

## Clarifying Pragma-Linguistic Incongruences When Conveying Meaning between Sociocultural Words/Worlds

Pilar Cal-Meyer

### **Sociolinguistic considerations in a socio-culturally situated interpreting model**

When we speak, we convey meaning through grammatical structures and through pragmatic (1) layers of meaning in a variety of signs. Language does not exist in a vacuum, but rather is inextricably intertwined and embedded within a multidimensional realm of sociocultural constructs and practices. The meaning of things, ideas, values, knowledge, etc., is not an absolute and universal construct to which we can all relate in an *exact* manner. Meaning is co-constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by individuals and societies; we create meaning based on our cultures, values, histories, and experiences, and according to our worldviews. As human beings, court interpreters are subject to the same influences as are all speakers and societies. Interpreters know better than most other professionals that interpreting *the word and the world* from one language to another accurately, fairly, and impartially, is indeed possible, but attaining those standards sometimes involves far more complex sets of linguistic skills than meet the eye.

### **A fascinating but puzzling question**

A few days ago, Sara, a colleague of mine, a court interpreter trainer, posted on the NAJIT listserv a fascinating, but puzzling question whose pragma-linguistic cultural complexity merited analysis beyond the literal and grammatical plane (i.e. beyond our intellectual comfort zone). The posting made me realize that finding equivalents in two languages, two cultures, and two worldviews was only the beginning; setting an ethical and operationalizing precedent as to how to approach such dilemmas was, and is, the ongoing question to be contemplated individually and collectively, since such pragma-linguistic dilemmas are not uncommon given the unpredictable nature of our activities.

The fact that my colleague was dutifully and openly appealing to the collective consciousness of the listserv in a search for information as to how to best answer a question asked by one of her students, made the call for enlightenment all the more significant and compelling. At some point, after reading various suggestions offered to her, it occurred to me that her particular dilemma and other “cultural dilemmas” can be approached in more ethical and transparent ways to preserve the integrity of due process and the value and reliability of our services. I believe that reproducing and circulating unexamined and random knowledge counters best practice and disseminates poor judgment among new and not -so -new interpreters entrusted with the honorable and delicate task of participating in the pursuit of equal justice.

### **Interpreting the word and the world**

After my first ten to fifteen years working as a court interpreter, I started to realize that judicial interpreters will develop impartial, unbiased, and fair practices once they have a firm understanding of the profession as a bridge of communication whereby the “word” and the “world” of our two language pairs are to be considered in equilibrium, i.e. without giving more weight or value to either of the two languages/discourses. Equating both the English discourse of the public institutions and the discourse of the LEP communities entails the recognition that court interpreting involves culture and language, and a genuine desire to serve both ends of the spectrum.

Before examining the question posed by Sara’s student, I want to mention my appreciation for the NAJIT listserv as an invaluable source of knowledge and insight in which its members have shared and received wisdom, gathered relevant information, found support, and much more. The listserv has been a space where language professionals could exchange thoughts on matters proper to our activity, and I believe that through time, our collective voices become the driving force that shape the destiny of our profession. I believe that in particular, the input of highly credentialed and experienced colleagues plays an influential role in either constructing new and more transparent models of interpreting, or in perpetuating a prejudicial legitimization of neglectful and unethical practices.

Below is Sara’s posting on the NAJIT listserv which, along with other contributions, prompted my reply and formed the basis of this article.

Hello colleagues:

I was teaching tonight in orientation workshop for court interpreters and a student from Ethiopia who speaks Amharic asked my fellow colleague instructor and me a question we were not sure how to answer. I’m hoping someone can shed some light on this: He stated that in his country, the day starts at 6:00pm US time so if he is interpreting for an Ethiopian native Defendant/witness and an attorney asks, “tell me where you were the night in question, Wednesday at 6:00pm?” In Ethiopia, Wednesday at 6:00pm would really be Thursday morning...he went on to say that culturally, Wednesday night at 6:00pm is really Thursday morning so the LEP would be confused if one stated the literal day and time...so do you interpret appropriate to the culture of the witness or do you interpret exactly what the attorney or speaker asks in a legal setting? The conversation then led a French student to say, “what I think he means is the same thing that happens in my language, if something happened at 11:00 pm, I would say, twenty-three hundred hours because that’s what the LEP understands in our culture and we are supposed to interpret for meaning...needless to say there were many differences of opinion in the class. I tend to agree with the French student but was not totally sure on the Ethiopian language question and my colleague instructor was not sure either.

I know that in a medical setting, I can totally mediate this issue as it is a cultural issue but I am not sure if it's permitted in the legal setting. Any input would be greatly appreciated! :)

Sara

The more I read through the online discussion and suggestions, the more I felt compelled to chime in since this is a recurrent topic and a very consequential one, especially because it relates to teaching court interpreting to future professionals. Spreading knowledge and practices of court interpreting among new providers in a field that plays an essential role in administering justice in the USA is not to be taken lightly.

Although court interpreting in the United States has come a long way thanks to the work of people like Roseann González and Holly Mikkelson, among others, it is still a field with many grey areas and numerous points of contention, insofar as it concerns tackling cultural dilemmas.

Unfortunately, there is still a prevalent and insidious worship of unanalyzed court interpreting models that tend to reduce interpreters to “*verbatim-machines*.” In my opinion, the literal conversion of words, stripped of their cultural meaning, from one language to another is not interpreting.

### **The house of cards**

During a given judicial procedure, the attorney may be excellent, the trier of fact may be thorough, and the LEP witness may speak with utter clarity, but if the interpreter is not prudent, the judicial process and efforts to achieve equal access will fall apart like a house of cards. When the court interpreter avoids dealing with cultural issues by offering such excuses as “it is not my job to find the cultural equivalent... I’m not a “cultural broker” or “I’m just going to replicate the literal words and let the chips fall where they may until the attorneys notice that there is an inconsistency, and deal with it,” then there is a problem.

Unfortunately, tricky cultural-bound terms frequently go unnoticed. I have lived it and seen it firsthand in hearings and trials at which none of the attorneys realized that there was an issue. I shared an anecdote on the NAJIT listserv some time ago about a trial in which I was the interpreter for a Dominican LEP plaintiff who referred to “the foot” as “the leg” throughout the entire trial. The trial took place without any incident and without any attorney ever objecting or clarifying anything. Not even I, the court interpreter, noticed any anomaly, because who would have imagined that “foot” was being used by the LEP witness to mean leg? All the instances used by the witness when vocalizing “foot” to mean “leg” would perfectly fit the linguistic and pragmatic context and thus be impossible to detect. For example, he would say, “Yes my pie/foot was hurting a lot” or “they put a cast on my pie/foot” and so forth. I later learned that the LEP witness (the plaintiff) was suing for injuries to the leg and not to the foot. I also learned that this usage is common in certain speech communities of the Dominican Republic. The question as to why the attorneys never asked for clarification every time the LEP plaintiff referred to “the foot” instead of “the leg,” was never properly answered.

### **Inadvertent errors vs. errors of negligent and apathetic practice**

What we can learn from inadvertent errors is that we can be quite as bilingual and bicultural as anyone else and still fail to detect certain idiosyncratic forms of language usage. These types of errors/pitfalls are unintentional, unexpected and unavoidable if there are no clues signaling a cultural or pragma-linguistic conflict. In such instances one can only hope that they are noticed in time to be resolved in the best and most transparent manner.

