

The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

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**ATA ON
THE ROAD**



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

CORINNE MCKAY
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Opening the Certification Exam to Nonmembers: A New Direction for ATA

One of ATA's strengths is, undoubtedly, stability. While many professional associations have struggled to remain relevant in the 21st century, we're thrilled that ATA is on solid financial footing. This stability has allowed us to pursue several "capital improvement" projects, such as a fully redesigned website—hopefully to go live before our Palm Springs conference—and an association management system—a piece of backend software that will streamline our membership management and accounting processes.

At the same time, we must evolve to remain relevant. This doesn't mean changing for the sake of changing. It means we need to change in ways that allow us to better serve you, our members, and to better serve the language professions as a whole. ATA will take a major step forward when, on January 1, 2020, we open ATA's certification exam to nonmembers, meaning that anyone who wants to earn the ATA-Certified Translator (CT) designation can take our exam, regardless of whether they are an ATA member. Likewise, our members who are currently certified will have the option of letting their ATA membership lapse while still retaining their CT designation.

We need to change in ways that allow us to better serve you, our members, and to better serve the language professions as a whole.

The ATA Board feels that this change will be a positive one, for several reasons:

- The CT designation will gain recognition and prestige when it is open to anyone, rather than being seen as an ATA membership credential.
- Opening the exam to nonmembers will allow us to promote the benefits of ATA membership to nonmembers who take the exam, hopefully bringing them into the ATA fold.
- Planning for this change has forced those of us on ATA's Board to really think through the benefits of ATA membership and how to promote them. We think that every ATA member should be a member because they choose to be, not because they are required to be.

I'm very grateful to the team that is helping to prepare for this major shift: our highly capable Treasurer John Milan has run various financial projections; Certification Committee Chair David Stephenson and his committee are preparing our exam graders for what we hope will be an increased volume of certification exams; Membership Committee Chair Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo and her committee are working on boosting our membership recruitment and retention efforts; Public Relations Chair Eve Lindemuth Bodeux and her committee are continuing their work to spread the word about the value of professional translators and interpreters in the business world; and our tireless staff at ATA Headquarters are putting various plans in place, including working with a membership marketing firm to recruit new members and reach out to lapsed members.

I'm excited about this new direction for ATA, and we eagerly await the first exam sittings at which nonmembers will be welcomed! ●

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Looking for Member News and Humor and Translation? These columns are found in the Chronicle-Online edition: www.atanet.org/chronicle-online!



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Cover: ATA Spokesperson Judy Jenner represented ATA at Lenguas 2019 in Mexico City.

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- <http://bit.ly/ChannelATA>
- <http://bit.ly/ATA-Pinterest>

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The Voice of Interpreters and Translators



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WALTER BACAK, CAE
walter@atanet.org

Board Meeting Highlights



Standing from left: Directors Tony Guerra, Madalena Sánchez Zampaulo, Cristina Helmerichs, Meghan Konkol, Evelyn Yang Garland, Eve Lindemuth Bodeux, Melinda Gonzalez-Hibner, Elena Langdon, and Geoff Koby.

Seated from left: Treasurer John Milan, President-Elect Ted Wozniak, President Corinne McKay, and Secretary Karen Tkaczyk.

The American Translators Association's Board of Directors met February 2–3, 2019, in Austin, Texas. The meeting followed the Board's Annual Strategy Day.

The Annual Strategy Day provides an opportunity for the Board to discuss in-depth aspects of the Association and the translation and interpreting professions. Strategy Day is coordinated and led by the ATA president-elect, who, by office, is the chair of the Governance and Communications Committee.

This year, President-elect Ted Wozniak guided the Board discussions through various membership issues, including restructuring membership and possibly offering membership tiers with various levels of benefits. Treasurer John Milan and Director Evelyn Yang Garland then

led the Board discussion on the future of the translation and interpreting professions. Treasurer Milan closed the day's activities with an overview of ATA's finances. Strategy Day discussions do not necessarily lead to concrete action plans, but they do help the Board come to a consensus on issues that serve as the foundation for working through complex options for ATA's future.

Here are some highlights from the Board meeting.

Opening the Certification Exam to Nonmembers:

The Board reaffirmed that the certification exam will be open to nonmembers starting January 1, 2020. (Nonmembers already have access to practice tests.) In addition, the Board discussed the possible impact on membership and the Association's finances.

Grader Participation in Preparing Candidates:

The Board discussed the involvement of graders in candidate coaching and prep sessions. A poll of the nearly 100 graders showed that few of them participate in this kind of training. Regardless, the Board is asking the Certification Committee to draft a policy for guidance for current and future graders. Related, the Board consensus was not to support exam prep courses outside the Association's official Certification Exam Prep Workshops.

Division Administration:

The Board discussed various issues internal to division administration, such as budgeting, delivering core services (e.g., newsletter/blog, online community, and website), managing volunteers, administering conference-related events, and more. With ATA now overseeing 22 divisions, there is a need to further standardize the administration of divisions. The Board will work with the Divisions Committee on these and other issues.

Nominating and Leadership

Development Committee Appointment

Approved: The Board approved the appointment of the members of the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee. They are Past President David Rumsey, who chairs the committee, Lucy Gunderson (Divisions Committee chair), David Stephenson (Certification Committee chair), Milena Waldron (a certified interpreter and advocate for interpreters), and Rosario (Charo) Welle (Spanish Language Division administrator). The committee reviews and selects the slate of candidates for the elections each fall. This year, we have elections for president-elect, secretary, treasurer, and three directors.

The Board meeting summary is posted online. The minutes will be posted once they are approved at the next Board meeting. Past meeting summaries and minutes are also posted online at www.atanet.org/membership/minutes.php. The next Board meeting is set for April 13–14, 2019 in Alexandria, Virginia. As always, the meeting is open to all members, and members are encouraged to attend. ●


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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ergonomics for ATA's Certification Exam | Emily Safrin

Anyone preparing to take a computerized ATA certification exam would do well to read Emily Safrin's article, "Ergonomics for ATA's Certification Exam: Unspoken Advice with Untold Benefits," in the November/December 2018 issue of *The ATA Chronicle*.¹ Emily points out that being physically comfortable can enhance both your confidence and your performance. Her useful tips for setting up your laptop and workspace might just give you the edge you need to pass the exam, although a thorough knowledge of your source and target languages and some solid translation experience are, of course, the foremost requirements.

To Emily's sage advice, I (as a longtime proctor of ATA exams) would add: dress in layers so that you can put on or take off clothing if the exam room is too cold or too hot. In addition, make sure you're thoroughly familiar with how to use the text editing program on your laptop (TextEdit for Mac/WordPad for Windows) and how to save your files, in both txt and pdf formats. Practice creating and saving documents before exam day so you don't waste time during the exam trying to figure out how your text editing program works. In addition, make sure your keyboard is set up to produce any diacritics or special characters you may need in your target language.

Laura Vlasman | Houston, TX

NOTES

1. Safrin, Emily. "Ergonomics for ATA's Certification Exam: Unspoken Advice with Untold Benefits" (*The ATA Chronicle*, November–December 2018), <http://bit.ly/exam-ergonomics>.



FEATURED FACEBOOK POST

 **American Translators Association**
January 9


International Translation Day is more than a one-day event!

If you missed ATA's International Translation Day infographics campaign, don't worry! The infographics are available to download and share all year long on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Instagram. They're perfect for family, friends, clients, and all those people who keep asking, "Can you really make a living doing that?"


Download all six infographics at <https://bit.ly/2Tdr3vv>

#translator #interpreter #atanet

TOP TWEETS

 The power of language: we translate our thoughts into words, but words also affect the way we think:

ow.ly/8MaM30nSVNn
MARCH 1 / @ATANET

 "Everybody Speaks English Nowadays". Conference Interpreters' Perception of the Impact of English as a Lingua Franca on a Changing Profession: ow.ly/Fn7m30nQtXm
FEBRUARY 26 / @ATANET

ATA at Lenguas 2019 in Mexico City



Attendees at Lenguas 2019 pose for a group photo. (Courtesy of Barry Slaughter Olsen)

In late January of this year, just as the U.S. was being hit by extremely low temperatures, I had the pleasure of heading to sunny Mexico City to represent ATA in my role as spokesperson at Lenguas, a biennial conference that “brings professional interpreters and translators under one roof to address topics such as best practices, market trends, and continuing education.”¹ I had heard great things about the 2017 event and thought that traveling to Mexico would be a fantastic opportunity to work on developing closer ties with our colleagues and professional associations in Mexico. ATA was also one of the conference sponsors and had a table to display promotional materials, which I was more than happy to staff so I could answer questions regarding ATA in between sessions.

The Lenguas conferences are organized by InterpretAmerica and Mexico’s Italia Morayta Foundation. The Italia Morayta Foundation seeks, among other goals, to “promote the

development and recognition of translation and interpreting in Mexico through meetings, research projects, and webinars.”² InterpretAmerica was established to “help raise the profile of interpreting by providing an open and ongoing forum where key players from all branches of interpreting can gather and foster a greater connection among its many sectors.”³

I was eager to experience the fine conference these two organizations had put together, but first I was going to take advantage of another amazing opportunity to meet up with fellow colleagues.

TAKING PART IN COLAB

The conference week began on a high note even before Lenguas 2019, as I had been invited to come spend a few hours at Colab,⁴ an intensive week-long workshop for professional conference interpreters, on the last day. Established by ATA member Laura Holcomb and

Lauren Michaels, a member of the Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec, Colab offers complete “hands-on” training. Participants spend the majority of the day in actual interpreting booths conducting mock interpreting sessions. (For Colab Mexico, the booths were donated by Gonzalo Celorio Morayta, chief executive officer of CM Idiomas, which was one of the main sponsors for Lenguas 2019.⁵ Gonzalo is also the president of the Italia Morayta Foundation.)

It’s very much a collaborative environment, where everyone alternates between serving as the speaker to be interpreted and as the one doing the interpreting. Participants also offer feedback to each other. On the organization’s website, Laura and Lauren describe Colab as “our yearly training camp, where we can play with certain language combinations, subject domains, and modalities. It also serves as a chance to learn from our colleagues and challenge any fixed ideas of ourselves and our vocation.”

From what I experienced, Colab certainly accomplished its mission! It was great to be there to talk about ATA and discuss issues pertinent to interpreters before heading to Lenguas 2019. I also got a chance to provide some feedback to participants. My time at Colab definitely energized me and put me in the right mindset for the three-day conference ahead.

THE MAIN EVENT

The first day of Lenguas 2019 took place at the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso, a gorgeous historic location in Mexico City. A museum and cultural center, the Antiguo Colegio de San Ildefonso is considered to be the birthplace of the Mexican muralism movement. I remember visiting it as a child during a school trip (I grew up in Mexico City), but the venue is even more impressive now as an adult. The first plenary sessions took place on the

main stage of this spectacular 16th-century building. The stage features a mural by Diego Rivera as a backdrop, so it doesn't get much better than this in terms of settings!

Since 2019 is the United Nations' Year of Indigenous Languages, it was very fitting that Lenguas 2019 had a strong focus on indigenous languages. Through sponsorship, the conference organizers were able to provide scholarships to dozens of interpreters and translators of indigenous languages. I was able to talk to many of the recipients and have to admit that I hadn't heard of some of the languages they interpret. It was quite a learning experience! As Mexico and the rest of the interpreting world works on the training and professionalization of interpreting for these key languages, I look forward to learning more and contributing in any way I can.

