

PROTEUS

Special Edition | Winter 2025



Shaping the Legacy of Judiciary Interpreting & Translation

Letter from the Editor

As we turn the page to a new and exciting chapter in *Proteus*' journey, I'm honored to welcome you to this special edition—one that reflects not only how far we've come, but also where we're headed as a profession and community.

Since its inception, *Proteus* has grown into a platform that amplifies the voices of judiciary interpreters and translators. It has served as a space to exchange ideas, navigate challenges, and celebrate our shared commitment to language access. With every issue, our contributors have offered insights, sparked conversation, and inspired action.

This edition holds particular significance: it marks our shift from a quarterly newsletter to a more dynamic, flexible magazine format—curated with your interests in mind. Inside, you'll find reflections on the evolution of NAJIT, research on police interpreting and language access, updates on policy and advocacy, insights on professional development, and stories that capture the challenges and progress shaping the future of judiciary interpreting and translation.

Thank you to our contributors for lending your time, insight, and passion to this issue. And to our readers—your engagement fuels everything we do. Together, we ensure that *Proteus* remains a space where history, advocacy, and innovation meet.

We hope these pages honor our past, reflect the richness of our present, and spark new ideas for what's possible.

With gratitude,

Julli Jaramillo
Editor-in-Chief, *Proteus*



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Julli Jaramillo

Publishing Coordinator & Editor-in-Chief for NAJIT

Introduction:

The history of judiciary interpreting and translation in the United States is one of resilience, advocacy, and progress. From the early struggles of court interpreters and legal translators to the professionalization of the field, the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) has played a pivotal role in shaping the profession. As we reflect on NAJIT’s origins, its present-day impact, and its future direction, it is essential to recognize the organization’s commitment to education, ethics, and advocacy.



The Past: Laying the Foundation

NAJIT’s roots trace back to the late 1970s, when a group of interpreters and translators in New York recognized the dire need for professional standards in the legal language field. Originally founded as the Court Interpreters and Translators Association (CITA) in 1978, NAJIT emerged from a necessity to establish legitimacy in a field that was, at the time, underappreciated and underregulated. As one of the founders, Dena Kohn, recalled:

“There was no organization, nothing, for the court interpreters, there was zero.”

By 1981, CITA had begun publishing its first membership directories and organizing ethics symposia. One of its first major publications, *The Judicial Community Looks at Court Interpreting: Four Viewpoints* (1983), set the stage for a standardized approach to ethics and professional conduct in the field. These early efforts underscored the necessity of a structured, unified body advocating for judiciary interpreters and translators across the United States.

“Judiciary interpreters and translators remain indispensable to the legal system.”

The Present:

Today, NAJIT stands as a leading force in the professionalization of judiciary interpreting and legal translation. The organization has expanded its reach beyond New York, conducting nationwide conferences, publishing research-driven articles in *Proteus*, and influencing policy through advocacy efforts. NAJIT’s commitment to training and certification has had a lasting impact, to improve judiciary interpreter and translator standards at the state and federal levels. NAJIT has played a significant role in the development of court interpreter and translator certification exams, ensuring that professionals possess the necessary skills for high-stakes legal proceedings. Additionally, the organization has strengthened its relationships with legal professionals, working closely with judges, attorneys, and policymakers to enhance language access in the judiciary field.



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The Future: Embracing Innovation and Overcoming Challenges

As NAJIT moves into the future, the field of judiciary interpreting and translation faces new challenges and opportunities. Technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine-assisted translation, are reshaping the profession. While AI offers tools that can assist interpreters and translators, NAJIT continues to advocate for human expertise as the gold standard in legal settings. Ethical considerations surrounding AI, machine translation, and confidentiality will be central to future discussions.

Additionally, the need for continued advocacy remains critical. Language access policies must be upheld and expanded to ensure that all individuals, regardless of linguistic background, receive fair representation in the legal system. NAJIT’s role in pushing for legislative support and professional recognition will be essential in addressing these ongoing issues.

Conclusion:

NAJIT’s journey—from its origins as CITA to its present status as a cornerstone of the judiciary interpreting and translation profession—demonstrates the power of collective advocacy and professional dedication. By preserving its core values of education, ethics, and advocacy, NAJIT will continue to be a driving force in the evolution of judiciary language services. The next generation of interpreters and translators will inherit not only the achievements of the past but also the responsibility to innovate and advocate for the future.

As we look ahead, the profession must embrace new technologies while maintaining the human element that is vital in the administration of justice. NAJIT’s past has shaped its present, and its present will undoubtedly influence the future—ensuring that judiciary interpreters and translators remain indispensable to the legal system.



End Notes:

1. Janis Palma, *NAJIT: The First Forty Years* (Atlanta, GA: National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, 2019), accessed [Jan 6, 2025], [NAJIT: The First Forty Years](#).