I strongly believe, however, that in cases in which the interpreter *is aware* of cultural dilemmas, it behooves her/him to address the issues either before the proceeding, or, if necessary, from the witness stand. In the latter situation, the interpreter may politely request a sidebar to ask for a few minutes to figure out a viable pragma-linguistic solution or to consult with other conscientious interpreters. After all, in these circumstances, we, the bilingual and bicultural professionals, are the most competent and knowledgeable individuals in the courtroom; it is only the court interpreter who has the skills necessary to notice and raise language issues and to find impartial and reasonable ways to deal with them. For example, in my experience with the “foot” term described above, I would be obliged under every code of ethics to address the issue if it arose again. Failing to do so would be unconscionable.

### **Sara’s question**

In analyzing Sara’s question from a pragma-linguistic perspective, we must ask this question:

How can an Amharic/Ethiopian court interpreter decode and encode in the two language directions, references of time, whereby one code/language/world, (English) uses cycles, units, and demarcations of time i.e., days (in English, one day=cycle of 24 hours starting at 12:00 a.m.) different from the referents in the other code/language/world (Amharic/Ethiopia) whose daily cycle starts at 6 p.m. and whose designations of periodical units of time (days of the week) may be affected by mismatching conventional templates between the two languages/cultures?

First, let’s examine why it might *not* be a good idea to “just let the chips fall where they may” when a cultural dilemma like this challenges us. Later, I will offer an alternative solution to the dilemma.

### A “verbatim-machine” interpreter

Using portions of Sara’s example, let’s imagine that an attorney is cross-examining an LEP Ethiopian witness and asks (in English), “Where were you the night in question, *Wednesday at 6 p.m.?*” (Six p.m., based on the time zone of the place where the incident occurred and, presumably in which the trial is taking place.) Then let’s say that a “verbatim-machine” Amharic/Ethiopian interpreter chooses not to address the intricacies of the cultural dilemma and arbitrarily chooses to use an Anglo-centric (English-based) benchmark to guide her/his literal interpretations, thus disregarding the Amharic/Ethiopian parameters. In our hypothetical example the “verbatim-machine” Amharic/Ethiopian interpreter then renders the question for the LEP witness in Amharic as “Where were you *Wednesday at 6 p.m.?*” which under Amharic/Ethiopian cultural conventions is actually Thursday morning at XX hours. In response, the Ethiopian LEP witness firmly responds in Amharic: “I was at home,” an accurate and intended statement, which the interpreter interprets. This will become problematic if the cross-examination continues without the attorney detecting the interpreter’s neglectful error/omission (i.e., using only the literal English time references and designations while disregarding the Amharic/Ethiopian parameters). One result, among others, would be a closing argument in which the witness’ credibility is attacked since he “lied” on the witness stand saying that *he was at home* when the evidence shows that he was somewhere else on *Wednesday at 6 p.m.* Of course we can see that the witness statements were accurate and intended, however misrepresented by the interpreter when s/he chose to interpret literally in terms of the *English parameters only*.

In our hypothetical scenario, disregarding a pragma-linguistic equivalent principle would not be the only violation. In fact, the interpreter’s conscious error in failing to address the cultural dilemma in a transparent manner, prior to the linguistic chaos, constitutes poor practice. Under this set of circumstances, the result would be a distorted set of facts undetected by the court.

### A socio-culturally situated bicultural interpreter

In contrast, a conscientious bicultural and trained interpreter would address the inconsistencies of times and the issues produced by them with the attorneys and with the Court if necessary. One way to interpret the same question above in a fair, accurate and impartial manner is shown below.

An attorney is cross-examining an LEP Ethiopian witness and he asks the following:

QUESTION BY ATTORNEY (in English): “Where were you the night in question, *Wednesday at 6 p.m.?*”

INTERPRETATION (into Amharic/Ethiopian for the LEP witness): “Where were you on *Thursday morning at XX a.m.-- Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. American (local) time?*”

When the interpreter addresses the LEP person in this way s/he conforms to the Amharic/Ethiopian parameters and the Ethiopian cultural conventions, plus s/he also marks the American culture/English language time, as well.

ANSWER (in Amharic/Ethiopian interpreted into English): “*Wednesday at 6:00 p.m., Thursday morning at XX a.m. Amharic/Ethiopian time, I was ...*”

The bidirectional communication governed by the principle of pragmatic equivalents will put everyone on the same page and the interpreter will not omit, add, or distort the reality and facts of the two worlds. Stating both time designations (the English and the Amharic/Ethiopian) for the record *and for the LEP witness* is perhaps necessary, not only in terms of accuracy and for ethical reasons, but also because the record will reflect the transparency of the interpreting process if verifications or appeals take place at a later time. One does not need to be a “cultural broker” or an anthropologic linguist to briefly and simply state or describe the issues to the attorneys and the Court in a discrete manner following the court protocols we all are familiar with. Doing so will prevent judges, attorneys, the jury and everyone else from scratching their heads when hearing the interpreter offering two sets of times, in this particular case of time discrepancies.

### Fundamental pieces of information

It is crucial to keep in mind that some pragma-linguistic referents like time and location are exceptionally important temporal and spatial landmarks since they may constitute alibis or pieces of information with much more evidentiary weight than immaterial information. Pragma-linguistic inconsistencies of immaterial information will not lead to unwarranted legal disasters if properly addressed.

### Shared and prior knowledge

I should comment on the example of yards and kilos offered by another colleague on the listserv thread that prompted this article. This colleague was paralleling the example at issue with conventional measuring units suggesting that “if the speaker is using yards and pounds we would never take it upon ourselves to make the conversions.” This analogy does not provide a viable solution to the Amharic/Ethiopian scenario described by Sara’s student, because international measuring systems, i.e., metric and English, are well known by interpreters and attorneys alike; both systems constitute shared and prior knowledge. Both systems have a set of units with corresponding translations in each language. For example, in Spanish↔English we have metros= meter, litro= liter, etc., and in the opposite direction some examples are inches=pulgadas, yards=yardas, ounces=onzas etc. They do not trigger a pragma-linguistic conflict of any kind. So, if an attorney asks a Spanish speaking LEP witness on the stand, “how far were you from the shooting?” and the LEP witness answers, “I was about two hundred metros/*meters* away from the shooting,” the interpreter will simply render the units in *meters*. Once the metric system term is heard, attorneys will immediately ask additional questions to determine the approximate distance (e.g., in car lengths, courtroom lengths, etc.) in the English measuring system, or counsel and the Court will do the math to convert from the metric system to the English system.

Similarly, if an attorney asks, "how many pounds do you weigh Mr. X?" the interpreter will keep the units in pounds (*libras* in Spanish) for the LEP witness, who may respond, "I don't know in *libras/pounds*, but I weigh XX *kilos*." Again, the interpreter will render *kilos* to the English audience, and then the attorneys and/or the Court will do the math. There is no real cultural dilemma or confusion in this scenario.

Of course, if a particular language had measuring units with lexical designations apparently similar to those in English, but with different "net values," and the interpreter is the only one aware of such an incongruence, there would be no "shared knowledge" by interpreters and attorneys as to the particular values. In such situations, the interpreter would need to address the pragma-linguistic issue in whatever manner s/he deems most appropriate, and find the correct pragma-linguistic equivalents that would smoothly and accurately represent the two languages/cultures/worlds involved. Certainly, pragma-linguistic issues are not limited to measure units or schedule demarcations, but they are ubiquitous and multiform.

