

Military Interpreting: The Least Known Branch of the Interpreting Profession



By Tony Rosado

Caesar's conquest of Gaul in 58 BC, Hannibal's march across the Alps in 218 BC, Alexander the Great's defeat of Persia in 334 BC, the Mongol invasion of China in 1279 AD and Napoleon's victory over the Third Coalition in 1805 have at least two things in common: they are among the greatest military campaigns in the history of the world, and they all involved two or more nations that spoke different languages.

The first interpreter probably appeared in history some 45,000 to 60,000 years ago when the Homo sapiens first met the Neanderthals and realized that they could not communicate. That first interpreter could have been a commercial/trade interpreter (unlikely) or a military interpreter who helped negotiate territorial borders, travel rights, and other related matters—perhaps a surrender, maybe a declaration of war. Ever since those first meetings, human groups have made war and have used the services of soldiers and sailors who spoke the enemy's language. Military interpreting is as old as humanity itself.

What is military interpreting?

A military interpreter is a commissioned officer of an armed force who interprets and/or translates to facilitate military operations. According to the United States Army careers and jobs descriptions, a military interpreter is an individual primarily responsible for interpreting and sight translating between English and a foreign language. Nine weeks of basic combat training followed by advanced individual training are required to learn the skills that are necessary for interpreter support in a number of areas. These include checkpoints, medical support, training host nation armed forces, VIP escort, and cultural awareness. **(1)** Interpreter officers are used extensively in multinational operations in which two or more countries do not share the same language, or in expeditionary missions where communication with the local population is crucial. Interpreter officers also work along with civilian interpreters, translators, and analysts in intelligence gathering and analysis. In other words, military interpreting is an essential activity within a country's armed forces during times of war and of peace.

A military organization's demand for interpreters and translators changes according to the location of the military conflict. During the Cold War years the United States military and intelligence services placed particular emphasis on Russian, German, and other languages spoken behind the iron curtain. After September 11, 2001, the demand shifted to Middle Eastern languages such as Arabic, Farsi and Pashto. In recent years there has been a resurgence of the need for French interpreters and translators due to developments in areas of Northern Africa and the Middle East that were colonized by the French. **(2)**

The armed forces' need for interpreters and translators also changes depending on the type of war being fought. During World War II the orders were to shoot all soldiers wearing an enemy uniform, since wars were fought primarily among organized military forces. Back then, interpreters were primarily needed to assist in the interrogation of prisoners of war, to sight translate intercepted messages, and to interpret during negotiations with enemy commanders. During the Vietnam War and the conflict in Afghanistan, the rules of battle had changed greatly. U.S. personnel were fighting against guerilla armies with no identifiable uniforms, because military actions were often fought against loosely organized groups or individuals. In this type of situation, interpreters are required to develop a close and trusting relationship with the local population. This entails a certain knowledge of the culture and social structure of those whose trust the interpreter needs to gain. In a war zone the efforts of an interpreter could mean the difference between life and death for soldiers and sailors; for example, the interpreter might overhear, as has happened, part of a conversation about an ambush or an assassination attempt.

Spanish language military interpreters are generally used for natural disaster relief operations and for security checkpoints. Although the United States has no armed conflict with any Spanish-speaking country, geographical proximity and the fact that there are millions of Spanish speakers in the United States who do not speak English, mean that Spanish has become a very important language for military interpreting and translating.

Behind the lines, interpreters play an important role in logistics and diplomacy. When an elected official visits a military base, military interpreters serve as escort interpreters. They also participate in media relations with local news agencies, and in the acquisition of supplies from local merchants. Interpreters also listen to radio reports, watch local TV stations, and skim newspapers to gather information about local issues.(3)

Who are the military interpreters?

Military interpreters have been essential to most historical events in the world. Following the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru, interpreters like Malintzin and Felipillo played a prominent role during the conquest. Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés first met Malintzin after he defeated the Maya-Chontal forces in what is now the western part of the Yucatán Peninsula. At the beginning, while she learned Spanish, Cortés used her as his Chontal Maya \leftrightarrow Náhuatl interpreter. Initially, Malintzin performed relay interpreting with Gerónimo de Aguilar, a Spanish priest whom Cortés had freed from the Mayans after years of captivity and who knew Chontal.. It wasn't long before she learned Spanish, and when Cortés realized how skilled she was, she became his personal interpreter. She also taught Cortés about Aztec culture. While they were staying at Zempoala, she protected him by warning of an assassination attempt that had been planned, just as modern-day military interpreters are trained to do.(4)

When the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the Americas.. it was for a military enterprise, not a good-will tour; thus the interpreters that aided Cortés, Pizarro and the other Spanish commanders were military interpreters, not diplomatic linguists. It is extremely important to keep in mind that most of these native interpreters, including Malintzin and Felipillo, were not citizens of the big empires the Spanish army was fighting against. They were members of other native nations that had been overcome, oppressed, and exploited by the powerful Aztec and Inca Empires.(5)

Modern military interpreters

Military interpreters come from all walks of life. In the United States, interpreters are found mainly among three different groups: military officers and regular members of the armed forces; civilians who have some foreign experience and language skills, such as former foreign service officers who have spent time abroad working in embassies and consular offices; and local civilian nationals from the conflict area who speak the required language as their mother tongue and have proficiency in English.