Julli Jaramillo is the Publishing Coordinator of *The NAJIT Observer*, NAJIT’s blog, and Editor-in-Chief of *Proteus*, NAJIT’s magazine. She holds a Master’s in Translation from NYU and a double major in Politics and Hispanic Studies from Oberlin College. With a background in language, law, and public policy, Julli is committed to curating content that elevates critical conversations and highlights the diverse experiences of judiciary interpreters and translators.

NAVIGATING LANGUAGE ACCESS IN CHANGING TIMES: UPHOLDING CIVIL RIGHTS AMID POLICY SHIFTS

By Carol Velandia

Navigating Language Access in Changing Times: Upholding Civil Rights Amid Policy Shifts

As interpreters and translators in the medical, legal, and educational fields, your role is indispensable in bridging communication gaps and ensuring equitable access to essential services for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). Recent policy shifts, notably Executive Order 14224, have significant implications for language access in the United States. Let's explore what language access entails, its importance, the legal frameworks that have supported it, and how these changes may affect LEP individuals and the vital work you do.



What Is Language Access?

Language access refers to the provision of services that enable LEP individuals to communicate effectively with public service providers. This includes interpretation (oral communication) and translation (written communication) services in settings such as healthcare, education, legal proceedings, and social services. The goal is to ensure that language barriers do not prevent individuals from receiving necessary information and services.

Why Is Language Access Important?

Effective communication is fundamental to accessing critical services. Without language access, LEP individuals may face challenges such as misdiagnoses in healthcare, unjust legal outcomes, and educational disparities. Ensuring language access promotes equity, dignity, and respect for all individuals, regardless of their linguistic background. American Translators Association (ATA).

Language Access as a Civil Right

Language access has been recognized as a civil right under various federal laws and policies. Discrimination based on national origin, which encompasses language, is prohibited, ensuring that LEP individuals have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from public services.

Legal Protections for Language Access

Several key legal frameworks have historically supported language access:

- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:** Prohibits discrimination based on national origin by recipients of federal financial assistance, which has been interpreted to require meaningful access for LEP individuals.
- **Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA):** Mandates that no state shall deny equal educational opportunity by failing to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by students. This act underscores the obligation of educational institutions to address language barriers, ensuring that LEP students receive equitable educational opportunities.
- **Lau v. Nichols (1974):** A landmark Supreme Court case where the Court ruled that the failure to provide English language instruction to non-English-speaking students violated the Civil Rights Act, emphasizing the need for language services in education.

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NAVIGATING LANGUAGE ACCESS IN CHANGING TIMES: UPHOLDING CIVIL RIGHTS AMID POLICY SHIFTS

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Legal Protections for Language Access - *continued*

Several key legal frameworks have historically supported language access:

- **Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA):** This section prohibits discrimination in healthcare programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. It requires covered entities to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to individuals with LEP, including offering free and timely language assistance services such as qualified interpreters and translated materials. Covered entities are also required to post notices of individuals' rights and the availability of language assistance services.

Changes Under Executive Order 14224

On March 1, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14224, declaring English as the official language of the United States and revoking Executive Order 13166. This shift has significant implications:

- **Federal Agencies' Discretion:** While the order does not mandate the elimination of language access programs, it grants federal agencies greater discretion in deciding how and when to provide language services. Agencies may choose to maintain, reduce, or eliminate existing language access policies.
- **Impact on LEP Individuals:** This increased discretion may lead to inconsistent language access services across agencies, potentially hindering LEP individuals' ability to access critical information and services.

“Effective communication is fundamental to accessing critical services.”

Language Access in Education and Court Hearings

Despite changes at the federal executive level, certain legal obligations remain:

- **Education:** The EEOA continues to require educational institutions to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers, ensuring that LEP students can participate meaningfully in educational programs.
- **Court Hearings:** Many state court systems are committed to providing language services. For instance, the Maryland Judiciary offers court interpreters for litigants and witnesses in civil, criminal, and juvenile proceedings, funded by the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The Vital Role of Interpreters and Translators

As professionals dedicated to facilitating communication, your role is more critical than ever. You ensure that LEP individuals can:

- **Access Essential Services:** By providing accurate interpretation and translation, you help individuals navigate healthcare, legal systems, and educational institutions.
- **Exercise Their Rights:** Your work empowers LEP individuals to understand and assert their rights, promoting fairness and equity. Feel free to inform the LEP, in their language, that they have a right to language access!
- **Bridge Cultural Divides:** Beyond language, you help bridge cultural gaps, fostering understanding and inclusivity in diverse communities.

