



THE ART of PERSUASION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE ARTICLES

The Law Gets Teeth
Page 1

How to Partner with Court
Administrators
Page 1

NAJIT NEWS

Executive Director Message
Page 2

Call for Nominations
Page 5

Members in the News
Page 5

Welcome New Members
Page 5

EYE ON CALIFORNIA

Page 6

GETTING DOWN TO

BUSINESS

Setting Life Goals
Page 7

A LEXICOGRAPHER'S LAIR

A Perfect Fit: Longman
Page 8

CONFERENCE REPORTS

Page 12

BOOK REVIEW

Page 14

THE LAW GETS TEETH...

AAG Perez Seeks Language
Access Compliance

Rosemary Dann

Forty-six years ago, Congress passed Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting national origin discrimination by recipients of federal financial assistance. Six years after its passage, in the landmark case of *U.S. ex rel. Negron v. State of New York*, a federal court ruled for the first time that failure to provide an interpreter for a Spanish-speaking defendant in a criminal case rendered the trial constitutionally infirm. It took another eight years before Congress passed the Court Interpreters Act, which governs the use of interpreters in U.S. district courts. Twelve years after that, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13166 in 2000, which resulted in the publication

*Language access policies persist
that are inconsistent with federal
civil rights requirements.*

of *Guidance to Recipients of Federal Financial Aid Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons* in the Federal Register in 2002. (Citations for the above appear in the sidebar on page 3.) I offer this brief history to illustrate just how slowly the wheels of justice grind.

I remember buttonholing judges, attorneys and administrators in my home state, New Hampshire, back in 2002 and enthusiastically offering them those 17 pages of fine print from the Federal Register. Despite my highlights of the pertinent sections directing their attention to the issues most important to the courts, no one showed much interest in perusing them. Worse yet, no one showed any enthusiasm for implementing them. Although I'm sure that this same scenario was being played

> continues on page 3

...BUT WILL INTERPRETERS GET BITTEN?

How to Partner with Court Administrators

Julie A. Sellers

Assistant Attorney General Tomas E. Perez's guidance letter to state courts on access to language services for the limited-English-proficient (LEP) reiterates the necessity for each court to take appropriate steps to help assure that the less-English proficient have meaningful access to the nation's judicial system. For those of us in the profession of judiciary interpreting, these issues are not new. We have all experienced the satisfaction of serving in our role and helping to ensure due process. Just as likely, we have all witnessed instances when full access to information or services has been hindered or prevented by a lack of structures in place.

As interpreters, our knee-jerk reaction to AAG Perez's letter is probably a shout of joy. No doubt we each could make a mental list of people and entities that have been resistant or ineffective when it comes to meaningful access to linguistic minorities. They are now going to get a rude awakening, or a little poetic justice, perhaps. Some of us might be rubbing our hands with glee in a golden "I-told-you-so!" moment.

Without a doubt, this letter can serve as a positive way to begin or reinstate previous conversations with administrators regarding provisions for interpreting and equal access. But before we run off to the nearest court to beat attorneys, judges, or even other interpreters over the head with this letter, we need to take a step back and consider how best to use its contents to represent ourselves and our profession.

No one is more passionate about our profession than interpreters themselves. Nevertheless, if we approach court personnel and try to use this Department of Justice text as a stick instead of a carrot, we are very likely not to win ground, and in the long run, we may even lose some. "These 'translator' types are so high strung!" you can almost hear them think.

Still, AAG Perez's letter is a prime opportunity for us to establish positive conversations that might bear productive fruit. The question is not so much what we

> continues on page 4



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Message from the Executive Director

By the time this issue of *Proteus* reaches your mailbox, NAJIT will have made some significant changes in its web presence as a first step toward taking the organization into an increasingly wired world.

The first step in the overhaul is the launch in early November of a newly updated webpage. Our revamped webpage will have a much more professional appearance and provide easier navigation so that visitors can easily find information about judiciary interpreting, legislation and advocacy issues, member benefits, and NAJIT's Spanish certification examination.

The directory search has also been updated to provide cleaner printouts. Speaking of the directory, I'd like to digress for a moment to remind NAJIT corporate and active members to keep their profiles up-to-date and review their privacy settings. Remember that the information in your profile is what appears in your directory listing. So taking the time to keep things up-to-date is essential.



How do you manage your profile? Easy. You log-in to the new members-only section with the member password and user account that you were assigned when you joined NAJIT. Once in the members-only area, you can view your profile, change your password, renew your membership, join NAJIT's listserve, and download a special NAJIT logo for business cards and letterhead. Best of all, the new members-only area will include a searchable library of resources of interest for professional interpreters and translators.

The library will include an archive of *Proteus* articles going back ten years, as well as conference handouts, board minutes, and articles of interest. The online members' library offers the opportunity to find resources by key word, date, title, and author.

We'll be making additional improvements to the webpage over the next few months, and we'd love to hear your thoughts about additional changes we could make.

In the spring of 2011, NAJIT will take our webpage another step forward when we begin publishing *Proteus* electronically. We believe the membership will welcome this development. In a recent survey, over 60% of NAJIT members indicated a preference for online communication rather than snail-mail. The new online version of *Proteus* will come to you via email, but will be posted in the NAJIT members-only area as stand-alone articles that will be easily printable. The newly formatted *Proteus* will be included in the NAJIT library, so articles will be easily searchable. Most important, we will create a way for members to comment or respond to articles, making *Proteus* a more interactive publication. We're also exploring other options for *Proteus*, such as formatting it for e-readers and syndicating it through an RSS feed directly to your email, computer or smart phone. We know that some of you may be reading *Proteus* content on-the-go, so we're looking at all the options for reader convenience.

All these features were recommended by you, the members of NAJIT. We're really excited about taking your ideas and making them a reality, so that communications in our association become a truly interactive highway. Stay tuned!

Robin Lanier
Executive Director

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.

THE LAW GETS TEETH *continued from page 1*

out across the country, I felt like a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Support for limited English proficient (LEP) litigants and training or testing programs for interpreters were not immediately forthcoming. But that was back in 2002.

Fast forward to this August, when Assistant U.S. Attorney General Thomas Perez issued a letter of guidance to all state court chief justices and administrators, explaining in clear and concise language, what is required of recipients of federal funding and why the courts must comply. A letter directly from the Department of Justice is pretty hard to ignore. I urge you to read the full text. (There is a link to it on our website at www.najit.org.) Print it out and carry it with you. It is an excellent source of support for LEPs and interpreters alike, and we applaud AAG Perez and the DOJ for issuing it.

Meaningful access is expected in civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings, including those presided over by non-judges.

