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BILINGUALISM, THE BRAIN, AND CREATIVITY

Martin C. Taylor

This article amplifies ideas from “Implications of Bilingualism,” a chapter in the recently published work by Saul Sibirsky and Martin C. Taylor, *Language into Language: Cultural, Legal and Linguistic Issues for Interpreters and Translators*, McFarland 2010.

“To possess another language, Charlemagne tells us, is to possess another soul.”
—John le Carré, *Absolute Friends*.¹

The monolingual vs. the bilingual The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that in learning one or more foreign languages, individuals undergo modifications to the circuitry of the brain which result in enhanced cognitive and emotive abilities, potentially leading to greater creativity. These alterations affect interpreters and translators, who invest time, money, and effort in achieving bilingual and bicultural professional proficiency. For these professionals, enhanced creativity is beneficial and indispensable to success. Bilinguals can take satisfaction in knowing that their efforts lead to greater emotive and cognitive abilities, qualities that inhere to them but not necessarily to monolinguals. Tokuhamu-Espinosa, in the chapter “The Brain and Languages,” puts it succinctly: “[M]ultilinguals have better working memory capacity than monolinguals, presumably due to the need to maintain one language in the mind while quickly retrieving the second.”²

As a point of departure, consider the difficulties inherent in becoming merely monolingual. Monolingualism requires years of continual immersion in the native language, as well as prodding and clarifications from family, friends, teachers, and peers — persevering through trial and error to define sounds with clarity and use grammar and syntax with logic. David Crystal, eminent linguist from Wales, puts the effort into perspective in “Learning English as a

Mother Tongue” by pointing out that the monolingual needs to absorb some “...50,000 words, understand a thousand grammatical constructs, manipulate prosody, combine phrases for clarity, and, ironically, bend or break the previous rules.”³ Using Crystal’s comments as a guide, one can imagine the compounded challenges in learning a second or third language.

Bilingualism, sociology, and intelligence Journalist and philosopher Carlos Alberto Montaner is not interested in promoting bilingualism on behalf of interpreters and translators, but rather to aid Latino immigrant groups. He stresses the sociological advantages of second-language learning because it serves to validate and uplift the economic and political status of those who seek a better life in America. He bolsters his argument (which is also the basic premise of this article), by focusing on

...the latest findings of psycholinguists [which] seem to demonstrate that bilingualism stimulates the development of intelligence by substantially multiplying the neuronal connections in certain regions of the brain. Researchers who measure and compare the intelligence quotients of people who are monolingual and multilingual usually confirm that relation: the more languages, the higher the IQ.⁴

In juxtaposing the sociological and the psycholinguistic, Montaner implies that as Spanish-speaking immigrants acquire English to improve their economic status, they not only enhance their own personal and educational status, but also are further enabled to serve the community and defend their rights when challenged by political opponents. Although Montaner focuses on the population of Latin Americans, he might have adopted a broader perspective. Training in English as a second language to promote bilingualism benefits all immigrants eco-

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Colleagues:

For my message in this issue, I'd like to discuss a matter that the board has been grappling with lately. Over the past few years, especially since the listserve has been active, NAJIT members have raised a number of questions on ethical topics, which fall into two broad categories: one, members consulting the board about the professional behavior of colleagues, expecting the board to become a kind of supervisory body; and two — in my view, much more troubling — members asking the NAJIT board to take a stand on issues that fall outside the purview of NAJIT's stated mission.

In light of these inquiries, it would be worthwhile to review NAJIT's mission. First and foremost, NAJIT exists to promote quality services in the field of legal interpreting and translating, in order to help ensure due process, equal protection and equal access for non-English or limited-English proficient (LEP) individuals. The purposes of the association are three-fold: 1) to promote professional standards of performance and integrity; 2) to disseminate educational material on matters relating to judiciary interpreting and translating; and 3) to promote the general welfare of the profession, and to take positions on matters affecting the advancement and interest of the profession as whole.

This mission is a focused one, designed to keep our organization moving in a purposeful direction. When an organization is asked to take positions that fall beyond its mission, a prudent board has to stop and consider the consequences. For this reason, and due to the fact that ethics issues have been a dominant topic on the NAJIT listserve of late, the board is preparing an official statement on ethics, which will appear in a future issue of *Proteus*.

I'd like to discuss the two issues that moved the board to take this action. First, regarding complaints about the ethical behavior of colleagues: it is quite true that NAJIT has developed a Code of Ethics

by which members are expected to abide. We hold the tenets of this canon in high regard. Yet at the same time, NAJIT is not a regulatory body, and has neither the disciplinary powers nor the financial means to sanction members who may be accused of ethical breaches. We can, of course, expel a member; but this may be done only if the regulatory body in the jurisdiction where the "offending" interpreter is certified, registered, or licensed determines that the ethical breach is significant enough to warrant discipline, and such official decision has been brought to our attention. We have no control whatsoever over interpreters who are not association members. NAJIT provides position papers, educational seminars and opinions on the interpretation of the Code of Ethics to help our members avoid the pitfalls that lead to breaches of ethics. We can provide guidance and encouragement, but at the end of the day we are not a sanctioning body, and the resources we would need to devote to such actions would significantly reduce our efforts to promote the profession.

The second ethical issue is a much knottier problem. NAJIT advocates at the state and federal levels on issues that affect the *profession*, but increasingly members have asked NAJIT to get involved in political issues far beyond the scope of the *profession itself*. There are significant gray areas in this realm. For example, NAJIT actively supports efforts to provide qualified interpreters in the courtroom to assist LEP individuals in gaining access to justice, but NAJIT takes no position on other issues such as immigration reform.

It is the firm belief of NAJIT's board that taking positions on broad social issues would jeopardize the required neutrality of our profession. Professional judiciary interpreters, whether they be members of NAJIT or not, are always free to express their personal opinions on any issue, outside the scope of

> *continues on page 4*

NAJIT occasionally makes its member information available to organizations or persons offering information, products, or services of potential interest to members. Each decision is carefully reviewed and authorization is given with discretion. If you do not wish to have your contact information given out for this purpose, please let headquarters know and we will adjust our records accordingly.

BEST ADVICE: LOVE WHAT YOU LEARN

Julie A. Sellers

Theories of learning based on physiological studies of the human brain offer a number of insights into the affective elements of learning. Perhaps the most crucial discovery to surface from this research is the central role that emotions play in learning. Brain research has shown that the notion that logic and emotions reside at opposite ends of the learning spectrum and that they are not closely related is a fallacy. Studies show that the way “a person ‘feels’ about a learning situation determines the amount of attention devoted to it”¹ and when emotions are positive, they “can actually contribute to long-term memory and higher-order thinking processes.”² Conversely, when negative emotions are present—for example, when a learner does not see the relevance of the material being learned, s/he is not engaged or feels threatened—s/he is less likely to pay attention or remember what is being covered. Likewise, when a threatening emotion is present, the limbic or emotional system takes over in a fight-or-flight response that swiftly overrides any cognitive response and learning is prohibited.³ It is therefore not enough for new information to make sense to a learner—that is, for him or her to comprehend it. Rather, the learner must be able to link the new knowledge to previous experience in order to derive meaning from it and furthermore, to believe that it is true, for “ultimately the learner must *feel something is true before it is believed*.”⁴

Studies of the brain’s reactions to learning indicate that those events in our lives that are the most emotional leave the equivalent of an emotional imprint on the brain.⁵ As Hardiman pointed out, the type of learning experience that a learner is most likely to remember long after it is past is not a written exam or a final paper but rather “plays we were in, service-learning activities we completed, or art and music projects we created.”⁶

Given the importance of the limbic or emotional system to learning, it is not surprising that brain theory places great emphasis on the learning environment. Educators are encouraged to pay careful attention to the emotional environment as well as the physical environment and to promote a sense of choice and control over learning. Learners’ opportunity to feel they have choice and control also enhances the brain’s ability and receptiveness to learning. When given a choice, learners feel more involved and as a result, have a better attitude and wish to engage in learning which in turn enhances motivation.

The emotional climate of the learning environment should include room for fun and laughter, both of which physically

influence the brain and thus, learning. Laughter results in chemical alterations in the brain and encourages neurotransmitter production, which in turn makes one more alert.⁷ Additionally, laughter and fun reduce tension and anxiety and even boost the immune system. Laughter allows for greater levels of oxygen to enter the bloodstream and causes endorphins to be released: the person laughing experiences both physical and emotional enjoyment as a result. Finally, laughing as part of a group helps to create a sense of community among learners. The inclusion of celebrations or acknowledgements is also an important element in helping to create an emotionally positive environment for learning and a sense of community. Additionally, these celebrations may encourage and enhance intrinsic motivation.

