The prestige and viability of the Ukrainian language was compromised by prejudicial Soviet language policies, massive population losses, and repression of language professionals. Millions of Ukrainians reached adulthood without formal or merely rudimentary education in Ukrainian, and Ukrainian was accorded the "low" language status in the prevalent diglossia. Current trends indicate that the respective roles of Ukrainian and Russian are changing as linguistic democratization and national consolidation advance, and human rights become entrenched.

R.B. Worobec, our Contributing Editor for Ukrainian, received his doctorate in immunology from Tulane University Medical School in New Orleans. After a stint as a medical researcher and educator, he switched to biomedical information management at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC and freelances as a medical editor, translator, and lexicographer. He can be reached at:

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# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone



Let us start with some very good news for those of us who work with Russian. With the help of Lynn Visson, contributor to and friend of our publication and member of the Editorial Board of *Мосты*, a counterpart of *SlavFile* published in Russia by R. Valent, we are working out an informal collaboration agreement between the two journals.

This should entail: 1) eventually a path by which our readers and those in the U.S. in general can subscribe to *Мосты*. (If you haven't heard of this Russian publication, it may well be because it is virtually impossible to get hold of a copy on U.S. soil.); 2) an invitation (see below) for our readers to submit English and Russian articles for publication in *Мосты* and for reprinting of previous *SlavFile* articles in its pages (with author's permission of course); 3) the chance to print new and previously published articles by *Мосты* contributors in our pages. Indeed, in an upcoming issue we plan to reprint an excellent article on the differences between Russian and English punctuation written by Natalia Shahova, who in our spring issue wrote about her experiences translating the English punctuation overview *Eats, Shoots & Leaves*; 4) other opportunities to be determined.

Below is the announcement submitted to us by R. Valent and some excerpts from a letter they sent us. It will be noted that the date they give for submissions for September is August 10. Given *SlavFile's* typical publication delay, this deadline is likely to be meetable only by those who already have articles ready to go. We assume that submissions to later issues are also welcomed.

Редакция московского переводческого журнала «Мосты» предлагает читателям и авторам *SlavFile* предоставить на русском или на английском языках свои статьи по практическому переводу для публикации в следующем номере «Мостов».

Просим предоставить материалы для Мостов № 3 (2008 г.) не позднее 10 августа 2008 г. для Нины Германовны Богомоловой (гл. редактор) на e-mail: rvalent@online.ru



Благодарим Вас за письмо и желание сотрудничать с нашим журналом.

Мы начали изучать сайт, на котором выложен архив *SlavFile*. Также разослали ссылки на него членам редколлегии «Мостов».

Материалы «Мостов» в открытый доступ не выкладываются, так как не все авторы соглашаются на это.

Мы также были бы очень заинтересованы в статьях ваших авторов, конечно, мы публикуем статьи, написанные по-английски. Самое главное, чтобы авторы понимали, что наш журнал – не развлекательный, не сугубо научный, не коммерческий, и пр. – это журнал **практикующего переводчика** (и еще студента, и уже работающего, и преподавателя перевода вуза и пр.). Читатели ждут наш журнал, чтобы познакомиться с секретами мастерства, понаблюдать за острыми дискуссиями (часто материалы появляются после заседания нашего Клуба переводчиков).

Мы всегда радуемся, когда в коллектив авторов вливаются зарубежные переводчики – становится ясно, как решают те или иные проблемы в других странах. Все присланные материалы рассматривает наша строгая авторитетная редколлегия, и несмотря на то, что журнал безгонорарный, напечатать в нем свою статью – дело почетное. Мы стараемся держать планку высоко и будем очень рады, если коллеги из *SlavFile* примут участие в работе «Мостов». В дальнейшем можно будет запланировать какой-либо совместный проект.

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For those of you who do not recognize this column without my random ramblings, here are a few.

I have been spontaneously called *Lidochka* by Russian speakers all my life. No less now than when I was very young. Even in situations where others are not addressed with the most diminutive of diminutives. I never thought to wonder much about this and, if anything, found it rather flattering. I did that is, until I read the following in a *New Yorker* story, "The Repatriate," by Sana Krasikov. "Her friend had been going by *Lidochka*, not *Lida*, all her life—a little girl's name that had followed her into her forties because of her gentleness and her reputation for being short on common sense." Oh well, why try to argue when the shoe fits, and gentle is certainly a good thing to be.

Last month some time, *The Washington Post* ran a photograph of Dmitry Medvedev at a post-inauguration service conducted by the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church. The photo gave me a "what's wrong with this picture"? feeling, and I kept trying to figure out why. I more or less ruled out the hypothesis that I that I was not used to seeing pictures of Russian authorities in churches. I wasn't, but felt sure there was something more underlying my sense of discordance. Finally I figured it out. I had never before seen a picture of a modern Russian official in a suit that actually fit him well.

*Continued on page 17*

# An Introduction to The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)

Julia Poger



The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) is a professional association for all conference interpreters, both staff and freelance. The Association was established by 35 interpreters in 1953; since then, AIIC has grown to represent over 2,800 active members around the world and is still growing!

AIIC works for its members, and for conference interpreters all over the world, by negotiating collective agreements with International Organizations on rates and working conditions (which apply to all interpreters, members and non-members); by setting standards, promoting best practices in training, monitoring market developments and new technologies; and by sharing this information with interpreters and those who benefit from their work. By expanding membership, especially in parts of the world where the profession is now growing rapidly, and holding regional meetings and training sessions, AIIC aims to improve the lot of all interpreters.