As AAG Perez's letter makes clear, it is not acceptable to grab the closest foreign language speaker and press him or her into service. Even highly educated bilinguals, without interpreter training, do not necessarily meet the requirements of the law. The Ninth Circuit reversed and remanded a case in which a self-professed bilingual attorney had translated a jury waiver form for his client. The Court held in *U.S. v. Bailon-Santana* that an attorney's statement that he was bilingual "lack[ed] one crucial component: confirmation by someone familiar with the requisite standard that the lawyer's fluency is commensurate with the level required for translating the sometimes difficult words and concepts used in federal criminal cases." Yet there are still courts that persist in using "interpreters" who are not properly trained or qualified. NAJIT hopes that the AAG's letter will help bring these courts into the twenty-first century. But we cannot rely on others to do our homework for us. We, as professional interpreters and translators, must advocate for our profession. While NAJIT, as an organization, will continue to promote professionalism and to educate the users of our services, each and every one of us — if we are serious about what we do — has to repeat the message as often as necessary: the courts are required to comply with the mandate of Title VI. For strategies on how to bare those teeth in the law as made explicit by AAG Perez's letter, please refer to the right-hand column by Julie Sellers. If we all get involved, it won't take another 46 years for the message to get through. ▲

CITATIONS**Access to justice for the limited-English-proficient**

U.S. ex rel Negron v State of New York, 434 F.2d 386 (2nd Circuit, 1970).

Court Interpreters Act, 28 USC 1827, came into effect as Public Law 95-539 in 1979 and was amended in 1988.

28 U.S.C. • 1827(b)(2) provides that, where a certified interpreter is not reasonably available, Federal Rule of Evidence 604 provides a means to qualify an expert interpreter using the methodology for qualifying expert witnesses.

Executive Order 13166, issued in 2000 by President Clinton.

Guidance to Recipients of Federal Financial Aid regarding Title VI prohibition against national origin discrimination affecting limited English proficient persons, Federal Register: June 18, 2002 (Vol. 67, No. 117, pp. 41455-41472).

U.S. v. Bailon-Santana, 429 F.3d 1258 (2005).

August 16, 2010. Department of Justice AAG Perez writes letter to state court chief justices and administrators pointing out that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. • 2000d *et seq.* and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended, 42 U.S.C. • 3789d(c), both prohibit national origin discrimination by recipients of federal financial assistance.

Fed.R.Evid. Rule 702 sets out the qualifications required of an expert: "...specialized knowledge [that] will assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue..." The provisions of the rule applicable to interpreters include: knowledge, skills, experience, training and/or education as an interpreter.



Mark Your Calendars

NAJIT 32nd Annual Conference

May 13-15, 2011

Long Beach California Hilton

HOW TO PARTNER *continued from page 1*

will talk about when we have those conversations, but rather, how to go about it.

Know Your History and Your Profession

“You can’t know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’ve been,” the old saying goes. If we as interpreters are not intimately familiar with the laws and the path that interpreting has taken in this country, we will be less effective in molding its future. Those in the legal profession cite case law to support their arguments; interpreters should be no different. It is essential that each interpreter understand the legal basis for the provision of court interpreters and be able to talk about it. To do so, we must be familiar with federal law as well as state and local laws or regulations governing the use of interpreters and the applicable qualifying processes.

No doubt we have all heard, at one time or another, someone comment, “If they’re in a U.S. court, they should know (or be able to get by in) English.” Rather than roll our eyes, we would do well to speak about the right to due process as the foundation of our judicial system, according to the Constitution. If a person doesn’t understand or speak English, or has an unqualified interpreter, that person cannot understand the charges against him, or effectively confront witnesses, or offer testimony in his own defense, or understand the potential penalties and consequences of a plea. We can agree to disagree with the person by basing our reasons in the law of the land: the U.S. Constitution.

Similarly, most interpreters have no doubt come face-to-face with untrained and unskilled individuals acting as interpreters. Rather than launch into a tirade about the hours of study and dedication necessary to achieve certification, we would do better to explain that certification or qualifying exams are intended to establish a minimum standard, which is necessary for uniform due process. Be familiar with your state’s laws guiding the use, certification, and selection of interpreters; you may find that you are better versed in those laws than the people using your services. It is up to the interpreter to operate within them.

In addition to being familiar with the laws or regulations providing for interpreting services, we need to be able to articulate succinctly what a court interpreter does. We are all familiar with the widespread and illogical notion that anyone who speaks two languages is by default an interpreter, or can quickly become one. Rather than rending our garments when we hear such a preposterous idea, we have to be ready for it by offering counter-examples such as:

- Just because you have two hands doesn’t mean you’re a pianist.
- Winning an argument doesn’t make you a lawyer.
- Playground basketball is not the same as making the college team.
- Knowing first aid doesn’t make you a licensed RN.

In all our discussions we need to draw upon our knowledge and experience of the judicial system. Those in the legal profession know that language used in courtrooms can vary from the most formal register to an abused cliché, and that subject matter, too,

is just as varied; appeal to this knowledge when you explain the breadth and depth of knowledge in both languages that an interpreter must possess, as well as a specific skill set.

Honey or Vinegar?

Just as one can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, people tend to be more receptive to new ideas when you interact respectfully and engage in a dialogue. We must at all costs avoid the tendency to be pedantic or emotional. Instead of a sermon, we would do well to be prepared to offer concrete, attainable suggestions. For example, instead of informing someone how little s/he knows about our profession, offer to accompany that person through the process of discovery, as suggested by these sample phrases:

- “I know this is unfamiliar territory to you, so I thought these materials would help as a kind of road map.”
- “I would be happy to talk with your association (bar, court reporters, court administrators, public defenders association about judiciary interpreting.”
- “I’ll be glad to work with you as you learn about this field.”
- “Whenever you need a hand organizing things, I’m a phone call away.”
- “You don’t have to reinvent the wheel. A lot of materials and information are out there to help.”

Additionally, be prepared to provide administrators with information pertinent to the selection, qualification and use of language interpreters, such as:

- access to interpreter rosters;
- voir dire questions for qualifying an interpreter;
- what to expect and not to expect from an interpreter;
- our professional ethical code of conduct.

Certainly, there will always be some people who do not discuss but rather dictate; who refuse to listen and seem to turn a deaf ear; who honestly have no interest in listening to anyone else. But, before we start rolling up AAG Perez’s letter to use as a rolling pin, remember: if we are too insistent in our cause, we come across as having self-interest at heart.

It is always tempting to exclaim that “someone” should do “something” about a problem, but it’s much more effective to prepare to contribute to change.

- If you identify a problem, pinpoint those who may help resolve it. Approach that person or persons with practical suggestions and a proposed plan of action.
- Know which agency or department makes decisions about the selection, qualification and deployment of interpreters in your area. Volunteer to work with that group and be a voice for interpreters.
- And finally, don’t go it alone. Seek out others in the field in your state and at the national level. Offer to participate in committees or task forces. Chances are, you might be able to adapt what someone else has already done to improve interpreting in your part of the world. ▲

NAJIT NEWS

Call for Nominations

The annual meeting of the association will be held on Saturday, May 14, 2011, at the Hilton Long Beach in Long Beach, CA during the 32nd Annual Conference. The terms of chair Rosemary W. Dann and director Nancy Zarenda are expiring. Two directors will be elected for two-year terms. Members are invited to recommend potential candidates to the nominations committee:

Virginia Benmaman, Chair	Vania H. Haam
Francesca Samuel	Rolando Hernandez
Laura Cahue	

The NAJIT bylaws, Article IV, Section II – Eligibility, read as follows:

“Any Active Member who attains two years of continuous membership as an Active Member in good standing as of the return date specified on the ‘Call for Nominations’ shall be eligible for nomination to the Board of Directors.”