In the United States the 223rd Military Intelligence Battalion provides interpreting, translating, counter-intelligence, and interrogation services, supporting the Army and the rest of the intelligence community.(6) Many of the civilian and military officers who want to become interpreters attend the Defense Language Institute (DLI), a United States Department of Defense educational and research institution that provides linguistic and cultural instruction. The Defense Language Institute's primary foreign language school and training of trainers center is located at the Presidio of Monterey, California. The Institute provides the opportunity to earn an Associate of Arts in Foreign Language degree to those students from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and law enforcement agencies who come to study one of over 40 languages that are taught at this facility. DLI (through the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State) has a facility in the Washington, D.C. area, where training is provided in languages not taught at the Presidio of Monterey. There is also a location at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.(7) In recent years the United States Department of Defense has offered some innovative courses, such as the Military Translation and Interpretation Training Pilot Program developed by Cyacom International for the Defense Language Institute.(8) The United States Army currently has 14,000 "soldier-linguists" stationed around the globe. Compare this figure to the mere 1,000 interpreters who are certified to work in the United States federal court system in Spanish, Haitian-Creole, or Navajo. Of late, the U.S. Armed Forces has been relying more on outsourcing these services to private contractors. This is big business, considering that in 2007 one of the largest language services contractors in Afghanistan was paid \$700 million to provide about 4,500 interpreters and translators.(9) Many of these interpreters are excellent and their language pairs are in high demand, so it is expected that once they leave the Armed Forces they will definitely have an effect on the civilian language services market in the United States and abroad.

What do military interpreters do?

Like all interpreters, military interpreters perform consecutive and simultaneous interpretation as well as sight translation. Sight translation is a very important part of their work. There are two kinds of sight translation: traditional sight translation, used primarily for strategic and intelligence purposes, and the more widely used summary sight translation. The latter type of sight translation is used during house searches, enemy searches and searches of the local civilian population. The interpreter looks at the document, skims through it, and summarizes its contents for his superior officer, who then decides, based on the information provided by the interpreter, if the document merits a more detailed sight translation or even a written translation. Keep in mind that many times during a search, soldiers may come across a foreign document written in a language that does not use the Roman alphabet; summary sight translation helps the officer to differentiate a laundry ticket from the directions to build a bomb.

The most common type of rendition is a combination of simultaneous and consecutive interpretation. When negotiating with the local elders or with enemy forces, interpreters often simultaneously interpret to their superior officer what the counterpart is saying by whispering into the superior officer's ear. When questions and answers are being interpreted, they interpret the words exchanged between the superior officer and his counterpart using a consecutive rendition. Of course, this can vary depending on the number of officers involved; if there are several, then he will interpret only consecutively.

The courage and skill displayed by military interpreters are admirable, since they must often perform the work under adverse circumstances, such as choppers flying overhead, shots being fired at them, or being surrounded by wounded people crying for help. In addition to all this, they must try and interpret while carrying a weapon at the same time.⁽¹⁰⁾ Director Kathryn Bigelow's movie: "*Zero Dark Thirty*" displays the role of the military interpreter throughout the film. There is one scene where an interrogation is being conducted through an interpreter performing a consecutive rendition, as happens in the real world. In another prominent sequence at the end of the movie, a navy seal turns to the interpreter during the raid and tells him to ask a young woman if the man they have just shot was Bin Laden. The interpreter, previously seen getting off the chopper in full gear alongside the seals, is then seen pulling the woman aside, asking her, and reporting back to his superior.⁽¹¹⁾

Essential principles of military interpretation (Ethical considerations)

Because of their function, military interpreters work under a different code of professional responsibility. Yes, they are ethically bound to do a professional job, to interpret with accuracy, to prepare for the assignment and to interpret to the best of their ability. They are also ruled by a different set of values and constraints. A military interpreter's top priority and obligation is to his country and to his fellow soldiers, sailors, marines, or airmen. His rendition can and should suffer when he must attend to other priorities, such as covering a fellow soldier, taking cover himself, assisting a wounded soldier, or complying with an order from a superior officer. The loyalty of military officers is to their platoon or battalion, and they are not neutral communicators, but are partial and serve one side: their armed forces. Military interpreters are required to interpret everything that the enemy or counterpart says, but they should only interpret back what they are told to interpret. If a superior officer tells them not to interpret to the counterpart either a portion of a speech or a paragraph of a letter, they must remain silent. They are always on duty, since they may come across valuable intelligence at any time.

It is important to understand that military interpreters are the only interpreters who work in an environment in which one of the parties may be an enemy who wants to kill them. Other interpreters, even court and diplomatic interpreters, work in adversarial situations, but never where there is a potential enemy involved.⁽¹²⁾ Military interpreters are the only interpreters who hold a weapon while doing their rendition, and the only interpreters who, if necessary, have to be prepared to shoot one of the persons for whom they are interpreting.