Learning environments should constantly introduce something new to spark curiosity and hold interest. These changes need not be great, for even subtle differences are enough to catch the brain’s attention instead of boring it into daydreaming or other activities to keep occupied.⁸ Because novelty and variety are highly stimulating to the brain, a change in learning activities as well as in the actual physical environment is engaging. Any activity that can make learning meaningful and relevant to learners, that is appropriate for ability levels, and that is exciting because of its difference is likely to be engaging.⁹

Physical movement, so often relegated to recess time for primary school students and walking to class for high school and university students, is essential for keeping the brain alert and improving long-term learning. Physical activity is important because it elevates blood flow and oxygen delivery to the brain. It is also crucial for helping to bind meaning to the information being learned.¹⁰ Activities that physically engage learners, such as games that have them up and moving—drama, music, and dance—“activate the neurotransmitter serotonin, associated with high self-esteem and enhanced cognitive skills.”¹¹

If educators’ aim is to encourage motivation, long-term memory in learners, and an ability to use content in real-world situations, it is necessary to teach with an understanding of the ways the brain learns best. It is therefore essential to create environments that help produce and sustain positive emotional experiences and that offer variety, choice and physical movement. ▲

1. David A. Sousa. *How the brain learns*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2001), 43.
2. Ibid., 33.
3. Mariale M. Hardiman. *Connecting brain research with effective teaching: The brain-targeted model*. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2003).
4. Eric Jensen. *Brain-based learning*. (Del Mar, CA: Turning Point, 1996), 29.
5. Mariale M. Hardiman. *Connecting brain research with effective teaching: The brain-targeted model*. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2003).
6. Ibid., 34.

7. Mariale M. Hardiman. *Connecting brain research with effective teaching: The brain-targeted model*. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2003) & Eric Jensen. *Brain-based learning*. (Del Mar, CA: Turning Point, 1996).
8. Ibid.; Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the brain in mind*. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998).
9. Eric Jensen. *Brain-based learning*. (Del Mar, CA: Turning Point, 1996).
10. Ibid.; Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the brain in mind*. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998); David Sousa, *How the brain learns*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2001).
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BEST ADVICE: LOVE WHAT YOU LEARN *continued from page 3*

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nomically, intellectually, and emotionally, and the United States becomes the greater beneficiary.

Bilingualism, psychology, and the brain Montaner might have validated his beliefs by consulting the writings of, among others, Ellen Bialystok of York University, Canada, a leading psychologist. She specializes in analyzing the various psychological tests and brain-imaging devices whose purpose is to compare the cognitive abilities of monolinguals and bilinguals.⁵ In her writings, Bialystok refers to the widely-used Stroop Color and Word attention test that assesses concentration abilities. Designed in 1935 by psychologist J. Ridley Stroop, the test has contributed to understanding and measuring bilingualism and its effects.⁶ The Stroop test challenges the cerebral hemispheres to differentiate between a visualized color that belies and confounds the symbol it represents. For example, on a card Stroop wrote the word “red” in blue ink, thus temporarily confusing the reader and causing a time lag in identifying the word. Stroop’s revelations led to further studies comparing the brains of bilinguals and monolinguals for interference, time lag, attention, and fatigue. The results of these studies suggest, based on statistical inferences, enhanced cognitive and motor abilities of bilinguals over monolinguals. Employing the Stroop test, subsequent researchers have shown that bilinguals perform better than monolinguals on a variety of skill tests, taking into consideration specific variables, such as age, education, English proficiency, and multilingual ability.

Bilingualism and brain-mapping/scanning devices Psychologists use Stroop and analogous tests to measure the cognitive abilities of monolinguals and bilinguals, and from these results make inferences regarding the brain’s focus. Neurologists, neurosurgeons, and electro-neurophysiologists utilize the following brain-scanning and mapping instruments to examine the role of the brain during language activity:

- **EEG:** electroencephalogram
- **PET:** positron emission tomography
- **fMRI:** functional magnetic resonance imaging

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR *continued from page 2*

the profession itself. However, for NAJIT to advocate on broad social policy would be improper and far beyond the organization’s existing goals. Moreover, as noted above, such advocacy would affect our neutrality. And neutrality is a central tenet of our ethical code.

So does that mean NAJIT is indifferent to social issues? Not at all. The board, committee chairs and committee members work very hard to fulfill NAJIT’s mission: the promotion of ethical and professional interpretation in legal settings. That is a narrow focus, but it ultimately serves both justice and the public good. And while we may not please all of the people all of the time, we have and will continue to keep the best interest of the organization in mind.

Rosemary W. Dann, Esq.
Chair, NAJIT Board of Directors

• **NIRS:** near infrared spectroscopy

How do they operate? In an EEG, electrodes are placed on specific areas of the head to measure electrical activity, which are recorded as “brain waves.” An EEG recording is useful in assessing sleep patterns, in diagnosing epilepsy and tumors, and in evaluating damage in the case of head traumas.⁷ During cognitive processing, an EEG records event-related potentials (ERPs), as mentioned by Bialystok, which provide “a more faithful record of the intensity and timing of cortical involvement in a specific task, but little spatial information.”⁸

In a **PET** scan, the spatial information becomes clearer. PET detects in the blood the presence and flow of radioactive tracers injected in a dye solution. In this method, specific sites of major language activity are made visible, and brain regions involved with language appear illuminated.

Unlike the PET scan, which is invasive and produces dynamic images, the non-invasive **fMRI** utilizes a powerful magnetic field and radio waves to produce static images of blood flow in smaller areas of the brain.

NIRS, similar to fMRI in functionality, examines the role of the brain during language activity by using optical imaging technology to locate areas that detect bilingualism. NIRS illustrates, according to researchers at Dartmouth College, that the “human brain’s language centers may actually be enhanced when faced with two or more languages as opposed to only one.”⁹ The researchers further assert that, although brains of monolinguals and bilinguals are similar (never identical because of different experiences), “bilinguals appear to engage more of the neural landscape available for language processing than monolinguals, which is a very good thing.” The scans reveal, according to Tokuhamas-Espinosa, that children who learn “two languages have a ‘distinct [cognitive/motor] advantage’ over monolingual children.”¹⁰

To sum up, instruments such as the EEG, PET, fMRI, and NIRS have opened new research pathways in brain studies and have led to discoveries about the brain’s interaction with language in general and bilingualism in particular.

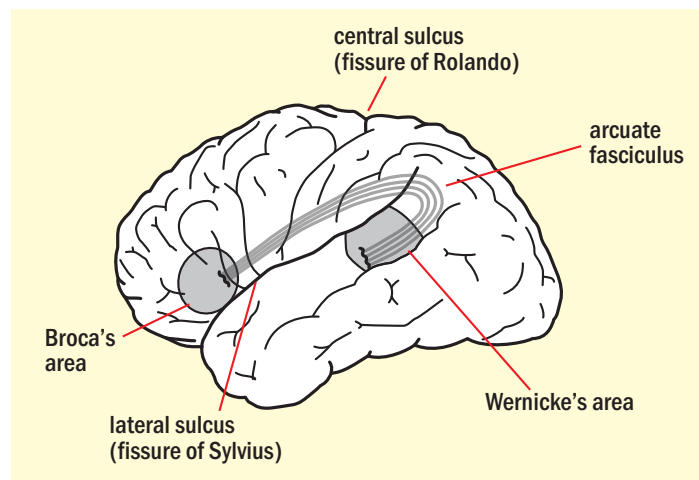
Pioneers of brain research These instruments were unavailable to Broca and Wernicke, 19th century theorists of the brain's role in language, who made great advances using the instruments and knowledge at their disposal. The present-day devices have validated, to a degree, the pioneering work of Pierre Paul Broca (1824-1880), neurologist, anatomist, and anthropologist. Broca's area, named after him, refers to the area of the left frontal lobe "close to the lateral cerebral sulcus [i.e., groove]," which he studied in 1861 as the part of the brain that was affected in persons afflicted with aphasia or the incapacity to speak.¹¹

An area in the left temporal lobe was named in honor of Carl Wernicke (1848-1904), a German neurologist and psychiatrist, who conjectured in the 1870s about two aspects of language:

1. Motor aspect: The site of vocalization and the motor ability to produce speech, believed to lay in the motor cortex of the left inferior frontal lobe.
2. Sensory aspect: An area in the left superior temporal lobe believed to sense and understand the sounds entering from the auditory system.

Broca's and Wernicke's mutually-supportive theories regarding the left hemisphere held that when a person is ready to produce speech, Wernicke's area in the temporal lobe transferred thoughts forward through the parietal lobe to Broca's area in the frontal lobe via the subsequently discovered *arcuate fasciculus* — the separate neural connection that links the two areas.