PLENARY SESSIONS

The plenary sessions were diverse and fascinating, with my vote for favorite talk being a toss-up between the funny and engaging remarks about Spanish linguistic purity by Concepción Company (researcher emeritus at the Philological Research Institute, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México), and author Michael Erard's discussion with InterpretAmerica's Co-President Barry Slaughter Olsen about Erard's work and research, most notably his book on hyperpolyglots, *Babel No More*.⁶

I was also able to share lunch with Michael Erard and a number of colleagues, including two former students and now ATA members, Aída Carrasco and Kenia Núñez, at nearby Azul Histórico. (Talk about full circle!) Later in the day, representatives of major translator and interpreter associations took the stage for an insightful roundtable on the future of the industry. I always enjoy hearing from Kevin Quirk, president of the International Federation of Translators, and found it fantastic that Allison Ferch, executive director of the Globalization and Localization Association, was able to participate via the remote online interpreting software platform Voiceboxer.⁷ In between sessions, there



Judy Jenner staffing the ATA table at Lenguas 2019.

I thought that traveling to Mexico would be a great opportunity to work on developing closer ties with our colleagues and professional associations in Mexico.

were many interesting conversations in the beautiful main hallway, and I was able to tell attendees to stop by the ATA table during the following two days, when the event moved to the nearby conference hotel.

Two more powerful plenary sessions stand out in my mind. One was a roundtable focused on interpreting in crisis situations, which included my esteemed colleague and fellow ATA member Julie Burns, that was moderated (in Spanish) by ATA member Katharine Allen, co-president of InterpretAmerica. The other notable session was the keynote by Chilean poet and political activist María Teresa Panchillo, which shed light on the intricacies of her language, Mapuche (also known as

Mapudungun). María also included a brief reading of one of her poems.

Another highlight was that the conference sessions were interpreted into several languages by a team of top-notch interpreters, and my hat goes off to them. I spent quite a bit of time pondering and talking with others about how I would have interpreted examples of Mexican grammar and spelling into English (my conclusion was that it would have been very challenging).

ITALIA MORAYTA AWARDS

Another highlight of Lenguas 2019 was the presentation of the Italia Morayta Foundation's Italia Morayta Awards for translation and interpreting in several categories (community interpreters,

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Judy Jenner with Kevin Quirk, president of the International Federation of Translators.

Since 2019 is the United Nations' Year of Indigenous Languages, it was very fitting that Lenguas 2019 had a strong focus on indigenous languages.

conference interpreters, research work, and translators). The awards are named for Italia Morayta, who became Mexico's first professional simultaneous interpreter during the second general conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, held in Mexico City in 1947. Morayta went on to forge a career as an official interpreter for Mexican presidents from 1946 to 2000. She fought to achieve professional recognition for the work of interpreters and translators,

for their working conditions, and for training new generations.⁸

This year, the awards went to the following recipients:

- **Arturo Vazquez Barron**, a trainer of literary translators, was recognized for his career achievements in the field of translation.
- **Lucila Christen y Gracia**, an interpreter and researcher, was recognized for her master's thesis examining whether the gender of interpreters has an impact on the perception of the quality their

interpreting. (Side note: I attended Lucila's session, "Influence of Voice Gender on Simultaneous Interpreting Quality Assessment: Does Sex Affect Perception?" at ATA59 in New Orleans—full circle, again!)

- **Miguel May**, an author, editor, cultural promoter, and Mayan-language translator (Yucatec Maya<>Spanish), was recognized for his community interpreting work in indigenous languages. He is the author of several books, served as editor of Mayan-language newspapers, and held a cultural position in the government of the southeastern Mexican state of Yucatan.
- **Laura Zocchi** was recognized for her work as an Italian>Spanish interpreter and for her *Manual on Consecutive Interpreting*, which is considered a basic training guide in the field.⁹

FINAL THOUGHTS

The following two days were jam-packed. I met with representatives of several Mexican associations, spent time staffing our ATA table, and got a chance to attend sessions. My favorite was Aline Casanova's session on deliberate interpreting practice. I've been a fan of her new online project, InterpretTimeBank (an online community for interpreters to practice), so it was fantastic to meet Aline in person and delve into her work.¹⁰

I received many intelligent questions about ATA and our role in the industry while talking to fellow attendees, which I compiled into a report for ATA's Board of Directors. In general, I think there are many great things we could accomplish by working together with our fellow associations in Mexico—there were ideas aplenty. I met with Patrick Weill, an ATA-certified Spanish>English translator and president of the COTIP, Asociación de Traductores e Intérpretes de México. Among many others, I also met with Mónica Ibarra, president of the Mexican Association of Conference Interpreters (Colegio Mexicano de Intérpretes de Conferencias), who told me the fascinating story of the development of interpreting in Mexico,

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS MENTIONED

Colab

<https://colabinterpreting.com>.

COTIP Asociación de Traductores e Intérpretes de México

<http://cotip.org/quienes-somos>

Globalization and Localization Association

www.gala-global.org

International Association of Conference Interpreters

<https://aiic.net>

InterpretAmerica

www.interpretamerica.com

Italia Morayta Foundation

<https://italiamorayta.org/en/home>

International Federation of Translators

www.fit-ift.org

Lenguas 2019

www.lenguas2019.com/homw

Mexican Association of Conference Interpreters

www.interpretesdeconferencias.mx

Ordre des traducteurs, terminologues et interprètes agréés du Québec

<https://ottiaq.org/en>

which I hadn't heard before. Another interesting meeting included several representatives of the International Association of Conference Interpreters.

Overall, I was very impressed with the high level of quality the organizers of Lenguas 2019 were able to deliver attendees. It was the first event I attended that gave such a high profile to indigenous languages, an effort I applaud. I learned a lot, met plenty of new colleagues, and talked about ATA so much I needed lozenges the last day—and it was so worth it. It was an honor to represent ATA and I look forward to doing it again soon. Many thanks to the conference organizing committee, including InterpretAmerica's co-presidents Katharine Allen and Barry Slaughter Olsen, and Gonzalo

Celorio, president of the Italia Morayta Foundation, for their support.

Gonzalo's foundation sponsored a study on the Mexican translation and interpreting market, which was partially published on the pages of this magazine last year.¹¹ The author was Laura Holcomb, one of the co-organizers of Colab Mexico, who also attended Lenguas 2019. ●

NOTES

1. Lenguas 2019, www.lenguas2019.com/homw.
2. Italia Morayta Foundation, <https://italiamorayta.org/en/home>.
3. InterpretAmerica, www.interpretamerica.com.
4. Colab, <https://colabinterpreting.com>.
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7. Voiceboxer, <http://voiceboxer.com>.
8. More information on Italia Morayta can be found at <http://bit.ly/Italia-Morayta-book>.
9. Zocchi, Laura. *Manual on Consecutive Interpreting*, <http://bit.ly/Zocchi-manual>.
10. InterpretTimeBank, <https://beta.interpretimebank.net>.
11. Holcomb, Laura Vaughn. "Translation and Interpreting in Mexico: Uncharted Territory, Rich Waters," *The ATA Chronicle* (July–August 2018), 16, <http://bit.ly/interpreting-Mexico>.



Judy Jenner is a Spanish and German business and legal translator and a federally and state-certified (California, Nevada) Spanish court interpreter. She has an MBA in marketing and runs her boutique translation and interpreting business, Twin Translations, with her twin sister Dagmar. She was born in Austria and grew up in Mexico City. A former in-house translation department manager, she is a past president of the Nevada Interpreters and Translators Association. She writes the blog *Translation Times* and is a frequent conference speaker. She is the co-author of *The Entrepreneurial Linguist: The Business-School Approach to Freelance Translation*. Contact: judy.jenner@twintranslations.com.



Katharine Allen delivering keynote at the second annual Interpreters and Translators Conference hosted by the Orange County Department of Education in Southern California.

Educational Interpreting 101: It's a Lot Harder than It Looks

Here is the story of one county's efforts to professionalize the field of educational interpreting.

KATHARINE'S FULL-CIRCLE MOMENT

Two days before International Translation Day 2018, I stood in front of 300 expectant faces, poised to deliver a keynote address to hardworking educational translators and interpreters. We were gathered at the second annual Interpreters and Translators Conference hosted by the Orange County Department of Education in Southern California. I remember being flooded with a range of emotions.

Here is where my own interpreting career began, fumbling my way through early education assessments, special education and parent-teacher meetings,

as well as physical, occupational, and speech therapy sessions as an untrained interpreter. In those days, I had been repeatedly tapped for the task simply because I was bilingual. Twenty years later, a full and rich career helping to build up health care and community interpreting lay behind me.

Now, here I was, standing at the podium, beyond gratified to be part of this seminal moment, to see educational interpreters and translators finally begin to get the recognition, training, and professional resources they deserve. "I want them to have what I didn't," I thought.

Before starting my speech, I looked at the woman seated in the front row, Natalia Abarca, co-author of this article. She is the single-handed force of nature whose vision and driving insistence made this day possible.

If you're at all active in our profession, it's been hard to miss the increasing presence of educational interpreters and translators at conferences and trainings, just like the one described above. As someone who has seen first-hand how much can be accomplished toward professionalizing our field (in my case, health care) in a relatively short time span, I'm feeling increasingly optimistic that educational interpreting is on its way up.

In the first part of this article, I describe the reality on the ground for interpreters (with some reference to translators) who work in education settings. In the second part, Natalia shares the efforts of the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) in Southern California to improve language access for its non-English speaking families and the lessons learned that are relevant for all of us. It's our hope that the following will serve as a wakeup call to our profession regarding the urgent need to support this emerging specialization.

What is Educational Interpreting?

For years, interpreters and translators working in kindergarten–12 schools have been largely invisible to our field. Despite the fact that Title VI of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires language access for federally-funded school settings, just as it does for health care and legal settings, professionalization has, for the most part, lagged behind.¹ (Please note that this article refers to spoken-language interpreting in educational settings. Sign language interpreting is significantly more developed than spoken-language in education.)

In general, educational interpreting falls under community interpreting. The International Standards Organization (ISO) defines community interpreting as "bidirectional interpreting that takes

place in communicative settings . . . among speakers of different languages for the purpose of accessing community services.”² No formal definition yet exists for educational interpreting, but a suggested definition is: Educational interpreting is a specialization of community interpreting that facilitates access to educational services in schools and other educational settings.

While educational interpreting is part of community interpreting, in many ways it can be better compared to the advanced specialization of mental health interpreting. Why advanced? Because mental health settings:

1. Are highly complex with tightly-scripted interactions between providers and patients.
2. Frequently involve sessions with multiple family members and providers present, thus requiring advanced modal skills.
3. Require the adaptation of standard medical interpreting protocols such as positioning, the professional introduction, and turn-taking.
4. Often require the interpreter to interpret for a family member and not the primary patient.

Interpreting in educational setting involves all these aspects, including several more:

1. Interpreting for complex administrative meetings³ that require advanced simultaneous skills and team interpreting.
2. Performing speed or simultaneous sight translation of complex legal or technical documents that are read aloud during public meetings.
3. Interpreting for special education services, which rival workers compensation in terms of the diversity of medical, developmental, psychological, legal, and educational topics that are covered and the variety of encounters required (from testing and assessment to Individualized Education Plan (IEP)⁴ meetings, in-class services, and appointments for physical, occupational, and speech therapy).

Many school districts across the nation have had interpreting and translation departments for years, but they have been operating in a vacuum.

4. Providing written translation services in addition to interpreting.

In many ways educational interpreting can be considered a hybrid specialization, one that requires a fully developed interpreter skill set to do well, including:

- Dialogue and long consecutive with note-taking.
- Conference and legal-style simultaneous, including team-interpreting with portable equipment.
- Chuchotage (whispered)⁵ simultaneous in dialogic settings for side conversations and during large group meetings.
- Sight translation, including speed sight translation during administrative meetings.
- Advanced knowledge of interpreting strategies to ensure accuracy and transparency.
- Working knowledge and application of community, legal, and conference interpreting ethics.
- Knowledge of appropriate protocols for diverse encounters.