Wednesday, December 15, 2010 has been established as the deadline for all nominations.

Members may nominate themselves or may be nominated by fellow members. Please note, however, that the Nominations Committee has the responsibility of proposing the names of candidates for the election to the members, taking into account the need to ensure, to the extent possible, a balanced slate as far as language, geographical location and professional activities are concerned. Only active members who meet the criteria above — who have been active members continuously in good standing since December 3, 2008 — may be nominated to the board of directors. Members uncertain as to their status may verify the facts with headquarters.

All nominations must include a short biography and statement explaining why the nominee should be on the board of directors. This information must be limited to one page (single spaced).

Please e-mail all nominations to the Nominations Committee at: nominations@najit.org

VOTER ELIGIBILITY: Members of NAJIT as of the record date of March 25, 2011 will be eligible to vote by mail ballot or online for this election.

Please contact headquarters with any questions on voting eligibility or the nominations process.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

“Death eligible” is the ghoulish euphemism used by lawyers and judges to refer to cases in which the death penalty may be applied as a sentencing option. For information on federal and state death penalty laws, including a list of the states that currently have a death penalty and which crimes are punishable by death, go to: www.deathpenaltyinfo.org

Members In The News

Kudos to Isabel Framer

Former NAJIT chair Isabel Framer was nominated by President Obama to be on the board of the State Justice Institute. The SJI is a quasi-federal non-profit agency created by Congress to award grants to state courts in order to improve the quality of justice. Its eleven-member board is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. There are four public member positions on the board, and if confirmed, Framer would be one of them.

NAJIT Institutional Member in Growth Spurt

ProTranslating has been named to the 2010 *INC 5000* list of the nation’s fastest growing private companies. This is the second year in a row that it was featured in this publication, which measures companies by overall revenue growth over a three-year period. ProTranslating ranked 3271 with a 3-year growth of 59 percent. The company’s reported revenue for 2009 was \$8.9 million. ProTranslating’s full *INC 500* profile can be seen at www.inc.com/inc5000/profile/protranslating.

New Dictionary by NAJIT Member

Sandro Tomasi published *English-Spanish Dictionary of Criminal Law and Procedure*, which was featured as the March 2010 “Book of the Month” by InTrans Book Service (See www.BilingualLawDictionary.com). Sandro conducted workshops at the American Translators Association annual conference in Denver, the California Federation of Interpreters’ annual conference in Santa Monica, the New Mexico Interpreters’ conference in Albuquerque, and the Oregon Judicial Department court interpreter services’ seminar on standardized legal terms in Portland.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

The following members joined NAJIT between June 1 and October 15, 2010.

Steven Hanley	Dinah J. Decker
Enrique Garcia	Michie Yamakawa
Michelle J. Gonzales	Gloria Ortiz
Noel Abraham	Elizabeth A. Mayes
Richard James Lardi	Gabriela Pedroza-Harding
Ruth A. Warner	Bradley Schnur
María Judith Maldonado-Márquez	Jaime E. Mena
Suzanne A. Przygoda	Loan C. Duong
Ambrosia J. King	Wilma E. Lopez-Round
Márcio Padilha	Stephanie Nicole Harrod
Hsiu-Li McGilvra	Pasquale Cervasio
Maida Babcock	Michael Cirillo
Michael Gonzalez	John Farrell
Anabel Marquez	Marcia T. Stubblebine
Elizabeth A. Cooper	Victor Hertz

ILL-ADVISED CHANGES IN CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

In early 2010, the California Administrative Office of the Courts implemented changes to court interpreter minimum continuing education (CIMCE) requirements. The new rules include significant changes that all told impose undue restrictions and hardship on interpreters. Most notably, self-study was eliminated, attorney continuing education reciprocity was eliminated, and the credit application process was made more strict and costly for interpreters and interpreter organizations – while being free and easy for other providers.

Under the old rules, interpreters could count self-study for up to half of California's 30-hour biannual requirement. Self-study typically includes studying and building glossaries or other materials, does not require a formal application for CIMCE credit, and is essential for interpreters of languages of lesser diffusion because there are very few continuing education options available to them in their working languages. However, under the new system, many interpreters will be paying twice as much for their continuing education credits.

There never was an abundance of options for CIMCE credit, so many interpreters would turn to attorney continuing education sessions. Interpreters who are also attorneys did not have to fulfill two separate continuing education requirements. Under the new rules, continuing education sessions for attorneys no longer counts for interpreters, greatly limiting interpreter options. According to AOC staff in the court interpreter program, the attorney continuing education sessions created and regulated by the California State Bar have lax requirements and are not good enough for interpreters — though apparently good enough for licensed attorneys, including those employed by the AOC.

New categories of pre-approved CIMCE providers—including the courts and accredited colleges—can waive a formal application for credit and are not required to pay the corresponding fee. At the same time, the fee has doubled for interpreters wishing to apply to become continuing education providers. Court interpreters are thus burdened with more requirements, have had increased obstacles placed in their way, and have to assume greater expense to maintain California state certification. Meanwhile, the AOC and courts have not created a career path with step increases for staff

interpreters, and insist on keeping per diem rates for contractors significantly below federal court and private sector rates.

The AOC has demonstrated callous disregard for the profession by not seeking interpreter input or direct participation in these decisions. In fact, the AOC never notified interpreters of these changes, which took effect last January 2010. As a result, rumors and misinformation abound, adding to the confusion. As court interpreters discover the implications of these changes, levels of discontent have risen. Once again, the AOC has implemented changes without consulting interpreters who are affected by them.

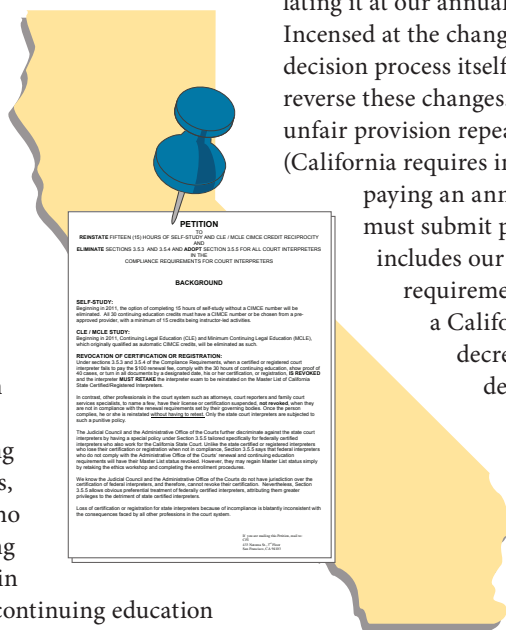
A group of CFI members drafted a petition and began circulating it at our annual conference in Santa Monica in October. Incensed at the changes in CIMCE requirements and at the decision process itself, CFI members are petitioning the AOC to reverse these changes. We are also petitioning to have another unfair provision repealed that has to do with recertification. (California requires interpreters to maintain certification by paying an annual \$100 fee, and every other year we must submit proof of re-certification compliance, which includes our continuing education requirement and the requirement to interpret a minimum of 40 cases in a California court.) The California AOC has now decreed that if an interpreter misses the final deadline for filing the recertification fee and proof of compliance, his certification is

revoked and he is obliged to re-take the written and oral exams to get reinstated. In every other legal profession (and most professions where licenses are required), revocation is a serious punishment for ethical violations or other similarly serious infraction, not for missing an

administrative deadline.