THE BRAIN FROM TOP TO BOTTOM¹²



Broca's & Wernicke's Areas, Arcuate Fasciculus, Sylvian Fissure

Modern researchers highlight the greater complexity of the brain. Neurobiologist Lisa Eliot, among them, no longer subscribes totally to the belief that Broca's motor area produces language through speech or writing, nor to the hypothesis that Wernicke's sensory component is responsible for language comprehension. Dr. Eliot asserts that brain scans and mappings expand on Wernicke and Broca's theories and show that Wernicke's area is correlated with semantics and Broca's area with syntax. Finally, in updating the hypotheses of these two nineteenth century scientists, Eliot posits that a "broad central wedge in the left hemisphere," called

the perisylvian cortex (overlying the Sylvian fissure), constitutes the site of language ability in 95% of the population.¹³

According to neurosurgeon George A. Ojemann of the University of Washington, fMRI also shows that the right hemisphere shares with the dominant left hemisphere some language activity. He demonstrated via extensive brain mapping that some people have language capabilities in the right hemisphere and others in both. Ojemann states that "when people are gifted bilinguals [...] the brain develops separate, tightly organized essential areas for naming in each language. The same must be true for all language-essential areas. [...]"¹⁴

Dr. Franco Abro of the University of Trieste, using fMRI on a simultaneous translator/interpreter of Italian and English, found that the two languages, initially, were "strangely lateralized in the left brain but, after training, the English appears to have shifted to the right side ... perhaps to avoid competing for essential language areas on the left [permitting the interpreter] to shift instantly from language to language."¹⁵

In this fast-evolving field, the research of Antonio Damasio, professor of psychology and neurology at the University of Southern California, has gone beyond discoveries by Broca, Wernicke, and Ojemann. Damasio argues, based on brain mapping, that instead of language emanating from separate zones, "convergence zones" are at work pulling together sounds that make sense [phonemes] from one area, to join with learned logical syntactic units from another area, coupled with meaningful visual units [graphemes/morphemes] from another brain area, which together merge into spoken and written language.¹⁶ As described in *The Human Brain Book*, a bilingual's two languages — the mother tongue (L1), and the second language (L2), are generated from separate areas of the brain, which, on the one hand, impedes interference, and on the other, enables functionality of one or the other language following trauma or disease.¹⁷ In accordance with this architecture, Damasio's "convergence zones" lend credence to the theory that neural connections in both hemispheres function simultaneously and reciprocally to permit two languages to function seamlessly.

Bilingualism and culture All the evidence demonstrates that a bilingual person has access to a more ample cultural and linguistic menu to express thoughts and feelings than does a monolingual individual. The bilingual person's greater creativity stems from an ability to reconfigure information and knowledge from more than one language and culture and to utilize them in novel ways. Biculturalism, according to University of Florida neurologist and scholar Kenneth Heilman, provides a comparative advantage in decision-making.¹⁸

Professor Christopher Thiery, who has done extensive research on second-language learning, affirms that factors often associated with culture are expressed better in the native language than in a foreign one:

A bilingual in attempting to convey an idea which has *not* found concise formulation in the language he is using will in fact be giving his audience some insight into the structure of the other society. Much can be learned by observing how people ask each

BILINGUALISM, THE BRAIN, AND CREATIVITY *cont. from page 5*

other for the time in the street in London, Paris, or Dublin. Everything is different: choice of words, voice, posture, distance between speakers and so on.¹⁹

In summary, an individual endowed with double linguistic skills becomes enriched by perceiving a second culture in a way similar to that of a native, a pre-requisite for an interpreter or translator but absent in a monolingual/monocultural person.

Bilingualism and creativity The thesis of this article, i.e., that bilingualism, brain activity, and creativity interlock and affect each other, finds strong evidence in psychologist Anatoliy Kharkhurin's research. In extensive testing on Russian-English and Farsi-English students *vis-à-vis* monolinguals, he found, as have others mentioned here, that "bilinguals showed greater performance on fluency, flexibility, and elaboration in divergent thinking."²⁰ The bilinguals' success in thinking prompted Kharkhurin to link bilingualism to "creativity," defined by him (in slide 3 of his Powerpoint presentation) as "an ability to initiate multiple cycles of divergent and convergent thinking, which creates an active attention-demanding process that allows generation of new, alternative situations characterized by novelty ([i.e.,] original or unexpected), and appropriateness ([i.e.,] useful or meeting task constraints)."

By way of definition, psychologist Spencer Rathus asserts that divergent thinking is characterized by "attempts to generate multiple solutions to a problem" whereas in contrast, convergent thinking "attempts to narrow in on the single best solution to a problem."²¹ In line with this reasoning, creativity could be defined as the ability to generate novel and appropriate solutions, applying both divergent and convergent thinking.

Kharkhurin's conclusions that multilingualism leads to greater creativity find further validation in a 24-page "Compendium" sponsored by the European Commission's Directorate on Education and Culture.²² This "Compendium," reviewed by three Spanish doctors of medicine and compiled by nine psychologists from seven countries, gathers documentation from dozens of internationally-reputed psychologists and neuroscientists. The evidence-based report starts off cautioning that "relatively little research exists which specifically focuses on any relationship between creativity and multilingualism," but concludes by validating the linkages based on psychological tests, and brain scans and mappings.²³ The committees of experts believe that "the multilingual mind differs in some respects from the monolingual mind, but in what way, with what outcomes is at present an open question."²⁴ The compilers state that those who know more than one language enjoy "a greater potential for creativity..."²⁵, then progress through the evidence to the conclusion that individuals who view the world through more than one set of lenses—their word is "binoculars"—especially in the Information Age, gain a "more extensive range of affordances or interpretations [that] can lead to increased choices."²⁶

The researchers finally link multilingualism to an analog, a newly-minted term called "multicompetence." Multicompetence consists of three dimensions:

The first is the idea that a bilingual is not the equal of two monolinguals. An individual who possesses L1 (the mother tongue), and L2 (the second language), is not equivalent to two individuals who possess separately L1 and L2. The two languages in one individual, through synergy, create a force where the result becomes more than the sum of the parts, in effect opening up "forms of added values which go beyond the languages themselves."²⁷

This reasoning, based on the compiled evidence, leads to the second dimension, which is that multicompetence is linked to creative potential.

The third dimension gleaned from the "Compendium" is that reviewers and researchers who followed the results of psychological tests, brain scans and mappings assert that "multilingualism generates a higher number of neuronal connections and stimulates multiple neuronal webs, both intra- and inter-hemispheric, which would lead to a higher capacity for generating new (creative and innovative) processes."²⁸ Thus multilinguals have the capacity to be potentially more creative than monolinguals.

Concluding remarks The important hypotheses of 19th century classical theorists Broca and Wernicke on brain damage and its effect on language have been superseded by 20th and 21st century psychologists, neuropsychologists, neurosurgeons, and electro-neurophysiologists. By using instruments such as Stroop's test, EEGs, PET scans, fMRI mappings, and NIRS optical images, they have demonstrated that bilingual persons display greater neural activity and synapses than monolinguals, and an increase in synaptic transmission. These findings have paved the way for investigations into how bilingualism may enhance human creativity. Persons learning a foreign language or who are already gifted in more than one tongue will show greater cognitive and motor advantages over those who are monolingual, thus increasing their potential for creativity. Furthermore, pragmatic proof comes from second-language speakers in the U.S. and other countries who perform better in language-proficiency tests, such as those required for certification as interpreters. The benefits of being bilingual outweigh the benefits of remaining monolingual: this can be affirmed for tourists perusing their Berlitz manuals, for foreign language teachers and their students, for immigrants to a foreign country, for executives in the exercise of leadership, and certainly in the case of interpreters or translators whose efforts are centered on capturing the *bon mot* in order to faithfully represent and transmit the ideas of another culture.

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Sincere appreciation to Irwin Gray at the New York Institute of Technology for his penetrating critiques. Dr. Gray's observations linked the present subject to the field of management decision-making, as illustrated in Michael H. Dickmann's and Nancy Stanford-Blair's, *Connecting Leadership to the Brain*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin P, 2002) 21, 234. ▲

END NOTES

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- See Tracey Tokuhama-Espinosa, *Living Languages: Multilingualism across the Lifespan*. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008) 123.
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> continues on page 14

PARROT OR PROFESSIONAL?

David L. Lauman

Most practicing interpreters would agree that quality performance, a business-like attitude, and a commitment to continuing education are essential to contributing to the general public's perception of interpreting as a profession. Additionally, the way we describe our own professional activities has a significant impact on how the profession is perceived.

All too often we hear others express the mistaken notion that interpreters merely *repeat* what somebody else says in another language. This statement has been made in reference to both simultaneous and consecutive modes of interpreting, although the latter is even more prone to being labeled as repetition due to the lag between the utterance in the source language and the interpreted message in the target language.

It is one thing for a layperson unfamiliar with the technical aspects of interpreting to affirm that interpreters merely repeat what has already been stated. However, as interpreters, we should be especially cautious not to subscribe to such assertions ourselves. In fact, it is essential that interpreters know how to advocate for the profession by being able to elucidate or at least describe the salient characteristics of the interpreting process.

First, an interpreter listens to the source language message in order to ensure comprehension, "a complex activity that is the product of a complete series of cognitive operations, such as: analysis-synthesis, deduction-induction, abstraction-materialization and comparison".¹ Given the differences between the syntactical, morphological and lexical systems of the source and target languages, the meaning of the original message must first be dissociated from the actual words spoken² before a target language rendition can be produced. This comprehension phase is followed by the complex, high-speed mental endeavor of determining which of various possible renditions is the most appropriate. The processing model of simultaneous interpreting proposed by Moser-Mercer³ makes it evident that interpreting is not

a linear process, but rather a myriad set of complex cognitive tasks including a certain degree of trial and error monitoring. Finally, an interpreter orally conveys the newly formulated message in another language while monitoring the rendition to ensure that it makes sense to the listener(s).