In an ideal world, entry-level interpreters should already have this skill set, but they typically don't. Health care interpreting, for its part, has found a workaround to the lack of available training by forging a pathway to professionalization that prioritizes the use of dialogic consecutive interpreting. This field also provides strategies for undertrained interpreters to maintain accuracy and transparency while largely avoiding complex sight translation and simultaneous interpreting.

Medical settings do, in reality, include many interactions where a

more developed skill set is needed. For example, whispered simultaneous is routinely needed to capture side conversations, and many medical centers are starting to provide simultaneous interpreting for medical presentations to patients and for support groups. Nonetheless, the overwhelming dialogic nature of the patient/provider interaction has made it possible for health care interpreting to professionalize without formally requiring interpreters to have fully mastered that skill set.

This pathway, however, doesn't provide a viable model for interpreting in educational settings. For example, interpreting for IEP meetings is one of the most commonly needed encounters, yet the skills demanded by these meetings far exceed “entry-level” dialogic consecutive interpreting and sight translation. The sheer breadth of topics and settings covered in educational interpreting can be daunting. Even “simple” IEPs, disciplinary hearings, developmental assessments, or board of education meetings require advanced interpreting (and translation) skills.

In reality, educational interpreters routinely face demands on their skill sets every bit as complicated and nuanced as mental health, workers compensation, court, and conference interpreters, while typically operating without the necessary infrastructure. Many school districts across the nation have had interpreting and translation (T&I) departments for years, but they have been operating in a vacuum. Their T&I staff likely have not taken valid proficiency tests, been given any substantive training, been sent to conferences, or encouraged to join professional associations.

In the broader profession, there are no professional associations dedicated to the needs of educational interpreters and translators. Educational interpreters must borrow the ethics and training resources developed for health care and legal settings. More often than not, their service coordinators also work in isolation, unaware of the resources already available, and end up recreating the wheel over and over. This is not to diminish the very real and credible

Orange County Language Group Data - Countywide for 2017 - 18					
Language	Total Enrollment	Number of English Learners (EL)	Number of Fluent English Proficient (FEP) Students	Total Number of EL and FEP Students	Percent of Total Enrollment that is EL and FEP
Spanish		88,623	72,956	161,579	33.26% *
Vietnamese		9,092	17,168	26,260	5.41%
Korean		2,961	6,213	9,174	1.89%
Mandarin (Putonghua)		3,141	3,872	7,013	1.44%
Arabic		2,314	1,817	4,131	0.85%
Filipino (Pilipino or Tagalog)		1,055	1,952	3,007	0.62%
Farsi (Persian)		1,234	1,692	2,926	0.60%
Other non-English languages		640	1,258	1,898	0.39%
Japanese		874	983	1,857	0.38%
Cantonese		305	940	1,245	0.26%
Hindi		364	752	1,116	0.23%
Russian		350	494	844	0.17%
Gujarati		164	514	678	0.14%
Urdu		238	434	672	0.14%
Portuguese		261	272	533	0.11%
Khmer (Cambodian)		179	308	487	0.10%
Tamil		191	273	464	0.10%
French		165	298	463	0.10%
Turkish		209	166	375	0.08%
Punjabi		129	242	371	0.08%

Top 20 Languages Spoken in Orange County Schools (Courtesy of the California Department of Education's Educational Demographics Office, <http://bit.ly/CA-languages>)

work being done by interpreting and translation departments in individual school districts across the country. Those efforts are just now starting to reach the level of visibility and maturity to help evolve the field as a whole.

One example of this can be found in the Orange County Department of Education in Southern California. Here, my co-author Natalia Abarca takes over the narrative and tells in her own words about the work being done.

NATALIA'S STORY: ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—THE DIFFERENCE ONE COUNTY CAN MAKE

I remember sitting behind my desk considering my new life and career in the "land of the free and the home of the brave," where dreams come true and only the sky is the limit. Many thoughts crossed my mind: Did I make the right decision? Will I be able to adapt to a new culture and a new language? How will I navigate this new work environment? Will I regain my career?

It was hard to fight a feeling of despair as a newcomer from Ecuador. Day after day in my new job as the project liaison of Language Services for the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), I was exposed to a Spanish that sounded

unfamiliar to me, spoken by families from Mexico and Central America. I learned new words, new jokes, and new sentence structures. Even though I was a native Spanish speaker, I felt like a foreigner who needed an interpreter to help me understand the unfamiliar slang and this new way of speaking. I had my own unique accent and few could place my country of origin. These early experiences with different dialects and languages made me ever more passionate about providing accurate language access to almost 500,000 students who attend Orange County's multicultural schools.

The absence of professional support and lack of training opportunities described above were among the challenges I faced when I was tapped for OCDE's newly-created position of project liaison for Language Services for the Instructional Services Division in 2014. My first task was to start building an infrastructure for our program.

A Little History

Currently, I lead the county-wide OCDE Multilingual Consortium, a professional network that provides multicultural and professional support to community liaisons, parent advocates, family support specialists, and multilingual

staff. Orange County students speak 66 languages, with Spanish—not English—spoken by the largest number. The Consortium provides a much-needed forum where members feel valued and respected for their background and their heritage. We not only strive to provide families in Orange County with equitable access to high-quality interpreting and translation services, we also work to build collective capacity to help newcomer parents and families navigate the U.S. educational system. This is a daunting task for our network's community liaisons and bilingual staff members. In my role, I tap into the Consortium's assets and take a strengths-based approach to build the group's leadership capacity, helping each member maximize their natural talents and potential.

As my colleagues and I started the Consortium, we immediately identified one initial challenge: our members reported feeling isolated and disconnected from one another. Our first step was to develop a coordinated survey to identify what was currently happening with language access in schools throughout Orange County. We reached out to more than 200 educators in 21 districts representing almost 400,000 students.

The data we received was powerful. Perhaps most eye-opening was the immense demand for translation and interpreting services. Here's a snapshot of what we learned:

- 77% of school districts in Orange County, California, have monthly requests for interpreting and translation.
- 82% of these requests are for IEP meetings, which are part of the special education process.
- 76% of these requests were related to meetings of the English Learners Advisory Committee (ELAC), District English Learners Advisory Committee (DELAC), and the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP).
- 66% of requests involved communicating with student family members.

Casting light on an evolving field, the following statistics relate to translation and interpreting services and resources already in place at Orange County school districts:

- 28% of school districts have a formalized translation and interpreting team with a coordinator to support language access.
- 65% of schools have provided training for bilingual staff to understand the roles and responsibilities of interpreters and translators.
- 95% of school district leaders support providing training to multilingual staff.
- 80% of personnel are eager to have more professional development opportunities to improve their interpreting and translation skills.
- 72% of respondents want more information about professional interpreting and translation ethics.
- 70% of respondents want to learn about laws and regulations relevant to language access.
- 60% want to learn about building cultural awareness in school settings.
- 85% of bilingual staff would like to become certified interpreters and translators.



Natalia Abarca speaks to attendees at the Orange County Department of Education's Interpreters and Translators Conference.

We not only strive to provide Orange County families with equitable access to high-quality interpreting and translation services, but also work to build collective capacity to help newcomer parents and families navigate the U.S. educational system.

From Data to Action

Based on the survey results, OCDE took several steps to promote language access, specifically by supporting the translators and interpreters who provide the critical language bridge. These measures included:

1. Creating an Annual Interpreters and Translators Conference: We identified the need for a formal event where our multilingual professionals could receive training and discuss new information, tools, and policies. In 2017, we launched the first annual Interpreters and Translators Conference: Connecting Cultures through Effective Interpretation and Translation. The response was swift and almost overwhelming: 40 school districts and 230 participants attended. Our second annual conference in 2018 sold out, with 270 people representing nine

California county offices of education, 19 Orange County school districts, and 24 school districts from other counties.

2. Establishing the Interpreter of the Year Award. This recognition program was implemented with the support of several school districts. Because there are no codes of ethics specifically for educational interpreters, we relied on material from the National Council for Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) to develop a rubric for conferring the award. To date, four outstanding language advocates have received this honor.

3. Providing Training for Trainers: I became a licensed trainer for Community Interpreter® International, a 40-hour certificate program that provides professional skills for school-based interpreters, including dual-role bilingual staff. OCDE can now provide

our own ongoing trainings to district-level employees working to facilitate communication between families and the educational system.

4. Defining Ethical Practice: OCDE, in partnership with 14 school districts, developed the Guidelines for School Interpreters based on NCIHC's National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care.⁶

5. Standardizing Educational

Terminology: We're also working on standardizing common educational terminology and translating frequently used documents in multiple languages, such as the Parental Notice of Procedural Safeguards, which has been translated into five languages.

What's Next?

OCDE's vision is for Orange County students to lead the nation in college and career readiness and success. Being bilingual or multilingual is an asset in the 21st century, so the department is working toward equal opportunity and significant access for every student by supporting the many state and federal initiatives in place to achieve these results. Simply put, OCDE cannot achieve its vision without integrating professional, high-quality interpreting and translation services. This means that our work is more important than ever.

As I map out the many logistical tasks that go into planning our third annual Interpreters and Translators Conference in September, I'm amazed at how much has been accomplished in just a few short years. We started with a simple survey and now we have a plan in place and have put several key pieces into action. As part of this journey, I've attended numerous conferences and met key leaders and experts in this profession. They've shared their knowledge and I've shared mine. It's my hope that the work I'm doing will be met, in equal parts, by a proactive response from the profession to expand its support and resources for interpreters and translators working in educational settings.

Educational interpreters routinely face demands on their skill sets every bit as complicated and nuanced as mental health, workers compensation, court, and conference interpreters, while typically operating without the necessary infrastructure.

STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE FOR EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETERS—FINAL THOUGHTS FROM KATHARINE AND NATALIA

As Natalia and I wrap up this article, I've returned from a two-day training for another large city school district in California. The sole focus of that training was simultaneous interpreting skills. That experience only served to validate my sense of urgency regarding the need to support our colleagues working in educational settings. As school districts across the nation struggle to fulfill language access requirements and the needs of their diverse multilingual families, our profession needs to step up, make space, and provide concrete resources for this new cohort of colleagues. It's our sincere hope that educational interpreters and translators will soon receive the same recognition and support as those working in legal and medical settings. ●

NOTES

1. Title VI of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 (U.S. Department of Justice), <http://bit.ly/TitleVI-Civil>.
2. ISO 13611:2014, Interpreting—Guidelines for Community Interpreting (International Standards Organization), www.iso.org/standard/54082.html.
3. Includes monthly Board of Education, Parent Teacher Association, School Site Council, English Learner Advisory Committee, and other committee and public administrative meetings and hearings.

4. Individualized Education Plan or Program—the legally-binding service contract entered into between school districts and parents to provide services for students with some kind of qualifying disability.
5. Chuchotage is a form of interpreting where the linguist stands or sits alongside a small target audience and whispers a simultaneous interpretation of what's being said. The term chuchotage is French for “whispering.”
6. National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care (National Council for Interpreting in Health Care), <http://bit.ly/NCIHC-ethics>.



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How to Leverage Testimonials When Marketing Your Business

Even though we may feel uncomfortable asking our clients for testimonials, when it comes to growing our businesses, we have to step up to the plate.

Testimonials are powerful. There's no denying that. But I keep hearing from translators and interpreters who say they feel uncomfortable asking their clients for them. "Do you really think they will give me one? Am I overthinking this?" My response to these questions: "Yes and yes."

We all purchase services or products and then receive messages to leave a review, so how is that different from asking a client for a testimonial? Why do we feel uncomfortable asking our clients to give us a few words of praise? I can only surmise that part of this discomfort stems from the nature of the work we do. We like to stay behind the scenes for the most part. But when it comes to growing

our businesses, we have to step up to the plate and ask.

