

Tiered Court Interpreter Systems



Roda P. Roberts

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2007, a report titled “Study of California’s Court Interpreter Certification and Registration Testing,” prepared by ALTA Language Services, Inc., identified eight states that used a tiered system to classify their court interpreters. (2007: 106-108) A study of state court interpreting that I performed in 2014 reveals that that number has increased dramatically to 42 jurisdictions with a tiered system, leaving only eight states without such a system. This striking development merits analysis, which is the purpose of this article.

First, the concept of a tiered system will be clarified, and various possible tiered system scenarios will be presented. Then these scenarios will be refined by analysis of concrete examples of each found in the United States. Next, the question of why tiered systems have suddenly mushroomed will be posed, and the pros and cons of these systems will be examined. This article will conclude with a comparison of tiered systems in the United States and similar systems in other countries.

2. DEFINITION OF “TIERED SYSTEM” IN THE CONTEXT OF COURT INTERPRETING

While the term “tiered system” has been regularly used in the context of court interpreting over the last 10 years, it has never really been properly defined. Simply put, this term designates a system of classification of court interpreters, who are ranked into different “tiers” based on qualifications that are labeled using various designations.

The creators of the Washington State Coalition for Language Access (WASCLA) Interpreter and Translator Directory have identified three main tiered system scenarios:

TIERED SYSTEM SCENARIO 1 : Based on the presence/absence of certifications

Tier 1: Any certification (Federal Court Interpreter Certification (FCICE) or Certification for Medical Interpreters (CMI))

Tier 2: Other qualifications (e.g. degree in languages, native speaker of foreign language, interpreting experience, etc.)

TIERED SYSTEM SCENARIO 2 : Based on required certifications

Tier 1: Certification in court interpreting required

Tier 2: Any kind of certification (in other forms of interpreting or perhaps in translation)

Tier 3: Other qualifications (e.g. degree in languages, native speaker of a foreign language, interpreting experience, etc.)

TIERED SYSTEM SCENARIO 3 : Based on the quantity of certifications

Tier 1: Three Certifications (e.g. Court interpreting plus Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) or Certification in Medical and in Social Services Interpreting (M & S)

Tier 2: Two Certifications (e.g. Court interpreting plus DSHS)

Tier 3: One Certification (Required for that assignment)

4th Tier: One Certification (Any kind)

5th Tier: Other qualifications

These three basic tiered system scenarios outlined by the WASCLA directory group are made more complex by two factors:

(a) oral performance certification examinations are not available in all languages; and

(b) scores on certification examinations can vary greatly, even among candidates who pass them.

While there are a large number of languages spoken in the United States (a tabulation from the 2006–2008 American Community Survey listed over 300 languages), and interpreters could be required in the courtroom for speakers of any of these languages, oral examinations for certification prepared by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) are available for only 20 languages. This implies that interpreters working in languages other than these 20 cannot be certified. They can, however, be tested using oral proficiency interviews in both English and the foreign language, and they can also take the NCSC written test in English. Those who pass these examinations would be considered as having “other qualifications.” However, the category of “other qualifications” can cover such a wide variety of criteria that a distinction needs to be made, as is often the case, between those who have been tested, albeit not through a certification exam and those who are qualified by virtue of their education or experience. This has led to the following tiered system:

TIERED SYSTEM SCENARIO 4:Based on the presence/absence of testing and on the type of exam taken

Tier 1: Certified Interpreter: Certified interpreters have passed a court interpreting certification examination. In those languages for which certification is available, the courts will select interpreters who have met the administrative office's criteria for certification if the judge determines that certified interpreters are reasonably available.

Tier 2: Registered Interpreter: The category of registered interpreters applies only to languages other than those for which certification examinations are available. These interpreters are tested in both English and the foreign language, but the examinations are language oriented, and do not test court interpreting skills.

Tier 3: Otherwise Qualified Interpreter: An interpreter who does not qualify as a certified interpreter or a registered interpreter, but who can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the court the ability to interpret court proceedings from English to a designated language and from that language into English, will be classified as a language skilled/ad hoc interpreter.

If the use of examinations other than those for court interpreter certification has led to the tiered system described above, the variations in pass scores in the certification exam have resulted in further refinements of the tiered system. A tiered testing system (also termed “tiered scoring system”) involves classifying interpreters who have taken the certification exam on the basis of their scores. Those who score just above the pass mark are considered certified; those who score far above the pass mark are considered certified at the master level; and those who are considered borderline are conditionally approved. This multilayered tiered system can be diagrammed as follows:

TIERED SYSTEM SCENARIO 5: Based on the presence/absence of testing, on the type of exam taken, and on certification exam scores.

- Tier 1: Certified – Master Level (high scores in oral performance certification exam)
- Tier 2: Certified (passing scores in oral performance certification exam)
- Tier 3: Conditionally Approved (borderline scores in oral performance certification exam)
- Tier 4: Registered
- Tier 5: Otherwise Qualified

It must be noted that there is little consensus on the designations for the different tiers. While the term certified interpreter is usually applied to an interpreter who has passed an authorized court interpreting exam, the phrase “registered interpreter” is used to indicate:

- a) someone who has done an oral proficiency interview rather than a certification exam for lack of a certification exam in their language (sense used here);
- b) someone who has fulfilled some, but not all of the conditions for certification;
- c) someone who has had some training in court interpreting; or
- d) simply someone who has registered with the AOC to interpret.

In the rest of this article, we will use the following terms as defined below:

Certified Interpreter: an interpreter who has passed an authorized court interpreting exam.

Conditionally Approved Interpreter: an interpreter who has taken an authorized court interpreting exam but has not passed all the sections and is therefore considered borderline. **Registered Interpreter:** an interpreter in a language for which there is no oral certification exam and who therefore has taken a language proficiency exam.

Otherwise Qualified Interpreter: an interpreter approved by the AOC on the basis of his/her resume.

3. EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT TIERED SYSTEMS IN DIFFERENT UNITED STATES JURISDICTIONS

When one tries to find concrete examples of each of the five tiered system scenarios mentioned above, it becomes clear that the theoretical model is not always found in practice. First, Scenario 3, where two certifications are required, is totally absent from the court interpreting scene. Second, Scenario 4 is a three-tiered system like Scenario 2 and the two can be put together. Finally, although Scenarios 1, 2, and 5 can apply to court interpreting, they need to be refined to be applicable to concrete cases.

SCENARIO 1

Let us start with **Scenario 1** based on the presence/absence of certifications:

- Tier 1: Any certification (e.g. court interpreting or other interpreting)
- Tier 2: Other qualifications (e.g. degree in languages, native speaker of foreign language, interpreting experience, etc.)

We have not found a single court jurisdiction that accepts “any certification” to classify an interpreter as certified, and the second tier includes either registered interpreters or otherwise qualified interpreters in the sense presented above. In other words, this scenario, like the others, needs to be refined to match reality, which is why we present revised scenarios in this section.

Scenario 1, Revised: a two-tiered system (based on the presence/absence of certification)

- Tier 1: Certified interpreters
- Tier 2: Non-certified interpreters (who could be registered or otherwise qualified or approved by the court or the AOC):

California:

Tier 1: Certified interpreter: Interpreter has passed a court interpreting exam.