Considering that these renditions must be produced instantaneously or semi-instantaneously, there should be no question as to the complexity of the interpreting process: it is something far beyond parrot-like repetition. Furthermore, "high speech density... [excessively] fast delivery... enumerations... poor sound quality... [and] compound technical terms"⁴ add to the challenges of interpreting. Similarly, the responsibility of preserving the meaning, tone, style, and register of the original message places far greater cognitive demands on an interpreter than would mindless repetition of a series of words.

Clearly, when advocating for our profession as interpreters, the way we represent ourselves and our work is important. We must take care to describe well how exacting a process it is to transmit a spoken message from one language to another while accurately preserving the speaker's intended meaning. By emphasizing that we *render an*

interpretation, and do not merely repeat words, we do justice to our profession by using terms that more accurately describe the overall complexity of the interpreting process. ▲

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- [David Lauman holds an M.A. in translation and interpretation. A court and conference interpreter, he is federally certified in Spanish as well as by the states of California and Colorado.]
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HOW TO CHANGE YOUR ACCENT: DEFUSING THE MYSTERY

Juanita Ulloa

Most people think they are born with a fixed vocal sound and an unchangeable accent. In fact, this is completely untrue. An accent is easily modifiable through adjustments in listening and practice. However, people often don't know where to turn to modify their sound or adjust their accent. Interpreters or teachers who depend on vocal clarity and consistency may feel reluctant to ask for help in a professionally sensitive area. Seeking assistance can be especially difficult if one's cultural identity is linked to a particular language. Finally, some people may be unaware that their accent is difficult for others to understand.

Thinking about accent, vocal production, how the voice is holding up on the job, or the health of our voice can be of great importance to an interpreter. One can do this alone anywhere and anytime. This article will help those who wish to begin to transform their accent.

Interpreters are of necessity above-average listeners who render large chunks of consecutive information at a time. Why wouldn't they be able to listen to and mold their own sound, just as they render someone else's meaning? Do we not think on our feet prior to producing sound and meaning? Unfortunately, interpreter programs do not offer training in these areas, despite the fact that our voices and bodies sustain the very career we are developing. As a result, interpreters have had little input or feedback in this important aspect of our work. Why not start now to turn this around?

Consider that you learn your first language(s) aurally, without talking to anyone about what you think of your sound or accent. Later, you attend language classes for a second or third language. There are many grammatical rules for spelling and syntax, but fewer regarding sound and accent, even though the way we originally learn a source language is usually by sound.

Start by asking yourself how similar your voice and your accent are to those of either close friends or family members. Are you all soft or loud speakers? Do you all speak with the same small two or three note intonation range, as in Mandarin, or does your voice modulate with a five to seven "up and down" note range, more like Spanish or Italian speakers? What are the particulars of the sound in your family and your personal vocal tendencies: is your voice high pitched, low pitched, gravelly, low volume, high volume, and so on? Try writing down five adjectives describing your vocal sound and the vocal sound of someone near you that is different. Then write out a list of the ten hardest words for you to pronounce perfectly in your target language.

Learn to use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

Unwritten rules about sound and language are actually not as difficult as one might think. In English it is especially helpful to work from the vantage of sound instead of spelling, e.g. learning and memorizing sound patterns. Many professional singers and their

voice trainers, including this author, use an independent group of symbols called the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). These symbols streamline through all languages, reducing thousands of sounds to a manageable group of core symbols. One can memorize a difficult sound not used in the source language with a corresponding symbol, which earmarks the sound visually before you say it out loud in interpretation. Here are three to get you started.

For example, the θ symbol with a line through it (\eth) means a "th" sound, as in the English word "the", and it is important to aspirate, or add air to the sound as you make it. Spanish speakers can find this symbol useful, so as to remind themselves not to say a "D" by mistake, because the letter "D" locates the tongue in exactly the same place as the letter "T", the only difference in the sound in the two languages being the aspiration.

An upside down "e", or "ə" is called a schwa, or neutral vowel, and this is probably the sound that is the least addressed, yet probably the most important vowel sound in the English language. Its sound combines "ah" and "uh" at the same time.

The symbol "dʒ" represents a double consonant "dj" sound, as produced by the tongue behind the teeth in the word "judge" or "language." Be sure you stop the sound fully with the tongue on "D" prior to progressing on to the full sound, which has a "ə" or schwa sound at the end as it tails off. In fact, many English words that end in a silent "e" usually trail off with a "ə" or schwa sound which, if emphasized as if speaking an extra syllable, much improves the diction and accent of a non-native English speaker.

Before you bemoan having to learn IPA in addition to the languages you use in your field, keep in mind that these symbols are wonderful memory builders for especially challenging sounds (available at no cost on www.IPA.com or www.IPA.org). They also serve interpreters well by adding to the note-taking arsenal of symbols for consecutive interpretation, thus helping to link memory retention with a visual cue for the sound.

Lengthen English vowels to three beats each

Most languages other than English have short one-beat vowels. Professional singers, speakers and radio announcers learn to lengthen vowels and shorten consonants in many languages to enhance diction, projection and beauty of sound. There is no reason why interpreters cannot do the same. If you read a selected paragraph aloud in slow motion while physically beating three counts per vowel pronounced, you start to become aware that the vowels are the glue that connects and carries sound. You can also read aloud once, isolating only the vowels, and then repeat, adding the consonants back in. Try making the consonants shorter in length than the vowels. Besides helping your accent, this connecting of the notes, to produce a "legato" sound, as musicians call it in Italian ("ligado" in Spanish), smoothes out phrases and helps create a more natural flow leading toward idiomatic

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR ACCENT *continued from page 9*

intonation. It is a great tool for certain Asian languages that tend to flow word to word instead of phrase to phrase.

Lengthen consonants to two beats each

While consonants help us articulate diction, they also stop the sound. In English they are often longer and always stronger than in many other languages, except German. For example, notice that in the word “mother” the first letter “m” has a definite preliminary “m” sound where the lips meet together (known as bilabial), prior to the “m” travelling into the vowel, just as when one says “mmmmm...finger lickin’ good.” In contrast, in Spanish the lips pronouncing the same letter “m” are already coming apart as they say the letter, not belaboring or lengthening the letter.

Many non-native English speakers feel like they are dramatizing and almost spitting consonants to pronounce English correctly because of the sudden need for more aspiration and emphasis. The letter “t” can be more clearly differentiated from “d” even though they are produced with the tongue in exactly the same position, and the letter “p” can be differentiated from “b” even though both are produced with two lips. These two sets of consonants are called pairs because they are produced in the same position, yet one is voiced, or produced by adding sound in the vocal chords, and the other is unvoiced, without any vocal cord sound. Unvoiced consonants like “t” and “d” are new to non-native English speakers and if isolated, one learns to aspirate, or add air, intensity and uniqueness to their pronunciation.

Getting a good breath will increase volume and projection when necessary in a courtroom. If people complain they can’t understand you, it may not be because of your accent, but because of a lack of breath support and/or volume. Private or group voice lessons can help you develop a deeper breath, even if your source language dictates using a lower volume due to cultural or gender issues.

If you record yourself reading aloud and find a study partner in another source language to edit each other’s material, you can combine accent work with legal language review and help each other at no expense. Recommended practice is only ten minutes a day, with one or two new ideas each session. You may also find a class on this topic in an ESL department at your local college.

Look for my next article addressing vocal production. And remember: ¡Sí se puede! Of course you can change your accent! ▲

[With music degrees from Yale and UC Berkeley, and post-graduate work at the Nice Conservatory in France, among other places, the author is a singer-songwriter and specialist in mariachi and Hispanic vocal music. She currently teaches at Texas State University, works as a voiceover talent, and is a courtroom licensed and certified interpreter for Texas and Nevada. She has created a 45 minute CD of vocal exercises for interpreters (\$15 includes mailing) and offers voice lessons. Email: profejuanita@txstate.edu or visit www.juanitamusic.com.]

Wireless Communications Equipment for Interpreters

The use of wireless equipment for simultaneous interpretation frees the interpreter from having to sit next to the listener. The interpreter can now move to a spot offering the best hearing and visibility, where the interpreter can concentrate on the message without interruptions or distractions.

Although some courts provide this type of equipment for its interpreters, availability is not always guaranteed. And many courts and other venues don’t even offer it.

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NAJIT NEWS

NAJIT COMMITTEE ACTIVITY REPORTS

Advocacy Committee

The advocacy committee was moderately busy over the year since the 2009 NAJIT conference.