### **Conclusion**

When we interpret, we "live" in and experience the two languages and the two cultures of our language pairs at the same time. Since language is encoded culture, we need to find not only lexical-semantic equivalents or close approximations to both worlds/languages, but also pragmatic (socially and culturally situated) equivalents in both directions, i.e., English/American Culture <> X Language/X Culture. This is why the term "bilingual" is a misnomer if devoid of lived experiences acquired through interaction with a wide variety of speakers from different backgrounds in different settings and during considerable amounts of time in the two sociocultural environments of our language pairs. Simply put, the language-culture connection is factual, powerful, and inescapable. One cannot be called *bilingual* if one is not *bicultural*. By virtue of our bilingualism and biculturalism, we are both equipped and compelled to respond accurately, truthfully, and ethically to cultural dilemmas in our daily work. I believe that once we detect a pragma-linguistic issue in a situation wherein the usual literal formula does not fit the regular schemes to which we are accustomed, whether in attorney-client settings or on the witness stand, it is our responsibility to impart the knowledge we have gained through experience.,

Michael Schudson, a professor of journalism at Columbia University, said, "Philosophy, the history of sciences, psychoanalysis, and the social sciences [including applied linguistics] have taken great pains to demonstrate that human beings are cultural animals who know and see and hear the world through socially constructed filters." (2) Therefore, in order to convey the linguistic codes and the pragma-linguistic signs embedded in the sociocultural practices of each "reality" as accurately as possible, despite the inherent influences of socially constructed "filters", one needs to appreciate how such physical and symbolic signs "translate" between the two realms. Ultimately, one needs to bring transparency to the process when deciphering the two realms, if justice is to be served.

No doubt there are as many styles, philosophies, and attitudes on how to interpret and how to approach cultural dilemmas, as there are court interpreters. Nevertheless, there may be just a few approaches leading to principled conduct and to the legitimacy of our praxis, regardless of the specifics of each situation, one of which is the recognition and internalization of the fact that court interpreting involves navigating and communicating *culture and language* and agenuine desire to serve both ends of the spectrum.

### **Notes:**

(1) Pragmatics is basically the study of how language is used in a physical, cultural, and social context. Pragmatics is as necessary as grammar to convey the meaning of our messages. Pragmatics is about what we accomplish with language and it does not deal much with the sentence structure but rather with communication, conversation, and discourse. Pragmatics pertains to how we do things with language, how utterances are said, where, by whom, etc.

(2) Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

---

*[Pilar Cal-Meyer is a certified court interpreter working in Boston, MA. She holds a master's degree in applied linguistics from the University of Massachusetts and a bachelor's degree in biological sciences from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She has worked in the fields of medical, conference and legal interpreting, and has been a translator for over 22 years. She was a main contributor to the chapter on Forensic Transcriptions/Translations in the new edition of Fundamentals of Interpretation (González, Vásquez and Mikkelsen.)]*

---

## Claiming Our Profession

By Athena Matilsky

"I am an interpreter." I was giddy the first time I said these words out loud, having just finished my inaugural shift as a volunteer interpreter in a medical clinic. To me, the possibility of uttering this phrase was an honor earned through hours and hours of study and sacrifice. From monolingual to bilingual by the skin of my teeth, I leapt from the classroom into a world of Spanish As It Is Spoken By Native Speakers. I dove into idioms, regionalisms and accent variations. I interned, observed, practiced, and practiced some more. I learned to refer to myself in the third person, constantly monitor my output and apply the code of ethics to a variety of absurd situations. Finally, I leapt over that scary precipice to land on the other side as a master approved court interpreter and freelance medical interpreter. Not only am I an interpreter now, but I get paid for it, too!

It is all the more odd, then, that when I say that phrase: "I am an interpreter," nobody seems to know what it means, or the commitment it took to get here. "Oh! So you're the one who writes down everything in court?" ask strangers at parties. In hospitals, I am condescended to and misunderstood: "So I guess you took some Spanish classes in high school?" muses one physician's assistant. "You know you should be in there translating!" orders a nurse as I stand outside the examination room for forty-five minutes because there is nowhere to sit, no provider in the room, and it is unethical for me to be alone with the patient. Just this last spring, I had to explain to a packed and open-mouthed courtroom that I was under the obligation to inform them that I needed a break and it was actually standard protocol to have two interpreters present for an 8-hour trial day. Luckily the judge took me seriously, a break was granted and another interpreter called. The lawyers later told me I should inform the court that it was standard practice to order Coolatta refills every fifteen minutes. Ha-ha.

But let me just tell you that yesterday took the cake as far as depositions are concerned, and not because of any difficulties in interpreting! It was a tricky job but I was pleased with the outcome. The Colombian plaintiff I was interpreting for had been living in the United States since 9 years before I was born. Let's just say that the extent to which his Spanish resembled Spanglish was, well, to a "*gran extento*" (that's "large extent" for those of you who are Limited Spanglish Proficient). My brain started to implode after endless replies of, "um-hmm [stare from court reporter], YES! ...*Sí, sí*" [yes, yes]. And, "That's *correcto*" [correct]. The fun really began when he gave a long, impromptu and unelicited explanation about how he had lived in three different apartments, one of which caught fire, but they needed more "rooms" to accommodate their divorced son. He kept referring to the apartment sizes as "*dos* rooms" (two bedrooms) and "*tres* rooms" (three bedrooms). I am proud to say I rendered the whole utterance intact without a repetition!

But no, the difficulty began a few moments after I entered the law office. As I was reviewing the complaint and jotting down vocabulary that might come in handy, I overheard the firm's (and plaintiff's) lawyer loudly tell the opposing party that there would be a paralegal sitting in to watch the translator "in case there are any problems." It didn't stop there; for the next five minutes, they both laughed about terrible interpreters: "I know some Spanish too, and I can tell when they're messing up!" (It is moments like these when I wish I interpreted a language of lesser diffusion, although of course that carries its own set of trials.) As I felt my blood pressure rise, I practiced my yoga breathing and thought over a few possible scenarios. I opted for "knockin' 'em dead."

And I did just that. As time dragged on and I continued to accurately interpret the lawyer's long convoluted questions without interrupting him, as I triumphantly found just the right words (eg. "When I was least expecting it" as opposed to the more literal, "when I least thought about it"), I tried to avoid noticing the paralegal who sat there, taking no notes but staring straight at me with wide judgemental eyes and not a trace of a smile. Finally, an hour and a half into the deposition, her moment arrived. The plaintiff said "*diez*" [ten] but I heard "*dos*" [two] and before I had a chance to correct my error, the paralegal began gesticulating wildly saying, "Stop! That was wrong! She made a mistake!"

The opposing counsel, bless him, informed them that the paralegal was being unprofessional and inappropriate, and that if she had anything she needed to say she could make a note of it and the plaintiff's lawyer could address it later. The plaintiff's lawyer, in turn, argued that they had only wanted to ensure that the Spanish was correct. I practiced my yoga breathing and finally spoke my piece. "I am a master court approved Spanish interpreter," I began, and with all the strength that our blossoming field affords, I rattled off a quick and comprehensive list of my qualifications. I explained that interpreters do make mistakes and we are happy to correct them. I explained that other people might believe a mistake has been made and if such is the case then we are happy to review the interpretation and act accordingly. I explained that as a professional, I wished that the lawyer had approached me personally with any potential concerns, and I stated that I had been put in an awkward and uncomfortable position knowing indirectly that someone else had been assigned to watch my every move.