Your potential clients, just like you, want to make sure they're purchasing a sound product or service. Who wouldn't? That's just one of the many reasons why providing client testimonials is an effective way to market your business. But you have to be smart about how you request and use testimonials so that one client's words can influence the decision-making of another. Here are my top tips for leveraging testimonials for your business.

Testimonials from clients have much greater impact than those from colleagues. Show how you helped a

client solve a problem. This is how other potential clients will be able to connect with the testimonial. They want to know what you're capable of doing for them! If you simply share testimonials your colleagues write for you, then you're not really showing those who pay for your services anything other than what your peers think. While peer support is important in other aspects of your business, the last thing you want is for a potential customer to think you've padded your testimonials with kind words from well-meaning friends.

Share a variety of testimonials (shoot for three to five!). The testimonials you receive from clients shouldn't all say the same thing. They should definitely go into more detail than simply "She always delivers on time!" (Well, gosh, I hope so.) While on-time delivery may be a positive aspect of working with you, it's not going to set you apart from others in your language pair or specialization. Make sure your testimonials have some substance to them and cover a range of positive experiences a client can expect if they choose to hire you.

We all purchase services or products and then receive messages to leave a review, so how is that different from asking a client for a testimonial?

Dedicate a very clear space for client testimonials on your website. You can choose to share one on every page or dedicate an entire page of your website to client testimonials. If you choose the latter, be sure to create a clear heading in your navigation menu. Don't make it hard for clients to find testimonials about your work!

Translate testimonials into your target language only if your clients are contacting you in that language to begin with. I get asked this question



If you simply share testimonials your colleagues write for you, then you're not really showing those who pay for your services anything other than what your peers think.

fairly often and my answer is always the same. It doesn't make sense to translate anything on your website unless your ideal clients are contacting you in that language from the start. Put your testimonials in the language your ideal clients speak and use when they enter search terms online.

Ask for them! This may be the one that so many people avoid: the "asking" part. The worst a client might tell you is that you haven't worked with them long enough for them to give you a solid testimonial, or they don't have time at the moment. In both scenarios, all you have to do is wait, work a little more for them on assignments, and then ask again. Is that really so bad? I don't think so. Write to your top five clients today and ask them to write a testimonial. If they don't have time, offer to write one for them to approve. A lot of clients actually prefer this, and some may even ask you to do this in response to your request!

Make sure your testimonials are brief and to the point. Whatever you do, don't fill up your testimonials page with long-winded praise. Try to stick to

around three sentences per testimonial. Anything longer than this means you run the risk of someone bypassing the testimonial altogether.

Be clear with clients about what you plan to do with their testimonials.

Make sure clients understand where you'll be using their names and testimonials. Try to use these on your website and any online profiles you use for business that allow for this type of content, like LinkedIn.

Offer to provide testimonials to others as a way to pay it forward.

I'm not saying you should offer a testimonial exchange to clients, although that could be interesting. Instead, dedicate some time once a month to do others the favor of writing a testimonial for them. Other professionals appreciate the praise, too. Consider writing testimonials for your accountant, bookkeeper, instructors or trainers you've learned from in the past, other translators or editors you actually hire/pay for work, etc. Just remember to be careful that these don't come off as friends doing each other the favor of padding each other's testimonials page on a website!

CHECK OUT THESE TIPS TO HELP YOUR BUSINESS GROW!

Seven Ways to Optimize Your LinkedIn Profile and Gain More Leads

<http://bit.ly/LinkedIn-optimization>

How to Use Referrals to Grow Your Client List

<http://bit.ly/client-referrals>

Make it a point to ask for a testimonial once a month. That's an easy business goal to set. And don't feel badly about asking for testimonials. It's a very common practice, and most people are more than happy to do it! Just make sure you also let them know by when you need the testimonial, as a lot of people don't see this type of thing as a priority and may forget, or your request may get lost in their inbox.

Use testimonials wherever you can, even if it's in the body of an email response. If a potential client reaches out to you and something they mention reminds you of a testimonial you received, it's not awkward to share something like, "Oh, you have this issue, too? Here's what another client said about the service I provided to them when they were in the same situation." Slip a solid testimonial in where you can, but make sure it feels natural to do so. It's not in poor taste to do some self-promotion like this. After all, you have a business to run! ●



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The “Shall” Conundrum: When Use Becomes Abuse

When learning to draft or translate contracts, we’re often taught that “shall” denotes a sense of command. However, a closer look at the contexts in which “shall” is used calls that rule into question.

As a lawyer-linguist, I’m often asked to confirm the accuracy of translated contracts or edit and review drafts by fellow lawyers. These are two of my favorite tasks because I love contracts. I realize that might be an odd thing to say. How can anyone “love” contracts, right? But drafting a solid contract is like solving a puzzle, where each clause is an individual piece that fits perfectly into a beautiful work of legal art that provides a valuable service to our clients. Next to constitutions and bills of rights, contracts are to legal drafting what poetry is to literary writing: an art form in which language is used for its inherent qualities.

It’s said that “a contract is a promise, or a set of promises, for breach of which the law gives a remedy, or the performance of which the law in some way recognizes as a duty,”¹ but it has also been pointed out that, “[t]his, like similar definitions, is somewhat misleading. While it is true that a promise, express or implied, is a necessary element in every contract, frequently the promise is coupled with other elements, such as physical acts, recitals of fact, and the immediate transfer of property or interests.”²

If you speak American English, you rarely get to use the word “shall.” But when you’re drafting or translating

contracts, you may be tempted to copy other drafters and translators and fancy-up your writing with the ever-pervasive “shall.” At school in the U.S., many of us were forced to learn the following cumbersome rule:

Simple Futurity

	Singular	Plural
First person:	I shall	we shall
Second person:	you will	you will
Third person:	he will	they will

Determination, Promise, or Command

	Singular	Plural
First person:	I will	we will
Second person:	you shall	you shall
Third person:	he shall	they shall

But out in the real world, this rule is inconsistent with the way Americans actually speak and write, leading many laymen to believe “shall” has fallen into absolute disuse. But legal and translation professionals know otherwise. When learning to draft or translate contracts, we’re often taught that “shall” denotes a command. However, a closer look at the contexts in which “shall” is used calls that rule into question. This is because “shall” is often used to indicate future tense or even permission in American contracts. Thus, the belief that “shall” denotes a command alone is only a half-truth.

The belief that “shall” denotes a command alone is only a half-truth.

In *Elements of Legal Style*, Bryan Garner, editor-in-chief of *Black’s Law Dictionary*, recommends cutting “shall” altogether, but for those who are not ready to bury “shall” just yet, he suggests the following rule of thumb:

“If you want to retain *shall*, then make sure that in each sentence in which it appears, it’s the equivalent of must.”³



Drafting a solid contract is like solving a puzzle, where each clause is an individual piece that fits perfectly into a beautiful work of legal art that provides a valuable service to our clients.

This may seem like an attractive solution in light of Garner’s own argument that “few lawyers have the semantic acuity to identify correct and incorrect ‘shalls’ even after a few hours of study.”⁴ But, as pointed out by Kenneth Adams in his *Manual of Style for Contract Drafting*, “just because *shall* passes the ‘has a duty’ test doesn’t mean the provision in question makes sense as an obligation.”⁵ The question, then, is beyond linguistic.

So how do we, as drafters and translators, know when we’re abusing “shall”? There are at least three very clear and simple cases of abuse that I see in dual language or translated contracts almost every day.

1. WHEN “MUST” DOES THE JOB IN CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Let’s look at the following example:

For the purpose of reimbursement for expenses incurred by Acme, Acme shall submit to Widgetco, no later than 60 days after receiving it, each invoice for such expenses.

There are many things wrong with the way this sample provision is drafted, but let’s focus on “shall.” Obviously, Acme

doesn’t have an obligation to submit invoices to Widgetco in general. It only has an obligation to submit invoices if it wants to be reimbursed for its expenses. Among other minor adjustments, this provision can be improved by dropping “shall” and replacing it with “must” as follows:

For reimbursement, Acme must submit to Widgetco, no later than 60 days after Acme receives it, each invoice for expenses that Acme incurs.

In the *Manual of Style for Contract Drafting*, Kenneth Adams illustrates this with an excellent example from the case of *Howard v. Federal Crop Insurance Corp.*, 540 F.2d 695 (4th Cir. 1976).⁶ The plaintiff-appellants in that case had purchased policies from the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) to ensure their crops against weather damage and other hazards. After incurring losses to their 1973 tobacco crop as a result of alleged rain damage, they sued the FCIC after a claims recovery for those losses was denied. The claim was denied because the fields were plowed prior to inspection by the FCIC adjuster. The provision in question stated that:

The tobacco stalks on any acreage of tobacco of types 11a, 11b, 12, 13, or 14 with respect to which a loss is claimed **shall not be destroyed** until the Corporation makes an inspection. [Emphasis added.]

The Restatement of the Law of Contracts, §261, states that: “Where it is doubtful whether words create a promise or an express condition, they are interpreted as creating a promise; but the same words may sometimes mean that a party promises a performance and that the other party’s promise is conditional on that promise.”⁷ The Restatement gives the following example involving a promise:

“2. A, an insurance company, issues to B a policy of insurance containing promises by A that are in terms conditional on the happening of certain events. The policy contains this clause: ‘provided, in case differences shall arise touching any loss, the matter shall be submitted to impartial arbitrators, whose award shall be binding on the parties.’ This is a promise to arbitrate and does not make an award a condition precedent of the insurer’s duty to pay.”

Naturally, the court held that, because there was no language indicating that the provision in question was conditional, it had to be construed as a promise.

2. WHEN USING FUTURE SIMPLE “WILL” DOES THE JOB

Future simple tense is used to refer to a time later than now, and expresses facts or certainty. However, if you use the term “will” to do this, you must proceed with caution. Because “will” can also be used to express compulsion (e.g., “as long as you’re living under my roof, you will do as I say!”), it can fall into the same traps as “shall” when used to express anything other than simple future tense. However, if your contract already has one too many “shalls,” then replacing the future simple “shall” with “will” makes perfect sense, despite that risk. For example, this:

The term of this Agreement shall begin on the date referenced in

paragraph eight of this Agreement and shall continue until the earlier to occur of [...]

Can be changed to this:

The term of this Agreement will begin on the date referenced in paragraph eight of this Agreement and will continue until the earlier to occur of [...]

3. WHEN STATING FACTS

Because statements of fact are, essentially, statements of what the provisions in a contract should always apply to the current situation (i.e., to what is), they should be drafted in the present tense. Unfortunately, they often get drafted or translated either in: 1) the future tense, or 2) the false imperative.

The Future Tense: Let's look at the following provision here.

The laws of the State of California shall govern this agreement.

As drafted, this provision is technically saying that the laws of the State of California will govern the agreement at some unstated time in the future. But imagine that it's been three years since the agreement was executed. If a dispute arose today, the parties would need to know what law governs the agreement today. So, it makes more sense to draft this as:

The laws of the State of California govern this agreement.

If you compare this to the sample provision I used to illustrate when to use "will" in section 2 above, you'll notice just how much meaning future versus present tense can carry. In the example in section 2, we wanted to indicate a future date (i.e., "the date referenced in paragraph eight of this Agreement" and "the earlier to occur of"). In the current example, we want to indicate that the law governs the agreement now.

This particular example illustrates what Kenneth Adams refers to as "language of policy," (i.e., "rules that the parties must observe but that don't, at least expressly, require or permit action or inaction on their part.")⁸ His recommendation, to which I adhere, is

to use the present tense for policies that apply to the effectiveness of a contract (e.g., applicable law provision) or for policies stating a time of effectiveness or lapsing of effectiveness. He recommends using "will" for language policy related to future events, regardless of whether the timing is certain or not.