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NAVIGATING LANGUAGE ACCESS IN CHANGING TIMES: UPHOLDING CIVIL RIGHTS AMID POLICY SHIFTS

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Moving Forward

In light of Executive Order 14224, it is imperative to:

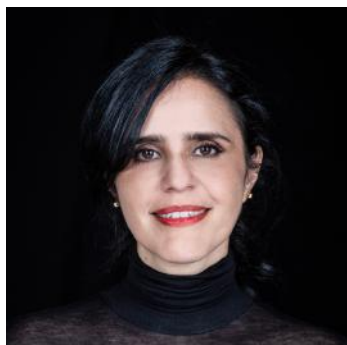
- **Stay Informed:** Keep abreast of changes in language access policies at federal, state, and local levels.
- **Advocate for LEP Communities:** Engage with professional associations and community organizations that advocate for consistent and equitable language access services. Whether these are linguistic associations or not, engage!
- **Enhance Professional Skills:** Pursue ongoing training and certification to ensure the highest standards of service in a shifting policy landscape.



“Your dedication and expertise are invaluable in upholding the principles of equity and access during these changing times.”

End Notes:

1. Civil Rights Act of 1964, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI>
2. Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1701-1758 (1974). GovInfo
3. Lau v. Nichols, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/414/563/>
4. U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). Education and Title VI. U.S. Department of Education
5. U.S. Department of Justice. (n.d.). Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Lau v. Nichols. Justice
6. Trump, D. J. (2025). Executive Order 14224: Designating English as the Official Language of the United States. Federal Register, 90(43),



Carol Velandia is a leading advocate for language access, rights, and justice. A graduate professor at the University of Maryland, she developed the award-winning interprofessional program *Effective Inclusion Through Language Access*. She is the founder and CEO of *Equal Access Language Services* and the creator of the podcast *Language Access Matters*. Carol has been featured across industries on platforms such as *Boostlingo*, *Nimdzi Live*, and *She Leads & Empowers*. Named one of the *World's Top Healthcare Leaders* in 2025, she also contributes to *MultiLingual* magazine, writing on the role of language services in advancing equity. Her mission is to eliminate language-based exclusion and embed access and inclusion across all systems. She is a rookie flamenco dancer.

NAJIT CONFERENCES THROUGH TIME

Documented by *Proteus*: NAJIT's Conference Legacy—Past, Present, and Future



For nearly five decades, the NAJIT Annual Conference has been a revivifying experience for judiciary interpreters and translators, offering essential training, networking opportunities, and discussions on the evolving landscape of our legal language services.

Beyond the speakers, workshops, and panels, the heart of NAJIT's conferences lies in the experiences of its members. From its early days, *Proteus* has played a crucial role in documenting these moments, ensuring

that the voices, challenges, and victories of judiciary interpreters and translators are heard and preserved.

From the earliest conferences advocating for certification to modern discussions on AI and remote interpreting, *Proteus* has consistently captured NAJIT's mission to educate, empower, and advocate for the profession.



“The heart of NAJIT's conferences lies in the lived experiences of its members.”

As NAJIT's official publication, *Proteus* has chronicled the milestones, challenges, and achievements of the judiciary interpreting and translation profession. Through articles, interviews, and personal reflections, *Proteus* has ensured that the voices of judiciary interpreters and translators are heard and that their contributions are recognized.

As we look ahead to the 2025 conference in Indianapolis, we encourage members to continue sharing their experiences. *Proteus* will remain the bridge between past, present, and future—preserving the stories and data that shape our profession.



NAJIT 38th Annual Conference, May 19th - 21st, 2017



Be a part of history—See you in Indianapolis !

DUE PROCESS BEGINS WITH PREPARATION: WHY INTERPRETERS MUST HAVE ACCESS TO CASE INFORMATION

By Katty Kauffman, JD

For those of us who work in the courtroom, it is no secret: interpreters are vital to ensuring due process and access to justice for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). What is less widely recognized—especially outside our profession—is how central advance preparation is to performing our role ethically and effectively.

As court interpreters, we do far more than decode words; we render complex legal discourse in real time, with precision and neutrality. But we cannot do this in a vacuum. When we are asked to interpret without access to case materials—complaints, indictments, plea agreements, motions, and more—we are expected to hit a moving target blindfolded. That expectation isn't just unrealistic; it may compromise the fairness of the proceeding itself.

This article advocates for the routine, secure provision of case information to interpreters prior to court proceedings, drawing on constitutional principles, U.S. case law, and both domestic and international professional standards.

Due Process and the Legal Standard for Interpretation

The right to an interpreter stems from the due process and equal protection guarantees of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution. The courts have repeatedly acknowledged that accurate interpretation is essential for LEP individuals to meaningfully participate in legal proceedings.

In *Mendoza v. INS*, the Ninth Circuit held that denial of competent interpretation can deprive an individual of a full and fair hearing. Likewise, in *United States v. Mayans*, the court recognized that interpretation must reflect not just the literal meaning, but also the intent and nuance of the original speech.

The implication is clear: the presence of an interpreter is insufficient unless the interpretation provided is accurate, complete, and informed by the context of the case. That degree of accuracy is only possible when interpreters are given the tools to prepare.

Ethics: A Shared Professional Duty

NAJIT's Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities underscores the ethical obligation to prepare:

"The interpreter shall prepare for each assignment by reviewing available materials and gathering information to the best of their ability, including learning about the case, terminology, and cultural issues that may arise." (Section 2.1)

The American Translators Association (ATA) echoes this in Principle 3 of its Code of Ethics:

"Translators and interpreters shall provide accurate and faithful renditions of the original message to the best of their ability."