Military interpreters are motivated and moved by the highest principles of love of country and protection of their fellow citizens. They go to work every day ready to give their life for their country; indeed, this is common occurrence. Native military interpreters work under tremendous pressure and face incredible danger. They are repudiated by many members of their communities, and are often considered traitors. American military interpreter officers and enlisted personnel are at constant risk of fire and roadside bombs. Not long ago State Department Foreign Service Officer Anne Smedinghoff and her escort military interpreter were killed in Afghanistan while participating in a book give-away to local Afghan kids.⁽¹³⁾

The future of military interpreting

A very pressing issue about the future of military interpreting has to do with another ethical and moral question: should the nations who hire local military interpreters protect them after the conflict is over, and should these governments take the interpreters with them when they leave? This is a question that many military interpreters in Iraq and Afghanistan are asking, and to this day they have not received a clear answer. Countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain and Australia need to decide how they are going to handle this delicate situation.⁽¹⁴⁾ A negative or an affirmative answer that comes too late could have an impact on the recruitment of local military interpreters in the future.

As already stated, military interpreting has always been around, and is expected to continue to be an essential component of the armed forces. Languages may change and tactics could differ, but the profession as such will remain basically the same. One day, military interpreters may not need to put themselves in harm's way. The U.S. military already has automated airplanes and it is working on the development of a robot interpreter. In April 2011, the defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) issued a call to tech companies to design a robot interpreter that must be able to perform sight translations and interpret local gestures as well. **(15)** Although it is unlikely that the armed forces will turn over their military duties to a machine, especially in the near future, perhaps space travel will be a place where robotic military interpreters will start their careers as the new "rookies" in the profession.

Notes

(1) www.goarmy.com/careers-and-jobs

(2) "How to Become an Army Interpreter or Translator" T. Hopper. March 30, 2011.

(3) "Science. HowStuffWorks.com" May 1, 2014

(4) "The First Interpreter in the New World." T. Rosado. The Professional Interpreter blog Aug. 13, 2012

(5) "The role of the 16th. century interpreters in the newly discovered world." T. Rosado. The Professional Interpreter blog Jan 17, 2013

(6) "Program: 223rd. Military Intelligence Battalion. The California Military Department. Calguard.ca.gov

(7) "Defense Language Institute English Language Center" dlielc.edu "Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center" dliflc.edu

(8) "Interpreting in Conflict Zones." K. Allen. NAJIT blog. Apr 27, 2012

(9) "Science. HowStuffWorks.com" May 1, 2014

(10) "What will happen to the Iraqi interpreters?" T. Rosado. The Professional Interpreter blog Nov 27, 2011

(11) "Zero Dark Thirty" Columbia Pictures 2012. Mark Boal, writer-producer, Kathryn Bigelow, Megan Ellison producers.

(12) "¿Tenemos cara para quejarnos de las condiciones en que interpretamos?" ("Do we have a right to complain of the conditions under which we interpret?") T. Rosado. The Professional Interpreter blog Jan 31, 2012

(13) "Six Americans, including three civilians, killed in attacks in Afghanistan." Ernesto Londoño and Anne Gearan. The Washington Post. Published April 6, 2013

(14) "What will happen to the Iraqi interpreters?" T. Rosado. The Professional Interpreter blog Nov 27, 2011

(15) "Science. HowStuffWorks.com" May 1, 2014

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Personalize Your Business

By Maria Cristina de la Vega

In these times of economic duress, everyone has been obliged to rekindle their marketing efforts to bring more business into the pipeline. We have all personally felt the onslaught of solicitation, in our own businesses and the attempts made to woo our clients away, both by local competitors and by an ever-increasing number of non-local rivals. While we cannot neglect the acquisition of new business, I would posit that it is more efficient to retain and grow our existing customer base. (See the numbers [here](#).)

For this reason, I am going to focus on some tips to keep the relationship with your current clients increasingly viable. If you are an owner-interpreter, like the majority in the field of interpreting, it is key to be aware of who your biggest clients are so you can nourish these relationships regularly and forestall attrition. Although we are not ubiquitous, we should make a concerted effort to personally work at assignments for this category of clients consistently, to refresh the contact with the attorneys in question and meet new administrative assistants at their offices. It is important to keep a record of their names so your communication can be more tailored.

You should also plan to remember them on special occasions such as Secretaries' Day and Thanksgiving so you don't get lost in the shuffle of the holiday period at the end of the year. Ways that you can do this is by showing up with movie tickets for the assistants or a tray of cupcakes with your logo on them. Personalized post-it-notes, nail files and flash drives will never be ignored and will keep you in the top-of-mind position. A simple survey through a free service such as Survey Monkey is a great way to keep your pulse on the market twice a year. You should budget for an incentive to get your clients to take part.

Many of our customers participate in community activities such as golf tournaments for a special cause or food drives in which they would appreciate our support. This does not mean that you need to pay for a team of golfers to participate. There are always alternatives available such as sponsoring a tee (with your name prominently displayed), paying for a portion of the goody bags (where you can often insert your materials), or providing beverages during the event.