The False Imperative: Strictly speaking, the imperative is not a verb tense, but "a mood reflecting a command or request of the speaker."⁹ The false imperative gets its name from the fact that it imposes an obligation on a subject that could not possibly carry out that obligation. In the case of contracts, the most common example of the false imperative is when, instead of a party being obligated to do or refrain from doing something, the agreement itself is:

This Agreement shall inure to, and be binding upon, the parties and their respective successors and assigns.

The problem with this clause may not be obvious to the untrained eye, but if you think about it, the subject is "the Agreement," and "the Agreement" cannot be obligated to do anything. "The imperative 'shall' should only be used when someone is being compelled to do something . . . [I]f no person is mentioned, the imperative form is incorrect."¹⁰ This provision makes a lot more sense as a statement of fact in the simple form:

This Agreement inures to, and is binding upon, the parties and their respective successors and assigns.

WALKING A THIN LINE

Like many other legal writers, I've come to realize that, despite my personal views, "shall" is not going anywhere. People are going to keep using it no matter how many times they are advised not to. But there's a thin line between use and abuse. Used excessively, "shall" can cause problems in both the language of contracts as well as in that of statutes (though that's a topic for another article). As legal practitioners, the better we write, the better we serve our clients. So, if we can prevent confusion and

misunderstandings by toning down our use of "shall" at least one notch, then we should. ●

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Passive Voices Peace: Reconsidering the Ban on the Passive Voice in Your Writing

Despite what the many critics say, the passive voice can be punchy, compact, and thought-provoking.

For almost a century, the passive voice has been under attack. From Strunk and White's iconic writing guide *The Elements of Style* (first published in 1919) to webinars and new guides on plain language, critics demonize the passive voice as lifeless, weak, evasive, and limp. They advocate for the active voice as more concise, direct, and vigorous than the passive. And in their belligerent criticism, they fail to see the weaknesses in their own arguments.

In his essay, "Fear and Loathing of the English Passive," linguist Geoffrey Pullum provides many examples to demonstrate what he calls "an extraordinary level of grammatical ignorance" among educated critics of the passive voice. Pullman explains that there are many who cannot distinguish between the active and passive voice. His list of constructions incorrectly labeled as passive include "five girls have died" (although dying may require no agency, this is an active

clause), "a struggle ensued" (clauses with verbs of event occurrence are active clauses), and "there was a ceasefire agreement" (an existential clause is not a passive clause).¹ Perhaps the passive voice has become a trope for indifferent language and lazy writing, but the passive voice has much to say about that.

Note that all examples included in this article come from actual texts. References have been omitted due to space constraints.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The active voice has a name more adept to a culture obsessed with agency, ownership, and competition. But you would think linguists, grammarians, and writers on writing are aware of the difference between a name and a function.

To show you the abilities of the passive, let's consider what writing is all about. When you write, you are pouring on the page your cast of characters and events and your contributions to your readers' knowledge. And all this, you do within the word order constraints of your syntax and within the limitations of human memory.

English syntax dictates the word order to be Subject Verb Object (SVO.) There is little wiggle room, lest like Yoda of *Star Wars* you become.² This SVO order means that the subject comes first, expressing what the sentence is about. You are reading this right—the subject is the default topic of your sentence, it has nothing to do with the agent of the action. Think of "my friend died" or "the rumor spread"—there is no agency on the part of the subject.

Roles such as agent, patient, recipient, experiencer, and others in your who-did-what-to-whom schema are semantic concepts, called *semantic roles*. They indicate how the various participants are involved in an event and relate to each other, independent

Event	Intransitive (1 Participant)	Transitive (2 Participants)
“doer” as subject	Subject + ACTIVE VOICE <u>The wind</u> howled. (“doer”)	Subject + ACTIVE VOICE + Object <u>The wind</u> broke <u>the window</u> . “doer” “done-to”
“done-to” as subject	Subject + ACTIVE VOICE <u>The window</u> broke. (“done-to”)	Subject + PASSIVE VOICE (+ Compl.) <u>The window</u> was broken (by <u>the wind</u>). “done-to” “doer”

of their syntactic position in the sentence.

Voice is one of the grammatical strategies to express perspective³ and change the syntactic position without changing the semantic role of a participant. It allows you to zoom in on a participant without losing track of who is doing what to whom. Voice becomes relevant when you use a transitive verb. (Technically, verbs are not inherently transitive or intransitive, but are used in transitive, ditransitive, or intransitive ways, as in “cook,” “cook a meal,” or “cook someone a meal.”)

With transitive verbs, you have two candidates for the subject or topic of your sentence: a “doer” and a “done-to.” These are macro-labels to remind us that a “doer” is not always a willing agent, and a “done-to” not always a passive object acted upon and changed. (Think of “Tom received a strange email.”) So, you, the writer, get to choose which participant to focus on and make the subject of your sentence. To talk about the “done-to” of a transitive verb, you make it the subject of a passive voice sentence.

Incidentally, note that intransitive verbs may also have a “doer” or a “done-to” in the subject position,⁴ but, in English, the distinction is semantic. The table above shows how semantic roles and syntactic ones interact for both

transitive and intransitive verbs. Passive voice simply means the “done-to” has been made the syntactic subject, or grammatical topic.

WHY DOES PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE MATTER?

Some thinkers argue that the ability to shed light on an event from the vantage point of different participants is what defines being human.⁵ The passive is a construction used to focus on the participants that relish, experience, endure, suffer, or witness the event described by the verb. It lays the path to abstractions and categorizations like “dispossessed,” “persecuted,” or “empowered.”

The active voice has a name more adept to a culture obsessed with agency, ownership, and competition.

But from a practical standpoint, why would you want to make the “done-to” the subject of your sentence? Precisely because it allows you to show the same event through a shift in perspective. Compare the following sentences:

- You will receive a reminder about your next appointment.
- A reminder will be sent to the patient.

In the first sentence above, the active voice provides information to the patient about a product for the patient (i.e., the reminder). In the second, the passive voice provides information about a process to someone who is not the patient, perhaps staff members in training.

In the flow of text, you want to align the topic of discourse (what your overall message is about) with the topic of your sentences, which is often the subject. This alignment contributes to the coherence and readability of the text. In spoken language, you can use nuance and intonation, but in written language you need topicalization strategies. Of course, the “doer” and “done-to” are not the only options for sentence topic. Through fronting (moving a phrase to the beginning of the sentence), you can topicalize an active voice object, a complement, or an adjunct phrase, as in “To pass the time, we sang together.”

PASSIVE POSSIBILITIES

Let’s see when the passive voice should be activated.

1. Short Passive: When the “doer” is unknown, untimely, or irrelevant to the story, the short passive makes the



When you write, you are pouring on the page your cast of characters and events and your contributions to your readers' knowledge.

“done-to” the subject and omits the by-phrase that would convey information about the “doer.” For example:

- JFK is assassinated.
- A self-portrait by Rembrandt, valued at \$36 million, was taken from the Swedish National Museum in 2000.
- Mistakes were made.

This last sentence exemplifies the most vilified use of the passive voice precisely for omitting the “doer.” Politicians are notorious for abusing the short passive to shake off responsibility. George Orwell famously (and perhaps not all that felicitously) described in 1946 how political discourse hides behind euphemistic expressions, including the passive voice.⁶ Today, the use of the phrase “mistakes were made” even has its own entry on Wikipedia, citing abusers from Ulysses Grant to Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. The flagrant lack of *mea culpa* led political analyst Bill Schneider to suggest that Washington’s use of the passive had become a new tense to be called “the past exonerative.”⁷

In defense of the short passive, linguist Geoff Numberg makes a strong plea when he reimagines popular songs edited to avoid the passive.⁸ After revisions, he says, “we’re left with

The Animals’ ‘Please Don’t Let Anybody Misunderstand Me’ and the Eurhythmics’ ‘This Is What They Make Sweet Dreams Out Of.’ Not to mention Elvis’ ‘Someone or Something Has Shaken Me All Up.’”

2. Long Passive with Relevant or Heavy By-Phrase: This is the prototypical long passive with a by-phrase revealing the “doer.” For example:

- “Whole Foods, who packs a month’s supply of food in a single grocery bag, was bought by Amazon, who packs a paper clip in a refrigerator box.”
- “During his last trip to Granada, the professor was gifted a chair that was sat on by Federico García Lorca.”

But, if the “doer” is known and relevant, why bring it up last? Remember, passivization makes the “done-to” the grammatical subject or topic of your sentence. By revealing the “doer” last, you, the writer, add new information about your chosen topic in an orderly manner (following the “old before new” mantra). This is very handy when the “doer” is truly breaking news or changing the reader’s perception of the “done-to.”

The long passive is also useful in dependent clauses that require a long fragment as a “doer.” In these cases, it is also your reader’s memory that you cater to. For, example:

- “The story is about Rebecca, Jack, and their three children, who are virtually triplets. Two of them are biological twins. The third triplet died at birth. But on that day, Jack decides to adopt an orphaned newborn to restore the threesome. The baby, Jack tells his wife, had been brought to the hospital **by a fireman who had been dissuaded from adopting the child himself.**

In the passive sentence, the baby, the hospital, the fireman, and the non-adoption enter the stage of the text on cue. If we edit the passive out, the cast of characters enters haphazardly and confuses the reader (e.g., Somebody dissuaded a fireman from adopting a baby. The fireman brought the baby to a hospital...) Note also that splitting the sentence does little for its overall readability.

3. Phrasal Passives: A nifty variation on the passive is to use the subject and the past participle without a tensed auxiliary, turning it into a phrase that you can use as an adjunct or modifier or as a heading by itself. The use of phrasal passives is frequent in newspaper headlines:

- “Twin-Sized Mattress Barely Slept On.”
- “Owls Encouraged by Second-Half Ground Effort in Loss to Houston.”

4. Causative Passives (with Get / Have + Participle): In causative constructions, a grammatical subject is indirectly responsible for a task that someone else carries out on his behalf or to his detriment. The subject may have delegated

the task willingly or may have unwillingly enabled it. The “done-to” can be the subject of the main clause or of an embedded clause. Here are a few more examples from published articles:

- “Zhang Zetian, China’s youngest female billionaire, got photographed by the paparazzi again.”
- “When you forget to lock your car overnight, you’re going to get robbed.”
- “My grandfather [...] had him investigated by a private eye.”

In the flow of text, you want to align the topic of discourse (what your overall message is about) with the topic of your sentences, which is often the subject.

As in short and long passives, the “done-to” is fronted to focus the flow of information on this new topic. In addition, causative passives carry a connotation of advantage or disadvantage that is itself a useful tool.

A WRITER’S TOOLBOX

The guardians of the active voice might do well to revisit their disapproval of the passive as weak, evasive, or convoluted. We have seen in the four options discussed here that the passive voice can be punchy, compact, and thought-provoking. Keep it as a crafty tool in your writer’s toolbox! It’s up to you to use it (as any other writing tool) in clear, timely, and meaningful ways. ●

NOTES


1. Pullum, Geoffrey. “Fear and Loathing of the English Language.” In *Language and Communication* (University of Edinburgh, January 2014), <http://bit.ly/Pullum-English>.
2. The Jedi master in the *Star Wars* films uses quirky sentence structures, such as “Much to learn you still have.”
3. Remember that voice is one of several verb features. Others include tense, aspect, mood, person, and number.
4. Linguists now distinguish between intransitive verbs with “doer” or “done-to” subjects as unergatives and unaccusatives, respectively. Some examples are “run,” “cook,” and “sing” versus “arrive,” “stay,” and “disappear.”
5. Kristeva, Julia. *Pouvoirs de l’horreur. Essai sur l’abjection* (Seuil, 1983), 45.
6. Orwell, George. “Politics and the English Language,” first published in *Horizon* (London, April 1946). Note that Orwell used the passive extensively even in this essay and in his writing, and he never

advocated to banish the passive from discourse, but to use it appropriately (<http://bit.ly/politics-language>).