- We wrote to Governor Perry of Texas to urge his veto on a bill creating a two-tier licensed interpreter system. The effect would be to create less-qualified licensed interpreters in populous Harris County. Despite NAJIT's recommendation, Perry signed the bill in June.
- We wrote to Senate majority leader Harry Reid and Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell to urge their support for the State Court Interpreters Grant Program Act, S.1329. The bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee in June.
- We wrote to California State University at Long Beach, protesting their elimination of their translation and interpretation studies program and related B.A. degree.
- We wrote to the Brennan Center for Justice to offer our cooperation in the case of Efren Diaz, who was denied adequate interpretation at his sentencing hearing. At a post-conviction state court hearing, a federally certified interpreter was called to provide expert testimony regarding the interpretation of the plea proceeding. An exhibit analyzing the transcript and tape-recorded Spanish utterances at the plea hearing was disallowed, and expert interpreter testimony was deemed hearsay. The defense subsequently appealed on the grounds that the Court had improperly excluded an exhibit prepared by his expert witness, that the defendant had not entered a knowing, intelligent, and voluntary guilty plea and had been denied effective assistance of trial counsel. The Appellate Court found no error, and affirmed the judgment of the post-conviction court. The Court's memorandum decision can be found at <http://www.ai.org/judiciary/opinions/pdf/08270902jgb.pdf>.
- We wrote to oppose a bill in the Tennessee legislature which would eliminate driver license testing in languages other than English.
- We wrote to comment on a criminal case of marijuana possession in Marshall, Missouri. In this matter, a Chuukese-speaking (language of the Marshall Islands) defendant was allowed to interpret for his co-defendants; the "interpreter's" case was then dismissed by the prosecutor in exchange for his "services to the court." The original news story can be found at: <http://www.marshallnews.com/story/1619341.html>
- Finally, under the auspices of the advocacy committee, Christina Courtright conducted a survey to track interpreters' perceptions of whether certified interpreters were used by preference in the courts in which they interpret. The survey report is available on the NAJIT site at:

<http://najit.org/documents/NAJIT%20Advocacy%20Survey%20Report%20Final.pdf>.

Advocacy and NAJIT will be using this survey for future work.

Respectfully submitted,
John M. Estill
Chair, Advocacy

Membership Committee

The membership committee has been reconstituted under chair Rob Cruz. We welcome new committee members:

M. Leslie Tabarez
Nabil Salem
Anna Witter-Merithew

The committee's first order of business will be to contact lapsed members where appropriate as well as to develop recruitment literature consisting of a member benefit brochure. Any members interested in joining the membership committee should contact NAJIT administrator Christina Filipovic at Christina@NAJIT.org.



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SSTI Activity Report

The Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation met regularly over the past year. In December 2009, SSTI joined NAJIT at the Modern Language Association conference in Philadelphia. Director Alexander Rainof represented SSTI and NAJIT at an exhibit table showcasing translation and interpretation work. Vice president Lois Feuerle has been instrumental in coordinating the March Haitian Creole skills-building workshop, held in Miami on March 27-28, 2010. This was a collaborative effort between SSTI and the Florida State Court Administration. Miami Dade College generously offered classroom space at their campus. Some 20 Haitian Creole interpreters participated. SSTI also participated in selecting the NAJIT scholars for the 2010 NAJIT conference. We coordinated skills tune-up workshops in Spanish and Russian to be held prior to the 2010 NAJIT conference, and we worked with the Consortium to arrange for the Haitian Creole certification exam to be held in conjunction with the 2010 NAJIT conference.

Lastly, SSTI is honored to be involved in the creation of the Susan Castellanos Bilodeau Scholarship Fund, the details of which are

being developed by a joint SSTI-NAJIT committee. We encourage all members and other interested individuals to consider making a tax-deductible donation to the scholarship fund.

As President of SSTI, I am honored to serve with our fine board: vice president Lois Feuerle, secretary Laura Douglas, treasurer Doina Francu, and director Alexander Rainof, all of whom have given generously of their time and energy to work on the above events. We thank our skills-building trainers for 2009-2010: Susana Stettri-Sawrey (Spanish), Elena Bogdonovich (Russian), and Joëlle Haspil (Haitian Creole). Thanks also to NAJIT executive director Robin Lanier and NAJIT administrator Christina Filipovic for their expert administrative support.

For 2010-2011, SSTI plans to continue responding to the training and education needs in languages other than Spanish, to work closely with the NAJIT scholars program, and to begin implementation of the Susan Castellanos Bilodeau Scholarship.



Society for the Study
of Translation and
Interpretation, Inc.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael J. Piper,
President, SSTI

TRANSLATION THEME AT MLA IN PHILADELPHIA

Alexander Rainof

The Modern Language Association (MLA) of America meets every year in December, between Christmas and the New Year. Most of those attending are professors of modern languages such as French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and, of course, English — as well as graduate students. Some students come just to listen to the presentations, while others, Ph.D. in hand, or in the process of finishing up doctoral dissertations, come seeking a university teaching position in their field of specialization. Papers are read and discussed, job interviews are carried out, and friends who have not seen one another in a while get a chance to come together, exchange ideas, and share good food and wine.

This past year, however, the MLA yearly meeting was different, for a variety of reasons. The December 2009 meeting was the last time the association is to meet in December. There will be no meeting in 2010, and the association will start meeting in the future in early January, starting in 2011. Due to the current economic situation, many professors could not obtain funding to travel to Philadelphia, and thus the number of faculty attending was considerably reduced. The job situation in the humanities was dismal. Most of the freshly minted Ph.D.'s did not receive any job offers, as extremely few jobs in literature were available this year in academe.

It is very important for our membership in NAJIT and SSTI, however, to know that, for the first time in the history of the MLA, the theme of the yearly conference was **translation** (which included interpretation). The choice of this theme reflects the

reality that, while precious few positions are available in letters, there is at a national level an acute need and a considerable shortage of qualified translators and interpreters.

This was the main reason why current NAJIT Chair Rosemary Dann, and myself as former chair, together with other national leaders in the field of translation and interpretation, (for example, Alan Melby from BYU and Chair of Translation Summit Advisory Board, TSAC) were asked to give ongoing presentations to the MLA attendees during the three days of the meeting. Rosemary Dann and I represented NAJIT, SSTI, and TSAC. Several other national translation and interpretation organizations were also represented, such as ATA.

The presentation was a success, with students and professors showing a great deal of interest in translation and interpretation, picking up over 200 copies of each of the various information packets made available, namely NAJIT position papers, and two of my law review articles. Indeed, for many reasons, the 2009 MLA meeting had historic significance. It was very important for NAJIT and SSTI to be represented at the MLA, and our participation was well received. It is most gratifying, and perhaps not altogether coincidental that the MLA annual meeting, with its translation theme, should have taken place in Philadelphia — a new declaration of inter-dependence? ▲

[The author is former chair of the NAJIT board and current SSTI board member.]

HAITIAN CREOLE TRAINING: SSTI IN ACTION

Lois Feuerle

When a devastating earthquake hit Haiti in January 2010, the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI), NAJIT's 501 (c) (3) non-profit educational arm, was already collaborating with the state of Florida's court interpreting program to organize language-specific skills-building training sessions for those who worked with languages other than Spanish. The sessions were to be modeled on the successful co-sponsored training that SSTI had offered in cooperation with the states of Oregon in 2007 and Pennsylvania in 2008.

In 2006 SSTI made a firm commitment to offer skills-building classes in languages for which formal interpreter training was rare or non-existent. SSTI's strategy was to collaborate with interpreter programs in the states where the annual NAJIT educational conference was to be held in order to harness the synergies of two organizations with similar goals. In this way we hoped to achieve something that neither entity would be able to accomplish on its own. Language-specific training for interpreters is difficult or impossible when enrollment is not high enough for either the state or local educational institutions to afford to offer training in the lesser-used languages.

The model that SSTI proposed was a two-day intensive training to be held over a weekend in March, to be followed by a one-day tune-up on the day before the annual NAJIT conference, culminating in the opportunity for participants to take the Consortium exam. This time frame was designed to permit participants to attend the March training and then to go home and practice, putting new insights, skills and practice models to work; to return for a one-day refresher course; and then, if they felt ready, to take the Consortium exam at the end of the conference.

SSTI approached the National Center for State Courts, which kindly agreed to offer the Consortium exam in the three training languages other than Spanish at the end of the NAJIT conference. This made it convenient and economical for conference attendees to sit for Consortium certification after they were inspired from days of educational events.

The 2007 co-sponsored training in Portland, Oregon attracted approximately 40 interpreters of Korean, Russian and Vietnamese as well as Spanish from 16 different states and one Central American country. In 2008 the training co-sponsored with Pennsylvania drew almost twice as many participants in the same four languages.

Initial discussions with Lisa Bell of Florida's court interpreting program revealed that the languages used most frequently after Spanish in the Florida courts were Haitian Creole, Portuguese and French, and the initial plan was to offer skills-building in each of those three languages, following the model developed for the Oregon and Pennsylvania training sessions.

Then on January 12, 2010, a 7.0 earthquake struck about 15

miles west of Port-au-Prince. The destruction was swift and overwhelming: one million homeless, 230,000 dead and an estimated 300,000 injured.