Membership in a large professional association such as AIIC is not automatic; it thus confers a label of quality, professionalism, and integrity and provides third-party certification of competence in language combinations to prospective employers. A prospective member must obtain signatures of his or her peers attesting to the fact that the candidate is a conference interpreter and that s/he upholds AIIC working conditions and standards.

Interpreters also benefit from a directory and a professional network that help them obtain contracts. Moreover, the association has taken positions regarding professional ethics and working conditions that interpreters are encouraged to cite to defend their interests. This can be particularly important when negotiating, since the fact that a large professional association supports certain positions adds

legitimacy, for example, to the requirement that an interpreter be paid an extra fee when his or her voice will be broadcast on television, radio, or the internet.

A particularly noteworthy achievement is our success in convincing the U.S. government that AIIC-established basic working conditions are legitimate. To achieve this important goal, AIIC hired lawyers and produced witnesses from around the world, conference interpreters expert in their field. Together they convinced the FTC judges that AIIC's standards for working conditions safeguard interpreters' health and promote quality interpretation, while in no way undermining competition. Since that time working conditions for conference interpreters have been spelled out on the ASTM website, under ASTM F2089-01 Standard Guide for Language Interpretation Services.

On a more personal note, I had wanted to be an interpreter since I started learning my first foreign language in grade school. After working as a freelance interpreter for several years, it was exciting to have a "stamp of approval" from the organization that has worked for us almost as long as our profession of conference interpreter has existed. Since then, membership has also given me some unexpected benefits, such as meeting people from far-flung places who can provide information, for example, on the best place to stay during an upcoming conference, and having clients consider me an experienced specialist (and giving me a higher rate!) because my name and qualifications appear in the AIIC Yearbook.

If you are interested in finding out more about the association, please visit [www.aiic.net](http://www.aiic.net), and look through the materials/services on offer.

Julia Poger has been a freelance interpreter since 1987 when she completed a course in Conference Interpreting (Russian and French) at the Monterey Institute. She is a U.S. Department of State contracting conference interpreter. She lives in Europe where, in addition to freelance interpreting, she teaches interpretation in Belgium and England. She can be reached at [j.poger@aiic.net](mailto:j.poger@aiic.net).

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## SLAVFILE LITE *Continued from page 16*

A friend of mine teaches a college class in translation to a group of "heritage speakers" of Russian (students whose native language is Russian but who came to the U.S. as children). I have frequently heard her complain, not of their lack of intelligence, but of their lack of knowledge of Russian and general culture. The other day she sent me an email message to tell me that one of her students translated "he crossed the Rubicon" as "он сломал кубик Рубика." Point taken.

We have a collection of refrigerator magnets that are reproductions of Soviet *агитпрон* posters. You probably know the ones I mean. One of these proclaims: *Если книга читать не будешь, скоро грамоту забудешь*. The other day it occurred to me to wonder what the young woman in the headscarf is so avidly reading surrounded by this slogan. After my March cataract operation, small print holds no terror for me. The answer: "10 дней, которые потрясли мир"—a translation from English!



# CONFERENCE PRESENTATION REVIEW

## “Tips for the Imperfectly Articulate”

Presented by Lydia Stone and Vladimir Kovner, ATA Annual Conference, San Francisco, November 2007

Reviewed by Elena Bogdanovich-Werner

It is common knowledge that the use of English articles has always presented a problem for native speakers of Russian. No matter how fluent and competent they are in English, they are never sure which article to use. Definite or indefinite? Article or no article? In the majority of situations, rules seem impossible to apply. Intuition does not work either. When you grow up speaking Russian, intuitions about articles are hard to come by and frequently wrong.

Linguists explain this phenomenon by pointing to the fact that Russian does not have the grammatical category of definiteness. In English, definiteness, or its cognitive correlate identifiability, is formally associated with nominal phrases (NP) via contrast between definite and indefinite articles and the absence of an article. Markers of definiteness signal whether or not the referent of the NP is assumed by the speaker to be identifiable to the addressee. Through the NP, the speaker can indicate whether the referent is specific, general, whether it is being mentioned for the first time or has already been mentioned, whether it is unique, one of a class, etc.

In Russian, identifiability is not grammaticalized, so Russian does not have articles. Of course, this does not mean that speakers of Russian are not familiar with the concept of identifiability. There are lexical and syntactical ways to express the status of referents in terms of identifiability: word order, the indefinite particle “-то”, the demonstrative pronouns “этот”, “тот”, number “один/одна”, etc.

Theoretical explanation definitely helps Russian speakers feel better about their article mistakes, justifying their inevitability. But, sadly, it provides little practical help.

There are certainly rules of article usage in every English textbook, but they are usually out-dated and do not cover all the variety of language usage on all its levels. The cases that do not fall under any of the categories specified for article usage, such as specific/general, countable/uncountable, mentioned for the first time/subsequent, unique/one of a class, etc., are abundant and designated as exceptions. Unfortunately, there seem to be more exceptions than cases that conform to the general rules.

In the light of all these difficulties, the Russian-speaking members of the SLD, in particular, welcomed Lydia Stone and Vladimir Kovner's presentation, which summarized the results of their study of the use of English articles by Russian speakers of English. Typical errors were identified, analyzed, and explained, and tips for correct usage of articles were provided. In addition to giving general instructions on what to focus your attention on when choosing the article, the presenters provided very detailed description of the instances of article use with particular words and phrases, something I have not seen in any English textbook so far.

