



THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

by Lucien Morin

My Latin teacher in high school, Monsieur Lebeau, said something about translation which I never forgot. He said it was the complete intellectual exercise. Every mental faculty was brought to bear: imagination, logic, association, memory, synthesis, analysis, and oh! yes, language. At the time, we were translating from Latin into French and I could relate to what he said of the difficulty but also of the rewards. It was quite satisfying to get the message right in the target language, and also to gain insight into the author's mind.

Sadly, this was just a fluke. Latin teachers were not expected to promote translation as a possible lifetime occupation. Teaching Latin was supposed to help students learn their own language more thoroughly. Translating Latin was just good mental exercise to prepare future scholars for greater learning challenges ahead. I just happened to be there when Monsieur Lebeau happened to

ruminant about the virtues of translation, and I happened to have the kind of mind that pays attention to apparently useless trivia. Five years later, I embarked on a McGill University Extension course in translation which would change my life. I completed that course in 1968, and I will celebrate 40 years in this noble profession next year.

Between then and now, much has changed, yet nothing has changed.

There have been changes, to be sure. At first, I used pencil and paper. Then I joined in a translation team with a fellow student at McGill (this teamwork idea was a new concept suggested by one of our teachers). My colleague, the late Margaret Brad, a Romanian raised during the Austro-Hungarian Empire's last years, learned Romanian at home, was schooled in French and German, picked up Italian and English on her way to Canada, and was a specialist in labor relations and legal documents – but her

French was not strong enough as a target language. My command of French grammar and style was very strong, and I learned a special

terminology through my association with her – as well as how to navigate the vicissitudes of translation itself. This is a labor of love which I performed as a sideline, after hours, sitting

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Lucien Morin

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on a camel saddle, dictating my cogitations to my colleague, who could actually type – on a manual Olivetti. She was making five carbon copies at a time, so we would debate the correct translation, and when we finally agreed, she would type it up. Each page so painstakingly produced had special value to us. We kissed each one gravely. In fact, we called the work we did “page kissing”.

Fast forward to today. We now have to be equipped with all the right software authoring and translation memory tools, a printer, a scanner, Internet and database access, an email account – or be left behind in this hyperactive and demanding marketplace. Turnover of deliverables is often defined in hours, not days.

And yet, in so many ways, nothing has changed. I was rejected from consideration for employment as a translator at Air Canada – I was so young, you see. I daresay young hopefuls have just as hard a time to get into translation full-time now as they did then. After some ten years in a clerical-to-sales-rep career, what helped me land that in-house translator position was not my increasing age or my resume. It was the friends I had made in the meetings of the local translator’s association, and who recognized me as they saw me walking past their cubicles on my way to the employment interview with the chief translator. The exalted leader was duly impressed with

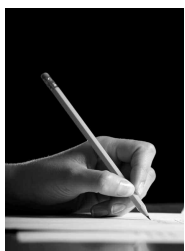
the respect shown to me, so he did not think it appropriate to subject me to the indignity of a test. I was hired then and there. Never underestimate the power of networking and volunteering in committees. I would venture to say that active participation in the life of one’s chosen profession is of utmost importance for a beginner’s future career. I know this from personal experience.

What has not changed also is the high pressure to meet deadlines and relatively low compensation for what is a highly skilled and very important service. It all has to do with the perception of the profession by the public in general and the client in each case. And what has not changed is that same absence from the high-school career counseling brochure stand of any literature on language specialist professions: translator, interpreter, terminologist, editor, etc. The advent of new technologies has only added to the array of specialized occupational categories that have appeared on the scene: transcription translators in security-related settings; on-call telephone interpreters; language system programmers for translation memory systems. But the fundamental reality of translation is still lost to this brave new world of educators, outsourcers and clients alike: translation is something a human being (the translator) conveys to another human being (the end user) about a third party’s communication (the original text). The translator plays a central role in this process. Without this very human

messenger’s ministrations, there can be no translation – none, that is, until the cranky polyglot diplomat robot C-3PO of Hollywood’s *Star Wars* becomes a reality.