After a number of discussions, Florida and SSTI agreed that in light of the acute humanitarian crisis in Haiti and the Red Cross's repeated pleas for Haitian Creole interpreters needed to help meet the needs of the numerous refugees and evacuees expected to be arriving in Florida, it would be most useful to focus our combined resources on Haitian Creole training. Training would consist of a two-day skills-building session in Miami in March and a one-day refresher course prior to the NAJIT conference in Orlando in May. Due to the urgency of the situation, this training was planned to be limited to Haitian Creole speakers who already had some interpreting experience; honing skills with an eye toward certification was considered the best way to meet immediate needs while training for those never before exposed to interpreting would best be deferred to a later date.

The instructor selected for the Haitian Creole skills-building training was Joëlle Haspil, who holds the distinction of being the first interpreter in the United States to become federally certified in both Haitian Creole and Spanish. Moreover, she is state-certified in French. Ms. Haspil, who served as a consultant and grader when the Consortium developed the Haitian Creole examination, is also the author of a Haitian Creole legal dictionary, *Leksik Angle/Kreyol pou Entrepren Ayisyen Nan Tribinal*. She developed entirely new written and audio training materials in Haitian Creole expressly for the SSTI training.

Thanks to generous support from the state of Florida, Miami Dade College, TN Communications and SSTI, scholarship assistance was available to 20 interpreters for this two-day training.

The class drew a full complement of 20 interpreters, primarily from the Miami area, but also attracting interpreters from as far away as Massachusetts. Attendees brought an interesting mix of experience in medical, school, criminal justice and court interpreting. Members of the group had interpreted in depositions, at grand jury, for immigration court and for medical specialists. Some had teaching backgrounds: teaching medical interpreting to teaching Haitian Creole; teaching Peace Corps volunteers; or teaching French language and literature in Côte d'Ivoire. Others are currently working as translators in addition to the interpreting they do. Professional backgrounds ranged from a master's degree in French and Spanish to a Ph.D. in French literature to a law degree earned in French in Haiti (currently working on law degree in the U.S.). The group included a Florida certified court interpreter, a church pastor, a former student of applied linguistics, an investigator, a 24-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, a paralegal and a language and cultural coordinator for the Peace Corps in Haiti. They have lived in Haiti, Canada, Mexico, France, Côte d'Ivoire

HAITIAN CREOLE TRAINING *continued from page 13*

and the U.S. In spite of all this diversity, all the participants shared one thing in addition to speaking Haitian Creole: a devotion to life-long learning. In the words of one of the participants, "I try to attend as many classes and seminars as I possibly can to better my work performance." Another summed it up similarly: "I continue to push myself in this field in order to be the best I can be. This training that is being offered by SSTI and NAJIT came at the right time.... Thank you for the opportunity!"

We at SSTI and NAJIT thank all the participants for their commitment to excellence, to litigants needing interpretation and to the profession as a whole. We wish them every success on the exams in Orlando and in their future interpreting careers.

UPDATE:

Unfortunately, the one-day refresher course in Orlando had to be cancelled due to serious illness in the instructor's family. The Consortium examination in Haitian Creole will still be offered on Sunday, May 16, 2010. ▲

[The author is vice president of SSTI and a NAJIT board member.]

BILINGUALISM, THE BRAIN, AND CREATIVITY
continued from page 7

23. Ibid., 5.

24. Ibid., 5.

25. Ibid., 7.

26. Ibid., 9.

27. Ibid., 18.

28. Ibid., 19.

ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES

Altarriba, Jeanette, and Roberto R. Heredia. 2008. *An Introduction to Bilingualism: Principles and Processes*. London: Psychology Press.

Fernandez, Mercedes. "Neuropsychological Test Performance in Monolinguals: Advantages and Disadvantages of Speaking Two Languages." Talk at Nova Southeastern University (18 March 2010).

Harms, J., and M. Fernández. "Late Language Bilinguals Outperform Monolinguals on the Stroop Test." Speech at the National Academy of Neuropsychology, 2007.

Misdragi, E., N. K. Lim, and M. Fernández. "Language and Cultural Influences on a Confrontation Naming Test." Speech at the American Psychological Association, 2007.

University of Syracuse, New York, Department of Linguistics. 2009. Symposium, "The Bilingual Mind." (7-8 October 2009). View panelists and abstracts at <http://bilingualmind.syr.edu>.

www.Multi-faceta.com/reference.html. This website contains a bibliography of resource materials on many aspects of bilingualism.

[The author earned a Ph.D. in Hispanic languages and literatures at UCLA and taught at the universities of Michigan, California at Berkeley, Nebraska, and Nova Southeastern University. He has written on Gabriela Mistral, as well as on Borges, Cortázar, and other subjects.]

In Memoriam**Susan E. Castellanos Bilodeau**

Susan E. Castellanos Bilodeau, a long-time member of NAJIT, suffered a stroke and passed away on March 16, 2010, in Concord, NH, at the age of 53. Born in California, the second child of Cuban immigrants, she grew up in Miami, Florida, and like many children of immigrants, her first experiences in interpreting were helping her mother navigate various bureaucracies. It wasn't until college that she began a serious study of Spanish.



Sue served as chair of NAJIT's nominations committee for three years, and attended nearly every annual meeting and educational conference from the time she joined the organization. She was a founding member and co-chair of NHITO and a member of the ATA and NETA.

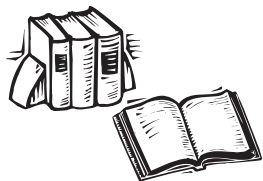
Sue was a woman of many talents. Before becoming a professional judiciary and medical interpreter, she obtained associate's degrees in paralegal studies and computer science; when her two sons were older, she returned to school part-time and obtained a bachelor's degree in international business studies. She studied judiciary interpreting at the Agnese Haury Institute, as well as at the many seminars offered through NAJIT; she also participated in medical interpreting courses offered locally. She was in many ways an autodidact. If something needed to be done, Sue would research it and figure out how to do it. She redesigned and installed a tiled bathroom in her home that is worthy of a magazine spread.

While most of her travel consisted of road trips — which were always an adventure — she took the opportunity to attend two professional conferences in Cuba. Recently, she served as an interpreter for a humanitarian mission in the Dominican Republic. She was also a member of Red Cross Disaster Services. Always prepared for any eventuality, apart from interpreting, Sue gladly supplied the other participants with insect repellent, Tylenol, ointments or extra socks — none of which they had thought to bring.

Sue was a giving person, whose last act of generosity was the donation of vital organs to help five people live longer and better lives. I am grateful for the gift of her friendship for over a dozen years, and I will miss her.

Rosemary W. Dann

Donations in Sue's memory can be made to SSTI, with the notation "Bilodeau memorial fund." Your generosity is appreciated. Checks may be sent to NAJIT, at official headquarters. All donations are entirely tax deductible. ▲



Book Review

Clifford L. Elow

Portable Professional Tools:

Spanish-English/English-Spanish Pocket Legal Dictionary

Nolan, James. 2008.

Hippocrene Books, Inc.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7818-1214-6

278 pages. | \$19.95

In an increasingly mobile world, there is a need for a reliable yet compact bilingual legal dictionary. *The Spanish-English/English-Spanish Pocket Legal Dictionary* by James Nolan helps fill this need. A compendium of the most commonly encountered legal terminology, this handy reference is packed into a compact soft-cover book. The author of this small yet comprehensive reference, James Nolan, is a retired United Nations interpreter with degrees in both law and translation. He has been an interpreter trainer for the U.N., taught interpretation at New York University, served as deputy director of the U.N.'s interpretation, meetings and publishing division and also headed up linguistic and conference services of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

After a short introductory and explanatory section, including a preface, pronunciation guide, and list of abbreviations, the book divides the entries into eight thematic categories: general and procedural terms; commercial; criminal; family; health-care; housing; immigration; and traffic law. For each individual entry, part of speech is indicated, and in the Spanish section, the gender of the word is included when not immediately identifiable. An additional aid to reference is the convenient tab on each page indicating the specific category of that section, shown on the recto in the English section and on the verso in Spanish.

In my evaluation of this reference, I first focused on the English section, selecting fourteen words that are in my view essential to a bilingual legal dictionary and a legal translator: *complainant, misdemeanor, felony, summary judgment, default judgment, claimant, deposition, convict* (noun and verb), *forensic, precedent, discovery, plaintiff, workman's compensation*, and *brief*. Only the word *precedent* was listed in a category — criminal law — different from what I anticipated. The remaining words were easily located in a logical category: *complainant* was listed under general and procedural terms, while *misdemeanor, felony* and *convict* were all, as expected, in the criminal law section. The ease of finding commonly used words contributed to my favorable opinion of the dictionary.

The second search conducted was of less commonly used words and phrases, such as *eminent domain, severance of proceedings, involuntary lien*, and *riparian rights*. These terms were likewise included and easily found, thus increasing the usable value of the reference.