7. Bill Schneider, a political analyst, journalist, and professor. See Broder, John. “Familiar Fallback for Officials: ‘Mistakes Were Made,’” *The New York Times* (March 14, 2007), <http://bit.ly/Broder-mistakes>.
8. Listen to “Passionate About the Passive Voice,” Geoff Numberg’s interview with Dave Davies, broadcast on NPR’s *Fresh Air* on May 1, 2009, <http://bit.ly/NPR-passive>.



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Yes, Conference Interpreting Is a Thing

“**W**hat are you studying?” During graduate school, when I was living in Toronto and constantly traveling back and forth between the U.S. and Canada, I got used to this question as the customs agent saw the student visa in my passport. It took me awhile to come up with a short answer because when I said “conference interpreting,” I was just met with more questions about what conference interpreting actually is, as if I would make it up.

I tried my best to give a succinct, scripted 15-second response that explained exactly what conference interpreters do, where they work, the rigor of the training, and that, no, your niece who spent the summer in Mexico isn't ready to be an interpreter. In the end, it was all in vain and I resigned myself to a simpler explanation: “You know that movie *The Interpreter* with Nicole Kidman? Yeah, it's like that.”

It's not surprising that customs agents, or any non-interpreters, don't know what conference interpreting is. But what has surprised me is the number of professional interpreters not working in conference settings who don't know what conference interpreting is. Even more surprising are the interpreters working at conferences who don't know that there is indeed special training for the very same work they're doing.

To be fair, I'm in the Midwest, where conference interpreting as I was trained really isn't a thing. We don't have international institutions here, and any competent interpreter who works with English and Spanish doesn't have any trouble getting work without a graduate degree in conference interpreting. So, how is it, then, that I decided to go to graduate school for something that is generally done by any court-certified



Even more surprising are the interpreters working at conferences who don't know that there is indeed special training for the very same work they're doing.

interpreter whose price is right? Why would I bother with this graduate degree? What did I even learn? Well, it's just like me to want to dedicate two years of my life and lots of financial and psychological resources to some obscure degree that can only be explained with an early-aughts Nicole Kidman movie. But there's more to it than that. I did learn a few things.

How to be a good team: Good turn-taking, passing over the microphone in a way that doesn't stun, deafen, or confuse your listeners, not choking your boothmate with the scent of your perfume and/or hand lotion, sharing resources, writing down numbers and names, looking up acronyms and keywords when you're the “off” interpreter, and arriving early. Does it

really take special training to know to do these things? Maybe, yes.

The listener's experience: Because I spent half my time in graduate school listening to my classmates interpret and the other half being critiqued on my interpreting, I'm extremely sensitive to the experience of those listening to me. And I'm not even talking about the accuracy of the interpreting. It's the delivery. I've worked with interpreters who laugh, cough, rustle papers, ask me questions, make comments about the speaker, all on an open microphone. My finger can't reach the cough button fast enough. In fact, I would say that thinking about the listener's experience was one of the cornerstones of my training. It makes sense when you think about it.

Interpreters are a vital part of ATA. This column is designed to offer insights and perspectives from professional interpreters.

Learning to prepare by not being prepared: During my training, I felt somewhat tortured interpreting for multiple events every week (some mock and some live) with little to no preparation materials given to me in advance. That was exactly part of the training. We were taught how to work with as little as speakers' names, or the name of an event, and gather a ton of information quickly that would help us prepare. Because we worked at live events, I also learned how to scout out materials at the event itself when none had been provided in advance. That detailed program for attendees at the registration table? Yep, I'll take two: one for me and one for my boothmate.


What good is the text of a speech when someone hands it to you right before the speech starts? First things first. You're going to do a super-fast sight translation of it. One exercise that seemed particularly horrible at the time was being handed the text of a speech, marking it up, and then going into the booth 15 minutes later to listen to and interpret the same speech. Then we would get another text and have 10 minutes before we interpreted it, and finally we would be left with just five minutes to prepare the text before interpreting it simultaneously.

On one of my first assignments as a conference interpreter, on the first day of the event, someone walked up to the booth five minutes before the opening session and handed us the text of the speech that was about to be given. And I knew exactly what to do with it.

Terminology is just a part of a larger picture: If your "interpretation" is just a spreadsheet of words strung together without any actual thought or analysis of what's being said, it's not meaningful. You can very easily have all the correct terminology, yet say the exact opposite of what the speaker meant. The goal is not to be constantly speaking, but to say things that actually make sense. Remember that thing about the listener's experience?

Crisis management: We were prepared not only for not getting materials in advance, but also for last-minute scheduling and venue changes, how to cope when the speaker begins speaking in a language you weren't expecting, what to do when the speaker begins speaking in a language you don't understand, what to say when the person asking a question in the Q&A session doesn't speak into a microphone, coping with lightning-fast speakers, obscure quotes and references, and jokes. We were also taught to arrive prepared with food and water in case you don't actually get the breaks you were expecting.

Why on earth would I put myself through all the above, knowing I could likely do this work without the training? I suppose it's because I could. Because I knew I wanted to continue working in interpreting, it would give me a solid foundation to build skills, and because I knew the training would set me apart. And, hey, doing something that seemed impossible, like quitting my job and temporarily relocating to Toronto? It was irresistible.

I would love to hear from you. What did you learn in your training that you couldn't live without? 



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University at Indianapolis, where she is an associate faculty member. In 2016, she earned a master's degree in conference interpreting from the Glendon School of Translation in Toronto. Since graduating, her work as a conference interpreter has taken her from interpreting at large sales conferences to smaller venues in film and academia. She is certified through the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters and the Indiana Supreme Court. She is currently a freelance interpreter based in Indianapolis. You can read her blog at <https://thatinterpreter.com>. Contact: hello@lizessary.com.

NEW CERTIFIED MEMBERS

Congratulations!

The following members have successfully passed ATA's certification exam:

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Diana Borbolla Resenos
Toluca, Mexico

María Vázquez
Cerámicas del Sur, Uruguay

Chinese into English

Xiaoqing Chen
Mission Viejo, CA

Shaoli Gu
Honolulu, HI

Artificial Intelligence and Translation Technology

I recently asked all the translation technology vendors that came to mind this question:

What are the areas in which you see artificial intelligence playing a role in your technology and/or in the translation-related technology of other vendors?

Why ask that? Well, there's been a lot of talk about artificial intelligence (AI) in technology in general. In the world of translation, we've talked about it in relation to machine translation (MT) in particular, but of course there's a lot more to say about AI and translation than just how it relates to MT. I was curious to see what's on the forefront of the minds of the developers of technology that you and I use.

Also—and this becomes apparent in some of the answers I received—the AI that we’re encountering in real-life scenarios today is not the AI that science fiction authors have been dreaming (or nightmaring) about. AI as we know it is not able to have any generalized application where it can make “decisions” across different types of expertise or domains. AI is being used to enhance decision-making in very narrow fields of expertise (thus “narrow AI”), and it’s increasingly good at it. Probably a better way of putting it is that developers and users are getting increasingly good at using this kind of technology.

The majority of translation technology vendors I contacted responded (many more responses are listed online¹). You'll see that the answers below (listed alphabetically according to vendor) are all over the place, but I think you'll end up learning a lot in the process (I did), including that AI is much more than "just" neural machine translation. Please note that the answers below are in the vendors' own words.

ATRIL

The application of Deep Learning to translation, in the form of neural



AI as we know it is not able to have any generalized application where it can make “decisions” across different types of expertise or domains.

machine translation (NMT), is clearly the main role that AI is going to have in the translation sector in the short term. The availability of accessible open-source NMT projects has resulted in a proliferation of language services providers adding NMT to their service portfolio, perhaps as a way of demonstrating their technical prowess. That said, given the vast amount of training data required to train high-quality NMT systems, it may still take some time for NMT to have a real impact in the industry.

In the short term, we expect NMT to be integrated soon into most competitive computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, with translator workflows slowly shifting to post-editing. We also expect other applications of AI to play a role in two other aspects: a) in the gathering and cleaning of training data for NMT; and b) in more sophisticated quality assurance tools.

ILANGL

We believe artificial intelligence in the translation industry can be used in these areas:

- Estimating localization quality.
- Helping to quickly select the best linguist for a particular job.
- Analyzing the resource workload and helping the project manager to manage and optimize the resource pool of linguists.
- Partially or fully replacing the project manager when dealing with complex localization workflows.

KANTANMT

There are numerous areas in which AI and machine learning will be used to enhance and improve localization workflows. More importantly, AI and machine learning will be used to improve business efficiencies and operations. These will lead to faster and more intelligent execution of localization workflows using fewer resources and costs while improving profitability. Here are a few areas to consider:

- Demand forecasting.
- Predictive workflow planning.
- Recommendation engines for optimal workflow selection.
- Alerts and diagnostics from real-time project management monitoring.
- Proactive workflow health management.
- Project performance analysis.
- Dynamic pricing (based on project factors).
- Workflow traffic pattern and congestion management.
- Risk analytics and regulation.
- Resource utilization analysis.

While most people think that AI and machine learning will be restricted to

technological innovation, we firmly believe that we're on the cusp of an AI revolution that will fundamentally reshape our industry and make us rethink many of our business management approaches over the past three decades. The machines are on the rise.

LILT

We think about the role of AI in Lilt's technology in terms of augmented intelligence. The idea that AI is somehow able to automate the entirety of translation via pure MT is misguided, especially for content that requires a high level of quality. You can't really "solve" MT until you solve artificial intelligence, which is itself very much an unsolved problem. We need to think about how we can use AI to augment human translation quality and speed. Translation is an art form, and Lilt's focus is on how we can continue to develop technology that uses AI to enable translators to do their best work. In short: machines should work with, and learn from, human translators.

MATECAT

Artificial intelligence is fascinating and scary. Human language and translation in particular are perhaps the most difficult challenges that machines face. Natural language is a very compressed channel of information that is densely packed with meaning. It requires contextual information beyond the words themselves to be understood.

Language is the greatest challenge that machines face because it's the most *human* thing there is. Because of this, automatic translation systems are progressing slowly, but they are undeniably progressing.²

MEMOQ

In translation environment tools, AI in its MT incarnation is here to stay, but with a clear shift in focus. We'll see technology and processes move from post-editing, where the human editor is an afterthought, to augmented translation, where AI is harnessed to give linguists superpowers. The next

exciting things will happen in human-machine interaction, not in the MT models per se.

Beyond language processing in the strict sense, MT will start cropping up in project management, vendor management, and localization engineering. Overall, the successful language professional's toolbox will include a growing number of commoditized machine learning and data analysis tools. AI's future is bleak in one area: quality assurance. If a tool were "smart enough" to assess quality, it would be smart enough to do the job better itself. So, we would use the tool to do the job, not the quality assurance.

Developers and users are getting increasingly good at using this kind of technology.

MEMSOURCE

At Memsource, AI has found its place in our translation management and translation tool components. Typically, we look for tasks that are repetitive, need to be performed at scale, and bring a high return on investment. These tasks are often perfect candidates for AI. For instance, our Machine Translation Quality Estimation (MTQE) feature identifies high-quality MT output that needs no post-editing. Another feature identifies non-translatable content. A very promising area is the end-to-end automation of the localization workflow, from configuring the right project settings to picking the right linguist for the job. On the other hand, AI will struggle with tasks such as a comprehensive review of translated content before delivery to a very demanding customer. For instance, AI will not spot issues that are unique or rare, or issues that might not have been present in the data set on which it was trained. In any case, these are exciting times, and AI-powered technology should allow us to focus on creative tasks that are more fun.