These codes assume that interpreters are granted access to information that enables them to meet this standard. When that access is denied, the interpreter's performance—and by extension, the fairness of the proceeding—may suffer.

Confidentiality: Safeguards Already Exist

Some court officers express concern about releasing sensitive case information to interpreters in advance. But professional interpreters are already bound by strict confidentiality protocols. ATA's Principle 5 explicitly provides:

"Interpreters shall maintain confidentiality with regard to all aspects of their work."

Moreover, courts already rely on mechanisms such as protective orders, secure file sharing platforms, and nondisclosure agreements. These can—and should—be extended to interpreters as a matter of routine. Protecting the integrity of proceedings and protecting interpreter preparation are not mutually exclusive.



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DUE PROCESS BEGINS WITH PREPARATION: WHY INTERPRETERS MUST HAVE ACCESS TO CASE INFORMATION

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Cultural Awareness in a Legal Framework

Court interpreters are not cultural advocates or cultural brokers. Our mandate is to convey what is said—accurately, faithfully, and completely—not to explain why it is said or how it may be understood across cultures. However, preparation remains essential for anticipating linguistic and pragmatic issues that may arise from cultural differences, especially in an adversarial system. For example, a speaker's use of vague or deferential language may be culturally appropriate but legally significant. A hesitant response may be interpreted as evasiveness by one party and as respectful restraint by another. Interpreters must be ready to preserve the register, tone, and linguistic structure of such utterances without altering or filtering them, regardless of how they may be perceived in the courtroom.

Professional codes acknowledge this challenge. The AIIC Code of Ethics states that interpreters must:

“Prepare thoroughly for each assignment, ensuring they are familiar with the subject matter, the speakers, and the relevant terminology.”

And the Chartered Institute of Linguists, a UK-based professional membership body for language practitioners, requires interpreters to assess their ability to perform competently and make adequate preparations accordingly under Code of Conduct, Rule 3.3.

In short: while interpreters are not cultural intermediaries, they must be linguistically prepared to navigate culturally influenced language—without stepping outside their neutral role.

The Ask: Make Advance Access Routine

As court interpreters, we are not asking for special treatment—we are asking for the tools to do our job to the professional standards we are sworn to uphold. These include:

- Access to charging documents, motions, and plea agreements prior to the hearing;
- Notice of key names, acronyms, and specialized terminology;
- Opportunity to clarify ambiguous or obscure references before interpreting them in real time.

These are not privileges; they are basic prerequisites for professional performance and due process.

Conclusion: A Call to Bench and Bar

For our colleagues on the bench and at the bar, we urge you to see interpreter preparation not as a luxury, but as a necessity. The right to an interpreter means little if the interpretation provided is inaccurate, incomplete, or contextually wrong. Advance access to case materials allows interpreters to meet our ethical obligations, avoid costly errors, and protect the integrity of the proceedings.

By respecting the interpreter's need to prepare, courts and attorneys uphold not only professional standards, but also the constitutional promise that justice will be both done and understood.

End Notes:

1. *Mendoza v. INS*, 623 F.2d 1338 (9th Cir. 1980).
2. *United States v. Mayans*, 17 F.3d 1174 (9th Cir. 1994).
3. American Translators Association (ATA), Code of Ethics and Professional Practice, Principle 3.
4. ATA, Code of Ethics and Professional Practice, Principle 5.
5. International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), Code of Professional Ethics.
6. Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), Code of Conduct, Rule 3.3.

Katty Kauffman is a federally certified court interpreter with state certifications in Florida, Maryland, and D.C. A longtime NAJIT and AIIC member, she began as a conference interpreter in Chile before joining the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida. Katty holds a law degree from Pedro de Valdivia School of Law and a certificate from American University's Washington College of Law. She has contributed to key legal publications, teaches at York University's Glendon MCI, and frequently lectures on Latin America's criminal justice reforms. In 2021, she received Chile's Premio de Traducción a la Excelencia Profesional y Académica.



THE SSTI RESEARCH CORNER: REINTRODUCING SSTI

The Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation



“SSTI aims to create spaces where research and the practice of interpreting and translation in legal and judiciary contexts can intersect, and where the exchange of ideas and information can actively contribute to higher performance standards and further research in the field.”

The Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation (SSTI) is NAJIT’s non-profit educational and research foundation.

SSTI, founded in 1997, was already conducting educational activities for NAJIT when the association’s certification exam development process began in 1999. Keeping these two activities separate—educating and testing—was one of the requirements to maintain the validity of NAJIT’s credentialing process pursuant to the Standards for the Accreditation of Certification Programs from the National Organization for Competency Assurance, now the Institute for Credentialing Excellence. And so, while SSTI focused on this credential, NAJIT took over the educational program. Since then, and throughout the years, both of these programs have undergone many transformations in response to shifting priorities for both NAJIT and SSTI Board members. Fast-forward to 2015: the NAJIT Board of Directors comes forth with a renewed interest in the original mission for which SSTI was created: to promote scholarly research and undertake projects intended to advance the profession.