Much has changed, yet nothing has changed. The need for public awareness and attitude adjustment is so great, and the workers in the vineyard are so few. Will you help us? The problem is the same, but the tools for reaching out to people are different. Here at the Circle, we have been working on a new and improved website. Currently, we are looking at ways of making us Board members self-sufficient in updating the content ourselves. With the right tools, we can achieve this. We are looking at adding more features and services. There are great opportunities for volunteers willing to help us increase our electronic presence and provide better services to members.

Whole groups of friends, priceless networks, have drifted away, for various reasons, all valid, no doubt. Now is the time to come back home to your Circle. We need you. Your profession needs you. The next generation needs mentors – camel saddles optional. If you are among those who did not renew your membership lately, please rejoin your association – no one can replace you, and we need each other to further the progress of our ancient profession. ■



A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

SOME THOUGHTS ON TRANSLATION ETHICS AND THE ETHICS OF EDITING

by Rosene Zaros

With translation very much in the news these days, most people have some idea about what we do, but very few have any idea of the complexity of the process. Even some foreign language teachers are so naive as to think that all it takes to translate is a rudimentary knowledge of grammar and a bilingual dictionary. The idea that there is an exact equivalent between languages has led to a very ill-defined concept of translation, which makes quality control very difficult. Who can determine whether a translation is accurate? And, what do we mean by “accurate?”

Civil documents (birth certificates, marriage licenses, etc.) are fairly straightforward. They all contain the same types of information and there are no nuances of meaning, no register to maintain, no ethical issues. It’s a sort of fill-in-the-blank translation. Formatting becomes the biggest challenge. For this reason, I sometimes find them almost relaxing.

At the other end of the spectrum would be the translation of literature, which is really a field unto itself in that it requires true writing ability in the target language. Many

literary translators are themselves writers of literature and there is a temptation to “adapt,” to make the text read well in English. There is also pressure from editors and publishers to make changes that will make the work more saleable. There can be major ethical issues at this end of the spectrum.

Most of what we do for a living falls somewhere in the middle and we rarely think about ethics being involved at all. If we are translating a document that is badly written in the source language, we do the research necessary to deliver a translation that conveys the intended meaning in the target language. We are not translating words. We are translating meaning.

The first time I ever had any doubt about this being a completely ethical approach was when I was translating an essay that was part of a scholarship application. As we all know, candidates are assessed not just on the ideas they have, but also on the way they express those ideas – in essence

on their ability to write well. As it turned out, the essay I was translating was well written in the source language so I did not have to deal with any of the issues that came to mind. It did, however, make me think about some of them.

One of my first thoughts was that, if I were to try to maintain the register of the source document by trying to “create” a document in English that was poorly written in the

Who can determine whether a translation is accurate? And, what do we mean by “accurate?”

same way as the source document, the client (who was not the writer of the essay) would be critical of the translation. In other words, the client evaluates my translation even before he/she begins to evaluate the content of the essay. If I

discuss the problem with the client, I may be overstepping the bounds of propriety. After all, I am a translator not an evaluator. Then I thought that perhaps it would be better just to take the ideas and make it read well in English. That way, the client is happy with the translation because it reads so well and, based on that, the candidate

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MEMBERS' VOICE

FOOD AND LIFE - METAPHORS FROM KITCHEN AND TABLE IN BRAZIL

by Tom Moore

An article by Tom that appeared in our last issue ("Nautical imagery in everyday Portuguese") explored the richness of nautical imagery in the Portuguese of Brazil and, not surprisingly, food, cooking, and eating supply a similar wealth of metaphor for the creative vernacular, reflecting, of course, the particular culinary practices of the country.