PLUNET

As a business management system running your workflows, Plunet could foresee artificial intelligence for vendor allocation, trying to go for the best possible option and then opening up to a broader potential vendor audience. AI could also be used to predict deadlines or even possible workflows. In addition, we could think about predicting what a user wants to do next and present those options to them (e.g., user experience design).

In an ideal world—given enough metadata and legacy information—projects could be entirely automated: quoting, setting up projects, choosing the right CAT tool, vendor allocation, and even some automated exception handling.

SDL

We see AI in any scenario where it's about increasing productivity and automation. Here are a few examples:

- Neural MT (a productivity booster) combined with translation memory (TM), terminology, and fragment matching to always provide the best possible match from which to start.
- Voice recognition. (Seeing the increasing quality of AI-based engines such as Google, it becomes more and more compelling to deeply integrate with CAT environments.)
- Project automation. For example, automatically routing work by analyzing source content and finding the most appropriate resources (e.g., TMs, termbases, and MT engines) and translators/reviewers with matching skills.

Having this set of intelligent tools at their fingertips, there is a certain likelihood that translators will spend more time overseeing and managing a translation process versus starting to translate from scratch (i.e., a shift from "from-scratch" translation to review). As an aside, we like to avoid the term "post-editing" when it comes to NMT. We prefer the term "review," as this more closely matches the type of work when reviewing output from a well-trained NMT engine.



There's a lot more to say about artificial intelligence and translation than just how it relates to machine translation.

Having said all of the above, though, language is language, which always means “unexpected intricacies” that make it key to design any piece of technology in such a way that translators are in control of the resources with which they are working, rather than shoehorning users into a certain way of working. Flexibility will be key. In our focus groups, users keep telling us that this is a vital aspect.

SMARTCAT

We use AI to make translation and translation management stress-free and efficient. For linguists, this means suggesting jobs relevant to their expertise; adapting translation suggestions to their style and voice; helping with tedious things like tags, number formats, and non-translatables; and handling invoices, payment, and everything related to running their own accounting. These tasks often take up to 30% of translators’ time, which they could use for translating, thus making more money and being happier in general.

For project managers, this means suggesting linguists who are the best match for specific projects,

automatically setting deadlines, choosing the most relevant MT engines, tracking progress, and notifying the project manager if anything goes wrong.

In the near future, AI will become the brain of multiple smart personal assistants for project managers and linguists in Smartcat, helping them work more efficiently and creatively by taking on repetitive, nonproductive tasks.

STAR

The two AI technologies—semantic information management and machine learning—play a critical role in STAR technologies and will also have a significant impact in the evolution of those technologies.

Semantic information represented in knowledge graphs and ontologies is key for opening the “content black box” in technical communications making content interpretable. This enables smart services and processing of tech coms in digitized processes. Semantic information is the base for intelligent assistants, chat bots, voice assistants, and intelligent augmented reality and virtual reality scenarios.

Machine learning is the base for MT and the core of the STAR MT solution

that supports translators by providing machine-based translation suggestions. Machine learning-based neural networks will also support the following:

- Intelligent (predictive) text completion in authoring memories.
- Higher degrees of automation for quality assurance, error detection, and correction in translations.
- AI-based post-editing of machine translations.
- Optimized terminology recognition and checking in morphology-rich languages.
- Higher automation of alignment corrections.

FINAL THOUGHTS

For me (Jost) it was very instructive to see what technology vendors had to say. Note that only one (MateCat in their longer response available online at the link listed below) casts real doubt on the longevity of the world of translation as we know it. All others see artificial intelligence not only as not taking over our work, but as something that complements our work as professional translators, editors, or project managers, and often in very creative ways. And, like I’ve said so many times before in this column, it’s likely up to us to become even more creative in communicating to technology vendors which tasks are mindless and repetitive and should probably be taken over by machines, and which are the ones that are better left to us. 🍌

NOTES

1. For a complete list of answers, see xl8.link/ToolBoxAI.
2. For the rest of the lengthy, but insightful, take on this topic, see marcotrombetti.com/future.



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Take Charge of Your Rates

There's been a lot written recently about raising rates. I've even seen it said that it's impossible to increase them for existing clients. So, having just raised mine for a large group of clients—something I've done many times in the past—I thought I would offer a little inspiration and encouragement for those being put off by all the misleading noise. Because, however nerve-racking it might feel to actually do it, just like any other business, you can always decide to raise your prices. Let's have a look, then, at the how and the why (not to mention the what, where, who, and when) of raising your rates.

WHY RAISE RATES?

This may be the biggest question of all. You've got clients who are happy to send you work at a particular rate. Why would you want to change that? The fact is there are lots of reasons why you should.

First, you know full well that prices go up all the time, which means your cost of living goes up. If, as a freelancer, you don't raise your own prices, your standard of living will go down. Now you could try to find ways to improve your productivity to bridge the gap. You could, of course, work longer and longer hours to earn the same. But you can be sure that your clients will raise prices for their customers from time to time, so why shouldn't you?

Then there are clients you've perhaps been working for since you started, when you didn't know much about what rates to quote. If you don't correct those anomalies with some increases, these clients simply won't be worth working for any more.

And what if you're always busy? You have so much work that you're regularly turning jobs away, including things you



However nerve-racking it might feel to actually do it, just like any other business, you can always decide to raise your rates.

might really have wanted the time to do. Raising your rates is a good way of thinning out that demand. You end up earning the same (or even more) and working less, and that surely can't be bad.

WHO DO YOU INCREASE RATES FOR?

Who are the clients who are going to be asked to pay your increased rates? All of them? That's what I used to think. Now, though, I try to take a more strategic approach. This year, I've raised rates for one group of clients—agencies in Spain—who have not had a rate increase for a few years and are my lowest paying group of clients. Last year, I raised rates for agencies in other countries and some direct clients. Why divide them like this? My aim is to guard against an (admittedly unlikely) widespread negative reaction to the

increase by clients. This way, even if some object to an increase, I have a whole group of customers who are not affected and who I can potentially use to fill any gap.

WHEN DO YOU RAISE YOUR RATES?

You can raise your rates at any time, although I like to do it at the beginning of the year, so I usually send out notices to my clients during December. But do it when you like. You're in charge. You decide.

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

I simply send an email with an attachment showing my new rates. In this initial mail, I don't discuss why I'm making an increase or try to anticipate possible objections. I try to stay as brief and matter-of-fact as possible. And I definitely

Business Practices will alternate in this space with "The Entrepreneurial Linguist." This column is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors.



don't apologize. I'm not an employee asking for a rise, I'm a professional giving notice of my new prices.

WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

Clients react in different ways. The best is when they simply acknowledge receipt and get on with the professional relationship. Some do protest, though, and sometimes quite vociferously. With these, it's best to be firm. Don't get into an argument. That increase is going to happen whatever they say. Explain as much or as little as you like. You can remind them how long it's been since you last raised your rates. Tell them you're usually busy but if you can reduce your workload by increasing your prices you'll have more time for their jobs. Very often, once they see you're determined, they will accept your new prices.

Some clients make the very reasonable point that they won't be able to send you as much work at the new rate. This is actually not a bad thing. It means your workload is going to be reduced, but you should still get the better-paid work from that particular client. Think of it this

way: you're becoming that client's top translator; the one they go to when the budget allows. But if you're worried about losing too much volume and you have a good relationship with the client, you could always suggest that you might be open to negotiating the price for certain jobs. That leaves you the option to take work at your old rate if things are a bit slow, as they can be, during the first few weeks after the rate increase. Don't make a habit of it, though. To ensure your new rates stick, you need to make it very clear that any discounts of this kind are a one-off arrangement for a specific job.

You do need to be prepared to lose some clients when you raise your rates. They will either make it very clear to you that your business relationship is over or, more likely, simply stop sending you work. This is quite normal. If you think about it, you're losing clients all the time, for all sorts of reasons, and replacing them with new ones. There's no reason why you shouldn't be able to do exactly the same for clients who stop working with you over price. Having said that, every time I increase my rates I'm always surprised by how many clients stick with me, very often without a murmur.

WHERE NEXT?

I think it's always easier to increase rates if you know what you're trying to achieve in the long term. In my case, apart from the need to protect my income against inflation, I want to move upmarket because I sincerely believe this is the best way for human translators to survive. However, my family responsibilities mean I have to carry on earning a living while I get there, so I can't suddenly drop all my clients while I go looking for new ones as I might if I were young and single. Instead, I see gradual increases as the way forward, while looking for new clients at higher rates. You'll have your own motivations, of course, but it's worth bearing them in mind to help maintain your resolve if you feel any hesitation or awkwardness—as a lot of us do—when it comes to notifying customers of your new prices.

Ultimately, whether you want to increase your rates is up to you. There are times when it feels right to do it and times when it doesn't, as well as times to be bold and times to be cautious. You're the best judge of these aspects for your own business. But please don't let anyone ever tell you it can't be done. ●



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largely in Spain but also in the U.K., France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, and other countries. His specialties include journalism, history, tourism, business, sports, food and wine, and art and music. He worked as a journalist in England for many years. He is a member of the Chartered Institute of Linguists, the Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters of Catalonia, and the Mediterranean Editors and Translators. You can find his blog at www.sjbtranslations.com/blog. Contact: simonberrill@sjbtranslations.com.

Machine Interpreting and Misleading Marketing

Nowadays, it seems that most tech companies have produced a product that promises machine interpreting. These are then promoted and sold to a public desperate to be told that the language barrier has fallen and they can now go anywhere they like and talk to anyone, without ever seeing another interpreter again. Whatever we think of this publicity, there might be lessons in it for human interpreters.

WHAT'S REALLY BEING SOLD?

To demonstrate how its device will “change the way you travel,” ili, a Japanese company that makes a pocket-sized one-way interpreting device, created lots of videos showing people using its product.¹ The company’s flagship ad, however, simply features lots of women wandering around with an ili device in their back pocket. All the camera sees for the entire ad is precisely that device and those back pockets. It seems that ili has decided that the best way to sell machine interpreting is with butts.

What do women’s bottoms have to do with machine interpreting? The truthful answer is: not a lot. Yet, the fact that a company would commission an ad that places posteriors over performance says a lot about what it’s really selling.

If the main selling point for the device is its technological achievements and flawless performance, then it makes no sense whatsoever to create an ad that simply shows it in someone’s back pocket. This makes it clear that ili is not simply selling an interpreting device, but a lifestyle choice. For ili, and for its target users, the device is both a travel accessory and a fashion item.

There might also be a second reason why a company’s ad would emphasize the physical features of the people carrying its device over the actual results produced by the device: sex sells. In a much more controversial ad for ili’s device, entitled “Kisses in Tokyo,” a

We can learn a lot from the way in which these manufacturers have used real-life problems and a bit of imagination to sell their wares.

monolingual guy sets a goal for himself to get a kiss from as many Japanese women as possible.² The ad might have been too controversial for ili to keep it on the company’s corporate YouTube channel, but it was clear in its intention. For ili, as well as a few other makers of machine interpreting devices, the key to a successful marketing campaign is not so much to show what the device does, but to provide the consumer with a vision of who the device allows them to become.

What ili is selling is not just the idea of suddenly becoming adept in another language, but the power that gaining that ability gives you. We interpreters and translators might happily talk about how our work connects cultures, enables business deals, or saves lives. However, the makers of the ili device would much rather show how their devices might get you a nicer holiday or even a date.