It was decided that the paralegal would write down any possible issues discreetly. Four hours and fifteen minutes after we began, the deposition finished and the lawyers turned to me, expressing their surprise and appreciation for how well it had gone. I informed them that with all due respect, ours is a difficult profession and if they are so concerned about accurate interpretations (which is understandable), then they should inquire into interpreters' qualifications before hiring them. We had an amicable enough conversation and then parted ways.

There is a lesson here somewhere, I think. Throughout my drive home, I tried to bring my blood pressure back to normal while I daydreamed clever essay possibilities: "Explaining Our Profession to Idiots" is one title I had in mind. I idly wondered if NAJIT would print such a story. Nonetheless, it struck me today that I am above all grateful to belong to a new and increasingly more powerful field. No, not everyone understands our career at first glance, or how hard we interpreters work to get here. But we have the opportunity to shape and participate in our profession in a way that people in other professions do not. And the fact that I interpret now instead of 30 years ago means that I can already count on the support of so many hard-working people who have paved the way before me. We have a rock-solid code of ethics that has our backs. I absolutely love my job, and so do pretty much all of the interpreters I have met. And so my new motto is: Educating People about Interpreters, One Lawyer at a Time. Meanwhile, I believe I'll keep practicing my yoga breathing.

*[Athena Matilsky, is a native New Jerseyan who earned a BA from Rutgers University with a concentration in interpreting and translation. She volunteered for a year as the 6th grade teacher in a non-profit bilingual school in Honduras, and has also served as an advocate for victims of domestic violence. A member of NAJIT, she currently works as a freelance court and medical interpreter in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.]*

---

## No Longer A Voice in the Wilderness

An Interview with Roseann Dueñas González by María Cristina de la Vega

Dr. Roseann Dueñas González is a 21st century luminary in the field of language access in the U.S. She was the founder and long-standing Director of the University of Arizona National Center for Interpretation, Testing, Research and Policy. I took the opportunity of her stepping down to ask her to share her thoughts on the status of our industry.

MCV: To give those readers not acquainted with you an idea of the influence you have had on the legal interpreting profession in the U.S., give us a brief summary of the salient points in your career.

RDG: As a linguist, I specialized in language policy, registers of English, and language proficiency testing. I was hired by the courts in AZ in 1976 to identify defendants who truly needed an interpreter. That led to my study of courtroom English, which became the basis of my 1977 doctoral dissertation, and a lifetime of work:

- The Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts consulted my research for the implementation of the 1978 Court Interpreters Act.
- I led the development of the model, which became the Federal Court Interpreter Certification exam, (SPA <math>\leftrightarrow</math> ENG).
- In 1983, I founded the Agnese Haury Institute at the University of Arizona to provide training for court interpretation and to meet standards set by the federal testing model.
- From 2000-2012, I was the Principal Investigator for projects that resulted in the development of curricula for the major in translation and interpretation at the University of Arizona, and onsite and online education to improve the registers of Spanish teachers to teach translation and interpretation in high schools, funded by the Department of Education. That in turn brought about:

(a) The publication of *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice* in 1991, in collaboration with Victoria Vasquez, J.D. and Holly Mikkelson. It is the most often cited work in law review articles and other scholarly work on court interpretation. This text provided the foundation for the profession's stabilization, growth, and emergence as a professional field. The 2012 revision offers further refinement of interpreter practice, protocol, and ethics.

(b) The expansion of the Agnese Haury Institute for the training of interpreters in healthcare.

(c) Nationwide short courses in test preparation, and introduction to court interpretation, or advanced court interpretation, hybrid online/onsite training and testing options that will provide opportunities for interpreters seeking to better their skills.

MCV: Why were you selected in 1976 by the Pima County Superior Court to assist in identifying defendants needing an interpreter, which led to your seminal doctorate dissertation?

RDG: The court called the English Department at the University of Arizona and asked for a testing specialist. Judge Ben Birdsall wanted a systematic way to determine whether or not a defendant needed an interpreter. I explained that the language of the courtroom constituted a particular variety that was different from ordinary English, and that for this reason, I would have to devise a language test particularly for this purpose. The judge provided me access to cases, some research support, and a pilot population. That was the beginning of the rest of my life.

MCV: What is the most significant change you have observed in the U.S. interpreting profession after the revolutionary implementation of the Federal Certification Program?

RDG: To see a profession grow out of the federal courts' recognition of its duty to guarantee constitutional rights and to carry out the mandate of the Court Interpreters Act (1978)—that is the transformation of a lifetime. With federal certification came the introduction of a professional language intermediary who made the courts accessible to limited and non-English speakers. Because federal certification testing was founded on a valid empirical analysis of courtroom language and the complex job of the court interpreter in this setting, it set the performance criteria and standards for the entire profession. This tool has identified a cadre of extremely talented persons, thus launching the birth of a profession.

MCV: What is the best measure of the growth the Agnese Haury Institute at the University of Arizona and the National Institute for Interpretation have experienced since their inception in 1983? Approximately how many interpreters have received training?

RDG: The Agnese Haury Institute can best be measured by its influence on the growth and development of the court interpreting profession. Its commitment to sharing knowledge and experience is foremost. The Institute was created out of a willingness of master court interpreters (of which there were few in 1983) to share their knowledge and to create a continuing platform where not only linguistic and interpreting skills could be honed, but where all of the content knowledge required of a court interpreter could be presented. Approximately 2,500 interpreters have taken courses there to date.

MCV: I see the short certificate courses offered by the NCI as a robust measure to fill the tremendous need for training that we are experiencing. Do you believe that as recognition for the profession increases, and remuneration merits it, that it will create more traditional educational opportunities through conventional degree programs that are so needed to support this goal?

RDG: As I stated in the 1991 Fundamentals of Court Interpretation and reiterated 20 years later in the 2012 edition, the quality of court interpretation, the growth of the profession, and the quality of language access depends upon the establishment of an academic national infrastructure of translation and interpretation undergraduate and graduate degree programs with an emphasis on interpretation, and a focus on judicial settings. However, consider the fact that it took me 25 years from the founding of the Agnese Haury Institute to the establishment of a T & I major concentration at the University of Arizona, despite my constant efforts. Higher education has been reluctant to embrace court interpretation as a viable field of study. Obstacles include the continuing lack of recognition of interpretation versus translation as a formal field of study; recognition of the need of higher education to fulfill the need for capable interpreters for judicial, medical and other critical settings; and the tremendous workforce demands for certified interpreters. As this need becomes better known through the enforcement of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by the Department of Justice and Health and Human Services, professional interpreters, linguists, lawyers, judges, and other professional groups will have an increasingly stronger argument to begin creating academic programs. However, a diversity of educational paths are still needed. The Agnese Haury Institute provides a professional experience unlike the experience gained in an undergraduate or graduate program. Persons who have completed our undergraduate major in translation and interpretation often take the Institute as a capstone experience. The intensive guided practice with feedback in the three modes of interpretation (consecutive, simultaneous, and sight translation) distinguishes this experience from all others. Short courses fulfill the need for test preparation, specialized instruction such as advanced simultaneous, consecutive, and forensic transcription/translation, etc. Short courses also offer persons considering interpretation the opportunity to self-diagnose and consider the practice of court or medical interpretation and contemplate their own linguistic, interpreting, and subject matter skills and knowledge, to find the educational pathway that meets their goal.