Representatives of CFI have discussed our concerns with AOC staff, who seem receptive to input, albeit after-the-fact. But we have yet to see any constructive results from these discussions. Despite our ongoing efforts to collaborate with the AOC and despite our repeated offers to collaborate, interpreters are not consulted until after changes are implemented. It remains to be seen if the AOC will take notice when court interpreters voice their frustration through the petition. ▲

[The author is president of CFI. Visit the CFI website and download or sign the petition at www.calinterpreters.org]



GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

MOUNTAIN CLIMBING: SETTING LIFE GOALS

María Cristina de la Vega

My mountain climbing experience, while limited, includes a recent excursion on the beautiful Inca Trail in Cusco, Peru. There are many allegorical parallels between mountain climbing and goal setting, which I'd like to discuss for this month's column.

Upon reaching the summit, as when reaching any goal, you can expect to feel a great sense of achievement, but on the way toward your goal you may encounter monsters lurking in the shadows. For example, on the Inca trail I had a bout of altitude sickness at the top, but following my guide's instructions on how to breathe and walk, I became accustomed to the scarce oxygen and at day-break was able to enjoy seeing the breathtaking Inti Punku, also known as the Sun Gate. Two large stones stand sentry at the top of the trail, corresponding to the winter and summer solstices, on which dates the gates are illuminated by natural laser-like beams of light, offering spectacular views of Machu Picchu, our goal on the climb.

Fortunately, by the time you make it to the top either in mountain climbing or with one of life's challenges, you have usually acquired the equanimity to calmly enjoy your surroundings, plus a quiver of tools that allow you to overcome difficulties. Along the way, you start understanding your new environment. Once you reach your goal, the problems may not necessarily have changed, but you will have. You will be better equipped to understand the obstacles, deal with them, and experience the unique transformations that can only come after a journey. In many cases, as you develop, your vision changes. You mature as you assimilate life's lessons. Your arsenal is fortified, though perhaps not in the way you anticipated.

As the old Chinese proverb says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." To reach the top of a mountain, one must first visualize how to get there. At ground level, perspective is not the same as at the top, where you have a bird's eye view of the topography. At first, it may seem that the climb is through an impenetrable jungle, but as you proceed methodically, one step at a time, you are better able to pick your paths. The view improves as you gain altitude and the trees start to thin out. The winning combination is knowing what you want and which of your personal values support your goals.

In any project, have faith that you can accomplish whatever you can imagine, then start taking baby steps, however small, to imple-

ment that vision. The fact that you can imagine the end result is an indication that you have the necessary resources to go forward with it. There is no greater deterrent to fulfilling goals than inertia or fear of failure, which keeps one from taking action, as when, for example, a person decides not to follow his dream of becoming an accomplished musician because of the practice, auditions, and competitions to endure on the way to the top.

In practice however, everything sorts itself out gradually and the more ground you cover, the more prepared you are to overcome once seemingly insurmountable odds. Once you mindfully begin the ascent, hitherto unseen opportunities open along your path and hasten progress.

I am reminded of when I made the commitment to go back to school for an MBA at the age of 56. It had been over 30 years since I had been a student. I had a phobia about the level of math skills I would need, and math had never been my forte. I had tried to go back to school twice before and had had to drop out for lack of time. I was fully engaged in running my language services company on a day-to-day basis, and the economy was in the midst of a

recession. We were working twice as hard for less profit. It seemed impossible, but little by little, taking one step at a time, I submitted the paperwork, attended orientations, took online courses and hired a tutor to supplement my finance and accounting skills. I found an executive program that met on Saturdays over two years, instead of during the week for one year, so I could continue to work. I focused on putting my best foot forward and was persistent in my efforts to do well, knowing that divided attention could have harmful repercussions on my company.

I was the eldest student in the class and yet at the end of two years was voted most outstanding by the faculty. It all happened because at every turn in the road I sustained my vision of getting the degree and applied personal values, such as my sense of responsibility, appetite for problem-solving and love of knowledge. It was a taxing but very rewarding experience which has continued to stand me in good stead ever since. Yet it would not have happened if I had not confidently started the climb and stuck it out. The experience led me to realize that one can achieve whatever one can visualize. Since then, I have gone on to fulfill other personal and business goals once considered farfetched, like getting my advanced scuba diver certification, writing articles regularly for

> continues on page 11



A LEXICOGRAPHER'S LAIR

A PERFECT FIT: LONGMAN

Dennis McKenna

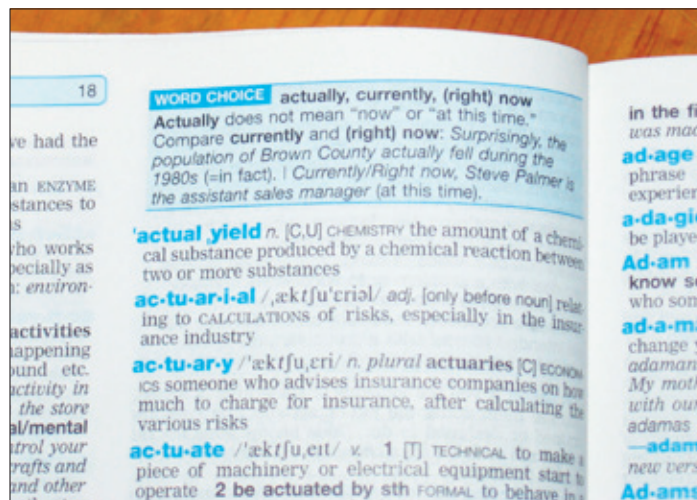
Longman Advanced American Dictionary
Second Edition, 2007
ISBN 1-405-82954-0 (\$50.60 paperback)

Interpreting students always ask my advice on which dictionary to use when they are studying for exams or preparing to work in court. When I inquire further, it turns out that they nearly always are expecting advice on bilingual dictionaries. I try to emphasize the importance of developing good research habits and not just reaching for a bilingual dictionary every time an unfamiliar term comes up. Naturally, if you are on the witness stand with everyone waiting for you to come up with an apt rendition on the spot, that is another matter. But when you are supposed to be *studying* to be a court interpreter, you should not cut corners or look for the easy way out. Over-reliance on bilingual dictionaries takes you down the road to Cognateville, where everybody is related and no one knows what anyone else is actually saying — that's why I don't endorse bilingual dictionaries for beginners.