Tier 2: Registered interpreter: This tier is reserved for interpreters of languages without certification examinations, who have passed all the alternate required examinations.

Alaska:

Tier 1: Certified interpreter has passed a court interpreting exam.

Tier 2: Otherwise qualified (Registered): This tier requires successful completion of a training program offered through the Language Interpreter Center.

South Carolina:

Tier 1: Certified interpreter: Interpreter has passed a court interpreting exam.

Tier 2: Non-certified interpreter: Interpreter has been “approved by the court.”

In the California, Alaska and South Carolina interpreter programs, we see three different ways for interpreters to be classified as Tier 2. While interpreters who are registered but not certified normally take clearly specified examinations, this is not the case for other qualifications or court approval. And although the “other qualifications” are often indicated clearly (e.g. in the case of Alaska, specific training is mentioned as a qualification,) there is generally no indication of how court approval is granted.

SCENARIO 2

Scenario 2, a three-tier system based on required certifications, with the first tier requiring pertinent certification (in court interpreting,) the second tier requiring any kind of related certification (in other forms of interpreting) and the third tier based on other qualifications, does not perfectly reflect what is happening in the court interpreting world, any more than does **Scenario 1**. This is because the only type of certification accepted in the court system is court interpreter certification, although different court interpreter certifications may be considered as equivalent. However, there are a number of different examples of three-tiered systems, the starting point of which is always the certification exam. So **Scenario 2** can be subdivided into three subcategories, all with that starting point:

Scenario 2A Revised: a three-tiered system (based on the presence/absence of examinations and on test scores)

Tier 1: Certified interpreter (has passed a court interpreting certification exam)

Tier 2: Conditionally Approved Interpreter (has sat a certification exam, but has not passed all sections of the exam or received high enough scores to be certified)

Tier 3: Registered Interpreter (has passed language proficiency examinations)

Examples of Scenario 2A:

Georgia:

Certified Interpreters Requirements:

- Orientation workshop
- English written exam
- Court observation hours
- Oral Certification Exam - candidates must pass each mode of interpretation (sight, consecutive and simultaneous) with a 70% or higher score in the same sitting.
- Successful completion of criminal history background investigation

Conditionally Approved Interpreters Requirements:

- Orientation workshop
- English written exam
- Court observation hours
- Oral Certification Exam- Candidates must receive an overall score of 60% on the exam, with no score in any mode of interpretation falling below 50%. Candidates with this classification must satisfy additional conditions, i.e., continuing education.
- Successful completion of criminal history background investigation

Registered Interpreters (category only available to those speaking languages where no oral certification exam exists) Requirements:

- Orientation workshop
- English written exam
- Oral proficiency interview (OPI)
- Successful completion of criminal history background investigation

Maine:

Certified (Tier III) Requirements:

- Federal certification (OR) certification through the National Center for State Courts

Conditionally Approved (Tier II) Requirements:

- Successful completion of Tier I requirements, AND
- Pass the National Center for State Courts written examination with a score of 80% or higher;
- Complete the Maine Court Interpreter Advanced Legal Training Program (4 days);
- 50 hours of legal interpreting experience; and
- Two years of post-secondary education

Registered (Tier I) Requirements:

- File an approved application;
- Pass the National Center for State Courts written examination with a score of 70% or higher;
- Pass oral proficiency interview in the target language;
- Complete the Maine Court Interpreters Orientation Program (2 days).

What these examples show is that while the three tiers are similar, the requirements for each one vary a bit from one jurisdiction to another. This is especially true for the Conditionally Approved Interpreter category.

A variation of **Scenario 2** is found in three jurisdictions with a three-tiered system. It can be described as follows:

Scenario 2B Revised: a three-tier system (based on scores on the certification exam)

Tier 1: Certified – Master level (high scores)

Tier 2: Certified (passing scores)

Tier 3: Conditionally Approved (borderline scores)

Examples of Scenario 2B:

New Jersey:

- Certified – Master level (Master) 85% or higher on the written exam; 80% or higher on simultaneous and consecutive modes; no lower than 75% in each subpart of sight translation.
- Certified (Journeyman): 80%-84% on the written exam; 70% or higher on simultaneous and consecutive modes; no lower than 65% in each subpart of sight translation

- Conditionally Approved (Trainee): 70%-79% on the written exam; 50% or higher on each performance part and an overall average of 55%.

North Carolina:

- Certified – Master Level (Master Certified): Interpreter has demonstrated a proven level of language and interpreting skills proficiency by passing the Federal Examination (FCICE) or receiving scores of 80% or higher on all sections of the North Carolina Court Interpreter Certification Examination (NCCICE).
- Certified: Interpreter has demonstrated a proven level of language and interpreting skills proficiency by receiving passing scores (at least 70%) on all three sections of the NCCICE.
- Conditionally Approved (Conditionally Qualified): Interpreter has demonstrated some language and interpreting skills proficiency by receiving passing scores on two of the three sections of the NCCICE or receiving scores within 10 points (60.9 - 69.9) of passing on all three sections.

Comparison of the New Jersey and North Carolina requirements for the three categories reveals some differences again, primarily when it comes to the scores required for each tier. It should be noted that this variation of the three-tiered system applies only to languages for which a certification exam is available. In the case of interpreters of other languages, other qualifications or an oral proficiency interview is required, but those interpreters seem to remain outside the tiered system in the examples cited.

Finally, a third variation of **Scenario 2** combines any three of the categories found in scenarios 1, 2a and 2b. The only element linking examples of this system scenario is the three tiers and the fact that the first tier is that of Certified Interpreters.

Scenario 2C Revised: a three-tiered system (based on the presence/absence of certification and on other criteria)

Tier 1: Certified Interpreter
 Tier 2: (Varies)
 Tier 3: (Varies)

Examples of Scenario 2C:

Delaware:

- Certified (or “National Services Center Certified”): Interpreter must score a minimum of 70% on each of three exam sections with an overall average of at least 70%.
- Conditionally Approved 1 (Conditionally Approved): Interpreter must score 70% in at least one section of the oral exam and 55% or over in the other two sections.
- Conditionally Approved 2 (Registered): Interpreter must have sat for the 3-section performance exam and have an overall score of at least 50%, with 50% in each section.

Utah

- Certified: In addition to the basic requirements of an English written exam, test on the Interpreter Code of Professional Responsibility, a two-day orientation workshop, a background check and 10 hours of observation, a certified interpreter has completed a five-day training course and passed a three-part examination on the modes of interpretation.
- Registered (Approved): In addition to the basic requirements of an English written exam, a test on the Interpreter Code of Professional Responsibility, a two-day orientation workshop, a background check and 10 hours of observation, an approved interpreter has passed an oral proficiency interview (OPI).
- Otherwise Qualified (Registered): Has completed the basic requirements of an English written exam, a test on the Interpreter Code of Professional Responsibility, a two-day orientation workshop, a background check and 10 hours of observation. There is no examination available in the language for certified or approved credentials.