MCV: Have you compared the learning curve and the stage of our profession in the U.S. to that of other parts of the world?

RDG: Although other countries (such as Spain) are significantly ahead in terms of educational opportunities at state funded as well as private universities and colleges, the United States court interpreting profession as a whole is light years ahead of its European and other international counterparts in terms of status of the profession, remuneration and the place of certified professional court interpreters in the justice system. This fact emanates from the rigorous standards set by the federal courts and the enforcement of same through the federal certification examination program and the commensurate remuneration policy established by the federal courts for those who have this unique capability. Although there may be many court interpreters who are doing outstanding work in the field and are not certified at the federal level, the standards set by federal certification provide an exemplar for all state and local courts as well as for other high stakes settings, such as medical.

MCV: What can interested parties do to lobby governmental and private sources to yield support for programs such as those you have spearheaded to develop language access in the U.S.?

RDG: As private citizens, as members of the court interpreting profession, and of professional interpreting and translation groups such as NAJIT and ATA, interpreters need to consider every horizon in terms of language access. The question that should always be: How does this agency, court, system, etc. meet the language access needs of its LEP population. How can I assist them to understand their language access obligation? State interpreter associations need to plug in to local colleges and universities and make it known that access is a primary aspect of their agenda, working collaboratively with universities to make language access a true part of every facet of these institutions.

What are the next goals for our industry and how can language associations help to achieve them?

As we discuss in Fundamentals, the primary goal for the profession is to strengthen its associations and continue to work towards its broader goal of "language access," which will in turn lead to greater professionalization. NAJIT'S new concentration on policy statements and collaboration with the American Bar Association and other agencies is an excellent beginning that should be expanded. The American Bar Association (ABA) recently launched the ABA Standards for Language Access in Courts. Spurred on by the ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants (SCLAID), the Standards represent the most comprehensive document to date promoting full language access in courts nationwide. Among other things, it provides detailed guidance for court interpreter conduct and will hopefully contribute to lawyers, judges and court staff gaining a broader appreciation for the crucial role interpreters play.

Professional associations and all court interpreters should concentrate on creating uniform standards of certification among the 50 states and lobby for the establishment of an office within a federal agency to oversee state and local certification of interpreters and ensure that national interpreting telephone and video relay agencies and other providers are employing persons who have passed a rigorous certification examination in legal, or any venue in which laws are applied or where life outcomes are affected. Until there are uniform standards among states and national or international agencies providing interpreting and translation services, the profession of court interpretation will never achieve its potential. Moreover, as it comes of age, the profession must begin to promulgate professional ethical standards that provide more specific guidance for interpreters to follow and some ways of policing itself, instead of being "policed" by an outside nonprofessional agency.

*Dr. Dueñas González decided to leave her position in September for health reasons and to spend time with her growing family, after many years of distinguished service. I invite your comments and ask you to join with me to wish her our best. We look forward to her continuing advice as the fruits of her labor blossom.*

*[Editor's Note: This interview was originally posted online on December 14, 2012, on María Cristina de la Vega's blog, Musings. Reprinted with permission. <http://mariacristinadelavegamusings.wordpress.com/2012/12/>]*



## NAJIT NEWS

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well enjoying the beginning of spring with its promise of color and renewal. Among other things, spring for me signals that the NAJIT conference is right around the corner and focuses me on the challenges that lie ahead for our professions in the coming year.

As I have said here before, we are living in both exciting and dangerous times for interpreters and translators. They are exciting, due in part to the attention garnered by our professions in the recent past. With the Supreme Court's decision in *Taniguchi v. Kan Pacific Saipan, Ltd.* in 2012, the high court clearly established the delineation between interpreters and translators, one that should be beneficial in framing precisely what it is that we do.

The US Department of Justice has been very proactive in its efforts to ensure that LEP litigants in any setting have access to language services at no cost to them. Several states have made significant changes in their policies in order to comply with these edicts. North Carolina and Tennessee are two prime examples of states that have adopted new and more extensive interpreter protocols. The State of Hawaii is debating similar changes at the time of this writing. The Department of Justice is continuing its investigation into the practices surrounding language services in California, our most populous state. The knowledge base of language access issues and interpreter ethics and best practices among stakeholders has steadily grown in the past few years. New curricula in degree programs have been introduced at the university level to train interpreters, although there are still woefully few. The media has also provided more coverage to issues involving interpreting and translation, focusing a bright light on our professions, for better or worse.

These and other trends do indeed make for exciting times. However it is also a very dangerous time. As the recognition, and in some cases, the requirement that language services be provided for our population has grown, new policies that will govern our professions are being crafted in all quarters. These policies are typically written by individuals with little or only a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of our professions. Therein lies the very inherent danger that even well-meaning policies may fail to take into account the realities of the services we provide. A general misunderstanding of the necessary environment that must exist for competent interpreting or translation services to be possible may give rise to the creation of a system intended to provide simply "more" language access while missing the concept of competent and professional language services.

The notion that technology can be the panacea that marries language access with cost efficiency is one such example. It is absolutely vital that we not turn away completely from the advent of technology as if it were not an inevitable reality. It is even more vital however, that interpreters and translators play a role in crafting the policies that will govern things like video remote interpreting (VRI) in the not too distant future.

Another example of misguided policies can be seen in the Executive Office for Immigration Review's (EOIR) new policy calling for "full and complete" interpretation. Although hard to argue against, this new directive fails to take into account how these changes will impact the individuals tasked with providing the interpretation.

These two examples illustrate why the time we are living in may be a defining one. I am proud to say that NAJIT has never been in a better position to call attention to our plight and to influence both policy and perception. NAJIT wrote a letter to EOIR's General Counsel in response to their policy shift. The letter was also signed by the other members of the National Interpreter Associations Coalition comprised of our partners the American Translators Association (ATA), the International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA), Mano a Mano, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the American Association of Language Specialists (TAALS). Although not successful in changing the policy as of the time of this writing, NAJIT continues to address these very real concerns with the help of our members and our partners.

On the subject of VRI, we are using some of our signed language partner organization's groundbreaking work as we craft a joint position paper with the California Federation of Interpreters to provide policymakers with a reference for best practices. This greater collaboration with other organizations is something that will enhance awareness and lend greater credence to our concerns, regardless of the interpreting setting or translation project. Our different disciplines all have important commonalities, and we can and should advocate for those together. I encountered an appreciation for these efforts when I participated in a panel discussion about our coalition at the IMIA conference in Miami this past January. (See conference video: <http://vimeo.com/58213209>)

It has taken the work of some very dedicated volunteers across all of our associations over decades' worth of struggles to have us well-positioned in these exciting and dangerous times. Maintaining our momentum will continue to require the tireless efforts and dedication of many volunteers. With the yearly process of electing new Directors and the re-assembling of all committees, the NAJIT conference signals a new period for building on our previous year's gains and renewing our efforts going forward.

The acceptance of the fact that language can be a barrier to equality and that it must be removed is, in effect, a form of social change. Margret Meade wrote, "All social change comes from the passion of individuals." I hope you will continue to be passionate about language access, and I hope you will be a part of effecting the change we all seek. There is never a perfect time to volunteer, other than the present.

If you missed the Annual Conference in St. Louis, start planning for next year in Las Vegas!