The following ideas and suggestions were the most valuable for me:

- 1) I absolutely agree that guidance that relies on distinguishing the “general” from the “specific” is very misleading. For example, the rules tell us to use “the” with NPs that are identified as specific. There are many instances, however, when an indefinite article may be used to identify both specific and non-specific referents named by the noun.

In the sentence, *I am looking for a book*, the indefinite article may signal either an identifiable or non-identifiable referent, as shown by the following anaphoric references: *I found it. I found the book I was looking for.* (specific) or *I found one. I found a book.* (non-specific).

- 2) The explanation of how to use articles with NPs that include modifiers (descriptive adjectives, quantifiers expressed by pronouns, numbers and nouns) was very helpful indeed. I expect many Russian speakers of English habitually make mistakes in phrases like *a hundred times* or *a thousand rubles* (erroneously assuming the articles should agree with the words *times* or *rubles*, which are in the plural).
- 3) The presentation threw considerable light on how to use articles with abstract nouns. Situations with abstract nouns can also be viewed as specific or non-specific. Rules in textbooks usually advise us not to use articles with abstract nouns, but, as the following examples demonstrate, this is not always correct.

*Time is flying.* v. *What was the time when the accident occurred?* v. *We had a great time in Russia.*

I very much liked the approach to presenting tips in separate sections like *When do we use no (0) article.* or *Article Rules for Names.* I find this layout very useful for practical use as a reference. And last but not least, a very attractive feature of this presentation was the fact that the study was conducted jointly by a native English and a native Russian speaker. In my opinion, this makes the work even more valuable and reliable, since it helps to avoid possible ambiguities and misunderstandings in processing the research data. I would highly recommend considering it for publication for the benefit of many Russian students of English.

Note: all the material from this presentation is available on SLD's pages on the ATA website: [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/resources.htm](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/resources.htm) Click on the link to “For the imperfectly articulate.”

Elena Bogdanovich Werner is currently a professor, freelance translator and court certified interpreter in the states of Oregon and Washington. She earned her Ph.D in Linguistics from Moscow Pedagogical University and has thirty years of experience in teaching as well as in translating, editing and interpreting. She is a former administrator of the Slavic Languages Division and can be reached at [elena@hillsdalecorp.com](mailto:elena@hillsdalecorp.com)

## Большой англо-русский, русско-английский словарь

### МНИМЫХ ДРУЗЕЙ ПЕРЕВОДЧИКА

Reviewed by Elena McDonnell



**Author:** Alexander Pakhotin  
**Publisher:** Издатель Карева (Moscow)  
**Publication Date:** 2006  
**Price:** \$20.45 at Eastview.com,  
 92 rubles at Bolero.ru  
**ISBN:** 5980350128  
**Number of Pages:** 303

I am not sure what I was expecting from *Большой англо-русский, русско-английский словарь мнимых друзей переводчика*, but it certainly was not what I discovered when I opened the book and flipped through its pages. After my first glance, the only word that came to my mind was the Russian *самодеятельность*, i.e. amateurishness. This dictionary was not compiled by a team of lexicographers, but by one person, and I am sorry to say that this definitely shows. But things only got better (or I suppose I should say worse) as I looked at this dictionary in more detail.

First, I could not help but question the title itself. *Большой?* The dictionary contains about 2,000 entries. I am not sure about the conventions and exactly how many entries a dictionary needs in order to be called “большой,” but I have checked some of the biggest dictionaries I have in my personal library (about 200,000 words each), and none of them boasts of being “comprehensive.” Second, the author uses the term “мнимые друзья переводчика.” The original term that has long been used in Russian linguistics and lexicography is “ложные друзья переводчика,” or “межъязыковые омонимы” (words that sound and/or look similar in Russian and English, but have different meanings). Pakhotin does not explain why he has chosen to change the adjective here, but he often follows his new term by the original term in parentheses: “мнимые (ложные) друзья переводчика.” Since the meanings of these two adjectives are virtually the same, this does not seem to add anything to the original term, but only makes it more cumbersome. Finally, even the term *словарь* (dictionary) just does not seem right here. This work seems more like a collection of the author’s notes, poorly structured and at times highly subjective, with complicated cross-referencing.

Often what Pakhotin includes in his entries are simply his observations of mistranslations made by one or more translators, without regard to their frequency. For example, the “Arabian Nights” entry in the English-Russian part of the dictionary reads as follows: “В известном телесериале, “Секс в большом городе,” это словосочетание перевели на русский язык как *Арабские ночи*. Именно поэтому хочется сказать переводчикам, что это словосочетание уже давно переводится на русский язык как *Тысяча и одна ночь*, если речь идет о книге. А если это словосочетание употребляется в переносном смысле то его следу-

ет переводить словами *сказочный, фантастический, необыкновенный* и т.д.” (sic) (p. 19).