Since then, SSTI has funded projects such as the Judiciary Interpreting and Legal Translation Bibliography & Database. We have also produced webinars for the NAJIT Academy, held sessions and pre-conference workshops at various NAJIT conferences which marry the insights of research with the exigencies of the practice of judiciary translation and interpreting, and worked closely with Proteus over the last several years in order to keep the membership abreast of our activities and to invite participation.

To date, our most ambitious project has been the SSTI Research Collaborative. Running actively from 2021 to 2022, the Research Collaborative was conceived as a hands-on research and mentorship initiative between scholars and interpreters / translators for a year of learning, collaboration, and discovery. Working in small teams with the guidance of a senior researcher, practicing interpreters/translators and early career scholars (MA or PhD students or recent graduates) identified pressing questions in our field and launched their own research projects to seek answers. The SSTI Research Collaborative led to multiple conference presentations (academic and professional) as well as to four publications in peer-reviewed academic journals, and the insights offered by our research teams continue to offer valuable approaches to practical problems (for a report on a study on police interpreting, see Jeffrey Killman’s article in this issue’s SSTI Research Corner).

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THE SSTI RESEARCH CORNER: REINTRODUCING SSTI

The Society for the Study of Translation and Interpretation

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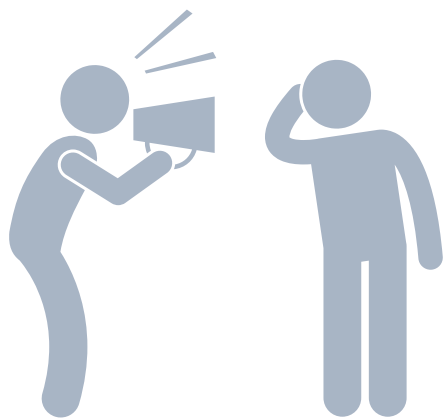
The SSTI team consists of:

- **Melissa Wallace** (President and Associate Professor of Translation & Interpreting Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio)
- **Christina Guerrero Harmon** (Vice President and Marin County staff court interpreter),
- **Jeff Killman** (Treasurer and Associate Professor of Spanish at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte)
- **David Gilbert** (Secretary and lawyer in Australia, also a certified professional Vietnamese translator).

We are honored to be in the company of past board members Aída Martínez-Gómez, Marianne Mason, Christopher D. Mellinger, Marco Hanson, Susan Berk-Seligson, Janis Palma, and Holly Mikkelsen.

For the SSTI board, 2024 marks a fresh start as we said goodbye to three longstanding board members (Aída Martínez-Gómez, Christopher D. Mellinger, and Marianne Mason) and welcomed two new ones (David Gilbert and Jeffrey Killman).

“We intend to continue our commitment to NAJIT’s mission by supporting the work of the Position Papers Committee, identifying new board members, and developing educational opportunities for members to leverage research in practice.”



THE SSTI BOARD MEMBERS WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We want to know what research projects you think SSTI should be sponsoring and what initiatives would take us the furthest as we continue to create spaces where theory and practice meet to build the profession together. We also welcome volunteers with social media skills, grant proposal writing skills, and funded research experience who can help us match the right funding sources with the projects we sponsor. And, of course, we hope you will continue to support SSTI with your generous donations when you **renew your NAJIT membership.**

The SSTI Research Corner: Policy and Practice in Police Interpreting: A Study from the SSTI Research Collaborative

Jeff Killman, PhD

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

At the 2022 NAJIT conference, Adam Richardson and I had the opportunity to present some of our work from the SSTI Research Collaborative. Focusing on police interpreting in the United States, our talk, *“Police Interpreting in Three Metropolitan Areas: Reviewing Practice and Policy,”* addressed a topic that has received relatively limited attention in interpreting studies, which to date has focused primarily on court interpreting both in the US and abroad. Some more contemporary scholarship has started to look at specific elements of interpreting that involve the police, such as interrogations and investigations, but the initial contact with speakers of languages other than English has yet to receive much attention.

“Criminal cases heard by courts originate in policing contexts, and both civil and criminal orders are served by law enforcement.”

Our project, as members of the first cohort of the SSTI Research Collaborative, was an effort to shine light on this area of research so that we can consider other aspects that are pertinent to language access in the administration of justice. As part of this research, we compared language access plans from three police departments in different metropolitan areas of different sizes and configurations on the East and West coasts of the United States. We compared when, how, and by whom language interpreting is provided in the work carried out by these police departments to identify how practice and policy intersect when considering the types of settings in which police interpreting occurs.

In looking at the approaches adopted by police departments, we largely found considerable attention and planning related to interpreting in language access plans as well as certain variations in practices or protocols.