Take the case of "endorse" and *endosar*. Most bilingual dictionaries will include *endosar* as a possible translation of "endorse." The uninitiated will see this and think they are always acceptable equivalents. But they only coincide in the context of endorsing a check. In other contexts, you would be better off in Spanish saying *aprobar*, *refrendar*, or *promocionar*, depending on the context. So, as with marrying your cousin, there are many reasons for not keeping everything in the family. Consulting a good monolingual dictionary (which I consider the Bible), will help you avoid these types of blunders.

If, on the other hand, a native English speaker were to ask me to recommend a good English dictionary, I would name one of the excellent unabridged dictionaries published in the U.S. for home and college use, i.e., Random House or Merriam-Webster. Each has its particular strengths and weaknesses. However, when a student is not a native speaker of English, these English dictionaries are not the most appropriate place to turn for most consultations.

In contrast to these two mass-produced dictionaries, English learner's dictionaries are specifically designed for non-natives. Their entries are written in an easy-to-understand core vocabulary consisting of no more than 3,000 words, so you are not frustrated by unfamiliar terms used to define the word you are looking up. They also feature something that regular English dictionaries have stopped including in recent years, namely, sample sentences that show words in context. If you are not familiar with a word, how are you supposed to know the right way to use it in a sentence? But in recent years, for reasons of space, major publishers of college and other English language dictionaries have stopped offering many examples of usage. Publishers prefer to brag about the



overall number of entries, because it is an easy yardstick that many buyers use for evaluating a reference work of this type. (Only later will customers discover that they don't really know how to use the multitude of new words.) Perhaps most importantly, learner's dictionaries point out potential confusion with Romance language cognates. This in itself is worth the price of purchase and eliminates the need to buy a separate book of false friends.

All told, English learner's dictionaries are excellent resources for individuals whose first language is not English. The problem is that many of the people who would benefit from these books feel that they need a "better" dictionary. It turns out that few adults want to identify as a mere "learner." This attitude is as difficult to change as getting a woman to try on her true dress size or a man to acknowledge his waist size. In my experience, no amount of reasoning will convince educated non-natives that English learner's dictionaries are a good fit for them. I often declare that these are books I myself use and derive a great deal of pleasure from, and when I say that, people look at me as if I'd just avowed a fondness for waiting in line at the bank.

Fortunately, I have found a work that fills this niche without the negative connotations of a "learner's dictionary." Perhaps taking their cue from jeans manufacturers who grossly mislabel their products with what is called "vanity sizing," Longman is now calling their book for non-native English speakers "advanced." The *Longman Advanced American Dictionary* (LAAD) is a learner's dictionary masquerading as a very good college dictionary. At over eighteen hundred pages, this book has no lack of entries. But it also has over 73,000 examples of usage. The natural-sounding sample sentences are on the mark. The website states that these sentences are culled from the "Longman Corpus Network," consisting of

over 330 million words carefully selected from books, newspapers, and magazines. For the word “quandary” it gives, for example, “Kate was **in a quandary** over how to vote.” For the word “proclivity” it provides the sentence, “Children have a **proclivity** to act impulsively.” The college edition of *Webster’s New World Dictionary* and *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* contain no such sample sentences. As with many other words, usage is not always obvious if all you have to go on is the definition.

The *Longman Advanced American Dictionary* is not a one-trick pony; sample usage isn’t the only area in which it shines. It goes to great lengths to make common American terms and expressions easy to understand. One way it endeavors to do this is by classifying words according to frequency. Entries marked S1, S2, and S3 are the most commonly used one thousand, two thousand and three thousand words in spoken English, while those labeled W1, W2, and W3 are the most commonly used one thousand, two thousand and three thousand words in written English. The LAAD also uses a mere two thousand words to construct most definitions. Only where it is absolutely necessary do they recur to words outside their two thousand-word “Longman Defining Vocabulary.” An example is its treatment of the word “rest.” Because “rest” can mean so many different things, Longman employs what it calls “signposts” to help you locate the proper context.

rest S3 W3 v.

1 **RELAX** a) [I] to stop working or doing an activity for a time, and usually sit down or lie down: *We stopped and rested for a time at the top of the hill.* b) **rest your feet/legs/eyes etc.** to stop using a part of your body because it is feeling sore or tired

2 **GIVE SUPPORT** [T always + adv./prep.] to support an object or part of your body by putting it on or against something: **rest sth against/on etc.** *He rested his head on my shoulder.*

3 **LIE/LEAN ON** [I always + adv./prep.] to lie or lean on something for support: + **against/on etc.** *Their bikes were resting against the fence. / He slept peacefully, his head resting on one arm.* >see THESAURUS box at lean 1

4 **rest assured (that)** used to tell someone not to worry, because what you say about a situation is true: *You can rest assured that the car will be ready on time.*

5 **rest easy** to relax and stop worrying: *I can rest easy, knowing that everything is being taken care of.*

6 **sb will not rest until** used to say that someone will not be satisfied until something happens: *We will not rest until our demands for justice are met.*

7 **COURT OF LAW** [I,T] if one side rests or rests its case in a court of law, they stop giving information because they believe they have said enough to prove what they want to prove: *The defense plans to rest its case tomorrow.*

> continues on next page



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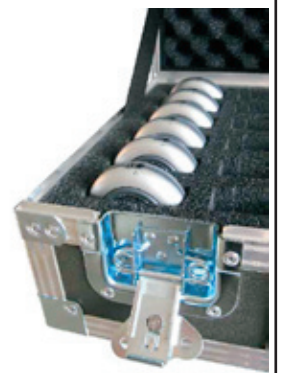


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A PERFECT FIT: LONGMAN *continued from page 9*

8 **I rest my case** SPOKEN, HUMOROUS said when something happens or is said that proves that you were right

9 **DEAD PERSON** [I always + adv./perp.] if a dead person rests somewhere, they are buried there: **final/last resting place** (=the place where someone is buried) →see also RIP

10 **rest on your laurels** DISAPPROVING to not make any further effort because you are so satisfied with what you have done: *In such a competitive market, a business can't afford to rest on its laurels.*

rest on/upon sth *phr v.* 1 FORMAL to depend on or be based on something: *Her argument rests on the assumption that the two systems are identical.* 2 if your eyes rest on something, you look at it

rest with sb *phr. v.* if a decision or responsibility rests with someone, they are in charge of it: *Responsibility for training rests with you.*

Here meaning number seven is labeled "COURT OF LAW." The many signposts and detailed explanations with examples of each usage are very clear and helpful.

Collocations constitute another important area that is amply represented in the pages of the LAAD. As the book's editors explain, "A collocation is a group of words that 'naturally' go together through common usage." They list "heavy smoker" ("NOT big") as an example. In order to sound natural when you speak or write, you have to use what are called "common set collocations" in English. These are highlighted in bold throughout the book. For "conviction" the collocations include **deep/strong/firm conviction**. For those whose first language is not English, this dictionary should be consulted before writing a letter discussing an "unfathomable," "brawny," or "resistant" conviction in something.