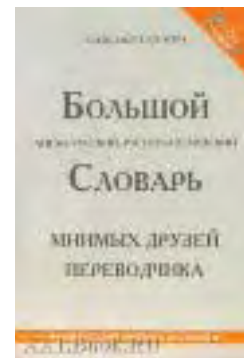
I am also always suspicious of books on languages that are full of misspellings and punctuation errors. And these are abundant in Pakhotin’s dictionary, which also includes some factual errors. For example, the author explains the Russian “аппендицит” (воспаление аппендикса) as “операция по удалению аппендикса” (p. 18). But by far my “favorite” mistake in this dictionary is the author’s comment on the word “chest”: “Это слово приведено в данном словаре только с одной целью – показать, что даже самые простые английские слова могут переводиться на русский язык ошибочно. Вспомните знаменитую пиратскую песню из *Острова сокровищ*. Там поется: “... и бутылку рома на сундук мертвеца.” Боюсь, что английское слово “chest” в данной песне имеет значение *грудная клетка, грудь*. Соответственно, переводить надо “... и бутылку рома на грудь мертвеца (*покойника*)” (sic) (p. 35). Even the original song here is quoted incorrectly (the correct version is “Пятнадцать человек на сундук мертвеца – йо-хо-хо и бутылка рому!”), not to mention the fact that his main point is mistaken. (Editor’s note: Dead Man’s Chest is evidently neither a receptacle nor a part of the human anatomy, but a reef in the Caribbean.)

“Список похожих слов” (A list of similar-sounding/similar-looking words) at the end of the dictionary is better structured and seems quite useful, but even here the scope of work is not clearly defined. For example, the pair “cognac-brandy” represents a clearly semantic issue, not a “false friends” issue.

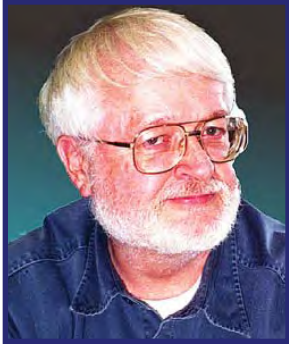
Occasionally a reader might come upon some useful information. For example, the entry on “excuse me (I am sorry/pardon me)” (p. 60) could be quite helpful for a Russian speaker, but here again, it goes more into the domain of semantics and seems out of place in the kind of dictionary that Pakhotin’s work claims to be.

I am not familiar with any of the previous dictionaries of translators’ false friends published in Russia, but I would doubt that this new one would be an improvement over any of them. I would not consider this dictionary an academic work, but rather one person’s notes (again, quite subjective and at times inaccurate) on his experience translating and observing existing translations.

Elena McDonnell is a freelance English-Russian translator residing in San Diego, CA. She also works as a Translation Tools Specialist for Accents US, Inc. You can contact Elena at [projects.russian@gmail.com](mailto:projects.russian@gmail.com)







## KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook

Reviewed by Roy Cochran

**Editor:** Vasilii Mitrokhin

**Publisher:** Routledge, Abingdon, England; **Publication date:** 2006

**Price:** \$44.96–\$77.11, depending on cover and source; **ISBN:** 0-7146-8235-7

**Available from:** Amazon.com; BookRenter.com, Barnes and Noble; more

**Number of pages:** 451; **Number of entries:** Not given

Managing to make his way to Britain, Vasilii Mitrokhin provided a treasure trove of information about the infamous KGB when, in 1999, he first became known to the general public through the publication of his *The Mitrokhin Archive*. According to the Wilson Center's biography of him (see <http://tinyurl.com/5n6q5j>), Mitrokhin was born March 3, 1922, in Yurasovo, Ryazan Oblast. By 1944 he had become a lawyer, and his work as a "police lawyer" brought him to the attention of the KGB's predecessor organization. After graduation from the Higher Diplomatic School in Moscow, Mitrokhin was assigned to the Committee of Information and, subsequently, sent on various intelligence field assignments. Back in Moscow, from 1972 on, he was involved in transferring documents from the old KGB headquarters. Secretly and at great risk, he made extensive manuscript notes about the papers that passed through his hands. After retiring in 1984, he somehow got the attention of the British Secret Intelligence Service, who smuggled Mitrokhin and his family out of the Soviet Union in 1992.

"In all, he produced 10 volumes of typescript, together with some 30 envelopes of unprocessed manuscript notes," the biography continues. There were yet to be 26 more volumes prepared from those notes after his defection. He continued his efforts, collating his papers and publishing his works until his death in early 2004.

*KGB Lexicon* was published only 2 years before his death and, although it is called a handbook, it is really more of a dictionary. The dictionary consists of two parts: Intelligence Lexicon and Counter-Intelligence Lexicon. Apparently Mitrokhin felt the book would be more valuable to historians than to linguists, so he separated it in this way. In addition, the Latin alphabet is used for all entries, albeit in Cyrillic alphabetical order! How odd this separation seems to this reviewer, who would have preferred

a one-part dictionary in Cyrillic and, for the historians and scholars, the Latin transliteration immediately following the entry. After all, the entries would have appeared in the same location in the book.

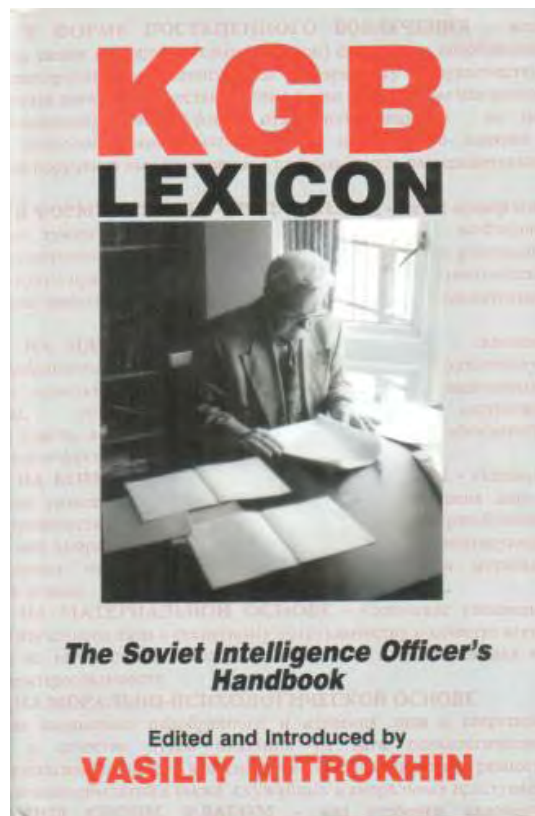
While there are no head terms, it is easy enough to look up a term (although, of course, in Latin transliteration). Terms are in bold, followed by a dash and the translation, also in bold. Beneath, in plain font, is an explanation of what the term actually means for the historian and scholar. In addition, terms that do not have a direct entry can be found by using the very comprehensive index. There actually are two, one in transliterated Russian and another to look up English terms appearing in the work.