“The ways in which these services are provided varied considerably – departments may deploy their own bilingual personnel or interpreters, contract interpreters, or rely on third-party-provided telephone interpreting.”

Depending on the circumstances, rapidly evolving or other sensitive situations requiring expediency may justify the use of conveniently available bilingual individuals such as family members. Either way, priority is given to the utilization of a department’s own personnel or any contractors that it may certify according to internal criteria such as a language proficiency test, which may differ from what court interpreters might expect based on their own experience.

The use of telephone interpreting was found to be the preferred alternative in two of the departments, whereas non-certified department members who self-identify as proficient are prioritized next in one of the reviewed departments.

“In all three cases, departments rely on bilingual family, friends, bystanders or any other such member of the public as a last resort.”

Certain procedures, such as custodial interrogations or interviews, may require the use of certified personnel, who may conduct the interview in the non-English language or interpret for another investigator, or contract interpreters or telephonic interpreters if such personnel are not available. Because in-person interpreters may not be available in every policing circumstance, departments may make use of telephone interpreting or individuals from the community, depending on the specifics of the situation.

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Based on our review of the various policies and procedures:

“It appears that they seek to balance quality and logistical considerations, with the understanding that one set of considerations may take precedence over the other depending on the nature of the procedure or situation.”

We hope that the results from this modest study may increase awareness of interpreting in law enforcement contexts, where criminal cases requiring interpreting and other foreign language support in the courts are initiated. Increased awareness may help us revise current practices or propose modifications as needed, as well as shed light on the importance of language access in this area giving rise to criminal matters heard in court. And something to keep an eye on in the future might potentially be the use of artificial intelligence to assist police in interacting with citizens who speak languages other than English.

“We hope that the results from this modest study may increase awareness of interpreting in law enforcement contexts, where criminal cases requiring interpreting and other foreign language support in the courts are initiated.”

Jeff Killman (Ph.D., Universidad de Málaga) is an associate professor of Spanish at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he teaches translation and interpreting courses in legal and other domains. His research centers mostly on legal translation and translation technologies, and his publications have appeared in various international edited volumes and journals. He is co-guest editor of a special issue of *Llengua i Dret/Language and Law* on legal translation and interpreting in the digital age and is state-certified as a Spanish court interpreter.



MEET THE *PROTEUS* TEAM



Editor-in-Chief:
Julli Jaramillo

Editor-in-Chief of *Proteus* and Publishing Coordinator of *The NAJIT Observer*. Brings a background in translation, politics, and public policy to elevate diverse voices in the field.



Vicki Bermúdez

State-certified court and medical interpreter who began freelancing in 2006 after a career shift from USPS. Former staff interpreter in Racine, WI, now enjoys freelance work and global travel.



Andre Moskowitz

Federally certified Spanish interpreter, translator, and lexicographer specializing in dialectology and Spanish-language variation; serves as ATA certification grader.



Mercy T. Cevallos

Former college instructor, retired high school teacher, book and newsletter editor. She is now a medical and legal interpreter and translator.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Proteus team members who came before us and laid the foundation for this publication. Your hard work and dedication have allowed our community to grow, evolve, and continue building upon your legacy.

*Thank you! ¡Gracias! Merci! Xie Xie! شكراً (Shukran)!
Obrigado! Cnacuño!*

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Chair: Nattalia Paterson, PhD

A seasoned Portuguese interpreter with 20+ years of experience in judiciary, conference, and diplomatic settings. Certified in 20 states and a U.S. federal court interpreter. Leads NAJIT initiatives for growth and efficiency.



Vice-Chair: Yadira Call

Experienced judiciary interpreter and translator, committed to advancing best practices and professional development in the field.



Treasurer: Lili Selden, PhD

Translator, interpreter, and intercultural communication coach responsible for helping NAJIT build a Continuing Education curriculum and a Learning Management System.



Secretary: Janis Palma, PhD

Veteran judiciary interpreter with 40+ years of experience. Advocate for interpreter education, certification, and professional standards.



The NAJIT Board of Director is committed to strengthening the profession and supporting judiciary interpreters and translators nationwide.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear NAJIT Members and Colleagues,

As I reflect on my tenure as your Chair, I am filled with pride by what we've accomplished together. I'd like to highlight NAJIT's organizational progress, our strategic vision, and why your participation in advocacy is more crucial than ever.

Organizational Strengthening

The Board has worked diligently to strengthen NAJIT's foundation. Our committees are fully staffed and active, with members spanning the U.S. and representing a range of language pairs—Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and others. This diversity ensures regional and linguistic representation across our initiatives.

We've partnered with a new management company, enhancing operational efficiency and freeing us to focus on substantive goals. With this support, we've proposed bylaw revisions, launched two new ad hoc committees—Forensic Transcription & Translation and Professional Interpreter Standards—and transitioned our social media management to Ngage for streamlined operations.