In a similar vein, compound words are included as headwords. This feature is a great time-saver. "Blank cartridge," for example, is listed as a separate entry, making it easy to find this term referring to a cartridge with gunpowder but no bullet. When I look up this term in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, no such entry can be found. Instead, I have to pore through all of the other meanings of "blank" (both as an adjective and as a noun) before I find this sense of the word, which it lists as meaning 3b in the entry for "blank" as a noun. I have saved oodles of time with the LADD by going directly to the entry I'm seeking, rather than having to wade through all the possible combinations of a phrasal verb or compound noun before finding the term I am looking for.

The LAAD in its wisdom anticipates many of the problems experienced by speakers of Romance languages and nips them in the bud. Under the entry for "actually," a box with an eye-catching blue background appears below the regular definition.

WORD CHOICE **actually, currently, (right) now** **Actually** does not mean "now" or "at this time." Compare **currently** and **(right) now**: *Surprisingly, the population of Brown County actually fell during the 1980s (=in fact). Currently/Right now, Steve Palmer is the assistant sales manager (at this time).*

These text boxes signal "word choice" or "thesaurus" and are sprinkled throughout the text. For example, under "ignore" one finds this box:

WORD CHOICE **ignore, be ignorant of** If you **ignore** something, you know about it, but choose not to take notice of it: *Some drivers simply ignore speed limits.* If you are **ignorant of** something, you do not know about it: *No driver can pretend to be ignorant of speed limits.*

Many new terms are documented, indicating that the LAAD is a reference work of the 21st and not the 20th century. This includes "denial of service attack" (an attack on a website that overloads it with too much information, rendering it unable to provide online services), "Netiquette" (accepted rules of polite behavior on the Internet), and "spoof" as an adjective "used to describe emails, websites, etc. that are designed to look as if they belong to real companies and trick people into giving out personal information, credit card numbers, etc.: *spoof emails.*"

On the CD-ROM (you can get the book in soft or hard cover, with or without the CD-ROM), you can hear all 185,000 headwords, as well as 12,000 sample sentences. Practice exercises are also provided to help with reading, writing, listening, and speaking. One of the features most useful for students is the one featuring vocabulary exercises.

Perhaps most common of all the multicolored enhancements designed to set this dictionary apart from reference works that have preceded it are the blue boxes marked "THESAURUS" scattered throughout the entries. The box under the heading "fake" reads as follows:

THESAURUS

false made to look like something real, sometimes in order to deceive people: *false teeth // a false passport*

imitation made to look and seem like something else: *imitation leather*

counterfeit money or a counterfeit product is made to look real in order to deceive people: *counterfeit credit cards // counterfeit lottery tickets // a million dollars in counterfeit bills*

phony not real and intended to deceive people: *He got the job using a phony job history and references.*

forged used about writing or documents that have been illegally copied in order to deceive people: *a forged signature on the letter*

ersatz artificial, and not as good as the real thing: *ersatz coffee*
⇒ ARTIFICIAL

The thesaurus feature is great, but there is no way of knowing under which terms it will appear. Under the word "grumpy," for example, a text box is provided to illustrate the differences between cranky/crabby/grouchy (all listed together), cantankerous, irritable, and touchy. This feature is really helpful, but only appears under "grumpy," with no mention of it under "cranky," "crabby," "grouchy," "cantankerous," or "irritable." Inexplicably, only under "touchy" does one find the note: "see THESAURUS box at grumpy". Who can fathom the reasoning behind this? Why come up with such a great feature if you are then going to hide it? Perhaps I will write to the editors for elucidation.

This dictionary is highly useful for non-native speakers who

want to improve their understanding of academic and idiomatic English. On the other hand, the LAAD is not a useful reference for matters of natural history, science, or anthropology. A “badger” is defined as “an animal which has black and white fur, lives in holes in the ground, and is active at night.” This seems to me to match the description of quite a few other animals (raccoons, skunks, ringtails). No picture is provided and there is no information about its genus or family. Mohawk is listed as “a native American tribe from the northeast region of the U.S.” This would probably match many other tribes. (And it fails to mention the hair style of the same name favored by many NAJIT members during the late 70’s!) “Bourbon” is simply defined as “a type of whiskey.” In the hopes of finding more detail, I look up “whiskey,” but there is no mention of bourbon whiskey.

The CD-ROM is clunky, taking far longer to react to commands than other similar products. It is also difficult to use to search for phrases. In order to find the phrasal verb “look up,” you have to scroll through all of the listings for “look” until you finally find it. Reviews on the Web for the somewhat more simplified iPhone app called “Longman American Dictionary” indicate that the problem with searchability exists there as well. Another technological shortfall is that the disk that came with my softcover edition only works with Windows 98SE/ME/2000/XP. My two most recently purchased computers have Windows Vista and Windows 7, so I was unable to use it on either one. Before you leap to purchase this dictionary, I would highly recommend that you first check and see if it is compatible with your system. (I still have an older PC in my basement where I was able to test the outmoded CD-ROM.)

While it includes many new terms related to technology and the Internet, it fails to include others. An example of omission is the common term “open-source” (software based on source code that is available to anyone).

While the LAAD includes plenty of American slang and idioms, it omits such common terms as “shit,” “fuck,” and “cunt.” Vulgarity aside, I would argue that these are words all learners need to know, if only to learn how to avoid them. It also omits the meaning of “penis” for “cock” and the meaning of “to have intercourse” for “screw” as a verb. These omissions are surprising for a dictionary of this day and age, although they are consistent with the overall didactic nature of the project. Longman specializes in educational materials, and this book is no exception.

Although this dictionary admirably includes many proper nouns in its pages, the descriptions are often wanting. Beethoven is described as “a German musician who wrote classical music.” Brahms, for his part, is described identically. This oversimplified treatment is meted out to many important cultural and historic figures. In contrast, Knute Rockne, an American football coach who died in 1931, receives five times as much space. The bias here seems to be that the editors favor modern American culture. Bob Dylan and Woody Allen receive considerably more space than Plato or William Shakespeare.

Overall, though, the LAAD is a good reference tool. It provides clear, simple explanations of both difficult and easy terms, making the job of lexicography itself seem almost effortless. As anyone knows who has ever attempted to define a word’s precise meaning

and usage, there is nothing simple or easy about it. The book, with its multiple features, graphic enhancements, and CD-ROM adds up to much more than the sum of its parts (so long as you can run it on your system). Longman has a distinguished history in dictionary-making: after all, this is the house that originally published Dr. Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755.

After using the LAAD for over half a year, I can vouch for its usefulness in parsing texts, offering synonyms, explaining potential false friends, and providing vocabulary building exercises (with its CD-ROM). Just like my 32” waist Old Navy jeans (with an actual measurement of 36”), this book is a perfect fit. Vanity sizing is alive and well, both in my closet and in the publishing business. ▲

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[This lexicographer’s day job is as a state and federally certified interpreter in California. He is a regular contributor to Proteus.]



MOUNTAIN CLIMBING *continued from page 7*

various publications, offering services around the globe to well-known multinationals, learning to play golf, and teaching yoga.