Rob

## NAJIT Announces New Member Forum

For many years, now, the NAJIT listserv has provided a great way for NAJIT members to come together to share information on a variety of topics. For many NAJIT members, the listserv is one of the primary benefits of NAJIT membership.

Unfortunately, the service provider that NAJIT was using to maintain the listserv decided to get out of the business of hosting listservs like ours due to changes in technology. This meant that we had to make a change.

Change can be a good thing. This will allow us to improve our system for helping members communicate with each other in ways we had not been able to do before, like creating a space where members can socialize and share humor, for example.

On May 1, 2013, NAJIT launched a new Member Forum that we think you're really going to like. It has bulletin boards already created on important topics, among them vocabulary, ethics, business practices, interpreting situations, translation, and a social forum for jokes and just hanging out. Members can choose to participate online without email, or subscribe to specific forums to have emails will be delivered to their inbox. The bulletin board approach allows you to tailor your participation. If you are not interested in Spanish vocabulary, you can bypass those discussions and go directly to non-Spanish vocabulary, or to discussions about English legal terms.

We hope you'll make the transition as soon as possible. Here is the information you need to activate your forum user account.

If you are a NAJIT member in good standing, a user account has been set up for you at the forum, which you can reach at [www.najit.org/forum](http://www.najit.org/forum). The initial username on your account is the same as your NAJIT members-only username (except that diacritical marks have been removed if your username has them). If you don't know what your username is, you can request it by following this link: <http://www.najit.org/php/pin.php>.

Once you set up your forum account, you can change your user name. You are also going to have to set up a new password for the forum. The instructions for setting up your new forum account can be found [here](#). Once you initialize your account, you can also set up your options, by changing your username if you want, choosing which forums you want to subscribe to so you get the email notices for only the subjects that interest you, setting up a signature line for your posts, and setting up other features that will personalize your participation.

The new system is more complicated than the old one, but it has many more features that will enhance your experience and your ability to connect with other NAJIT members.

If you have any problems with your transition, please contact NAJIT's executive director Robin Lanier via email at [robin@najit.org](mailto:robin@najit.org).

---

## A Scholar's Impressions of the 2012 Conference

Samantha Mowry

In the week or so leading up to the 2012 NAJIT Conference in Boston, I had a series of discussions with my boyfriend about what I hoped to get from it. I proudly and confidently laid down my plan: I was going to ask everyone I saw two questions. The first was: how does one get their first clients? I'm still a student, of course, and haven't ventured very far yet into the world of actual freelance translation. The second question was even more general, asking for advice on what steps I should take to become more familiar with the legal profession and the kinds of terms or documents I would be working with. The short version combining both was, "How do I get from where I am now to working as a competent freelancer?"

As it turns out, the questions themselves were entirely superficial. From my very first session Friday morning (on marketing and branding, where I learned more in one morning that I did in some entire college courses) to the various meet-and-greets where I was instantly accepted as a member of the profession, this conference changed my entire outlook on my future as a translator. Before going to the conference I was nervous and unsure about what my next steps should be; after the conference I felt confident and ready to start my own business, something I didn't even recognize as a possible step before, and to take pride in my work. Although I was just a student, every person I talked to was interested in what I had to say and offered some new insight on translation or interpretation. I met someone in person whom I had only admired from a distance on Twitter, and then she gave me real career advice.

Before leaving for the conference, I had assumed that I wouldn't need business cards because only the established professionals would be exchanging them, and I didn't have any services to offer. When I arrived and started talking to people I realized that knowing how to translate does indeed mean I have services to offer, even as a student, and that the people exchanging business cards weren't scary businessmen and women who were better than me, they were all the people I was already talking to in the halls and over drinks.

My favorite presentation by far was Marcela Jenny-Reyes' Marketing and Branding for Translators, which was one of the all-morning pre-conference sessions. I think I took about seven pages of notes on her presentation; she covered in detail many things I didn't even realize were topics I should be addressing (things like what a brand actually is, and how to build comprehensive online identity). I enjoyed having the time to really go into detail and ask questions when I had them, as afforded by the longer session. Judy Jenner's session on pricing strategies was also interesting; it actually covered some of the same ground, but from a different perspective (and it was only an hour long).

I thought that there was plenty of time for meeting people and discussions. During nearly every break I ended up talking to someone new or meeting up again with someone I had just met, which was really neat. I especially enjoyed the Scholar perspective- I connected with people who were also students like myself, but I also met every member of the board of directors and had a lot of opportunities to talk to them directly, which made me feel very privileged and just really cool. Overall, I absolutely loved the conference. It was amazing to meet so many different accomplished people and hear their stories, and I learned a ton from the sessions.

Currently, I'm taking courses at the University of Chicago in medical and financial translation, and when I complete them, I'll be finished with the program. I've been working hard on laying the groundwork for what will be my freelance business. I bought a PC laptop that I plan to use as my primary work machine and outfitted it with memoQ - purchased at an impressive student discount - and Microsoft Office. I've picked a name for my business and I'm in the process of laying out a website, so I know what artwork to request of the graphic designer I have lined up. Then I just need to find a web designer to convert it into html. Luckily, my boyfriend has volunteered to manage the server side and host of the website. I've also signed up with a number of organizations that manage volunteer translators for non-profits. I haven't taken on any projects yet, as I am waiting to get a real CAT tool on my machine before I start.

Turns out, for all my careful planning, I ended up asking all of maybe two people my official questions and instead got all the answers I could want just from attending the sessions and talking to people already established in their fields. The conference as a whole was an amazing experience, and I'm honored I was able to attend as a NAJIT Scholar. I'm already looking forward to next year's conference, which I plan to attend as an active member with my own budding translation business.

---

*[Ms. Mowry was a 2012 NAJIT Scholar and participated in the Annual Conference in Cambridge, MA.]*

## Scholarship Winner

NAJIT is pleased to announce this year's recipient of the **Susan E. Castellanos Bilodeau Conference Scholarship**. Citali Alvarado of Brooklyn, NY is a freelance interpreter working in New York and New Jersey. Her volunteer work includes working with the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) in Salinas, California, interpreting into English and Spanish workshops for farm workers, and with the Free clinic of Washington County in Hillsboro, OR , as a medical interpreter (Spanish). In June of this year she will be volunteering her interpreting services in both Spanish and French for the International Movement ATD Fourth World in New York for conferences related to the 2015 Millennium Goal. Congratulations, Citali!

## **Conference Scholarships**

### **NAJIT Scholars**

NAJIT is pleased to recognize the scholars who will be attending our 2013 Conference in St. Louis, Missouri, sponsored by the 2013 NAJIT Scholar Program, which is administered by the Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI).

Under this program three to five Scholars are selected from applicants currently enrolled in or recently graduated from translation and interpretation programs in North America, primarily the United States and Canada, to attend NAJIT's annual conference. This year's scholars are: Antonio Borjas, Lorena Devlyn, Brian Jones, Shelby Lasaine and Michaela McCaughly. Congratulations to all, and we are looking forward to meeting you and welcoming you to the profession!

## Items of Interest

### BOOK REVIEWS

#### Dictionary Review

##### Spanish-English Dictionary of Law and Business, 2nd edition

Author: Thomas L. West III

Publisher: Intermark Language Publications

Publication Date: June 21, 2012

Page count: 516

ISBNs: 13: 978-1-92957-01-0

10: 1-929570-01-5

Price: \$49.95

Review by Rosemary W. Dann, Esq.