Depending on your zest for civic duty and whether you have someone on board to help, you might raise your visibility by considering sponsoring a community event yourself, such as a 5K run for a worthwhile cause like the League Against Cancer, where you can sign up staff or freelancers. This is a good networking opportunity where you will have a good time, engender camaraderie, and always run into clients. You can have a booth or sponsor a drum with water bottles bearing your name on the course, etc. There are an infinite number of events, for example, building projects by Habitat for Humanity, that are always requesting volunteers. Your people can show up in company t-shirts designed for the occasion. Always take plenty of pictures at these activities, properly identifying everyone in the images at the time, so that you will later know who is who. You can subsequently use them to post on your website, company FB page, Constant Contact mailers or company blog. As to the latter, please note that our clients couldn't care less about interpreting news -- just as we don't care when they send us news about their recent court cases and amendments to laws that have been passed. If you are going to do a blog that goes to clients, you would be better advised to keep it light and concentrate on topics that may interest legal assistants, such as special events in your area, restaurant critiques, sales and job opportunities and so forth. Only sneak in a reference to interpreting if there is something very interesting that happened that you are free to discuss, if you or your company have earned an award of some type, or you can mention an interesting infobyte about language in general.

Remember that whatever you decide to do, the most important thing is to be persistent and always schedule formal or casual follow-ups on a regular basis, to track how efficient a particular endeavor was in generating business.

[María Cristina de la Vega submitted this article shortly before she passed away. Please see the In Memoriam section of this edition of Proteus to learn more about our exceptional and much-missed colleague.]

NAJIT News

Message from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well. It is with mixed emotions that I write this last message as NAJIT Chair. In some ways, the past three years have been a whirlwind. However, if I stop to contemplate all of the issues, initiatives and changes in that time, it seems a long journey. I find that contradiction fitting, as the work was hard but the time was made fun and exciting by all of you whom I had the pleasure to work with. Over the years, my fellow directors, the committee leaders, and our support staff led by Robin Lanier, our Executive Director, have all enriched my personal and professional life through their support and dedication. They have my sincere gratitude. The sense of trust and appreciation that I have received from you, our members, leaves me filled with pride and humility as I finish my term. Living up to that trust and responsibility has always served as my guiding principle.

When we gathered for our annual conference in Las Vegas May 16-18, these emotions were magnified in the interactions with so many wonderful friends and colleagues. NAJIT received a wonderful reception from our colleagues at the Nevada Interpreter and Translator Association (NITA). Their gracious hospitality and assistance with the local logistics of conference planning helped to make the conference a resounding success. I offer my sincere appreciation to all of the planners, attendees, presenters, sponsors and exhibitors who helped ensure that success.

In preparation for my remarks during the Annual Meeting and Luncheon I could not help but reflect on some of the changes and events during my tenure, among them the landscape of our professions now, as compared to when I was first elected a Director six years ago. In many ways, interpreting and translation are now more defined, more recognized and more respected as professions than they were six years ago. However, as I have written previously, it is also a dangerous time because it is a defining time. Issues such as enforcement of current laws, funding, and the use of technology to deliver our services are but a few of the issues that will no doubt change the landscape of our evolving professions over the coming years. That is precisely why organizations like ours need the continued support of a large and active membership. It is that support that fuels the engine of change. As we have done over the better part of two years, it is equally imperative that organizations like ours continue to work closely together to maximize and unify our voice when important issues are addressed and policy drafted.

I am confident that our incumbent Directors, Bethany Korp-Edwards, and Claudia Villalba, and our newly-elected Directors, Jennifer de la Cruz and Melinda González-Hibner, now led by Esther Navarro-Hall, our Chair, are more than up to the challenges that lie ahead. I congratulate you all and thank you for your service. I would also like to thank fellow retiring Director Kathleen Shelly. Kathleen has served as NAJIT's Secretary and Assistant Editor of *Proteus* during her tenure and has been a joy to work with.

Another event I reflected on was an interview that I did with our beloved colleague Maria Cristina de la Vega for the NAJIT Blog shortly before her passing. May she rest in peace. Her interview made me focus on how to best describe my approach and what I hoped I had accomplished during my tenure as a Director and as Chair. It made me think of two powerful quotes that I read years ago and that have defined my approach to NAJIT and other endeavors. It was with those two quotes that I closed my remarks at the Annual Meeting and I will do the same here:

“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” — Buckminster Fuller

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”
— Mother Teresa

With your support, I hope to have created a few ripples.

Thank you for the honor of being the Chair of your Board of Directors,

Rob

In Memoriam

In Memoriam of our Beloved Friend and Colleague

María Cristina de la Vega



Writer, Translator, Interpreter, Entrepreneur

June 28, 1952 Havana, Cuba

April 18, 2014 Miami, Florida

Our beloved friend and colleague, María Cristina, left us on Good Friday, 2014.

It was on June 13, 2013, that she revealed publicly in her blog, *Musings* that she had been diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome, a cancer of the bone marrow. Although she described in detail the shock she experienced upon learning of the diagnosis, the focus of her essay was to tell the interpreter community about the disease and to encourage us to become bone marrow donors.