My brother, Alberto Salazar, was a world-class marathoner in the 1980’s, and he relates similar experiences when striving toward his goals. Only in his twenties when he tallied major victories at the New York and Boston marathons, he visualized himself winning, held that image, trained to the utmost, and learned from the experts. During each race, he just concentrated on placing one foot in front of the other, until he crossed the finish line. I remember visiting him after he set a world record at the NY marathon in 1981. He was lying in bed in a suite at the St. Regis Hotel, enthusiastically chatting with the family, when I noticed that the bedsheets around his feet were bloodied. He explained matter-of-factly that he had lost several toenails in the race and hoped they would grow back.

Here, then, is one of the many lessons to be learned: always be prepared to put some skin in the game if you consider the result worthwhile. In the end, you will never know if you could have accomplished your dream if you didn’t give it your best try. As Alberto’s former employer, Nike, advises, “Just do it!” ▲

[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.]

CONFERENCE REPORTS

TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING SUMMIT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Alexander Răinof

The Translation and Interpreting Summit Advisory Council (TSAC) meets once a year for a day of intensive work and exchange of ideas. This is an umbrella organization of organizations whose members are generally represented by their current or past presidents. Members of the Council include heads of language departments in government agencies and top executives from the business sector. The Council includes, to name but a few of its seventeen members, ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages), ATA (American Translators Association), FIT (Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs, the International Federation of Translators), IRL (Interagency Language Roundtable), MLA (Modern Language Association), as well as NAJIT and SSTI, represented by myself and Lois Feuerle respectively. The TSAC members possess collectively a vast amount of information, knowledge, expertise, and resources relating to language, translation and interpretation.

TSAC stakeholders had been asked to bring to the table a "statement of mission" and what they considered to be the "big issues" facing translation and interpretation. The NAJIT Board of Directors and the SSTI board contributed the following:


- Need for adherence to the requirements and rules for using certified (or, in some jurisdictions, qualified) interpreters.
- Need for quality control of interpretation, particularly in the lesser used languages. All too often courts use only a language speaker, not a professional interpreter.
- Need to come to terms with impediments to funding. Courts which are mandated to use professional interpreters have been known not to do so, saying that they do not have available funding. Claiming poverty has been used as an excuse for not complying with legal mandates.
- Need for unification of medical and legal interpreter examinations.
- Need to address the shortage of interpreters: recruitment, training, and retention.
- Furthermore, all stakeholders felt that there was a need to agree on standards of practice and codes of ethics.

Another agenda item included for discussion was the possibility, presented by William Rivers, of creating a translation and interpretation-oriented trade council. A review of work in progress on ASTM (American Society for Testing and Material) and ISO (International Organization for Standards) language standards was outlined by Sue Ellen Wright from Kent University, and William Rivers. In particular, reference was made to ASTM Standard F2575-06 (Standard Guide for Quality Assurance in Translation)

and ISO TC 37 (International Organization for Standards Technical Committee 37), more specifically to the work of the subcommittee working group on the translation and interpretation process (TC37/SC 2/WG6). While this subject might appear arcane, the alignment of American, European, and Chinese standards is of paramount importance.

Another important item on the agenda was the report by MLA past-president Catherine Porter on the MLA's 126th convention to be held in Los Angeles from 6 to 9 January 2011. I have been invited to participate in MLA Session 249 on translation and interpretation in a panel scheduled for noon on January 7th.

Members of TSAC come mostly from a translation rather than an interpretation orientation. This has resulted in interpretation seeming at times a poor relation within the TSAC family. While the summit organization's name is the Translation and Interpreting Summit Advisory Council, the acronym (TSAC),

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NEW MEXICO INTERPRETERS CONFERENCE

Bethany Korp-Edwards

The 3rd annual New Mexico interpreters conference was held October 15-17, 2010 in Albuquerque. This conference has become an annual tradition since New Mexico instituted a continuing-education requirement for state-certified court interpreters, but 2010 was the first year it was open to all, regardless of field, language, or geography. Interpreters came from far as New Jersey, Seattle, and Mexico City. The conference was sponsored jointly by the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts, the New Mexico Translators and Interpreters Association, University of New Mexico Hospitals, the New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Community Outreach Partnership for the Deaf, the New Mexico Center for Language Access, and the El Paso Interpreters and Translators Association. The keynote speakers, Cynthia Roat (Seattle, Washington), Robyn Dean (University of Rochester), and Nestor Wagner (Southern California School of Interpreting) spoke of the need to see interpreting as one field that can be practiced in a variety of contexts and of the benefits in interpreters working together across specialties. Indeed, participants found that sessions outside their particular area of expertise or language pair had much to offer.

The 160 attendees represented court, medical, community, and conference interpreters, most of whom interpret Spanish, Navajo, or American Sign Language; there were also interpreters of Chinese, Arabic, Thai, Vietnamese, and Russian. Most sessions were language-neutral, but there were also language-specific sessions for Spanish and Navajo. Each keynote speaker also offered a 1.5- or 3-hour workshop in his or her own specialties: medical interpreting; demand-control schema and interpreting as a practice profession; and skills-building for court interpreters. The subjects of other popular workshops included Navajo medical vocabulary by Ida Bradley; Spanish crime scene terminology by Esther Navarro-Hall; coping strategies for interpreters by Dagoberto

Orrantia; team interpreting for conference, escort, and court interpreters by Tony Rosado and Rosemary McCoy; and Mexican slang by Rogelio Camacho.

Pamela Sánchez, statewide program manager for language access and jury of the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts, stated, "The New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts and the New Mexico Supreme Court recognize that supporting and advancing the profession of interpreting across all its specialties is in the interest not only of justice, but of each of our citizens' basic civil rights. It is because of this support that New Mexico has been able to make significant progress in developing professional training opportunities, such as the conference and the New Mexico Center for Language Access, for interpreters and others who provide language access services." ▲

[The author is federally certified, currently a staff interpreter in the U.S. district court in Albuquerque, and president of the New Mexico Translators and Interpreters Association.]

ITEMS OF INTEREST

On October 7, 2010 the Council of the European Union adopted expanded rules on the right to translation and interpretation in criminal proceedings. The next step is for member states to formulate legislation in response to the directive. Among the enhanced rights are the right to interpretation in investigative and interrogation settings and for suspects to communicate with counsel, as well as the right to have relevant documents translated by sight or in writing. The directive includes provisions for training judges, lawyers and others on how to work with interpreters. See www.eulita.org for further details.

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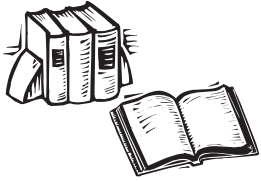
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REPORT FROM THE SUMMIT *continued from page 12*

is missing the letter "I," which should represent Interpretation. Considering how vital interpretation is in the United States, the global economy, and to the TSAC mission, I felt that the TSAC acronym should be changed to reflect this importance; consequently I introduced a motion to change the acronym to TISAC to embrace the interpreting aspect of the council's mission. María Brau, co-chair of the Interagency Language Roundtable seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. I am happy to report that interpretation now is acknowledged in the official acronym and from now on, TSAC shall be known as TISAC. ▲

[The author, a Ph.D. in comparative literature, is a professor at California State University at Long Beach. He is former chair of the NAJIT board and current board member of SSTI.]