Scenario 5

Finally, **Scenario 5** as presented in Section 2 is a more complex tiered system, not only because it covers a minimum of four tiers, but also because it is based on a number of different criteria: the presence/absence of testing, the type of exam taken, and the certification exam scores. Here again, we need to separate this scenario into two subcategories, A and B, to distinguish between those with many tiers and those with main tiers that are subdivided into sub-tiers. The revised scenario 5 will be termed Scenario 3, since we have eliminated the original **Scenarios 3** and **4**.

Scenario 3A: a complex, many-tiered system (based on the presence/absence of testing, on the type of exam taken, and on the certification exam scores)

Tier 1: Certified
Tier 2: (Varies)
Tier 3: (Varies)
Tier 4: (Varies)
Etc.

Examples of Scenario 3A:

Hawaii

- Certified Master (Tier 6): Consortium full: 80% in each part, with at least 75% in each sight translation subpart.
- Certified (Tier 4): Consortium full: 70% in each part, with at least 65% in each sight translation subpart.
- Conditionally Approved 1(Approved) (Tier 3):
- Consortium abbreviated (Simo): 70%
- Consortium full: 60% in each part, with at least 55% in each sight translation subpart.
- Conditionally Approved 2 (Conditionally Approved) (Tier 2)
- Consortium abbreviated (Simo): 60%
- LionBridge: 70% overall
- Registered (Tier 1):
- Must attend orientation.
- Must pass consortium written exam with 70%
- Must pass Hawaii Basic Ethics exam with 80%.
- Alternative Credential Recognition (ACR) exam for languages that are in high demand in Hawaii, but are not included in the Consortium exam battery.

Iowa

- Certified (Class A): must pass certification examinations with minimum scores
- Conditionally Approved (Class B): certified in another (less stringent) state, or completed a college-level court interpreter training program, or took an approved certification exam and achieved scores that fall 5% short of the certification criteria.
- Otherwise Qualified (Class C): On roster
- Non-certified: Not on roster

It is clear that Hawaii's system is more complex than Iowa's, even though Iowa does have four tiers. It is also obvious that there is no clear match from one complex system to another, except for the certified category (Tier 6 in Hawaii and Class A in Iowa.)

Scenario 3B differs from 3A in that, instead of having tiers 1-X, as in 3A, 3B has at least one tier (that of Certified Interpreter) subdivided into 2 or three sub-tiers, as follows:

Tier 1: Certified (Master and Certified)
Tier 2: Conditionally Approved
Tier 3: Registered
Tier 4: Conditionally Registered

Examples of Scenario 3B:

The complexity of the 3B scenario is revealed by the following diagram for the Pennsylvania system.

Pennsylvania

The table below summarizes the classification for interpreters working in a foreign language for which there is a full or abbreviated proficiency exam in Pennsylvania:

TABLE 1

Criteria	Classification			
	Certified		Otherwise Qualified	
	Master	Certified	Qualified	Conditional
Written Exam	85 % or higher	80% or higher	80% or higher	80% or higher
Simultaneous	85% or higher	70% or higher	60% or higher	50% or higher
Consecutive	85% or higher	70% or higher	60% or higher	50% or higher
Sight (Eng./FL)	85% or higher avg, but no lower than 80% in each part	70% or higher average, but no lower than 65% in each part	60% or higher average, but no lower than 55% in each part	50% or higher
Sight (FL/Eng.)	85% or higher avg, but no lower than 80% in each part	70% or higher avg, but no lower than 65% in each part	60% or higher avg, but no lower than 55% in each part	50% or higher

The next table summarizes the classification for interpreters working in a foreign language for which there is no oral proficiency exam in Pennsylvania:

TABLE 2

Criteria	Classification	
	Otherwise Qualified	
	Registered	Conditional
Written Exam	80% or higher	80% or higher
Oral Proficiency Interview	Superior level	No oral proficiency interview available
English Oral Proficiency Exam	Superior level	Superior level
Other	Pass oral proficiency exam in interpreter's language when available	Pass oral proficiency exam in interpreter's language when available

As discussed above, the tiered systems found in 42 of the 50 states reflect the three basic revised tiered system scenarios with their variants.

19 states have a two-tiered system:

- Alaska
- Arkansas
- California
- Connecticut
- Florida
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Louisiana
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- New York
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- Texas
- Vermont
- Virginia

16 states have a three-tiered system:

- Colorado (2C)
- Delaware (2C)
- Georgia (2A)
- Kentucky (2A)
- Maine (2A)
- Mississippi (2C)
- Nevada (2C)
- New Jersey (2B)
- New Mexico (2C)
- North Carolina (2B)
- Ohio (2C)
- Oregon (2C)
- Tennessee (2C)
- Utah (2C)
- Washington (2C)
- Virginia (2C)

Finally, seven states have a many-tiered system:

- Alabama (3B)
- Hawaii (3A)
- Idaho (3A)
- Iowa (3A)
- Nebraska (3A)
- Pennsylvania (3B)
- Wisconsin (3A)

4. Reasons for the proliferation of tiered systems in recent years

The jump from eight states with tiered systems in 2007 to 42 in 2014, as indicated in the Introduction, is certainly significant. What has caused the proliferation of tiered systems in recent years? The answer is clearly the adoption of a certification exam by many more states and the construction of testing instruments in many more languages.

Between 1995, the year it was founded, and 2007, the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification, which later became the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts, had developed certification examinations in 16 languages, along with an English-language written examination, that member states used to ascertain the level of ability and qualification of their state court interpreters. By the end of 2007, 29 member states had tested or begun testing their court interpreters using the Consortium examinations, and two other non-member states, California and New York, used their own screening examinations. That total of 31 states using credentialing examinations has since grown to 42 by 2014, and at least a few of the remaining 8 states are moving towards adopting the Consortium exam. The number of languages in which certification examinations are available has also grown from 16 languages in 2007 to 20 languages in 2014.

With a growing number of certified interpreters, a distinction needed to be made between them and the non-certified interpreters. To encourage interpreters to become certified, court systems needed not only to pay them better than their non-certified colleagues, but also to give them priority for assignments. This was the motivation behind the establishment of tiered systems, which began as simple two-tier systems (Certified vs. Non-Certified) or simplified three-tier systems (Certified/Conditionally Approved/Non-Certified or Certified Master/Certified/ Conditionally Approved), but have now developed into more complex systems which take into account the fact that many languages still do not have certification examinations and therefore need to be tested differently.

5. Pros and Cons of Tiered Systems

The first and perhaps most important advantage of a tiered system is that it serves to recognize master-level interpreters, while also identifying interpreters with minimum skills who could improve their interpreting skills through training and/or mentoring. This in turn makes it possible to assign the most qualified interpreters for proceedings involving higher stakes, while still using interpreters who do not fully meet certification requirements for more routine proceedings, or those involving lesser consequences. In other words, a tiered system allows for tiered placement options and, it is hoped, a more rational use of limited interpreter resources.

From a certified interpreter's point of view, a tiered system would mean not only better remuneration but also more assignments, since in many jurisdictions with a tiered system, it is expressly stated that preference for assignments should be given to the top tier (i.e. certified interpreter), and if no such interpreter is available, an interpreter from the next level should be sought (and so on, down to the last tier).