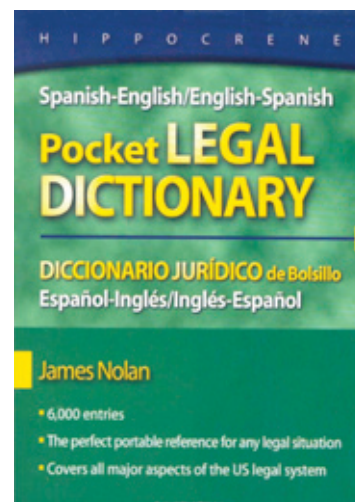
While this dictionary cannot be considered a comprehensive bilingual reference for legal terminology, it is a concise compilation of more commonly-used terms in the eight thematic domains listed above. Given that the organization of the

dictionary is its separation into the aforementioned areas of law, it is most oriented towards those who specialize in those particular areas. Thematic compartmentalization of definitions renders the quick search for words somewhat more cumbersome than in a more traditional dictionary which organizes information in an overall alphabetical listing. Still, the salient traits of this handy, user-friendly dictionary are accessibility and convenience.

Finally, the dictionary comes with two brief appendices, both oriented towards law-enforcement personnel. The first contains bilingual useful phrases with the Spanish equivalents for such statements as “you are under arrest,” “exit the building,” and “get out of the car.” Although these are elementary for an interpreter or translator, this appendix aims to be particularly useful to police officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, or any other individual involved in critical situations. For these individuals, this appendix alone would be worth the price of the book (\$19.95). The second appendix is even more specialized, with an English-to-Spanish translation of the Miranda warning, of interest primarily to police officers, detectives, and other law-enforcement personnel.

Overall, the reviewer believes that this work is well worth purchasing. The entries encompass most of the subject areas germane to legal interpreters and translators, all are commonly encountered legal terms, and the definitions are easy to find. While some of the more arcane language used in the field of law is not to be found in this dictionary, this reference enables a user to expeditiously locate accurate translations within a variety of domains in which translators and interpreters frequently work. This new pocket dictionary by James Nolan met this reviewer's expectations, and then some. It is highly recommended and acquits itself well on all counts: relative comprehensiveness, accuracy, and accessibility. ▲

[The reviewer is a certified translator (Spanish-to-English and Portuguese-to-English), a certified public accountant, a certified professional contracts manager, and a certified government financial manager. He is the author of “Socio-Political Aspects of Land Tenure in the Agricultural Development of Contemporary Mexico.”]



GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

IS YOUR ESPRIT DE CORPS SHOWING?

María Cristina de la Vega

Just what is *esprit de corps*? According to Answers.com it is: “A common spirit of comradeship, enthusiasm and devotion to a cause among the members of a group.” That said, I trust many of you are putting the concept into practice to attend our annual conference in May in Orlando.

As of this writing, it is still a few weeks before that date and I am very excited about attending this year. It is a wonderful opportunity to galvanize one’s business and professional development by taking advantage of all the resources and benefits offered by NAJIT. It is a time to come out, meet colleagues, see what your association can do for you and how you, in turn, can enrich the organization with your unique contributions and perspectives. I have been in the business of interpreting for over thirty years. I attended a NAJIT conference for the first time last year in Scottsdale and found the experience invaluable. I connected with colleagues who were able to add to my business acumen, not only by becoming resources for me to tap into but by sharing specialized knowledge that I would not have gained elsewhere. I still remember three sessions in 2009: Jack Navarrete’s demo of software tools for transcriptions; Rogelio Camacho’s session on Mexican street slang; and Georganne Weller’s interesting talk about the INALI project to train speakers of Mexican indigenous languages to become interpreters. Shortly after her presentation, my business had a need to provide an interpreter in Zapoteco and I knew just whom to contact for a lead.

During the conference I also made it a point to attend the Board of Directors meeting, open to all members, which provided great insight as to how things get done in our association, the recognized leader in the field of court interpreting. I also took advantage of the opportunity during the pre-conference days to sit for both the NAJIT written exam and an ATA exam. As I did not personally know many of the professionals who attend the conference, in advance, I contacted Isabel Framer, then chair of the board, to ask her to introduce me. She was gracious enough to let me tag along as she made her rounds before the sessions began and I got to meet a lot of people, among them the *Proteus* editor, who offered me the opportunity to write a regular column on business-related themes. That one outcome, by itself, has been a rewarding justification for going, because it gave me the opportunity to write about topics that I enjoy and find useful to our profession.

Through NAJIT we have a marvelous vehicle at our disposal to present a united voice on issues of importance to the language industry, such as language access in the state courts for the limited English proficient, and the status of medical and community interpreting. We are fortunate to have among our ranks informed practitioners and academics who have written a host of position papers that are available for all members to use. For example, I regularly send out the paper on Team Interpreting to educate clients who

ask that we provide a single interpreter for long trials. Through our listserv we have a forum that lets us interact with community organizations to offer language services when needed in times of relief efforts such as the recent earthquake in Haiti, and through which we learn of significant findings in our field that may impact our work, such as interpreter surveys and other resources that permit us to stay abreast of developments in the field. In addition, through the website, a large number of useful links are provided to other related organizations and to training and educational resources. All these tools only serve to raise the standard of our profession, yet none happen *sua sponte*. We have these resources because individuals throughout the years have given their time and energy to strengthen NAJIT by making contributions to the organization as a whole. Each of us can do something at whatever level we feel comfortable with, but it has to start with a decision to show up, meet people and learn how you can become involved.

Perhaps you couldn’t make it this year to Orlando. Next year we have the conference venue in Long Beach, California to look forward to. It is not too early to start the ball rolling and make plans to attend. Make sure to reserve the date! The area is a giant playground nestled in the heart of southern California. As an art major in my undergraduate days, one of the main attractions of the area for me is the Getty Center, a beautiful museum in a magnificent cliffside setting bordering the sea. For those who enjoy nature, you can go whale watching, or just cruise the Pacific Coast Highway from Long Beach to Laguna Beach, one of the most scenic highways in the world, or stop in to see the Aquarium of the Pacific. If you enjoy fine dining, there is Pine Avenue, north of the ocean, where you will find numerous restaurants with outdoor seating, and even one with its own brewery where you can savor local micro-brews.

It is never too early to start planning. Make a mid-year resolution to see how you can derive the most from your membership in NAJIT and connect with your colleagues. Strategize to figure out how you can contribute, attend the annual conference next year, and help improve it. All organizations are a work in progress. Stay in touch with those you had the luck to meet in Florida or at past conferences. We never know when as colleagues we may be able to help one another out. A network is certainly useful anytime, but more so during difficult periods. Although the economy seems to be improving, we are not out of the woods yet. This is a time to take stock of our assets so that we can put our best foot forward and make the most of a challenging time. We have the tools, so let’s get down to business! ▲

[The author holds an MBA, is a federally certified Spanish interpreter, conference interpreter, and co-owner of ProTranslating in Miami. She is a regular contributor to this column for *Proteus*.]

A LEXICOGRAPHER'S LAIR

GRAHAM THE GRAMMARIAN TALKS TURKEY

Dennis McKenna

A recent series of posts regarding spoken vs. written English on the NAJIT listserve has spurred me to comment on a persistent problem encountered by candidates preparing for standardized interpreting tests. Many of them find themselves wondering, "What's the real English anyway, the spoken language that we are all familiar with, or the written one with its arcane rules that relatively few people have really mastered?"

Given the importance of the subject, I decided to contact Graham, whose acquaintance I first made many years ago when Mrs. Woollcott, my high school English teacher, suggested I seek help for deficient diction. Graham was my sponsor at our local Grammarphobe's Anonymous meetings and we have kept in touch ever since. This is my thirty-second year on the abstention-from-bad-diction wagon and I owe a good deal of my success to Graham. This said, I admit that he can be a bit pedantic at times. And I have also suspected that he may make his living as a test writer for the English sections of certain standardized interpreting tests.

I contacted him and asked point blank whether or not he writes those odious tests. Graham was elusive at first, but I pressed until finally he 'fessed up. "All right, all right! It's true. It is I who make up those tests that everyone hates. But if you blow my cover in your column I'll have to change my e-mail address, which is so inconvenient!" Then he began to sob uncontrollably into the phone. "You have no idea what it's like. The testing company sends me all their hate email about me. Honestly, I don't know what I did to deserve this." His whimpering tugged at my heart, but I didn't let him off the hook. "I won't reveal specifics about your whereabouts, but only on condition that you meet with a group of your accusers." We agreed on the protocol: he would don a ski mask and we would meet outside an interpreter training school on a Saturday morning between classes. I warned him that it wouldn't be a friendly meeting, but he assured me that he knew full well what to expect. What follows is an edited transcript of what transpired.

Graham the Grammarian: Am I to take you people seriously in your aspiration to be court interpreters?

Prospective Interpreter #1: Are your *inferring* that I'm not qualified to interpret in court right now, just because I haven't passed that silly certification test?

Graham the Grammarian: To *infer* is to surmise or to conclude from evidence or premises. The question that I suppose you meant to ask whether I am *implying* such a thing. To imply is to hint or suggest something. But yes, the fact that you just mixed up the two terms allows me to safely *infer* that you are not yet ready.

Prospective Interpreter #2: My friends and me all think that you don't have hardly any idea of what you're talking about.

Graham the Grammarian: You must have meant to say: My friends and *I* (subject pronoun). And try to avoid saying, "don't have hardly any," since it's a double negative. The same is true of "don't have barely any" and "don't have scarcely any."