Book Review

Julie A. Sellers

Misinterpretation and Self-Translation in *The Poisonwood Bible*

The Poisonwood Bible

Kingsolver, Barbara

Harper Perennial. 1999.

ISBN-13: 978-0-06-078650-2

543 pages. \$14.99

Barbara Kingsolver's novel *The Poisonwood Bible* recounts the tale of a zealous minister, Nathan Price, who carries his fiery message to the Belgian Congo in 1959 without the sanction of his church. Told through the voices of Nathan's daughters (Rachel, twins Leah and Adah, and Ruth May) and his wife, Orleanna, the novel relates the family's experience of living in Africa. Language and interpretation figure prominently in the plot, both in linguistic (mis)interpretation, and the characters' transformative self-translation into new realities and selves. By the novel's riveting conclusion, the reader comes to understand that the Word and words are equally powerful players in individual and national destinies.

The process of self-translation begins on the evening the Prices arrive in the Congo and are welcomed with a meal that bears little resemblance to the church dinners common to their congregation in Bethlehem, Georgia. The nakedness, food and customs of the villagers of Kilanga are in stark contrast to the myriad creature comforts the family brought along, such as garden seeds, a hand mirror, aspirin and cake mixes. As the family tries to integrate these familiar pieces of home into their new life, they continually suffer the culture shock of realizing that their former way of life does not directly translate into their current reality. Nathan's garden seeds wash away and Orleanna's cake mix turns solid in the humidity: they learn that nothing can be taken for granted in Africa.

Given that Nathan's mission is unsanctioned, the family did not enjoy the benefits of organized language training prior to their emigration, and language becomes a constant struggle. As Leah points out, "In the beginning we were just about in the same boat as Adam and Eve. We had to learn the names of everything" (101). The daughters find that the French they hear sounds nothing like the language they studied, and the Kikongo language seems even more remote. In Kikongo, a word — *nommo* — has multiple meanings. Leah reflects on this complexity after some time in her new home, realizing that she could never relate a typical day in the Congo to her friends in Georgia because "[y]ou'd have to explain the words, and then the words for the words" (235).

Words have power even when they are merely repetitions. Methuselah, the parrot left behind by a former missionary, is not only able to repeat what he hears in multiple languages; he is able to accurately reproduce each speaker's voice as well. To the girls'

chagrin, they realize that nothing they say is safe, for Methuselah may expose their secrets. Nathan eventually loses patience with Methuselah, his rival in the control of utterances, and frees him to the jungle. Adah is skeptical about the domesticated bird's chances in the wild, with atrophied wings and "a breast weighed down with the words of human beings" (137).

Nathan also uses words as punishment. Whenever any of his daughters commits a transgression, she is condemned to do the dreaded Verse, starting at the Biblical verse assigned by the Reverend and made to copy the following one hundred verses, the final one explaining the particular atrocity committed.

Nathan finds himself in linguistic straits in delivering his sermons. Just as self-important and fiercely self-sufficient as he is self-righteous, the Reverend finally concedes that the villagers do not understand his poor attempts at French and Kikongo. He enlists the help of the local schoolteacher, Anatole, who faithfully interprets the sermons. Adah points out that "this slick trick schoolteacher could be saying anything under the sun. Our father would never be the wiser" (72). But Anatole's motives are sincere, as Leah later learns, when he befriends her and explains that the villagers have a right to hear what the Reverend says so that they can make an informed decision about his message. "It wasn't evangelism," Leah realizes, "just full disclosure" (453).

Anatole's position within the community and his role as interpreter make him the emissary as well of messages from the village chief. Because Nathan does not like these messages, he loses trust in Anatole and increasingly tries to do the interpreting himself:

"*Tata Jesus is Bängala!*" declares the Reverend every Sunday at the end of his sermons. More and more, mistrusting his interpreters, he tries to speak in Kikongo. He throws back his head and shouts these words to the sky, while his lambs sit scratching themselves in wonder. *Bängala* means something precious and dear. But the way he pronounces it, it means the poisonwood tree. (276)

This same inflexibility and self-centeredness contribute to the villagers' growing distrust of Nathan.

At the same time that the Reverend plots to save the world, national and international events gather steam, rushing the Belgian Congo towards the birth pains of independence. Despite multiple warnings to leave, the Reverend steadfastly refuses, insisting on fulfilling his self-proclaimed mission. As Adah suspects, the motives for Nathan's zeal are more personal than religious:

Our Father has a bone to pick with this world, and oh, he picks it like a sore. Picks it with the Word. His punishment is the Word, and his deficiencies are failures of words—as when he grows impatient with translation and strikes out precariously on his own, telling parables in his wildly half-baked Kikongo... It is a special kind of person who will draw together a congregation, stand up before them with a proud, clear voice, and say wrong words, week after week. (213)

When other missionaries abandon the Congo, the Prices lose their small salary and this, coupled with a relentless drought,

> continues on page 16

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BOOK REVIEW *continued from page 14*

takes its toll. Still, Nathan does not desist, even when the villagers, incited by the local witch doctor, begin to blame Nathan's God for the drought.

"Independence is a complex word in a foreign tongue" (383) Orleanna observes, summarizing the wrenching shifts the Congo undergoes as international powers seek to influence events. It is an especially ominous omen that Adah discovers the recently-liberated Methuselah's ravaged remains on the very morning of Independence in the Congo: "Feathers at last at last and no words at all" (186). Like Methuselah, the people of the Congo are unused to freedom, and independence harbors many outside dangers. From this point forward, events — some humorous and others heart-wrenching — conspire, carrying the Prices to a family tragedy and each to a point of decision. Their African story leaves its mark upon each in a unique way, and none can ever be the same again.

Although he never personally narrates a single portion of the story, there is no doubt the weightiest words in this tale belong to the Reverend Price, whose iron inflexibility undergirds the story of his family and the village. This same blind determination to translate one reality into another from different cultures and nations is also seen in the context of international events overtaking the Congo. Looking back, Orleanna considers the

fabric of this narrative, realizing that "To live is to be marked. To live is to change, to acquire the words of a story..." (p. 385). Adah, too, eventually arrives at an understanding of her family's history, written across time, continents and languages, and realizes that "the mistakes are part of the story." (533).

At times funny, and others, tragic, this novel draws the reader into a time and world eerily reminiscent of the present day. *The Poisonwood Bible* is recommended reading for anyone interested in the power of words and (mis)interpretation, and the role played by translation — literally and figuratively — in personal and international revolutions.

Author of seven novels, each unique in plot and setting, as well as of creative nonfiction, essays, and poetry, Barbara Kingsolver's work has been translated into more than twenty languages. She was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2000, the highest recognition in the nation for service in the arts. ▲

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