Most tiered systems allow for those with minimal skills to start interpreting at the lowest tier. So the system has value even for non-certified interpreters. However, those who seem to react most negatively to such a system are those who take the certification test and do not pass it, or whose scores are borderline, resulting in a classification of "conditionally approved." To be classified in this tier is obviously hurtful to the interpreter's pride, especially as many interpreter directories present interpreters by tiers, announcing to the world thereby that interpreter X was not good enough.

Another possible disadvantage of a tiered system is that it could be misused by court officials. This misuse could take different forms. For example, instead of calling first upon certified interpreters, they might tend to go to the lower tiers in an effort to save money. Or they might not understand the concept of tiered placements and send an interpreter to a proceeding for which he/she is not qualified. Tiered systems are more complicated than non-tiered ones and are therefore more difficult to administer.

6. Tiered systems in other countries

The United States is not alone in having tiered systems for court interpreters. As in the U.S., provincial jurisdictions in Canada that have a certification program also have tiered systems. This is clearly the case in Ontario and New Brunswick, but less obviously so in British Columbia and Quebec. In three of these four provinces, it is the two-tier system that is used.

In Ontario, a new accreditation exam was developed in 2009, which led to the establishment of a two-tier accreditation model:

- Certified (Accredited) - interpreters must achieve a score of 70% and above overall and in each category
- Conditionally Approved (Conditionally Accredited) - interpreters in the conditionally accredited category did not achieve a score of 70% on every section of the exam but did achieve more than 50% in each section of the exam.

New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in Canada, has a two-level certification process for French and English interpreters, with certification examinations developed, administered, and evaluated by the New Brunswick Translation Bureau.

- Partially Certified (Level 1 interpreters): The level one certification exam has three components: basic translation skills, basic legal knowledge, and French/English consecutive interpretation. After an interpreter has passed the exam, the Bureau conducts an in-court evaluation to test the interpreter's performance in a courtroom setting.
- Certified (Level 2 interpreters): The level two certification exam has four components: written translation, sight translation, lawyer-witness exchange for consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpreting of French and English. These interpreters have a higher level of proficiency and experience, and are able to interpret simultaneously. They are generally assigned to the Court of Queen's Bench and to lengthier, more complex trials.

British Columbia and Quebec do not explicitly state that court interpreters fall into one of two tiers. Both provinces highlight the use of certified or accredited interpreters. The Ministry of Attorney General in British Columbia formally recognizes the following interpretation credentials for spoken language interpreters: graduation from and certification by the Vancouver Community College (VCC) Court Interpreting Certificate Program; certification as a Court Interpreter by the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia (STIBC); and certification as a Court Interpreter from a society belonging to the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council (CTTIC). Quebec's Department of Justice considers as accredited those interpreters who meet one of the following requirements:

- Pass the court interpreting aptitude test and the knowledge test based on the *Court Interpreter's Guide*.
- Hold a university degree in interpreting and pass the knowledge test based on the *Court Interpreter's Guide*.

- Be a Certified Court Interpreter accredited by the Ordre des traducteurs et interprètes agréés du Québec (OTIAQ) and pass the knowledge test based on the *Court Interpreter’s Guide*.

However, despite these provinces’ insistence on certification/accreditation, both of them have a second tier of non-certified or non-accredited interpreters, although little information is available about this tier. According to one source, in British Columbia “non-certified interpreters are subjected to criminal record checks and personal and professional references are followed up.” (White Paper on Quality Court Interpretation Services, 2010: 11) In addition, Directive A-6 of Quebec’s Department of Justice, Services d’interprètes et paiement des frais, specifies remuneration for non-accredited court interpreters.

In fact, while at first sight Quebec seems to have a two-tier system like the other three provinces mentioned above, the remuneration scale indicates a much more complex system, which is based as much on a university degree and experience as on accreditation:

Niveaux	Séances	Heures	Séances	Heures	Taux horaire
Sans diplôme universitaire					
1	0 à 200	0 à 600			24,00 \$
2	201 à 400	601 à 1200			26,00 \$
3	401 à 600	1201 à 1800			28,00 \$
4	601 à 800	1801 à 2400			30,00 \$
Avec diplôme universitaire					
5	801 à 1000	2401 à 3000	0 à 200	0 à 600	33,00 \$
6	1001 à 1200	3001 à 3600	201 à 400	601 à 1200	35,00 \$
7	1201 à 1400	3601 à 4200	401 à 600	1201 à 1800	38,00 \$
8	1401 à 1600	4201 à 4800	601 à 800	1801 à 2400	40,00 \$
9	1601 et plus	4801 et plus	800 et plus	2401 et plus	43,00 \$

There are nine different levels identified on the basis of the number of interpreting sessions and hours of experience. A further distinction is made on the basis of a university degree or not; those having such a degree start higher up the scale at level 5. Elsewhere, it is indicated that a non-certified interpreter can only be remunerated at level 1 (if he/she does not hold a university degree) or at level 5 (if he/she does have such a degree). This tiered system is therefore one of the more complex ones in existence.

Tiered court interpreter systems are not just a North American phenomenon. In Great Britain, since February 2012, 80% of interpreter bookings are made under the Ministry of Justice Framework Agreement with Applied Language Solutions (ALS) which requires interpreters to pass an assessment which is said to test their ability to interpret simultaneously and consecutively and their responses to ethical questions, and which ranks them into three different tiers of qualification.

Certified (Tier 1): Diploma of Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) (English law option) [based on a nine month course], or its predecessor Certificate in Community Interpreting (CCI), or a post-1997 Metropolitan Police Test and an Honours degree or higher in interpreting, or membership of the National Register of Public Service Interpreters NRPSI (full or interim); Association of Police and Court Interpreters, or Institute of Translation and Interpreting (Police Court Interpreter level).

Conditionally Approved (Tier 2): Partial DPSI (meaning that they passed the spoken elements of the DPSI), a degree in linguistics or a similar language related qualification, or full or partial DPSI (Health or Local Government option), as well as previous or current employment in the criminal justice system, legal training, or "other exposure to criminal justice work" such as involvement in victim support, and a University degree in any subject.

Otherwise Qualified (Tier 3): Demonstrable experience in the public sector with appropriate linguistic background or formalized basic interpreter training.

In addition, at Tiers 1 and 2, the interpreter must have 100 hours of public sector interpreting experience; this is "desirable" for Tier 3. They must also supply references and pass the assessment at the appropriate level.

ALS has stated that it will book any interpreter for a tribunal hearing unless the Tribunal specifies that a Tier 1 or Tier 2 interpreter is required for the specific case.

There have been many objections raised against the new tiered system in Great Britain. Detractors claim that there has been a significant lowering of the standards required for court interpreting. For example, they claim that the new Tier 1, the highest tier, requires only the previous minimum standards; that the Tier 2 interpreters would not have qualified previously for criminal justice interpreting; and that no formal interpreting qualifications are required to work at the Tier 3 level. (Interpreting and Translation Services and the Applied Language Solutions Contract: Sixth Report of Session 2012-13)

A very detailed study of court interpreter systems in European Union countries is found in [Assessing Legal Interpreter Quality through Testing and Certification](#) (Cynthia Giambruno, editor. pp. 149-190). What emerges from this study is that there are a variety of systems in use, many of them non-tiered.