Some things are almost universal, of course, with our "daily bread" and its imagery, found in any culture that eats wheat. The basic, fundamental nature of bread is reflected in the saying "Pão, pão, queijo, queijo" (Bread, bread, cheese, cheese). This means "straightforwardly, clearly, simply, without complication or obfuscation", recalling the admonition of the King James Version of the Bible to "let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay". And the spiritual nature of bread is further reflected in the expression "comer o pão que o Diabo amassou" (to eat the bread which the Devil kneaded), that is, to suffer, to pass through many trials. The origin of this expression is unclear – it may refer to the first temptation of Jesus in the desert, reported in Matthew, where the Devil, confronting Jesus after he had fasted for forty days, invites him to assuage his hunger by turning the stones into bread, or possibly to the passage in John where Satan enters into Judas after he has eaten the bread which Jesus gave him. The expression is not to be found in

American folklore, but is current in Grenada in the Caribbean. The ubiquitous presence of fresh bread in the padarias of Brazil (and its low price, and high quality, as established by the government) means that anyone who insists on saving a few pennies by eating day-old bread must be really stingy – hence the most common expression for the cheapskate – pão-duro (stale bread). Likewise, when you say that someone is "farinha do mesmo saco" (flour from the same sack) this is always negative (unlike "birds of a feather" in English). For example, Brazilians learned over the last four years that the PT was just as bad as all the rest, at least according to Adilson Siqueira, a former PT activist, who says that changes in the party meant that it was "farinha do mesmo saco".

But most of the time, at least in Brazil, bread is fresh, hot, and delicious – just like a sexy young man, who in the slang of a few decades ago was a "pão" (bread). The "ão" sound also recalls that of the augmentative

ending, something innately masculine – the "pão" might be "bonitão, grandão, fortão, gostosão" (handsome, big, strong, sexy). Those less attractive to the opposite sex might be tagged, on the other hand, as "moscas de padaria" - flies which buzz around the sweet breads, but almost not worth the bother to swat.

Italian food is very common in Brazil, which had a major immigration from the peninsula, particularly to the state of São Paulo. Anyone who has been following

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Brazilian politics recently knows that no matter what the partisan disagreements may be on the surface, sooner or later everything will "acabar em pizza" (end up in pizza). Like a big Italian family, which may have loud and vociferous disagreements, but at the end of the day will sit down and eat at the same table, politicians in Brazil will eventually be sharing a pizza (after all, who doesn't like pizza?), even if they are from different parties.

Soup is another potent generator of metaphor. The fact that soup requires no chewing makes it a synonym for something easy. A woman who walks by "dando sopa" (giving soup) is one who seems to be an easy target for the lusty male. This doesn't mean that she is necessarily "dando mole" (giving soft), or showing clearly that she is interested. (The final term in this series is "dar em cima", which we would translate in English as "hitting on"). And so something which "não é sopa" (is not soup), is difficult (as in the title of the 1957 film "Titio não é sopa", which lets us know

that Uncle is a handful).

The expression "cair como sopa no mel" seems at first to have to do with soup, but instead has to do with the practice of dipping your bread in something liquid to soften it (or to make it more tasty). In Brazil this would be "molhar" (to moisten), but in Portugal "ensopar". What is

"sopa" is not soup, but a piece of bread which is moistened with honey. This imagery recalls the sexual slang expression (very common in Brazil) "molhar o biscoito" – to moisten the cookie. (Perhaps the most widely known occurrence of this is the popular song by Gabriel o Pensador from 1998 – 2345678

– Tá na hora de molhar o biscoito!) Brazilians are just as fond of sweets as the rest of the world, if not more so, not surprising in a country with so much sugar cane. Of course, like anything delicious, tasty, and seductive, sweets must be indulged in with moderation, or at least so we are told by the dictum "quem nunca comeu melado quando come se lambuza" (someone who has never eaten molasses licks himself when he finally gets some), the moral being that if you

are not used to a pleasure, you overdo it). Sweets are used as terms of endearment – a woman may be "docinho de coco" (coconut candy, but metaphorically sweetie, sweetheart), and an attractive man may be the "rei da cocada preta" (the king of black coconut sweet) – the title of a song by the late sambista Bezerra da Silva, but still very current in contemporary slang.