Strategic Vision for the Future

We've developed a five-year strategic plan focused on major technological upgrades, including a redesigned website and directory, an optimized NAJIT app, and a Learning Management System to deliver on-demand, accessible content. These innovations will significantly elevate our member experience.

Strength Through Collaboration

Collaboration has been a cornerstone of our work. We've partnered with AAITE, ATA, CCHI, NATE, RID, ALC, SAFEAi, ASTM, the ABA, and the National Language Access Coalition to amplify our impact and protect interpreter rights.

Expanding Our Presence and Advocacy

NAJIT's presence is growing—we've exhibited and presented at national conferences (ATA, DVTA, TAPIT) and hosted successful "Meet and Greet" events. These engagements strengthen our community and extend our mission.

Our advocacy has produced meaningful results:

- We contributed to an amicus brief protecting interpreter access.
- We influenced the Maryland Supreme Court's decision to reconsider a rule harmful to interpreter well-being.
- We supported interpreters in North Carolina and Illinois facing difficult conditions.
- We co-developed national guidance for interpreters navigating unexpected law enforcement encounters.

A Call to Action

We now face our most serious threat. Recent Executive Orders undermine decades of language access progress. E.O. 14224 revoked protections for limited English proficient individuals. E.O. 14281 jeopardizes the "disparate impact" doctrine—central to civil rights enforcement in language access cases. This isn't just policy—it's an existential threat to our profession. NAJIT, along with five other associations, issued a joint statement opposing E.O. 14224 and continues to monitor the impact of E.O. 14281. If interpreter services are no longer protected, justice itself is compromised. This is your call to service. We need:

- Writers for swift advocacy responses
- Members to join committees
- Volunteers to share experiences via our surveys
- Listeners for our upcoming **Conversations in Advocacy** podcast
- Advocates to use our **Advocacy Toolkit**—now live on the NAJIT site

Language access cannot be preserved by a few; it demands our collective energy and action.

As my term concludes, I extend heartfelt gratitude to all who supported my leadership. It has been a privilege to serve alongside such dedicated colleagues. I warmly welcome the incoming Board and look forward to NAJIT's continued evolution.

NAJIT's strength is its members. The question now is:

How will you answer this call to service?

With respect and gratitude,

Nattalia Paterson

GOODBYE AND THANK YOU, CMAC!

By Janis Palma, NAJIT Life Member

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

Henry David Thoreau



A few old-timers like me may remember when NAJIT's Chair at the time, Sam Adelo, decided the Association was getting too big to be managed by five volunteers who also had to work full-time to earn a living. That was 1992. We had ups and downs with outsourced executive directors and management companies, but in 2015, under Ester Navarro-Hall's leadership, NAJIT contracted a management company that was truly knowledgeable about the association and the professions NAJIT represents: Comprehensive Management & Consulting, Inc. (CMAC). It was a company created by a colleague who had been part of NAJIT's leadership a few years earlier and wanted to put his business know-how to work in a new direction.

Rob Cruz and his wife, Susan, became the dynamic duo for NAJIT. They knew the organization inside out, so much so that they could anticipate the needs of the board and the membership at any given time. They "ran interference" when needed, opened doors that benefitted NAJIT and closed doors that didn't. CMAC was the bridge that helped every NAJIT volunteer jump onboard, they were the custodians of NAJIT's institutional memory, in short, Rob and Susan were the "secret sauce" that kept NAJIT growing year after year, quietly, behind the scenes, where only the board members and the committee volunteers could see everything they did.

In 2024, they decided to follow the sounds of a different drummer. As with everything else in life, you don't know what you have until you lose it. And what a loss it has been for NAJIT!

In this special issue of *Proteus* I share with you a farewell interview I did with Susan and Rob Cruz, for those who didn't get to know them as well as I did, I hope our collective and heartfelt appreciation for all their years of service to NAJIT comes through loud and clear.

JP: What made you want to start an association management company?

RC: I served on many boards, associations like Chamber of Commerce, arts councils, many boards, not just NAJIT—although NAJIT was my favorite because I truly believe in NAJIT's mission. But one of the things I realized was that a lot of people on these nonprofit boards overall had a huge lack of business acumen, so that's one of the things I brought to the association as NAJIT's chair, my business background. Because you can have the greatest intentions in the world, but if you don't know how to market it, if you don't know how to say it, if you don't know how to package it, it doesn't really matter. It was towards the end of my tenure that I started to look into this concept of association management, but it still took another year and a half for us to form CMAC.

SC: For me, one of the personal drivers was that I was traveling for work every week. So when Rob approached me about forming CMAC, I saw it as an opportunity for me not to be on the road all the time.

RC: If it hadn't been for Susan, I never would have contemplated forming a company. She can do the numbers, the planning, all the things I cannot do. But I never envisioned NAJIT being a client. This came up much later, about a year or a year and a half later, when Esther asked me about this idea of forming my own management company.

JP: What is it that stands out for you as a defining moment or decisions during your almost ten years as NAJIT's management company?