This was so typical of María Cristina, or “MC,” as so many of us called her. Instead of indulging in self-pity or asking “why me?” she immediately externalized her experience in an effort to aid others.

This generosity of spirit is what we will always remember about María Cristina. A woman of extraordinary accomplishments (including scuba diving instructor!), she never hesitated to share her time and considerable talents with anyone who asked.

A consummate professional, María Cristina de la Vega was certified as a Spanish-English interpreter by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, by the Supreme Court of the State of Florida and by NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators). She was an excellent businesswoman who had earned her MBA from Florida International University, and had founded her own business, ProTranslating, Inc., in 1973, of which she was president for over forty years. Her dedication to the interpreting and translation professions led her to participate actively in **NAJIT**, the **American Translators Association** (ATA) and the **Association of Conference Interpreters** (AIIC-Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence).

She was a profound and intuitive writer, who loved to share her thoughts, ideas, experience and expertise by means of her blog *Musings*, her monthly column in the ATA Chronicle, *Interpreters Forum*, and the NAJIT newsletter, *Proteus*. She was also instrumental in setting up the **NAJIT blog**, and worked tirelessly as contributor and editor.

Although María Cristina was active in other organizations, we, the members of NAJIT, think of her as particularly *ours*. María Cristina became a NAJIT member in 1997. She was extremely active in the organization, and her contributions were uniformly invaluable. She was a member of the Public Relations Committee and of the Board of Directors of NAJIT from 2011-2013; only her illness forced her to give up these activities.

To the interpreting community, María Cristina was a treasure. We miss her, but we know she will always be with us in spirit.

Memories and Tributes

Gio Lester (NAJIT blogger):

When I think of María Cristina de la Vega the image that comes to mind is that of an ant dressed as teacher, standing in front of a blackboard guiding us, teaching us new ideas, opening doors for us to grow through. A very dynamic presence, not threatening in the least, always ready to lend a hand. That is the María Cristina I knew.

We were not close as individuals, but were so as professionals. I will miss her friendship and guidance, as well as her sense of right and wrong (so much like my father's), and her generosity.

María Cristina shared her knowledge, savvy and experiences with anyone willing to listen. It's no surprise the NAJIT blog attracted her so. Many of us benefit from it and her blog family will keep on working, carrying on the torch lighting and lightening up the trail for those who come behind us.

Jaime M. de Castellvi (NAJIT blogger):

Thank you, this is beautiful. This has been such a shock, it's still sinking in. We all knew about her sickness, but she was always so matter-of-factly there for everyone, that one didn't expect that she would be gone, as it seems, from one day to the next.

As with Gio, I was not personally close with her because I only used to see her and talk to her at NAJIT conferences (and that in the broken and intermittent way in which such contact takes place in such situations). But I always found her extremely warm and friendly, positive, supportive, intelligent, professional, and quietly driven (and with this neat sense of underlying, mostly unexpressed, but often quietly smirking wisdom). So I had a lot of respect for her professionally and, in what extremely little I knew of her personally as well.

Though we all know that she is gone, she does not feel quite absent somehow. It is hard to explain. It is as if everything that she started and that she set in motion still carries a bit of her and of her presence amongst us.

May her heart weight far lighter on the scales than Ma'at's feather, for surely many must be the souls who rejoice in the fact that she lived and that it was given to them to share a bit of her incredible—and yet so human and simple—existence.

Jennifer de la Cruz (NAJIT blogger):

I first heard the name of María Cristina De La Vega at the NAJIT Conference in Long Beach only a few short years ago. I soon started noticing how she has involved herself in numerous projects that have a profound impact on our profession. When she started to lead me personally as my mentor, I was in awe. She always guided me with kindness and poise, giving honest, forward-thinking, knowledgeable feedback that allowed me to grow. I knew I could go to her for answers.

Now that María Cristina has passed, I think that her legacy is bigger in so many of us than she would ever have envisioned. She gave of herself generously and built strong foundations that we can continue to work from in honor of our shared profession. I am eternally grateful.

May your legacy live on, María Cristina, and may you rest in peace until we meet again.

Kevin Mercado (NAJIT blogger)

Though I only corresponded with MC via Skype and e-mail she inspired both my personal and professional growth. I appreciated the opportunity she gave me with both the public relations committee and the blog. She encouraged me to write more often and to remain connected. Her passion and dedication for the profession and to her colleagues was always evident. I still look forward to meeting her one day.

Kathleen Shelly (NAJIT blogger, NAJIT Board member)

Aside from her inveterate kindness and helpfulness, María Cristina did something for me that I will never forget. The fact is that I never would have begun contributing to the NAJIT blog if it hadn't been for this lovely and talented lady. I had always loved to write, but didn't think I really had anything to say. María Cristina encouraged me, and helped me learn to write essays that were coherent and readable. (I will always remember her advice on dividing sections of a piece by means of headings. Genius.) She was so willing to share her hard-won experience with writing for internet publication.