Prospective Interpreter #3: But we all speak real good English; and anyway, whenever I interpret for depositions — where, by the way, nobody ever asks to see my certification — the attorneys always say I did real good.

Graham the Grammarian: Perhaps you do speak and interpret *really well*, but right now you're not doing a very good job convincing me of it.

Prospective Interpreter #4: Between the federal and the state interpreting test, which do you think is the hardest?

Graham the Grammarian: When only two things are being compared, we are obliged to use the comparative "harder" rather than the superlative "hardest."

Prospective Interpreter #4: For somebody like me, who just begun studying last week, what would you recommend I do first?

Graham the Grammarian: Honestly, I would first take a refresher course in English grammar (where you can learn the difference between the simple past and the past participle), then read good writers and good periodicals, and listen to NPR and the like.

Prospective Interpreter #1: But all those classes, serious novels and intellectual radio broadcasts are boring.

Graham the Grammarian: I don't mean to sound flippant, but if you don't want to put in the effort to study, read, and listen to serious programs, maybe you should try dating an English teacher.

Prospective Interpreter #2: I tried that once, but I couldn't stand him correcting me all the time.

Graham the Grammarian: You mean you couldn't stand *his* correcting you all the time. You have to use the possessive immediately before the gerund.

Prospective Interpreter #2: Well, anyway, it was awful. I'll never go back to that, even if it means I'll never pass the test.

Graham the Grammarian: My wife can attest to how annoying it is to live with someone who's always commenting on other people's use of language. But please don't despair. Here is a list of often misused words that test writers love to trip us up on:

A LEXICOGRAPHER'S LAIR *continued from page 17*

Adverse circumstances are opposing circumstances, so adverse means contrary.

Averse is reluctant. To be averse to something is to not want to do it.

Advise is the verb that we pronounce with a z sound and means to inform or counsel someone.

Advice is the noun that rhymes with spice: "I need some advice on what to study."

Aid is help and to aid is to help, so the one word could be either a noun or a verb.

Aide is a noun and refers to a helper, as in a congressional aide.

Alright is a word that drives grammar geeks crazy because many of them, the ones who are the biggest sticklers, say it is not really a word at all and that it's really just a misspelling of *all right*.

All right is the adjective that means okay, fine or safe and the adverb that means okay or fine.

Alternate as a verb that means to switch back and forth. As an adjective it means able to be chosen instead of something or someone else, as in alternate juror.

Alternative can also be an adjective meaning much the same thing, but is also a noun that refers to a choice or option. "His only alternative was to run for his life."

Amiable is an adjective that describes people who are nice.

Amicable describes arrangements that are satisfactory to all, as in an amicable agreement.

Amount is used for uncountables, as in a large amount of flour, rice or wheat.

Number is for things that can be expressed as a number, such as apples or oranges.

To **compliment** someone is to say how much we admire his or her appearance, actions, etc. When we do so we pay that person a **compliment**.

To **complement** is to enhance or to complete that which is incomplete: "That belt complements your outfit perfectly."

To be **conscious** is to be aware or awake. "The astronauts were still conscious as the capsule fell to earth."

Conscience is the inner voice that tells us the difference between right and wrong.

Continuously is an adverb that describes something that is nonstop and constant. "The machine ran continuously all afternoon long, until it finally got so hot that it seized up and melted together in places."

Continually refers to that which is repeated frequently or on a regular basis over a long period of time. "When I was growing up, my mother needed to continually remind me to do my homework."



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in Orlando, FL on
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To **deprecate** is to criticize someone or something.

For something to **depreciate** is for it to fall in value. We can also **depreciate** assets by assigning them a lower value over time (e.g., for tax purposes).

Different than does not exist (in our ideal world of perfect grammar).

Different from is the proper expression.

Discreet means to be careful about what one says or does. "I knew I could count on my partners to be discreet about our purchase of the land surrounding the town."

Discrete is limited to a single one or a thing that's clearly separate from the rest, as in there were five discrete units.

To be **disinterested** is to be neutral about something, free of bias.

To be **uninterested** is to have no particular interest in a subject, which may be what you're feeling by about now about this discussion.

FINAL QUESTION AND ANSWER:

Prospective Interpreter #4: So what *advice* can you give us to help us pass these difficult exams?

Graham the Grammarian: First accept that you don't know it all and that you have a grammar deficit. Recognize that you can improve your knowledge of standard English through hard work and determination. Commit yourself to making the necessary changes to improve your ability to communicate effectively. Good grammar makes for effective communication because it eliminates ambiguity and misunderstanding. It's also the most elegant and economical way to speak or write. Sign up for an English class at your local community college. Read good literature and newspapers. Seek out a friend with good language skills and ask him to critique something you wrote from a grammatical standpoint. Get a grammar book that makes sense to you and study little by little, allowing each of the grammar points to sink in. Then some day, with a little luck and a lot of hard work, you'll reach your goal of becoming a certified interpreter. I encourage you to persevere until you vanquish all your grammar demons. And who knows? After a few years in the profession, you just may be lucky enough to address a group of angry students who only want to pass the exam and get on with their lives. ▲

[Lexicographer Dennis McKenna, whose day job is as a state and federally certified interpreter in California, is a regular contributor to Proteus.]

THE NAJIT SCHOLARS OF 2010

Congratulations to the following scholars, who were chosen to attend the NAJIT conference in Orlando. The NAJIT Scholars program was initiated in 2005. Scholars receive free conference registration, free NAJIT membership for one year, and a \$500 stipend for travel costs.

Rosaura Figueroa, *California State University, Long Beach*. Rosaura is a California native. She was recently named outstanding graduate for the College of Liberal Arts 2010 at Long Beach. She will be starting her MA in the translation and interpretation program at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in fall 2010. She hopes to have a long and fruitful career in translation and interpretation, and to one day teach in the field.

Geraldine Hernandez, *University of Arizona, National Center for Interpretation*. Geri is Navajo—clan: Totsoni, Todacheeni, Tsenjikinni, and Tlauscheii. Her upbringing was on the Navajo reservation. She worked as a nurse and pursued a social work degree to work with Native American veterans. Her language and profession have benefitted to serve her clientele with quality care and dignity.

Desirée Martin, *Florida International University*. Desirée is currently a full time student at FIU, with a dual degree major of Spanish and psychology, and minor in translation studies pursuant to a certificate in court interpretation. She is of Spanish and Cuban-American heritage, and hopes to utilize what she is learning to benefit the Hispanic community.

Luz Nápoles, *Miami Dade College*. Luz was born in Cuba with an optic nerve condition that left her legally blind by age 4 and totally blind by age 10. It wasn't until she emigrated to the U.S. at age 16 that she learned

how to read and write in Braille. Thanks to mentors in the U.S., Luz was able to earn a high school diploma in four years. For the next ten years she worked developing film, an occupation tailor-made for a blind person since undeveloped film cannot be exposed to light. In 1998, she became an active member of the Lighthouse for the Blind in Miami, where she learned software and computers. When Luz graduates in May with an associate's degree in translation and interpretation, she will achieve her dream of being the first member of her family to earn a college degree. She plans to continue her education at Florida International University. Her desire is use her skills to bridge the gap between the blind Spanish-speaking population and English-only speakers and to encourage other blind people to further their education.

Ruth Siewierski, *Florida International University*. Ruth was born in Colombia, and has worked as a protocol attaché for the Colombian Mission to the United Nations as well as for top Fortune 500 companies during her 20 years of residence in the United States. She is currently pursuing her certificate in translation and interpretation from Florida International University.

Molly Watters, *College of Charleston*. Molly grew up in Ohio. In graduate school she was a Spanish translator intern for Motley Rice LLC, one of the largest plaintiff litigation firms in the country. Recently she completed an internship with the U.S. District Court in New Mexico. She graduated with an M.A. in bilingual interpreting and a certificate in medical and health care interpreting from the College of Charleston in December, 2009. She now lives and works as a freelance interpreter in Albuquerque, New Mexico. ▲



PROTEUS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JUDICIARY INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

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I certify that the above information is correct and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. I agree to abide by the NAJIT Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities.

Applicant's signature _____ Date _____

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

	Active	Associate	Student	Corporate Sponsor	Corporate	Organizational (nonprofit)
Dues	\$105	\$85	\$40	\$300	\$160	\$115
Suggested voluntary contribution to SSTI	\$35	\$25	\$10	\$100	\$100	\$65
TOTAL	\$140	\$110	\$50	\$400	\$260	\$180

PAYMENT METHOD

☐ Check or Money Order (payable to NAJIT) ☐ MC ☐ VISA ☐ Amex

Card number

Credit card verification value _____ Expiration date ____ / ____

Signature _____ \$ _____
(REQUIRED FOR CREDIT CARD PAYMENT) Amount

Contributions or gifts to NAJIT are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. However, dues payments may be deductible by members as ordinary and necessary business expenses to the extent permitted under IRS Code. Contributions to the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI), a 501(c)3 educational organization, are fully tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED
APPLICATION AND PAYMENT TO:

NAJIT

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