My name is Rosemary and I am a bookaholic. There, I've admitted it! And because my books of choice are dictionaries, I relished the opportunity to review the second edition of Thomas L. West III's *Spanish English Dictionary of Law and Business*.

This is the revised, corrected and expanded edition of the book that has graced my shelves for a decade. I purchased the first edition because, after a quick glance, I found words and expressions I had not found in other dictionaries. In this respect, the second edition does not disappoint. Some 200 pages larger than the original, it differs in that it has over twice as many pages of entries from Spanish to English, but none from English to Spanish. This is, perhaps, in holding with the dictum that we should normally only translate into our native language.

While the first edition came out in hardback, the new version is in paperback - a plus in my view, as it would otherwise be a more cumbersome tome. Likewise, the print is smaller. The paper is a brighter white than the original, which I find easier to read.

Cosmetics aside, the new edition is far more detailed, and in many cases, includes within the individual entries pertinent statutes, laws listed as obsolete where applicable, and titles of courts that may have changed. For example, the entry for *abuso de confianza* reads as follows:

**abuso de confianza (1)** [DER PEN] *embezzlement, misappropriation of funds (SYN) apropiación ilícita, apropiación indebida, distracción de fondos, desfalco, malversación (2)* [DER PEN] Chi, Esp, Hon *criminal breach of trust (DEF)* In some countries abuso de confianza is not a crime but an aggravating circumstance ('circunstancia agravante'). -> Art. 12 CP *Chi*, Art. 22.6 CP *Esp*, Art. 27 CP *Hon* (14)

The entry for *derrama judicial* cites and summarizes the specific statute:

**derrama judicial** *Per special welfare fund for judges and court employees (DEF)* Mediante Ley N° 24032 se creó la Derrama del Poder Judicial como fondo inembargable, para beneficio exclusivo de todos los servidores del Poder Judicial, con el fin de proporcionar ayuda económica a los aportantes en los supuestos de fallecimiento, jubilación, invalidez total y permanente, suspensión de plaza, cesantía involuntaria o voluntaria. (206)

The entries are presented in strict alphabetical order (e.g. *chantaje* follows *CFE -Codigo Fiscal Federal*.) This differs from the first edition, in which there was a separate appendix for acronyms. While the inclusion of an appendix would have been beneficial for quick reference, and would not have been burdensome, this is a minor point. Synonyms are also given for most terms, because, as the author explains, writers of legal Spanish use more elegant variation, whereas consistency, i.e. repetition of terms in mandatory legal English, is necessary because the use of another term may imply reference to a new or different concept.

The inclusion of vocabulary from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic is a welcome addition for those of us who practice on the East Coast. In his preface, the author explains the unique challenge of translating these terms because they are often literal translations from the English (Puerto Rico) and French (Dominican Republic) and includes an illustrative chart. (4)

The author makes detailed distinctions with respect to words which other dictionaries might consider relatively generic. For example, the entry for *libertad* includes 34 sub-entries (329-331); *delito* has 90 sub-entries (193-196). These are commonly used terms in criminal law, but civil law is also well represented. In the field of landlord/tenant law, the author distinguishes between *desahucio* and *evicción*:

**desahucio (1) eviction (DEF)** Forcing the tenant out of the leased premises. (DEF) Note that eviction is not "evicción" in Spanish. Evicción means "deprivation or disturbance of the right to quiet and peaceful enjoyment of property. ... (207)

In banking and finance, for *cajero automático*, there is a distinction between ATM (automated teller machine) in the US and ABM (automated banking machine) in Canada. (100) and *fuga de capitales* is explained:

**fuga de capitales capital flight [DEF]** The transfer of large sums of money from one country to another in order to seek greater security, higher interest rates or avoid political and economic upheaval. (SYN) **evasión de capitales** (271)

I could cite examples forever, but you get the point: this is a detailed, comprehensive dictionary of the broad spectrum of law and business and is an invaluable tool for the translator of Spanish into English. I only hope that the author provides us with an equally outstanding resource from English into Spanish.

---

*[Rosemary W. Dann, Esq. is Chair Emerita of NAJIT and Editor-in-Chief of Proteus. She is a Massachusetts state certified interpreter of Spanish.]*

---

## Note-Taking in Consecutive Interpretation By Irina Zubanova: Returning Prominence to a Neglected Art

Scott Bean

For many interpreters, note-taking is not so much an issue of serving a useful purpose as it is an issue of non-necessity. In my experience, many interpreters find that in fact they do not need to use notes in the first place: “The chunks I work with are short enough to remember without notes,” and “I get by writing down only numbers,” are some of the common rationales heard against note-taking. Moreover, since note-taking is not widely taught or practiced in the United States, it seems reasonable to expect that such rationale will prevail for many for years to come. Fortunately, Irina Zubanova’s *Note Taking in Consecutive Interpretation* offers not only the practical means for developing one’s own functional note-taking system per se, but also the cognitive means for applying such system as efficiently and skillfully as possible.

Written originally for interpreters of Russian and English, *Note Taking in Consecutive Interpretation* could very well be adapted to any language: divided into two sections – theoretical, with a subordinate section on the basics for developing note-taking symbols, and practical – the author, first and foremost, addresses the conceptual analysis and synthesis of texts, and subsequently discusses how note-taking is best based on such analysis and synthesis rather than on the superficial structure of any given text.

As a practicing interpreter, I find three chief assets in this textbook (two in the theoretical section and one in the practical section). The first is the author’s emphasis on the analytical, and to a lesser extent synthetical, stages. The author’s exposition of the analytical stage’s importance in noting the source language’s meaning rather than superficial content may seem more an assertion of a long-held principle rather than something groundbreaking. Yet Ms. Zubanova’s point goes deeper, describing how meaning is, to put it bluntly, ingested, digested, and regurgitated. And how this approach is taken up by the individual interpreter is one of the main factors that separates professionals from amateurs: some try to interpret verbatim, others allow themselves complete freedom. What the author proposes is a middle-ground approach that is based neither on the source nor the target languages, but rather on each interpreter’s unique metalanguage. As she puts it best herself:

By extracting the nucleus of the meaning from its verbal shell, the interpreter does what is comparable to enriching ore, sifting through rocks in search of kernels of gold, or separating grain from ryegrass. The “grains” you end up with belong to neither the source nor the target language. It can be said that the meaning structure’s components are interpreted into their own metalanguage that is, ideally, disconnected from both specific languages being used for communication. Pictograms and graphic symbols serve as a direct reflection of metalinguistic meanings on paper (Zubanova, I.V., 2013: 49).

Interpreters work with elements of metalanguage and not superficial pieces of the source and target languages. Keeping this approach provides a happy medium between verbatim and unchecked interpretation: the meaning is locked in place (analytical stage), while the interpreter is able to form and reproduce the text on the terms of the target language (synthetical stage).

The second chief asset of the theoretical section is its well-shaped system for creating and expanding basic note-taking symbols to develop a complete repertoire of signs through small, logical additions. For example, using solid and dotted lines to change a symbol’s significance, and thus its meaning. Among Ms. Zubanova’s examples, the symbol ‘§’ for law, regulation, statute when underlined twice becomes constitution, while placing a dotted line under the symbol makes it by-law, rule, etc. Applying this method to one’s foundation of signs greatly expands the interpreter’s semiotic vocabulary. At the same time, as the author stresses, if a symbol can be interpreted ambiguously or has not been memorized, then it is best not using it rather than taking the risk of distorting the meaning.