While this dictionary makes a valuable resource for anyone who may be translating documents from the Cold War or works of fiction based on KGB activities, there are some omissions. This reviewer has been given to understand many times that *мокрые дела* was a term used for

assassinations or sabotage, but it is not found here. In addition, there is no reference to *пятый отдел*, the department supposedly responsible for *мокрые дела*. Or was it the GRU who used these terms? But a search of the Web reveals the Fifth Department was responsible for something else in the GRU. On the other hand, terms like *дезинформация* and *резидентура* appear in the dictionary.

There are numerous entries not easily found elsewhere. One such example is *микродот*, *microdot*, "a miniature image of any document..." which is translated quite differently, both from and to Russian, in other dictionaries.

*Шифровка*, meaning *cipher communication*, is another term not easily located in conventional dictionaries. Yet another unusual term is *легенда*, *legend*, a term familiar to most John Le Carré fans. While easily



*Continued on page 24*



# How to tell interpreters and translators apart: Do we belong to one or two species?

*Lydia Razran Stone*

**INTRODUCTION, METHOD:** When planning this “focus on interpreting” issue, we conceived the idea of trying to empirically test the hypothesis that, although clearly in allied professions, interpreters and translators have quite different personalities—a commonly held belief. I chose the popular Myers-Briggs test as the instrument for assessing personalities. This test is widely used, comes in various short and painless forms available and scored on the Internet and, most important, has strong face validity, i.e., the test makes a good deal of common sense. It is hard to argue, for instance, that someone who says yes to a preponderance of questions on the order of: “I recharge my energy by being with people,” or “I have a wide circle of friends,” is likely to be an extravert. It was trivial to locate a number of short, free Myers-Briggs tests on the Internet. The one I wound up selecting (<http://www.kisa.ca/personality/>) was particularly appealing because it allowed people to choose the answer “I’m really in between” for each question. The next step was to find translator and interpreter volunteers to take the test. After an appeal in the Spring SlavFile brought disappointing results, we recruited more participants on the Yahoo Russian Translators Club and through ProZ (thank you, Elana), and loyal SLD member Tanya Gesse put out a call to AIIC members for me when the interpreter sample fell short. Participants were asked to send us their results and tell us if they were primarily translators or interpreters or, if both, which activity they found more compatible or comfortable. As of this writing we have received usable results from 44 people we classified as translators and 33 classified as interpreters. This is enough subjects to produce interesting data but for really reliable results, it would certainly be desirable to have a larger sample; additional volunteers are hereby solicited.

**ABOUT THE MYERS-BRIGGS TEST AND PROFILE:** Taking a Myers-Briggs test results in a profile that characterizes a person in terms of four dimensions on the basis of answers to questions pertaining directly to personality preferences (no interpreting inkblots here). These dimensions, defined by their poles, are: introverts (I) vs. extraverts (E); sensors (S) vs. intuitives (N); thinkers (T) vs. feelers (F); and judgers (J) vs. perceivers (P). Few people are extreme on all dimensions, so many test profiles, including the one used here, provide percentages after each letter to indicate how dominant a particular pole is. Since the supposed meaning of some of these dimensions is far from obvious and the words designating them are used in a very specific sense, we provide a description of them from the website [www.personalitytype.com](http://www.personalitytype.com)

Extraverts’ energy is directed primarily outward, towards people and things outside of themselves. Introverts’ energy is primarily directed inward, towards their own thoughts, perceptions, and reactions. Therefore, Extra-

verts tend to be more naturally active, expressive, social, and interested in many things, whereas Introverts tend to be more reserved, private, cautious, and interested in fewer interactions, but with greater depth and focus.

Sensors notice the facts, details, and realities of the world around them, whereas Intuitives are more interested in connections and relationships between facts, as well as the meaning or possibilities of the information. Sensors tend to be practical and literal people who trust past experience and often have good common sense. Intuitives tend to be creative, theoretical people who trust their hunches and pride themselves on their creativity.

Thinkers make decisions based primarily on objective and impersonal criteria—what makes the most sense and what is logical. Feelers make decisions based primarily on their personal values and how they feel about the choices.

Judgers prefer a structured, ordered, and fairly predictable environment, where they can make decisions and have things settled. Perceivers prefer to experience as much of the world as possible, so they like to keep their options open and are most comfortable adapting. So, Judgers tend to be organized and productive while Perceivers tend to be flexible, curious, and nonconforming.