- Some countries have no certification program or other qualification procedures and, therefore, no tiered system (e.g. Cyprus).
- Some countries have two tiers, but they are based on academic qualifications rather than certification (e.g. Denmark, where State-Authorized Interpreters hold a master's degree in Translation and Interpreting or a Certificate in Interpreting, while non-State-Authorized Interpreters either hold a master's degree or a first level university degree in Philology or are native speakers of a language other than Danish who can prove their competency in Danish).
- Some countries have two tiers based on the presence or absence of an examination (e.g. Germany has Officially Authorized Interpreters who pass a translation exam or hold certification from another country, but also uses interpreters who do not have this qualification if no exam exists for that language).
- Finally, some countries have a clear-cut certification procedure, generally involving an exam, and only use certified interpreters in their courtrooms (e.g. Austria).

7. Conclusion

The best practice involves a jurisdiction having a compulsory certification exam and using only those interpreters who pass it. However, this seems like a pipe dream in most states and countries since the demand for court interpreters greatly outstrips the supply of qualified interpreters. If only certified court interpreters were used, many proceedings would have to be delayed or even cancelled for lack of an interpreter.

In fact, that situation arose in Ontario when a new certification exam was imposed in 2009. Despite the establishment of two tiers (Accredited Interpreters and Conditionally Accredited Interpreters – see section 6 above), the number of interpreters who passed the exam or even obtained borderline scores was so small that the judicial system was practically thrown into chaos. As one 2011 newspaper article said (Peter Small, “Court Interpreter Shortage Nears Crisis”, theStar.com):

A judge in Scarborough throws out a drunk-driving case due to delays in finding a Tamil interpreter.

An assault conviction is tossed aside in Brampton because of incompetent Punjabi translation.

A judge in downtown Toronto declares a murder mistrial for lack of an interpreter in Oromo, an African language.

Across Greater Toronto, justice is under threat from a lack of accredited court interpreters.

While a tiered system such as Ontario’s does allow for the use of conditionally approved interpreters, therefor relieving some of the pressure on the judicial system, the fact remains that many lawyers are reluctant to trust these second tier interpreters. Louis Strezos, a defense lawyer and the secretary of the Criminal Lawyers Association, said in 2010 that, while some cases were employing conditionally accredited interpreters, he was not surprised that some defense lawyers were challenging their use. "For myself, I would be remiss to go with a partially-accredited interpreter, because I don't have any way of knowing the accuracy of the translation," he told CTV.ca. "I need to know that my questions are being properly asked and answered."

While there is no doubt that interpreters in lower tiers are not as qualified as certified interpreters, surely attorneys and judges do not want to go back to the days when all interpreters were considered equal (equally good or equally bad) for lack of testing to distinguish among the various skill levels. A certification exam makes it possible to identify different skill levels and a tiered system allows courts to continue functioning with less qualified interpreters (who are often the same interpreters they used before the certification testing began!)

What is necessary, but is often lacking in existing tiered systems, are modalities for moving up from lower tiers to upper tiers and time limits for doing so. This would imply development of more certification examinations in more languages as well as training and mentoring for interpreters in the lower tiers. This in turn would require funding that many jurisdictions do not have available. But the fact that much progress has been made in court interpreter certification and systems between 2007 and 2014 gives some hope that further improvements will be introduced in the next seven years.

References

ALTA Language Services, Inc. Study of California’s Court Interpreter Certification and Registration. Report produced for the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts. 2007. <http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/altafinalreport.pdf>. Last accessed on September 21, 2014.

Giambruno, Cynthia (Ed.), Assessing Legal Interpreter Quality through Testing and Certification: the Qualitas Project. Alicante: University of Alacant/Alicante Publications, 2014.

Interpreting and Translation Services and the Applied Language Solutions Contract: Sixth Report of Session 2012-13, Vol. 1. Great Britain: Parliament: House of Commons: Justice Committee, The Stationery Office, 2013.

Mulholland, Angela, “Justice in Ontario getting lost in translation”, CTV News, October 24, 2010 <http://www.ctvnews.ca/justice-in-ontario-getting-lost-in-translation-1.565900#ixzz3DnUXflgK>. Last accessed on September 21, 2014.

Pennsylvania United Judicial System. Administrative regulations governing court interpreters for persons with limited English proficiency and for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. 2010. <http://www.pacourts.us/assets/files/setting-2936/file-231.pdf?cb=983fe>. Last accessed on September 21, 2014.

Ryan, Camille. Language Use in the United States: 2011. American Community Survey Reports. 2013 <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-22.pdf>. Last accessed on September 21, 2014.

Small, Peter, “Court Interpreter Shortage Nears Crisis”, theStar.com, 2011/01/28 http://www.thestar.com/news/crime/2011/01/28/court_interpreter_shortage_nears_crisis.html. Last accessed on September 21, 2014.

WASCLA Interpreter and Translator Directory Discussion. www.wascla.org/library/attachment.202789. Last accessed on September 21, 2014.

ALS written guidance states that in the case of 'rare languages' where DPSI is not available, ALS requires interpreters to have the Cambridge Proficiency in English Certificate or NRPSI registration.

Although Alaska calls this tier “Registered”, the term is not used in the sense adopted here.

The Consortium test for some languages only has one part. It is considered “abbreviated”. Here the indication is that in the abbreviated Consortium test, which contains Simultaneous, 70% is required.

The designations for the different tiers or categories have not been changed in this diagram to conform with the terminology we have normally used in this paper. This is because of the complexity of the system.

WASCLA is the acronym for The Washington State Coalition for Language Access, an organization consisting of legal professionals, advocates, law enforcement personnel, interpreters/translators, educators, service providers, and community advocates who are dedicated to assisting state and local agencies within the State of Washington to understand and comply with their obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has a Language Testing and Certification program, which has developed tests to measure English language proficiency, proficiency in eight foreign language and translation/interpretation skills. Five types of tests were created to evaluate the skills of five categories of people: DSHS employees with bilingual assignments, licensed agency personnel whose agency provides services to DSHS under contract (such as mental health and substance abuse program workers), contracted translators providing written translation services to DSHS programs, contracted interpreters providing oral interpretation services to DSHS social service programs, and contracted interpreters providing oral interpretation services to DSHS clients in medical settings.

There is a Test for DSHS Social Service Interpreters and a separate test for medical interpreters.

Cf. STATE OF WASHINGTON Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Professional Language Certification Examination Manual Updated: November 2007, Division of Administrative Services, Language Testing and Certification (LTC)

In our discussion of various jurisdictions in the following sections, we will use two sets of designations for the tiers, where necessary. We have analyzed the various tiers proposed, regardless of their names, and then presented them first using a uniform terminology as indicated above. However, the uniform terms are followed in parentheses by the terms used by the given jurisdiction, if they are different.

[Dr. Roda P. Roberts is a retired Professor of Translation, who has taught translation, interpreting and writing skills at several universities in Canada, the US and India. She has also been a practicing translator and interpreter. She has served as training consultant to several government agencies and university departments and has helped set up testing/certification programs in both court and community interpreting.]