I am now going back and reading what I consider María Cristina's *chef d'oeuvre*—the weekly entries she began publishing in her blog, *Musings*, in May of 2011. The more I read, the better I feel that I am acquainted with this extraordinary woman.

A brief glance at the listing of categories María Cristina addresses in this invaluable collection reveals the eclectic nature of her far-ranging interests. They include: broadcast interpreting, yoga, compassion, technology, the economy, nutrition, goal setting, language training, meditation, music, court interpreting, medical interpreting, philosophy of life and God. Again, the range of the pieces is amazing, from witty comments on current events related to interpreting and translation to profound and thought-provoking meditations on the meaning of life, and becoming a better, more fulfilled human being. I encourage all interpreters to go online and indulge in good read, and I hope that *Musings* will always remain available on the internet for the elucidation of future interpreters, translators and others who are interested in our profession.

Rob Cruz (NAJIT Board President):

To know María Cristina, or MC as I called her, was to know a kind and gentle soul. In the few short years that I was fortunate to call her my friend I always saw a person striving for self-improvement and determined to share her experiences with others. Whether physically, professionally, emotionally or spiritually she sought growth and fulfillment with no time to spare for negativity or things beyond her control. She was committed to her family, her friends, her work, her colleagues and her profession. Although illness struck shortly after her election to the NAJIT board, she was doggedly committed to serving out her term and to the vision she had for NAJIT. She was the driving force behind the creation of NAJIT's Public Relations committee as well as the NAJIT blog. Those will now serve as a part of a vast legacy she leaves behind.

I know she will rest in enlightened peace but her passing leaves a tremendous void in the lives of all those she touched. She enriched my life, she challenged me and she inspired me. I am grateful for that but infinitely more grateful that she befriended me. I am a better person for having known her. May her family and friends find comfort from her poise and draw strength from her strength. I will miss her but she will always live in my heart and the echo of her spirit is something I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

Rosemary Dann (*Proteus* editor, former NAJIT Board member):

Dear María Cristina,

We met at a NAJIT conference under auspicious circumstances. I was proctoring the written exam, and you were the only candidate sitting for that session. The testing company had neglected to send us the essay questions, and the omission was only discovered mid-test. Test-taking is a normally highly stressful experience, but to have a major glitch occur can be devastating. I was frantic, apologizing profusely, but you remained calm, and during the hour it took to get the materials faxed to us, YOU reassured ME that everything would be all right. (It was – you passed with flying colors.) I knew then and there that you were an extraordinary person whom I wanted to know better. It was my good fortune when you were elected to the Board of Directors, and a privilege to work with you for two short years. Your enthusiasm for life, even while in the throes of illness, was a hallmark of your character. All of us who knew you have been touched in special ways, and each of us has a special story. You were, and will continue to be an inspiration to me and many others, and you will be sorely missed.

2014 NAJIT Conference Notes

NAJIT's Annual Meeting and Educational Conference, held in Las Vegas from May 16-18 was an all-around success. 239 attendees took part in 21 sessions led by 41 presenters. We were joined by five NAJIT Scholars from across the United States: Marina Grishayeva, Alexandra Guevara-Salcedo, Kristen Mages, Priscilla Muzza-Pastor, Valeriya Yermishova and our Susan E. Castellanos Bilodeau Scholarship recipient, Teresa Ost, who travelled from Mexico City to attend. We said "adios" (but not "goodbye") to departing Board members Secretary Kathleen Shelley and Chair Rob Cruz, and welcomed new Board members Jennifer De la Cruz and Melinda González-Hibner, and congratulate returning Director Esther Navarro-Hall as the new Chair. There was simply so much going on that we could not include it in this issue, so stay tuned for the Summer issue, which will feature photos and impressions. We hope that it will inspire you to start planning to attend the 2015 Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

NAJIT writes letter in support of the DOJ's ongoing LEP initiative

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Links to Articles

TRANSITIONS

From the *New York Times*: Noted Russian interpreter Viktor M. Sukhodrev, the personal interpreter for Nikita S. Khrushchev and Leonid I. Brezhnev, who brought a flair for language and diplomacy to three decades of brinkmanship between leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States, died on Friday at his home outside Moscow. He was 81.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/20/world/europe/viktor-m-sukhodrev-soviet-leaders-trusted-interpreter-dies-at-81.html?_r=0

DICTIONARIES, GLOSSARIES, VOCABULARY:

Glossary of education terms: EN> SP, Vietnamese, Somali

<https://www.k12.wa.us/CISL/FamilyEngagement/Communicating/Glossaries.aspx>

Frequently mistranslated English terms

<http://www.howto.gov/web-content/multilingual/spanish-guide/frequently-mistranslated-terms>

First Saudi Sign Language Dictionary launched.