Turning from theory to practice, the author provides texts and exercises, together with audio recordings on compact disk, for individual practice. Again, it is the author’s main objective that this section put into practice what was covered in the theoretical section: the ability to take notes by analyzing what is underneath the source.

At first glance the practical section may seem to some to have a drawback or two: the recorded voice is faster than expected; some of the topics are not relevant to individual interpreter’s specialization, etc. Despite the objections, this is where the section’s greatest strengths are found. As any interpreter can attest, the speaker’s speed determines, to a significant degree, how accurate the interpretation will be. Learning to analyze at high speeds is an essential element to the interpreting profession, and the author’s outline for training per the textbook’s exercises highlights this by having the student first read the text and then answer questions such as: “What can you say about the emotional and judgment-based aspect of the text and how do you plan on reflecting this information in your interpretation?” and “How would you determine the general functional and pragmatic layout of the text and what are the communicative goals that the author has set for himself?” (Zubanova, I.V., 2013: 138), etc.

*Note Taking in Consecutive Interpretation*, by establishing the importance both of note-taking and the accompanying skills that are crucial to how well it is done, and by meticulously showing exactly how to do this through theory and practice, is a strongly recommended companion for both beginners and seasoned professionals. As the author states: “Practicing interpreters often say that they do not use notes, since taking them is distracting, they add stress, and that they write down only numbers and, for example, proper names” (Zubanova, I.V., 2013: 20). It is my belief that this textbook is capable of making a positive difference in how note-taking is perceived in professional interpreting.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Zubanova, Irina Vladimirovna. 2013. *Note-Taking in Consecutive Interpretation*. Moscow: R. Valent. 216 pages.

This book may be ordered by writing to the following email address:

[rvalent@yandex.ru](mailto:rvalent@yandex.ru) or [rvalent.99@gmail.com](mailto:rvalent.99@gmail.com). The website (in Russian) is <http://www.rvalent.ru/index.html>



*[Scott Bean is a freelance translator and interpreter with a B.A. in Russian and Political Science from Gustavus Adolphus College and a degree in conference interpreting from the Moscow State Linguistics University (Maurice Thorez Moscow State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages.)]*

## Link to Articles

### LINKS TO ARTICLES:

Free online course on immigration and US citizenship

<https://www.coursera.org/course/immigration>

Inside a Chinese Courtroom

<http://www.npr.org/2012/12/13/166984263/a-rare-visit-inside-a-chinese-courtroom?sc=tw>

Early language skills reduce preschool tantrums <http://t.co/jwByXmLJ>

<http://www.wate.com/story/20391866/early-language-skills-reduce-preschool-tantrums-study-finds>

Study on switching between cognitive tasks

<http://news.yahoo.com/study-bilinguals-faster-brains-120105403--abc-news-health.html>

Portuguese insults

<http://translationjournal.net/journal/63insult.htm>

German words in English

<http://aimdanismanlik.wordpress.com/2013/01/11/german-words-in-english/>

French resources (dictionaries/glossaries)

<http://gdt.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca>

<http://www.vos-droits.justice.gouv.fr/>

[http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=sr\\_pg\\_2?rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3Adictionnaire+juridique&page=2&keywords=dictionnaire+juridique&ie=UTF8&qid=1361126170](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=sr_pg_2?rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3Adictionnaire+juridique&page=2&keywords=dictionnaire+juridique&ie=UTF8&qid=1361126170)

Glossary of English interjections

<http://www.vidarholen.net/contents/interjections/>

Emotions for which there are no English words

<http://www.popsi.com/science/article/2013-01/emotions-which-there-are-no-english-words-infographic>

Tips on interpreting for children

<http://www.alsintl.com/blog/interpreting-for-children/#.T9d-7ZtBpe8.twitter>

Tips on dealing with fear

<http://mariacristinadelavegamusings.wordpress.com/2013/01/03/three-fears-interpreters-face-and-how-to-deal-with-them/>

Discussing Pricing

<http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/33907/How-to-Talk-About-Pricing-Without-Scaring-People-Off.aspx>

Reverse engineering the brain

<http://tech.fortune.cnn.com/2013/01/09/kurzweil-ray-futurist/>

Military interpreters

<http://rpstranslations.wordpress.com/2013/01/17/the-role-of-the-16th-century-interpreters-in-the-newly-discovered-world/#comment-1255>

Australia Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) releases updated Code of Ethics

<http://www.newsmaker.com.au/news/23683>

---

## Media Links

### LINKS TO MEDIA:

Understanding and abiding by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

<http://vimeo.com/6123163>

Silbo Gomero - Whistling language of the Canary Islands

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20953138>

---

# Brain Exercises

Read the following two exercises aloud.

I.

7H15 M3554G3  
 53RV35 7O PR0V3  
 H0W OUR M1ND5 C4N  
 D0 4M4Z1NG 7H1NG5!  
 1MPR3551V3 7H1NG5!  
 1N 7H3 B3G1NN1NG  
 17 WA5 H4RD BU7  
 N0W, 0N 7H15 LIN3  
 Y0UR M1ND 1S  
 R34D1NG 17  
 4U70M471C4LLY  
 W17H 0U7 3V3N  
 7H1NK1NG 4B0U7 17,  
 B3 PROUD!  
 0NLYC3R741N P30PL3  
 C4NR3AD 7H15.

II.

I cdnuolt blveiee that I cluod aulactly uesdnatmrd what I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in what oedr the ltteres in a word are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is that the frsit and last ltteer be in the rghit pelae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can still raed it whotuit a pboerlm. This is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlelf, but the word as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt!

III.

The Eye test:

Find the two Bs:

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR  
 RRRRRRRRRRRBRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR  
 RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR  
 RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR  
 RRRRRRRRRRRBRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR  
 RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

Find the 6:

99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999  
 99999999999999999999999999999999

Find the N:

MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMNMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM  
MMMMMMMMMMMMMM

---

## Regular Departments

### Notable Quotables

"Anyone can speak Troll. All you have to do is point and grunt."

—J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*

“When I say or write something, there are actually a whole lot of different things I am communicating. The propositional content (i.e., the verbal information I'm trying to convey) is only one part of it. Another part is stuff about me, the communicator. Everyone knows this. It's a function of the fact there are so many different well-formed ways to say the same basic thing, from e.g. "I was attacked by a bear!" to "Goddamn bear tried to kill me!" to "That ursine juggernaut did essay to sup upon my person!" and so on.”

—David Foster Wallace, *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*

---

## For Better or Verse

Farewell we bid the NAJIT list.  
By some it will be sorely missed  
For shared ideas that are the gist  
Of erudite exchanges in our midst.

Yet in somewhat of an ironic twist  
Demise will free the often dissed  
Of knowing they must not persist  
In saying what two or three resist.  
On the forum it is surely wished  
That responses will not be hissed,  
And conversations will all consist  
Of respect for others as we coexist.

--Douglas Hal Sillers

---

*[Hal Sillers is a MN state and federally certified court interpreter and frequent contributor to this column.]*

---

## The Last Laugh

How to laugh in other languages

<http://mashable.com/2012/12/12/laugh-online-languages/>

French singing cats

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=4517377140741&set=vb.1480112901&type=2&theater>

The Dancing Merengue Dog

<http://www.myamazingearth.com/2012/12/the-dancing-merengue-dog/>

---

[Return to the Winter/Spring 2013 issue of \*Proteus\*](#)