As The Old Saying Goes



By Leonor Valderrama de Sillers

As I was growing up in Colombia, I was always aware of the numerous proverbs and sayings that were incorporated into our daily lives. It seemed like older people, in particular, spoke in proverbs all the time. My mother's day would begin with: *A quien madruga Dios le ayuda* ("The early bird gets the worm,") which was her way of exhorting my sister and me to get up and start the day. *El que quiere celeste que le cueste* ("Nothing ventured, nothing gained") was her answer every time we wanted something, but complained about the difficulty in obtaining it. In addition, we could never complain about a gift we had received, as she always replied: *A caballo regalado no se le mira el colmillo* ("Never look a gift horse in the mouth.") She had a proverb for every daily event and so did many others. We lived in a "sea" of proverbs. At school, for example, the nuns would impart their wisdom with sayings that they felt would enhance our scholastic, cultural and religious education. Admonishing us to be quiet, they would say: *En boca cerrada no entra mosca* ("Silence is golden,") or *El que mucho habla, mucho yerra* ("The less said, the better.") We were encouraged not to be idle with: *El tiempo perdido los Santos lo lloran* ("Time is precious") These sayings made up a great deal of everyday speech. They were so prevalent that I didn't think of many of them as specific expressions, but rather as just a natural part of communication.

When I came to the United States and began to learn English, I realized that there was a universal component to sayings and proverbs. *No ensillar antes de traer las bestias*, for example, has its English counterpart in: "Don't put the cart before the horse." The saying *Más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando*, translates into English as: "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" and *El que con lobos anda a aullar aprende* is: "If you lie down with dogs, you get up with fleas." In both Spanish and English, the proverbs use the same basic reference, but they are adapted to fit the rhythm, rhyme and alliteration of the particular language.

When I entered the profession of court interpretation, I became more aware of the prevalence of proverbs used to express a wide range of concepts. I heard attorneys make comments like, "Birds of a feather flock together" (*Dios los cria y ellos se juntan*); and "Where there is smoke there is fire" (*Cuando el río suena, piedras lleva*). On the other hand, Spanish speaking clients said things like: *El que no llora no mama* (The squeaky wheel gets the grease) and : *A lo hecho, pecho* ("There's no use crying over spilled milk.") This added to the already difficult task of accurate interpretation. I learned very quickly, how critical it was for me to become familiar with a number of, proverbs, idioms and expressions, in both languages.

As a starting point, I began with the premise that, "In order to render a complete and accurate version of the SL message, the interpreter must conserve every single element of information that was contained in the original source language (SL) message," (González, Vásquez and Mikkelsen, 476). This is, in fact, required by the "Code of Professional Responsibility for Court Interpreters in the Minnesota State Court System." When dealing with proverbs, idioms and expressions, the difficulty in complying with the obligation to ensure completeness and accuracy is compounded by the language and culturally specific metaphors that are the essence of many proverbs, idioms and expressions. This makes it all but impossible to transfer them, in verbatim form, from the source language, into the target language.

There are certain aspects of languages that are almost universal, such as the fact that most languages are based on sound. All are structured to communicate the speaker's point of view and the words themselves are organized in a way that expresses their meaning. The learning of words is not the learning of a language. While words are definitely a part of a language, it is their

combination with other words, in grammatical structure and “shades of meaning”, that convey ideas. In this sense, proverbs, idioms and expressions are as much a part of a language as are the individual words and structures. In her book ¡Se dice pronto! María Leonisa Casado Conde says, “*Dominar una lengua implica no solo manejar con habilidad los mecanismos de funcionamiento de la misma, sino también conocer el hecho diferencial, las variantes de índole cultural que conforman una determinada realidad.*” (9) (Command of a language implies not only the skillful handling of its mechanics, but also knowing the differences in meaning, the cultural and sociological variations that defines with a given reality) [Author’s translation].

Because the human experience is similar the world over, and because languages and cultures have always borrowed from one another, many proverbs, idioms and expressions have equivalents in several languages. It is essential for the interpreter to “build a store house of equivalents” (González et al, 245), upon which he can call instantly. For example, upon hearing the English expression: “You are between a rock and a hard place,” the interpreter should react instantly to convert the phrase into its Spanish equivalent: *Está entre la espada y la pared* (“You are between the sword and the wall”). Although it sounds poetic, this literal translation is not a familiar saying in English and would be an incorrect interpretation. At the same time, there are proverbs, idioms and expressions which do not have a true equivalent in the target language because they have developed in a culturally or geographically isolated way and are specific only to the context in which they were created. For example, the Spanish proverb *Tanto va el cántaro al agua que por fin se rompe* (“The jug goes for water so often that it finally breaks”), from Don Quixote, has no real equivalent in English. In order to maintain the obligation to strive for completeness and accuracy, therefore, the interpreter must be able to express a similar concept concisely, without entering into an explanation; in this case, an appropriate choice would be the English expression: “Don’t press your luck.”

A proverb, as Luis Alberto Acuña says in his book Refranero Colombiano Mil y un refranes, “*...tuvo por padre al pueblo, por madre a la experiencia... amigo es de todos, pero muy particularmente de los viejos...*” (9-10). (... the father of the proverb was the people, and its mother, experience... it is a friend of all but particularly the old.) [Author’s translation].

Proverbs come to us from innumerable sources. Many have their origins in the agricultural life of times past when animals, weather and crops dominated everyday life. The expression *Entre ecuestre y pedestre* (“He doesn’t know if he is afoot or on horseback”), for example, was used when people traveled by horse. Over time, this expression has come to signify someone who is confused, or doesn’t know what to do: (“He doesn't know if he's coming or going.”). Others have their origins in religion. The Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament's Book of Matthew includes the teachings of Jesus in the form of proverbs. One of the more familiar proverbs in the Sermon is, “Judge not that ye be not judged” (*No juzguéis para que no seáis juzgado*) (Matthew 7: 1-3). They are still popular sayings and proverbs today, even though some have been slightly changed over the years. In his Dictionary of 1000 Proverbs, Peter Mertvago also points out that there are Arabic, Roman and Christian influences in Spanish proverbs and sayings (8). This, he says, may be due to their collection by monks in the Middle Ages and their use in the moral education of youth.

Proverbs, idioms and expressions change with time, like everything else. They evolve, develop and mutate to fit the context in which they are used. They are also created constantly using new metaphors that are apt to the times. “You can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear” had literal currency in a bygone time when most people knew what a sow was and understood the difference between the smoothness of silk and the rough texture of this part of the pig. Today, even though it enjoys frequent use, many repeat this proverb without any notion of the meaning of this reference. A more modern proverb from the 1940s is attributed to the plain-spoken President Harry S Truman who, when speaking of being able to put up with stress and pressure, said: “If you can’t stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.” The uncomfortable nature of the hot kitchen is not in itself a modern reference, as hot kitchens have existed for centuries. To apply, however, the metaphor of a hot kitchen to the very contemporary context of pressure and stress creates a present-day proverb. The Colombian humorist Daniel Samper Pizano, in his column “*Postre de notas*” (Carrusel 2003), says that proverbs urgently need to be revised because they are full of agricultural and craft references that only historians understand. To this end he offers a series of modern day proverbs, which, although written somewhat in jest could be future “old sayings.” For example: *Si te hacen el atraco, no pelees con el caco* (“When you are mugged, don’t fight with the thug”) or *Un potrero y balón, son la mejor religión* (“An open field and a ball are the best religion of all.”) He has taken a reality of every day life, created a simple rhyme and makes it memorable by the truth it expresses.