**SOME CAVEATS ABOUT THE RESULTS.** The results we have obtained, to be discussed below, are certainly very interesting and, furthermore, they are intuitively satisfying. However, there are a number of factors that may erode their significance as revealers of ultimate truth. First of all, the sample is small and may not be representative of all translators and interpreters. People who read SlavFile or emails from the Russian Translators Club, ProZ, or AIIC and are inclined to respond to a request of this sort may tend to be of certain type(s), which would then end up over-represented in the results. The Myers-Briggs procedure is based on a “forced choice” paradigm, in which people are compelled to choose between two alternatives. Even though the particular test we used here allows a choice of “I’m really in between,” profiles are based on this “either/or” model, and people who score 50% one extreme and 50% the other are assigned (we do not know on what basis) to one or the other. While a forced choice procedure produces clear-cut and easily interpretable results, it unfortunately belies the “bell-shaped” nature of many psychological phenomena, a real shortcoming of Myers-Briggs profiling. In addition this particular test, especially since it allows people to say they are in the middle, undoubtedly produces results that are somewhat different from other, and especially more extensive tests. It is quite common for people who are not extreme on a personality dimension to be assessed as, e.g., introverted on one particular test and extraverted on another.

*Continued on page 22*

## INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS *Continued from page 21*

RESULTS. The Myers Briggs procedure produces profiles by associating people with a particular endpoint in a category, regardless of the extent to which answers of one type dominate answers of the opposite type. Indeed, even if 50% of an individual's answers are classified as belonging to each of two opposing poles, he or she is still classified as associated with one pole or the other on the basis of an algorithm unknown to me. Because this seemed of dubious legitimacy, I have tabulated all the results two ways, once using the dichotomies indicated by the traditional profiles, and once using an approach in which people whose predominance in one category is less than 59% in either direction are put in an intermediate classification. Dichotomous results are further compared to the published population norms in each category. Numbers are expressed in percentages to ease comparison.

### Two-way classification

#### As groups:

1. Translators are significantly more likely to be introverted than interpreters or the population at large.
2. Interpreters are significantly more likely to be intuitive than the population at large, which is heavily skewed toward sensing. The difference on this dimension between the translator and interpreter group or the translators and the population was not statistically significant.
3. Translators are significantly more likely to be thinkers than interpreters or the population.
4. Translators are significantly more likely to be judgers than the population as a whole or the group of interpreters.

Polar Classification of Personality Traits (Two-way Classification—Percentages)

	Intro.	Extra.	Sense	Intuit.	Think.	Feel.	Judge	Perceive
Translators	91	9	66	34	59	41	82	18
Interpreters	44	56	52	48	21	79	61	39
Population	51	49	73	27	40	60	54	46

Classification of Traits with an Intermediate Category (Three way Classification—Percentages)

	Introvert	Intermed.	Extravert	Sensing	Intermed.	Intuiting
Translators	75	20	5	36	41	13
Interpreters	36	33	30	21	45	33

	Thinking	Intermed.	Feeling	Judging	Intermed.	Perceiving
Translators	36	32	32	66	27	7
Interpreters	9	30	61	30	45	24

Comparisons of Translators vs. Interpreters (and each vs. population) were tested using the Chi square statistic for both the two-way classification and the three-way classification of personality types for every personality dimension. Note that this statistic is based solely on the number of people who fall into each category and does not take into account each particular "score." The two-way classification of translators and interpreters were tested separately against published population norms. Three-way norms for the overall population are not available.

The following results achieved statistical significance. (Note that terms like judging and thinking are here used only in their Myers-Briggs definitions provided above.)

### Three-way classification

When scores were tested in a three-way classification scheme, which had a middle group of balanced or only mild preferences, it was found that significant differences persisted between translator and interpreter groups on introversion/extraversion, thinking/feeling and judging/perceiving.

*Continued on page 23*

## Announcing the 11th Annual Susana Greiss Lecture

**2:00 PM Friday  
November 7th  
Orlando, Florida**

Our 2008 Susana Greiss Lecturer, Anthony Briggs, comes to us from England with rave reviews as a speaker and literary translator. Briggs will reflect on his experience translating *War and Peace*, walk his audience through some of the translation challenges he faced, and share the strategies he devised to address them.

**PREDOMINANT TYPES OF TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS**

Now, let us look at the description of the most common four element types among translators and interpreters. See the table below

Translators	Number in group (%)	Population %
ISTJ	15 (34)	12.0
ISFJ	10 (23)	14.0
INTJ	4 (9)	2.1
INFJ	4 (9)	1.5
INTP	3 (7)	3.0
INFP	2(4.5)	4.0
ISTP	1(2.3)	5.0
ISFP	1(2.3)	3.0
ENTP	1(2.3)	3.0
ESTP	1(2.3)	4.0
ESTJ	1(2.3)	9.0
ESFJ	1(2.3)	12.0

Interpreters	Number in group (%)	Population %
ENFP	6 (18)	8.0
ENFJ	5 (15)	2.5
ISTJ	5(15)	4.0
ISFJ	3 (9)	14.0
INFJ	3(9)	1.5
ESFJ	3 (9)	12.0
ESFP	2 (6)	9.0
INFP	2 (6)	4.0
ISFP	2 (6)	9.0
ENTJ	1(3)	2.0
ESTJ	1 (3)	9.0

Not found in translator group: ENFP (8% of general population), ENFJ (2%), ENTJ, (2%). ESFP (9%)

Not found in interpreter group: ESTP (4%), ENTP (3%), INTJ (2%), INTP (3%), ISTP (5%)

Among translators the most common type is ISTJ, representing 34% of the sample (as compared to 12% of the population). This type is described in the personality type website (link above) as follows:

People of this type tend to be: cautious, conservative, and quiet; literal, realistic, and practical; careful and precise; logical, honest, and matter of fact; resistant to change and comfortable with routine; hard working and responsible. (Seems like a list of desiderata for a company looking for a stable translator with whom to form a long-term relationship, although literal is not quite a good quality in language professionals.)