<http://t.co/C6Y8A50NzN> via @Arab_News

OSHA Glossary

https://www.osha.gov/dcsp/compliance_assistance/spanish/osha_gi_ensp.html

Glossary of stock market terms

<http://www.nasdaq.com/investing/glossary/>

American Red Cross Shelter Communication Tool in 14 languages

<http://nationalmasscarestrategy.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/multilingualsheltercomm.pdf>

Everything you need to know about LEP - glossaries & other materials

<http://www.lep.gov/resources/resources.html#SC>

RAE releases new grammar manual (Spanish)

<http://ortografiaygramatica-1.blogspot.fi/2013/11/descarga-el-manual-de-la-nueva-gramatica.html>

BUSINESS:

Tactics for content distribution

http://www.outbrain.com/blog/2012/04/four-tactics-for-content-distribution.html?utm_content=qst

Financial tips for the self-employed

http://www.dailyfinance.com/on/self-employed-work-forever-retirement-saving/?icid=maingrid7%7Cmain5%7Cdl29%7Csec1_Ink2%26pLid%3D440025&a_dgi=aolshare_facebook

Tips on pricing

<http://freelancem.ag/freelancing-basics/hourly-flat-rate/>

Technology to help cash flow

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-26673698>

Agencies push for lower pay rates

<http://patenttranslator.wordpress.com/2014/01/18/what-is-behind-the-relentless-pressure-to-lower-rates-paid-to-translators-by-certain-translation-agencies/>

Certifying translations

<http://patenttranslator.wordpress.com/2013/12/15/who-can-certify-a-translation/>

Treatment of colleagues

<http://mariacristinadelavegamusings.com/2014/01/22/ten-things-you-cant-do-to-colleagues/>

TRAINING:

http://www.glendon.yorku.ca/interpretation/the-dark-side-of-interpreter-training/?fb_action_ids=10202836367740090&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=other_multiline&action_object_map=%5B120821408112370%5D&action_type_map=%5B%22og.likes%22%5D&action_ref_map=%5B%5D

HEALTH:

Meditation

<http://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-12124/meditation-for-people-who-dont-meditate-a-12-step-guide.html>

Increasing productivity

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/10-one-minute-time-hacks-that-will-make-you-more-productive.html>

Benefits of being bilingual

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/how-the-brain-benefits-from-being-bilingual.html>**LANGUAGE:**

Language and thinking

<http://blog.ted.com/2013/02/19/5-examples-of-how-the-languages-we-speak-can-affect-the-way-we-think/>

Neurology and language

<http://www.sfgate.com/health/article/UCSF-study-shows-how-the-brain-sorts-sound-to-5190015.php#page-2>

Hardwired aspects of language

<http://psychcentral.com/news/2014/04/21/brain-appears-hardwired-for-some-aspects-of-language/68787.html>

Language and music

<http://www.psmag.com/navigation/books-and-culture/language-helps-us-understand-music-without-words-72097/>

Lexical distance among European languages

<http://elms.wordpress.com/2008/03/04/lexical-distance-among-languages-of-europe/>

Roots of the English "qu"

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/54772/why-does-q-almost-always-go-u>

Fun facts about the Irish language

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/49480/8-fun-facts-about-irish-language>

Preserving the Noongar language

<http://theconversation.com/online-encyclopedia-will-help-preserve-noongar-language-23259>**TERMINOLOGY TOPICS:**

Terminology matters

<http://www.maslias.eu/2014/02/terminology-matters-everywhere.html>

Translating into Spanish

<http://www.languagescientific.com/language-services-blog/comprende-why-cant-translate-spanish.html>

Preservation of lost and dying languages

http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/smithsonian-archives-preserve-lost-and-dying-languages/2014/01/17/2a2c3218-74a1-11e3-8b3f-b1666705ca3b_story.html

Advice from successful writers

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/belle-beth-cooper/6-of-the-best-pieces-of-a_b_4628690.html?utm_hp_ref=tw

Sports idioms in English

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_sports_idioms**TRANSLATION:**

Research models and methods in legal translation

<https://lans-tts.uantwerpen.be/index.php/LANS-TTS/issue/view/5>

Terminology database

<http://www.languagescientific.com/language-services-blog/4-ways-a-terminology-database-can-optimize-your-translation.html>**THE PROFESSION:**

Language Access Brief: Language Access and Self-Represented Litigants (from NCSC)

<http://ncsc.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/accessfair/id/339>

How to mentor

http://businessjournal.gallup.com/content/976/Basics-Mentoring.aspx?utm_source=add_this&utm_medium=addthis.com&utm_campaign=sharing#.Uvrb_MZh1zY.facebook

Study on remote interpreting

<http://aiic.net/page/1125/remote-interpreting-assessment-of-human-factors-and-performance-parameters/lang/1>

FB forum for Italian translators

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/formazionecattools/>

Articles on confidentiality

<http://aiic.net/search/tags/professional-secrecy>

Interpreting for the Dalai Lama

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/18/dalai-lama-interpreter_n_4125033.html?utm_hp_ref=fb&src=sp&comm_ref=false

MISCELLANEOUS:

Interpreters at Oscar Pistorius trial

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/oscar-trial-interpreter-under-fire-1.1655689#.UxdRvVvYmDW>

Media Links

"A Witness to History" : Lecture by Dr. George Sakheim, Nuremberg interpreter, Delaware Valley Translators Association