RC: Rebranding NAJIT, getting a new logo, a new website, all of that.

SC: Making the conference a celebration of interpreters. I think that by the time we left people were coming to the conference to see their friends, get their CEUs, but also because they felt it was a celebration in their honor.

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GOODBYE AND THANK YOU, CMAC!

Continued

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JP: What do you hope will be your legacy as a team and as individual leaders?

RC: I hope that the legacy we left is that if you hire, and you work with the right people, that they will execute what you need to get done, that it doesn't take geniuses, it doesn't take tremendous amounts of money to really affect change. If you have the intellectual capital, the people who know what needs to be done, and you partner with the right management company, not only will that allow you to execute your vision, but it will also amplify your vision. I hope we did that by example. That is one of the things that I am the proudest of.

SC: It's a matter of public record, NAJIT had \$75,000 in the bank at the end of the year when we came in. I came in and there wasn't much going on in that back office, but we completely revamped and rebranded NAJIT. We helped get a new logo, a new website, a new membership management system, and we revamped the conference. I know we did good for NAJIT. I feel like we did something good for the profession. That's what I would like my legacy to be.

JP: If you could leave one message to NAJIT's future leaders or members, what would it be?

RC: This is important, because it is an existential threat to NAJIT, and it's been an existential threat to NAJIT. Associations are not municipalities. They are not funded by taxpayers' dollars. No matter what chaos happens at City Hall, the tax dollars keep rolling in, but that's not the way associations work. When someone decides that they're going to run for City Hall, as disruptors, as agents of chaos, demanding transparency above all else, it doesn't matter if the city comes to a crawl, the tax dollars keep coming in, everybody still gets paid. If I could leave a message to anybody that wants to be a leader in a nonprofit association such as NAJIT is that you cannot come in thinking that you're going to apply city government ideals, sunshine laws, and all of those things, because it will not work. If you're going to volunteer for a nonprofit association, you cannot take the same approach that you would take if you were running for City Council. ***You can save your city because the tax dollars are always going to come in, but you can destroy your association by creating that type of chaos.***

SC: And if you're going to join an association to affect change, you need to have a solution. If you don't have that solution, don't bother trying to change it because all you're going to do is ruin it. Now, for me, it's all about the volunteers. Everybody comes with great ideas, right? I want to do A-B-C-D-E-F. Well, you have to ask yourself #1, how am I going to accomplish all that, and who's going to help me? And when you're trying to get volunteers to help you, you have to understand what those volunteers want too. ***As leaders, everyone has to understand everyone's why in order for anything to happen. Because if you're pushing your own why, and you don't care about theirs, nothing's going to happen.***

JP: Were there any unexpected lessons that you are taking with you as you leave NAJIT?

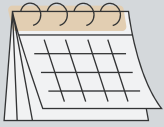
SC: For me, it was really learning about people. I have worked with people all my life, right? I've been in sales, I'm a financial planner, but it's different when you're working with volunteers. What I learned to appreciate the most was seeing someone who was willing to understand something enough and go out on their own, go on a limb and say, hey, no, this is really what we should be doing or no, that's wrong. You see really good people, and you see leaders that don't really know that they're leaders. I think that's where my learning was: just the people.

RC: Oh, that's easy. I never anticipated being revered as a volunteer leader and being vilified as a paid leader. We took a big risk when we started. I put my heart and soul into NAJIT, especially at the beginning when there was no guarantee. I saw NAJIT's books, and I saw that NAJIT was going to be defunct in a year. One bad conference is all it was going to take. And we brought NAJIT back from that, but for some people it's never enough, and I never anticipated that. And quite frankly, I mean, that hurt me, if I'm being very, very honest.

SC: I think we all know that's one of the big contributors to why we're not still there today. On a more positive note, I learned that if you have marketable skills, you don't need a nine-to-five job. Even beyond NAJIT, I am not going to go get a nine-to-five job ever again. It's very liberating. And I think that was my big lesson learned, and it's exciting for me.

***Thank you for your dedicated work to our organization, CMAC!
We are grateful for your work and wish you the best in your future endeavors***

EVENT CALENDAR



Events You Won't Want to Miss



June 3-5: LocWorld 53. Malmö, Sweden

June 6–8, 2025: NAJIT 46th Annual Conference. Indianapolis, Indiana, USA.

June 4-5: ALC Amplify. Online

July 7–9, 2025, Transius Conference 2025. Geneva, Switzerland.

June 10-11: TAUS Massively Multilingual AI Conference. Dublin, Ireland

June 19-20: LEO's 11th International Conference "Elevate Your Human Game!". Online

June 23-27: 20th Machine Translation Summit. Geneva, Switzerland

August 2-3: TAJIT Annual Conference. location TBD

September 10-12: ALC 23rd Annual Summit. New Orleans, LA



If you have an event to add to the calendar for our community, please reach out:
proteus_editor@najit.org or
hq@najit.org



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