The most common profile and other profiles that share three of its four features (I, S, T, J), deviating in only one, account for more than 70% of the translator sample. Only four out of 44 (9 %) translator profiles share no or only one feature with ISTJ. This seems to be clear evidence of the predominance of these four characteristics in the “translator personality.” In particular, I and J, which are the most predominant indicators throughout the whole group, correspond very well to the work conditions of the average translator—relative isolation and the opportunity to create a precisely appropriate and well-defined finished product. S would seem to correspond to the detail orientation needed by every translator and T to the way translation decisions can potentially be based on analysis and research.

The remainder of the profiles of the translator group are single instances of types differing considerably from the ISTJ.

The picture presented by the interpreter group is very different. And as perhaps befits the more freewheeling nature of their work, the picture presented by the interpreter profile at first glance appears more chaotic. The most common personality profile for our interpreters sample is exactly the opposite of the predominant translator profile, as if to emphasize the differences rather than commonalities between the activities. Six interpreters (20% of the group compared to 8% expected on the basis of population figures) were ENFP. The literature describes this type as follows: friendly, outgoing, and enthusiastic; affectionate articulate, and tactful; highly empathetic but easily hurt; creative and original; decisive and passionately opinionated; productive, organized, and responsible. The most important things to ENFPs are their relationships and the opportunity to communicate and connect with others. Again an apt description of at least some of the characteristics of a good interpreter. Such individuals would seem well fitted to displaying empathy (E, F), picking up on non-verbal, as well as verbal cues (F), rendering global meaning and not getting bogged down in details (N), instantaneously (instinctively?) finding an appropriate rendition rather than being moved to agonize over the best possible one (F, P), and tolerating the ambiguity and lack of closure of real-time performance (P).

However, when the rest of the data for the interpreter group is examined, we find that the other common profiles do not all show the expected similarity to ENFP. ENFJ (just one removed) is one of the two second most common profiles in this group. The other is ISTJ, the profile as dissimilar as possible from the predominant interpreter profile, yet just as common as ENFJ among the interpreters. The rest of the profile data for this group is consistent with the idea that there are two dominant types of interpreters with two very different personalities: one exactly like and the other diametrically opposed (at least on the M-B scale) to that of translators.

*Continued on page 24*



## INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

*Continued from page 23*

One completely speculative hypothesis to explain this situation would be that among those who choose to study languages or to make them their career, the characteristics I, S, T, J are moderately predominant (as I, T, and J are in many academic fields). Over the years some of the “translator types” stray into interpreting for whatever reasons and find this work acceptably compatible, possibly because of the features it shares with translation. However, the great majority of those in whom the opposite characteristics predominate may either always have intended to be interpreters, or, perhaps, flee into it at the first opportunity. It is interesting that some of our interpreter sample reported that they found translating boring, while quite a few translators mentioned the stress engendered by interpreting.

Now, a pair of exceptions that seem to prove the rule. There was one respondent who claimed to love translating and interpreting absolutely equally. Her profile: 50% balance on all four M-B dimensions. An interpreter wrote, “I have always had doubts about my career choice, as I do not feel too comfortable when interpreting for large audiences and I hate the stress factor.” Her profile: INFJ.

Well, then, are translators and interpreters members of the same or different species? First, the group data shows that on the whole, the translator sample differs significantly from the interpreter sample on three of the four M-B dimensions and approaches a significant difference on the fourth. Thus as a whole, our group of translators seems to be significantly more introverted, judging, thinking and sensing than the interpreters. When we consider not group averages but frequency of individual profiles, the answer seems to be that some interpreters share the dominant personality type with translators and some have a maximally dissimilar personality. An intriguing if somewhat equivocal result! It should be noted here that in spite of all these tests and statistics, personality is by no means career destiny. There are a number of people in our samples whose profile shows little similarity to the dominant ones, and yet, as far as we know, they are happily and productively pursuing their careers without any concern that they are not the right type. I myself have a profile shared by only one person in the translator group (my results were not part of the sample) and none at all in the interpreter group, yet as soon as I started working as a translator I felt this was the work I was born for.

## KGB Lexicon

*Continued from page 20*

found in other dictionaries, the sense of it was different in the world of the KGB. Although one may find the interesting word *одорология* in the Russian version of Wikipedia (see <http://ru.wikipedia.org/>), it certainly appears in very few dictionaries. *Гамма* translates as *code series*, not “a code series,” a translation certainly not found in other dictionaries. And speaking of single words, when translating something regarding the KGB, the user will discover that the common word *центр* translates as “the center,” not simply *center*, as it is “the central apparatus of intelligence.” (In the world of espionage, obviously, the articles *a*, *an* and *the* and their usage are significant.)

The handbook-cum-dictionary translates and defines 18 different types of *агент*, from recruiters to those who are under deep cover within another country. In addition, a translator can find explanations of and background information about the KGB’s predecessor organizations, including such infamous abbreviations and acronyms as ВЧК (the Cheka), НКВД and ОГПУ.

The number of unique translations or meanings for some otherwise common words or phrases as they relate to the world of the KGB intelligence and counter-intelligence will present a problem for translators; in order to offer the most benefit for the client, the translator will have to provide a glossary or numerous footnotes, especially for those words that are not easily found in other dictionaries. This book will suit that purpose.