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77sOxuIftBU>

Renewing the Mayan language

<http://www.upworthy.com/a-library-in-a-remote-village-in-guatemala-proves-the-internet-is-more-than-lolcats?c=ufb1>

Language access under Title VI explained

<http://www.justice.gov/crt/pressroom/videos.php?group=2&video=0>

Motown in German

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/54658/3-motown-greats-who-recorded-german-versions-their-hits>

Movie *Frozen* song in 25 languages

<http://www.crushable.com/2014/01/22/entertainment/frozen-let-it-go-25-languages-video/>

HBO's "Getting On" Season One - "Language Barrier" - Episode #1

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2NcwrPZBLM&feature=youtu.be>

Guess the language

<http://greatlanguagegame.com>

Dealing with vicarious trauma

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKekWz8I2G0&feature=youtu.be>

Russian interpreter on Colbert

<http://www.stereogum.com/1657401/watch-pussy-riot-on-colbert/video/>

Training Mayan interpreters in Omaha, NB

<http://netnebraska.org/interactive-multimedia/news/mayan-interpreters-serve-language-and-cultural-needs-omahas-guatemalan>

What language does America speak?

<http://t.co/Zw7AD0BLBZ>

Barry Slaughter Olsen, Keynote Speaker at NAJIT's 32nd Annual Conference, delivers TED Talk at Monterey Institute of International Studies

Arizona Translators and Interpreters, Inc. calls for presentation proposals for its Tenth Anniversary Conference on September 27, 2014 in Phoenix.

REGULAR DEPARTMENTS

Noteable Quotables

"Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day. You shall begin it serenely and with too high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense."

---Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Words have special powers.
The power to create smiles or frowns.
The power to generate laughs or tears.
The power to lift up or put down.
The power to motivate or de-motivate.
The power to teach good or evil.
The power to express love or hate.
The power to give or take.
The power to heal or harm.
Choose your words carefully."

---Anthony Douglas Williams

For Better of Verse

A Jury Trial

The charge in the Complaint was for a conspiracy,
 But no one involved could say what that could be.
 It allegedly happened 'tween May and November,
 But none of the witnesses could even remember.
 Many thought they knew what was for sure true,
 But could not be sure what the defendant did do.
 One Lucky fellow at the time had not been there,
 But relied on much hearsay and a lot of spin flair.
 The victim said he was sure he'd been victimized,
 But what he was sure of, he'd only just surmised.
 The expert affirmed test results were not proved,
 But the report from the lab was still not removed.
 The main witness' style was loud and bombastic,
 But the story he told was far more than fantastic.
 The Defense felt their closing was so very taught,
 But everyone could see with holes it was fraught.
 The State's argument, perhaps somewhat better,
 But could have been mailed in just like any letter.
 The Jury considered the case for a very long while,
 But after three days the judge mentioned mistrial.
 The verdict at last came down to reasonable doubt,
 But all wondered why the case was not thrown out.
 The interpreters thought it was all way too absurd,
 But true to their code showed no sign - not a word.

---Douglas Hal Sillers

[Hall Sillers is a MN State and federally certified interpreter of Spanish and frequent contributor to this column.]

The Last Laugh

Sis Caesar (RIP) performs in four "languages"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SqEmkwADmY>

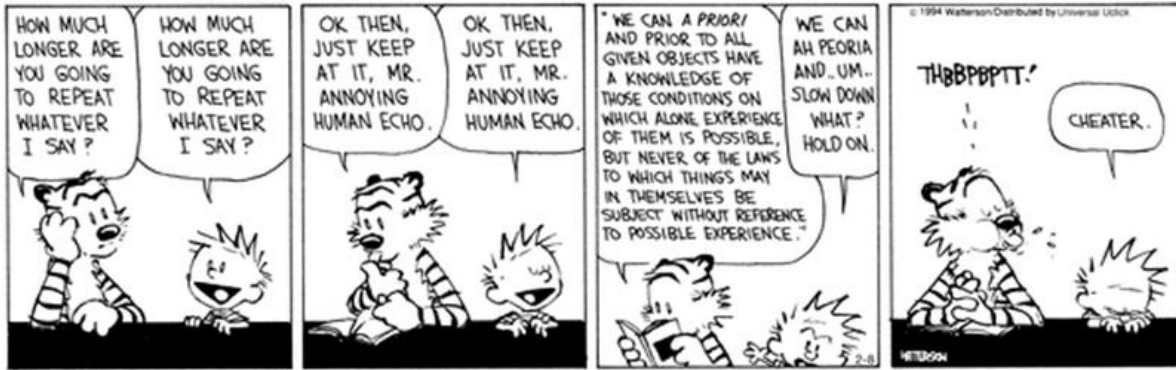
Conference calls in real life

<http://twentytwowords.com/what-if-the-annoyances-of-conference-calls-happened-in-real-life-meetings-painfully-accurateand-hilarious/>

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/nataliemorin/chinese-signs-that-got-seriously-lost-in-tranlsation>

Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson

- o February 08, 2014
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