No doubt many of the “old sayings” we use today began in just this way.

Given the varied origins of proverbs, idioms and expressions, it is incumbent upon the interpreter to constantly acquire information relative to the culture of the languages in which he or she works. From the perspective of learning a language, proverbs, idioms and expressions are essential to truly mastering any language. Both reflect culture and people’s attitude towards daily life. “Proverbs encapsulate popular wisdom” (Pérez, Sala and Santamaría, 290). Some are nearly identical in their translations. For instance, the equivalent in Spanish of the English proverb: "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush", is: *Más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando*. A direct translation into English is: "A bird in the hand is better than a hundred flying." In Arabic, the same proverb becomes: "A bird in your hand is better than ten in a tree." The same idea in Somali is expressed as: "If you have fruit in your hand you don't have to pick the one in the tree." My sources for these sayings, Mrs. Nazdar Hassan (Arabic) and Mr. Sakawdin Mohamed (Somali), report the constant use of proverbs in their respective languages and that children are taught in their native countries with the use of proverbs. Both commented that proverbs are known as “old people’s sayings.” This is consistent with my own experience, as I often preface a proverb by saying: “as my mother says...” and in English one hears frequently: “as the old saying goes...”. This is an empirical indication that proverbs idioms and expressions are such an important part of language and cultural communication that we identify them as being part of our heritage even as we use them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acuña, Luis Alberto. Refranero colombiano. Mil y un refranes. Bogotá, Colombia: Tres Culturas Editores., 1989.

Casado Conde, María Leonisa. Se dice pronto. Madrid, España: Ediciones Internacionales Universitarias, S.A., 2002.

González, Rosean Dueñas, Victoria E. Vásquez, Holly Mikkelson. Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy and Practice. Durham, NC., Caroline Academic Press, 1991.

Mertvago, Peter, Dictionary of 1000 Proverbs. New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1996.

Pérez, Ángeles, Rafael Sala, Manuel Santamaría. Cassell’s Contemporary Spanish. New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993.

Samper Pizano, Daniel. “Nuevos refranes para nuevos manes.” Carrusel January 30, 2003. El Tiempo, Bogotá, Colombia. 30 January, 2003.

<http://eltiempo.terra.com.co/proyectos/humor/nevosrefranesparanue...>

[Leonor Valderrama de Sillers is a native of Colombia, South America. She is a Minnesota Certified Court Interpreter, holds a Masters Degree in Liberal Arts/Hispanic Studies and is an Associate Professor at Concordia College, Moorhead, MN. For the past twenty-eight years she has taught Advanced Grammar, Introduction to Translation, Spanish for Health Professions and Latin American Culture. She was an original member of the Minnesota Supreme Court Interpreter Advisory Committee, and a lead faculty member for the MN Supreme Court Interpreter Training Program. Leonor is the owner of International Translation Service and the author of "Proverbs, Idioms and Expressions A Guide for Interpreters and Translators".]

Message From The Chair



My dear colleagues,

As I write this message to you, I sit at home, finally enjoying a few days back in the Monterey Peninsula, instead of going through the hustle and bustle of airports, cabs and other assorted modes of transportation. Although traveling is one of my passions, it is also good to be back home for the holidays. I trust that all of you are enjoying a respite from your daily interpreting and translation activities, and spending time with friends and loved ones during this holiday season.

The end of the year is often a time for taking stock and pondering on things to come. Looking back on some of the events of 2014 and thinking about the days I've shared with my dear colleagues, one of the things that stands out the most in my mind is the growing spirit of collaboration among like-minded professionals. Nowhere is this more manifest than in the continuing education events and conferences we all attend each year. However, this year has brought us even closer than ever to other organizations. This is happening via concerted efforts from our Boards to work together for the good of our profession. In addition to our very own event in Las Vegas this year, another important event where meetings took place to foster this kind of collaboration was this year's ATA annual conference in Chicago. I attended on behalf of NAJIT and left feeling elated about the conversations I had with many of our NAJIT members. The excitement in the air was palpable, as we made our way through meeting areas, and as we listened to the inspiring presentations put together by caring professionals eager to share their knowledge and experience with fellow interpreters and translators. Our participation in this remarkable conference was made possible through a reciprocity established with our sister organization. The American Translators Association provided us with an exhibitor's space free of charge so that we could offer information about NAJIT to our current and prospective members. We in turn will provide ATA with an exhibitor's space during our annual conference in May, so that they can do the same for their members.

I am happy to note that in 2015, the partnership between our associations will continue to grow —and will seek to include other sister organizations as well. During one of the meetings I attended as NAJIT's representative, we explored additional possibilities for collaboration. The National Interpreter Associations Coalition (NIAC) is made up of several associations with a shared interest in the professionalization of interpretation. The representatives of each association meet once a month via conference call, and once a year in person, during ATA's conference.

We report back to our boards and we stay in touch with each other about our respective association's activities. Our organizations include the full gamut of interpreting specialties. Can you imagine what we could accomplish if we were to come to the table every so often to discuss the issues we have in common? In our meetings going forward, we intend to do just that. We have decided that we don't need to wait until the next national event to find out what our fellow professionals are accomplishing in other parts of the country (or the world). We can use technology and human ingenuity to create new lines of communication with our brilliant colleagues, so that we can keep fostering a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect.

NAJIT and SSTI participated in the Translation and Interpreting Summit Advisory Council (TISAC) at the beginning of the conference week in Chicago. This dynamic group consists of twenty two members (<http://www.tisac.org/>). Its latest member, the International Medical Interpreters Association (IMIA), was just accepted into the council during our last gathering. One of TISAC's main objectives is to strengthen the T&I community across various government, education, and industry sectors. NAJIT sees this meeting as yet another opportunity to be proactive in all interpreting and translation matters. However, one important difference is that in addition to the dialogue taking place within our profession, we are now part of the conversation involving other language professionals and industry stakeholders. For years, we have focused inward. Perhaps it is now time to look outward.

Although seven months sounds like a long time, I feel like I am barely getting my bearings. Our own conference, however, is right around the corner, and time is of the essence. As you probably already know, the next one is in Atlanta, GA. Thus, we are currently working very closely with the Atlanta Association of Interpreters and Translators (AAIT), and our fellow interpreters and translators in the area. We intend to make NAJIT's 36th Annual Conference the best conference ever! Our wonderful Conference Committee is hard at work already, making preparations for our gathering in May 15-17, 2015.

In addition to working with other translation and interpreting groups and planning our yearly event, we are hard at work creating NAJIT's very own Mentoring Program. This program will provide guidance for newly-certified interpreters, or for interpreters pursuing certification. Mentoring will be done in person or over the internet. Our Mentors will be NAJIT members in good standing who can volunteer a minimum of two hours per month, for a period of six months. The Mentees will be paired up with Mentors according to the Mentees' needs. NAJIT's Mentoring Program will be open to as many language combinations as we can accommodate, but it can also be conducted in a non-language specific format. This unique opportunity will offer interpreters new to our field a great advantage, since they will have the benefit of communicating with an experienced court interpreter and receiving guidance with their transition period or preparation efforts.