Finally, in addition to the two parts, the usage of the Latin alphabet in Cyrillic order and at least a few missing terms, there is one more thing about the work that irks this reviewer. Although Mitrokhin thanks his translator, nowhere is the translator’s name to be found in this edition.

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### Decoding Russian Blood Count Abbreviations

*Contributed by Tanya Gesse*

- П- палочкоядерные нейтрофилы - Band forms
- С- сегментоядерные нейтрофилы - Segmented neutrophils
- Э- Эозинофилы - Eosinophils
- М- моноциты - Monocytes
- Л-20 – лимфоциты - Lymphocytes
- общ.бил - Bilirubin, total
- прям. бил. - Bilirubin, direct
- непрям.бил. - Bilirubin, indirect

# SLOVENIAN POETRY IN TRANSLATION

Martha Kosir-Widenbauer

## Tone Škrjanec

A poet and translator, Tone Škrjanec was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 1953. His collection of poetry *Blues zamaha* (Blues of a Swing) was published in 1997, followed by a collection of haikus *Sonce na kolenu* (Sun on a Knee) in 1999. In 2001 *Pagode na veter* (Pagodas on Wind) was published, followed by *Noži* (Knives) in 2002, the collection *Baker* (Copper) in 2004, and his latest collection of poems titled *Koža* (Skin) in January of 2007. In the spring of 2005, Ugly Duckling Presse published his collection of haikus, *Sun on a Knee*, in English translation. In November of the same year a collection of his poetry was published in Krakow, in a Polish translation titled *Pilnowanie chwil/ Nadzorowanie trenutkov* (Supervision of Moments). In 2003 a CD of poetry and music titled *Košček hrupa in ščepec soli* (A Bit of Noise and a Pinch of Salt) was released by a group of Ljubljana poets and musicians. For it, Tone Škrjanec had collaborated with the musician Janij Mujič on a collection of five poems. In August 2006, Tone Škrjanec and Janij Mujič released another CD titled *Lovljenje ritma* (Catching the Rhythm), which was selected as CD of the year by the editorial board for music of the *Radio Študent* in Ljubljana. As a translator, Tone Škrjanec has rendered the works of modern American authors like Charles Bukowski, William S. Bur-

### večer pred nočjo in noč pred jutrom

vse zelo čudno. ta sivolasa skala. kamen s temnosivo kožo  
zgubanega psa. čisto krotek in mehak. zeleni čaj z dodatkom  
divje mete precej greni. ptič, ki je prepeval celo noč. vemo,  
kateri je bil. poznamo ga. tak je svet, ki ga podlagam svojim mislim.  
nič ni za zmeraj. vse je zelo čudno. telesa so lepa.  
vzpenjajo se v hrib in sopihajo. ko zarosijo prve kaplje dežja,  
se jih oprimem pod roko in se stisnem pod dežnik. kako  
pošastno lepo med njimi prehaja toplota. polovico neba prekrivajo tanki oblaki,  
lepi obrazi niso nujno temni in mladi. drevesa niso nujno oljke.  
ponoči, ko spim, me nemočnega zaskoči preteklost.  
sanjam bleščeče, gladke ustnice in majhne, ploske prsi,  
kot val na umirjenem morju. starodavne občutke. pobegnem  
v zgodnje jutro. sedim pod nadstreškom, v zraku čutim vonj mladih  
drevov. dež počasi ponehava. kaplje drsijo po mastnih suličastih  
listih oleandra. z vseh strani se javljajo ptice.  
telo ne posluša glave, svojeglavo se ziblje sem ter tja po svetu  
in pušča za sabo lepljive kaplje. zakašljam, prižgem cigareto,  
popijem požirek hladnega čaja. nad mano se preteguje sivo nebo.  
z vseh koncev se oglašajo ptice. ostalo spi.

roughs, Frank O'Hara, Gary Snyder, and Timothy Liu into Slovenian. He has also translated works from Croatian and Serbian. The poems of Tone Škrjanec have been included in numerous anthologies of modern Slovenian poetry and have been translated into a number of languages.

Martha Kosir-Widenbauer is a professor of Spanish at Kentucky Wesleyan College, mkosir@kwc.edu.

### evening before night and night before morning

everything so very strange. this gray-haired rock. a stone with dark gray skin  
of a wrinkled dog. completely tamed and soft. green tea with a supplement  
of wild mint is rather bitter. a bird that sang all night. we know  
which one it was. we know him. this is the world that I put before my thoughts.  
nothing lasts forever. everything is so very strange. bodies that are beautiful.  
they climb the hill and pant. when the first drops of rain fall  
I hold them by their hand and squeeze myself under an umbrella. how  
terribly beautiful is the warmth that passes between them. half of the sky is covered in thin clouds,  
delightful faces that are not necessarily dark and young, trees that are not necessarily olive trees.  
at night, when I sleep, I am powerless and overwhelmed by the past.  
I dream of shiny, smooth lips and small, flat breasts,  
like a wave on a calm sea. antiquated feelings. I escape  
into the early morning. I sit beneath a gable and feel the smell of young  
trees in the air. the rain is slowly stopping. raindrops are sliding down the greasy  
leaves of the oleander. the birds are calling out from all directions.  
the body does not listen to the mind, it sways stubbornly here and there in the world  
and leaves behind sticky drops. I cough, light a cigarette,  
drink a sip of cold tea. the gray sky is stretching above me.  
the birds are singing from everywhere in creation. all else is asleep.