Using sexual attraction to sell machine interpreting is not exclusive to ili. Waverly Labs, the developer of a two-way interpreting device it claims is capable of interpreting between 15 languages and 42 dialects, uses a similar, albeit more subtle, strategy. In a video explaining why the people at Waverly decided to invent their device, the company’s founder admits that he came up with the idea when he met a French woman who didn’t speak English very well.³ After this grudging admission, the ad alternates between suitably impressive engineering

diagrams alongside happy engineers and scenes of the company’s founder showing the French woman around a town.

It may not have the same amount of cheek as the posterior-filled ad from ili, but the message is almost identical—language ability gets you dates, so use these devices to give you that ability. In the Waverly Labs example, the difference is that the company is also happy to discuss the technical expertise that went into making the device in the first place. The overarching message is that Waverly has called in the best engineers to make the best product so you, the user, can date the best people.

We probably shouldn’t expect too much honesty and technical accuracy from ads. Their role is to sell products, not explain science, but the fact that two major manufacturers saw sexual attraction as the key selling point of their devices should give us pause. I have yet to see a professional interpreter or interpreting agency use the same tactics (and perhaps they shouldn’t), but we have to admit that the ads have been successful. Waverly Labs raised \$2 million within the first hour of their crowd-funder being live, and, despite the \$199 price tag of its device, ili has built a growing fanbase, including 600,000 followers on YouTube.

SELLING SOLUTIONS TO REAL-LIFE PROBLEMS

The way that these companies are selling machine interpreting is gaining them credibility and sales at levels that surpass what we would expect in our industry. Before we look at the actual truth behind machine interpreting, there’s one more machine interpreting device manufacturer to mention. No discussion of machine interpreting would be complete without Google Pixel Buds, billed as the perfect match for a state-of-the-art Google Pixel phone.



For some makers of machine interpreting devices, the key to a successful marketing campaign is not so much to show what the device does, but to provide the consumer with a vision of who the device allows them to become.

Since Google is one of the world leaders in machine translation, which is the core of any machine interpreting device, it might be expected that the company would be the most brash in its sales pitch. Yet the opposite is true. While ili and Waverly Labs are keen to bill their devices as dating aids, Google's pitch is much more sedate. For them, the greatest selling point of machine interpreting is pizza.

In a blog post that trumpets the power of its "Google Pixel Buds" to overcome language barriers, the Google product engineering team asks us to imagine being in Italy and not being able to order a pizza. Just one touch on your earbud, they say, and you can get the Italian for your favorite toppings.⁴ It's a much more down-to-earth approach than the one adopted by ili and Waverly Labs. It also has the added advantage of being an application that sounds more plausible to anyone familiar with the current state of machine interpreting technology.

What all these marketing approaches have in common is that they present an everyday problem and push a piece of technology as the solution. Cheap airfares have opened up international travel to the masses, leading to inevitable language issues. Whether those language issues involve just getting around, ordering pizza, or meeting the love of your life, everyone can recognize the awkwardness that comes from realizing that you simply can't communicate.

In targeting traveling consumers and promising to solve real-life issues, the manufacturers of machine interpreting have done a far better job at marketing their products than most of those who sell professional human interpreting. Check any interpreting agency and you will see the same old, hollow platitudes about "100% accuracy," "24-hour availability," and "expert linguists." None of this comes close to the persuasive power of showing how access to an interpreting service can

make your holiday easier or get you a nice, hot pizza.

The truth is that these machine interpreting manufacturers aren't targeting the business-to-business, legal, or medical markets that most interpreters will focus on. Few of us could make a decent living by selling our time in short increments to people who want to be able to get kisses from strangers or order a meal. Yet, we can learn a lot from the way in which these manufacturers have used real-life problems and a bit of imagination to sell their wares. What if we marketed our services according to the problems we solve and the difference we make, rather than our list of qualifications and certifications?

MARKETING TO AN IDEAL— UNDERSTANDING THE CAPABILITIES

To grow our businesses, we also need to understand something about the accuracy, or lack thereof, of machine interpreting marketing. While we could debate the merits of multilingualism as a factor in attracting a mate, it's probably more important for us to understand what machine interpreting is currently capable of and how far its marketing represents an ideal, rather than actual deliverable results.

Let's start with Google's pizza example. Assuming that you have an accent that's compatible with speech recognition (as a Scotsman, mine isn't), you can run a simple test on how well Google Pixel Buds would perform, even if you haven't bought them. Open an app that allows you to use speech recognition on your phone, such as Google Docs, and simply say "Can I have a pizza with [insert your favorite toppings], please?" Then copy and paste whatever your phone comes up with into Google Translate and ask it to translate it into another language. For the big European languages, and perhaps even Chinese and Japanese, the results will probably be pretty good. Simple sentences will most likely be handled pretty well in languages where

Google Translate has a large enough corpus from which to work.

There is a slight issue, however. My personal favorite pizza topping is ham and pineapple. Now, it's my understanding that asking for pineapple on pizza in Italy isn't a good way to get into the good graces of the pizzaiolo. No matter how accurate the interpretation, Google Pixel Buds would be no good in the ensuing debate over the merits of my pizza choice. However, a good human interpreter, who values the continued health of the client, might be tempted to suggest that pineapple and pizza are not classically seen together in Italy.

BEYOND PIZZA TOPPINGS

What happens when we ask machine interpreting to do more than deal with simple cases of people asking for unpopular pizza toppings? While I don't have an ili pocket device or a set of Waverly Pilot Buds on hand to try, there have been two recent trials that provide insightful data points.

Tencent might not be very well known in the English-speaking world, but it is a Chinese company with the financial and social clout of Google. Like many tech companies, Tencent enjoys releasing new products with flashy demonstrations. In April 2018, the company felt that there was no better opportunity to launch its new interpreting system than to let it take over from human professional interpreters at the Boao Forum, a showcase aimed at senior leaders of government and industry.

The results were far from perfect. The system, which was also asked to transcribe its output onto a big screen, produced a stream of garbled Chinese characters, repeated words, and, at one point turned a line about China's "Belt and Road Initiative" to build infrastructure around the globe into "a road and a waistband."⁵

Recently, there was a more hotly debated example. In a story that easily deserves an article of its own, iFlyTek, a software company based in China, was accused of trying to pretend that

interpreting produced by a professional human interpreter had actually been produced by its artificial intelligence system.⁶ The twists, turns, claims, and counter-claims involved in the story are complex, but the basic upshot was that iFlyTek was faced with little option but to admit publicly that its system was not even close to matching the capabilities of human professionals.

TIME TO CHANGE MARKETING TACTICS

That the actual performance of machine interpreting is far from the results advertised should surprise no one. In fact, most professional interpreters would expect the technology to be flawed. However, just because machine interpreting marketing is misleading doesn't mean we can dismiss it.

The success of machine interpreting marketing in the face of reality should be a wake-up call for interpreters to use their imaginations to market their services as a means of demonstrating to potential clients the difference a professional really makes.

We may be aiming at different markets than Google or Waverly Labs, but we can learn from them. Few, if any, of us will have a marketing budget the size of ili's or the connections of Tencent, but what we have on our side is our track record and stories. If nothing else, the success of machine interpreting marketing in the face of reality should be a wake-up call to all professional interpreters. We need to start using our imaginations to market our services according to the difference we really make. If we don't shift our

own marketing, we're handing over the future to well-marketed but flawed machines. It's our call. ●

Remember, if you have any ideas and/or suggestions regarding helpful resources or tools you would like to see featured, please email Jost Zetzsche at jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.

NOTES

1. Watch "ili—It Will Change the Way You Travel," <http://bit.ly/ili-YouTube>.
2. Watch "Kisses in Tokyo," <http://bit.ly/Kisses-Tokyo>.
3. Watch, "Waverly Labs—A World Without Language Barriers," <http://bit.ly/Waverly-language>.
4. Champy, Adam. "Google Pixel Buds—Wireless Headphones that Help You Do More," *Pixel Blog* (October 2017), <http://bit.ly/buds-Pixel>.
5. Chen, Celia. "AI-Powered Translation Still Needs Work After Errors Mar Debut at Boao Forum," *South China Morning Post* (April 16, 2018), <http://bit.ly/Tencent-Boao-Forum>.
6. Ng, Lance. "China Tech Leader Accused of Faking AI-Generated Simultaneous Interpreting," *Slator* (September 26, 2018), <http://bit.ly/iFlyTek-Slator>.



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Am I Ready for the Exam?

Why does ATA's certification exam have such a low pass rate? Readers of *The ATA Chronicle* tend to be a savvy bunch when it comes to translation. If you're reading this, you probably don't suffer from any of the classic illusions about translation. You know that being a competent translator takes more than bilingualism. You appreciate the complexities of human thought and language that make it so difficult to transmit all the nuances of any utterance into another language. You probably know more about the niceties of grammar and style than many a high school English teacher.

So maybe this article will, for the most part, be read by people who already know what I'm about to say. Nevertheless, here goes.

Every year, hundreds of people take ATA's certification exam and approximately (on average, across all language pairs) 80% of them fail to produce translations that earn them ATA certification. This pass rate suggests an epidemic of overconfidence mixed, perhaps, with a lack of understanding of ATA's certification standards.

Of course, there is a certain subset of exam-takers who miss attaining certification by a few points because of nervousness, one unfortunate but impactful error, or because they were simply having a bad day. Such candidates had good reason to take the exam and should probably try again.

Based on 15 years as a certification grader, I would urge anyone interested in taking the exam to ask themselves the following questions:

Do I have extensive experience writing and being edited in the target language? It's one thing to speak a language well; it's another to write well in it. All ATA exam passages come with a set of translation instructions (TIs). Those instructions provide information about the purpose of the translation. Although the TIs vary, they all indicate that the translation is to be used either for publication or professional use. This means that the translation must not

just be comprehensible, but adhere to the standards of the target language's grammar and style and be easy to read and understand. The reader should not be confronted with non-standard collocations, mangled idioms, syntax that might be fine in the source language but highly distracting and confusing in the target one, or the misapplication of definite and indefinite articles (a frequent problem in into-English exams).

No one becomes a good writer in a particular language without doing a lot of writing and reading in it and having their writing critiqued by others. This often means having been through a target-language university program that included extensive writing and feedback on that writing.

It's hard not to feel bad for candidates who have paid hundreds of dollars to take the exam when they are clearly nowhere near ready.

In addition to reading dozens if not hundreds of books in the source language, have I kept up with current writing in it (e.g., periodicals, newspapers, blogs)? Excellent reading comprehension is just as important as good writing, and developing this ability in a given language takes more than a large vocabulary. It takes practice. Any experienced translator knows: languages and the cultures in which they develop are complex living entities that constantly evolve.

Have I successfully translated thousands of words in this language pair? ATA's certification exam is a "mid-career credential for experienced, professional translators." In other words, it's not designed for recent graduates just starting their translation careers.

Have I taken an ATA practice test? Prospective candidates who cannot

answer the first three questions with a wholehearted "Yes!" should, at the very least, test their chances of attaining certification through a practice test. It costs \$80 per passage to take a practice test for ATA members (\$120 for nonmembers) versus \$525 for an actual exam. It's puzzling that relatively few people take this important step in preparing for the exam. Practice tests offer candidates an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the type of text with which they will be dealing and—most importantly—see how their translation was graded. Unlike the actual exam, a graded practice test is returned to you. Candidates are able to see what wordings were marked as errors and how severely those errors were assessed. Often, comments are included to explain error markings.

Graders are thrilled when they encounter candidates who live up to the standards of ATA's Certification Program. At the same time, it's hard not to feel bad for candidates who have paid hundreds of dollars to take the exam when they are clearly nowhere near ready. A passing exam must have fewer than 17 error points per passage, yet many exam passages earn well over 40 points. So, please: if you're planning to take the exam, do ask yourself the four questions above. If the answer is "yes" to all of them, you have a strong chance of succeeding. ●



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