As I travel for my own practice, I speak with many colleagues in the U.S. and abroad, and I get the distinct feeling that we are working together in ways we have never done before. In my first year as NAJIT Chair, I have seen the T&I community come together swiftly and decisively to tackle some of the problems which currently affect us all. This is a great thing to behold. NAJIT looks forward to the journey ahead, and I look forward to the challenge. Thank you for your trust in me.

Here's wishing you all a joyful, healthy and prosperous 2015!

NAJIT at the ATA Conference

NAJIT made its presence known at the ATA's 55th Annual Conference in Chicago. Our Chairperson Esther Navarro-Hall and Board Directors Melinda González-Hibner and Claudia E. Villalba had the opportunity to network, share NAJIT's mission with attendees, meet and greet members in person and make new friends. Interpreters and translators in all fields of expertise, diverse language combinations from the US and other countries including Germany, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina and others, came to our booth to learn more about NAJIT. The NAJIT Board of Directors thanks members who volunteered their time at our table in the exhibitor's hall: Gladys Matthews from Indiana, Maria Teresa Pérez, New Jersey; Linda Anne Dulap, A.T.I.F. president from Miami, Florida; Nitaya Jandragholica, Minnesota; Georganne Weller from Mexico and Amine El Fajri, Arabic/French interpreter from San Diego, CA.

- Claudia Villalba, NAJIT Secretary



Our NAJIT Secretary, Claudia Villalba, at the NAJIT table



Our NAJIT Chairperson, Esther Navarro-Hall, at the NAJIT table



Claudia Villalba and NAJIT member, Gladys Matthews



NAJIT member, Linda Dunlap, at the NAJIT table



Claudia and NAJIT member, Maria Teresa Pérez



Claudia and NAJIT member, Lorena Pike

How I Handled It

NEW COLUMN IN PROTEUS!

Because we learn from each other, "Proteus" is adding a new regular feature, "How I Handled It", and we invite you to submit your suggestions as to how you dealt with problematic situations at work. Please send your submissions to: editor@najit.org.

This morning I had a rather unusual and uncomfortable request.

At the psychiatric hospital, while waiting for the commitment hearings scheduled with an interpreter, the public defender's supervisor requested to get the interpreters out of the hearing room while other cases were done citing privacy rights.

The coordinator asked me if I could wait outside and I complied and left the hearing room. I found another interpreter in the corridor waiting as she had not been allowed to come inside the room. She was very uneasy as there was a lot of turmoil in the corridor; an unruly patient was screaming and kicking doors and there was quite a bit of tension in the air. The other interpreter was nervous since she was struck in the past, in the back of her head, in another psychiatric hospital. As they opened the door to call in the next patient, I went in the room and talked to the judge (she is a wonderful lady) and expressed to her my concern that we were not being offered any protection due to the Public Defender's supervisor demand, and that as officers of the court we should be afforded the same protection given to all involved in these proceedings.

The judge understood my concern and immediately told me to come and sit inside and to also call the other interpreter to come in.

If privacy rights are the issue, then every doctor, attorney, public defender and prosecutor should also wait outside in the corridor until their clients' turn. As interpreters we are bound by our code and should not be exposed to unnecessary risks. This is an environment full of mentally ill people and we should not be exposed alone in the corridors.

UPDATE:

I spoke today with the Interpreters Supervisor and sent her a letter with an account of yesterday's incident; she will escalate the issue in the NJAOC. Her take is that we are officers of the court and should never be left exposed to danger.

To all of you doing assignments in the Psychiatric hospitals, prisons, or any other setting outside the courthouse, demand that protection be given to you.

(Reprinted from Certified Court Interpreters Forum by permission of the author.)

[A native of Colombia, Angela Patricia Pedraza has been working as an interpreter and translator since 1993. Not only was she educated in English and Spanish, earning her bachelors' degree in Colombia and her master's degree in the United States, but she also spent eight years living and working as a conference interpreter in Brazil. This trilingual globe-trotter is a Certified Medical Interpreter, and a NJ AOC Approved and PA Certified Court Interpreter. Certified in translation as well, she belongs to the Delaware Valley Translators Association and is a voting member of the American Translator's Association.]

Links of Interest

THE PROFESSION

[NAJIT blog](#)

[Security for court interpreters](#)

[Courts may require use of interpreter in taking of testimony](#)

[Interpreter challenges](#)

RESOURCES

[Modern acronyms](#)

[More effective Google searches](#)

[Effective use of microphones at meetings](#)

LANGUAGE

[Tricky English pronouns](#)

[Resource for Spanish grammar, vocabulary](#)

[Language extinction](#)

GENERAL INTEREST

[Toronto non-profit language service](#)

[Public speaking tips](#)

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING

[Benefits of using a Certified Deaf Interpreter](#)

[Advice for sign language interpreters \(and others\)](#)

BUSINESS

[Tips for the self-employed](#)

VIDEO LINKS:

[Wukchumni dictionary created by last fluent speaker](#)

[Sign language "cover" for "You're the One that I Want"](#). Caution: do not try this at home. Or in your car.

Notable Quotables

“The ability to speak several languages is an asset, but the ability to keep your mouth shut in any language is priceless.”

---Anonymous

"Let no feeling of discouragement prey upon you, and in the end you are sure to succeed."

---Abraham Lincoln



For Better or Verse

The Interpreter's Office

There's an office up on the second floor. The chair's right there next to the door.
It is a place where you can hang your hat, and everyone knows where you're at.

There's a south window - top to bottom, venetian blinds, it's good you've got 'em,
'Cause summer and winter around eleven, the sun shines in, and it's not heaven.

There are two phones, quite high-tech, PC and keyboard where you hunt 'n peck.
The printer's to the left just like a loner. Below the desk there's some extra toner.

The shelf above holds your dictionaries, dust, laser paper and vocabularies.
Then comes a row of three ring binders, a home-made shelf, junk and reminders.

Off to the right, a large and small table where you do some work if you're not able
To use the desk that's covered and strewn with stuff you need morn and afternoon.

Folders marked by month, full of cases, lined up on the floor and in other places,
Boxes of paper stacked behind the chair, but you can reach it all without despair.

The four walls, though dull, are replete with your family's photos that complete
The look and feel that give you cheer and make you believe that you belong here.

This is the place you go every day, to interpret for the courts and earn your pay.
Some might say it is small and crowded, but you're just glad you are allowed it.

--Douglas Hal Sillers

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

The Last Laugh

Interpreter film parodies

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?ca=3d458f5e-1ae9-4236-8be0-81647b5c6865&c=c5793bc0-36a4-11e3-a568-d4ae52754b78&ch=c67acd40-36a4-11e3-a6a5-d4ae52754b78>

What might happen when the interpreter knows the witness a little too well.

<http://appellatesquawk.wordpress.com/2013/05/31/the-court-interpreter-knows-the-witness-no-problem/>

The article above mentions one of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, "The Greek Interpreter." A must read for interpreters, as it poses an interesting ethics situation. Here is a link to the story: <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/40/the-memoirs-of-sherlock-holmes/581/adventure-9-the-greek-interpreter/>

Not that we advocate violence but...



[Return to the 2014 Fall/ 2015 Winter issue of *Proteus*](#)