Not all of these expressions are positive. A "bolo fofo" (fluffy cake) is someone who is not too smart. A Brazilian may sarcastically say that someone is "tão doce como doce de jiló" (as sweet as a dessert made from jiló, a famously bitter vegetable). Something that is overly sweet (the English of E. Nesbit's day would have said "treacly", from "treacle") is "melado" (molasses). A vapid film, or indeed anything which is sweet with no nutritive value, is "agua com açúcar" (sugar water). And perhaps the most common food metaphor in the daily newspapers is that which accuses Geraldo Alckmin, the former governor of the state of São Paulo, of being bland. His opponents claimed that the politician was like a "picolé de chuchu" (a chayote popsicle), a notion about as appetizing as broccoli ice cream (yes, there really is such a thing – see the *Daily Mail*: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/health/womenfamily.html?in_article_id=360344&in_page_id=1799).

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The label stuck, and now in every political cartoon about Alckmin there is the ever-present chuchu.

Someone who wants guidance from popular wisdom will generally have no problem finding proverbs to support either side of any question. A Brazilian who wants to say that something is easy as pie, a piece of cake (to cite but two food expressions from English) will say "mamão com açúcar" (papaya with sugar). But if he wants to emphasize that no reward comes without a cost, he will tell you that "rapadura é doce, mas não é mole não" (the molasses candy is sweet, but it is hard as a rock), and may go on to add "quer mole senta no pudim!" (you want it easy? sit on the pudding!)

Brazilian Portuguese is rich in food metaphors for the vicissitudes of life. Someone who has "put their foot in it", making a major misstep, is said to "enfiar o pé na jaca", that is step in a jackfruit, a large, green fruit whose innards are gloppy. A complicated mess or problem is said to be "angu de caroço", literally "lumpy corn mush", and what we might call a ruckus in English is a "sururu" (literally, a sort of crab found in salt marshes). A difficult problem that you have to solve means you have to "descascar abacaxi" (peel a pineapple), and such a problem can also be a "pepino" (cucumber – due to the

labor necessary to peel it?) Someone talking nonsense is "falando abobrinha" (abobrinha=squash). Those whose fantasies are far removed from reality are said to "viajar na maionese" (tripping on mayonnaise), or to "pirar na batatinha" (go nuts on potatoes). If you are going to have to suffer together with someone over the long term, that means you will be doing it long enough to "comer um saco de sal juntos" (eat a sack of salt together).

Ideas of food are, of course, ever present in the bedroom, and in relations between the sexes in general. One of the commonest expressions for sex is the verb "comer" (to eat), but used only in the active sense. Both men and women can "eat", though a woman may also "dar" (give). A woman who is ill-tempered is often thought to be "mal-comida" (badly eaten). Since, metaphorically, the woman is providing the food to eat, she is often compared to the "panela" (saucepan) in which the food is prepared. Popular wisdom tells us that, in spite of the fascination with youth, "panela velha é

que faz comida boa" (it's the old pan that makes good food), a saying incorporated in a popular song by sertanejo star

Sergio Reis (a variant says that it is the "galinha velha que da bom caldo" – the old chicken makes good broth). In contrast, we have the "garota Coca-Cola" (Coca-Cola girl), someone with lots of fizz, but who is not nutritious (let's just say that she doesn't put food on the

table). Both handsome men and attractive women can be "filé" (filet mignon), but what the Brazilian usually gets at the table, and in bed, is "arroz com feijão" (ordinary, everyday sex). Your partner may be "manteiga derretida" (melted butter), which means that they are sentimental, and if you are truly blessed they will be your "metade da laranja" (your other half). A man will be happy to romance an "uva" (grape – pretty woman), but a woman certainly doesn't want a banana (a wimp).

There are many more expressions to be explored, but as I don't want you to think that I am just "enchendo linguíça" (killing time) we can leave it at that. ■

Someone who wants guidance from popular wisdom will generally have no problem finding proverbs to support either side of any question.



THE SEAGULLS

by Rene Osmorasz

There they were, alone on the beach, a dozen or so gulls, huddled together, waiting, watching the steel gray sea beneath the even paler ashen gray of a late February sky. No fishermen, no ships on the horizon. I was alone, walking, and, like the gulls, contemplating the endless gray of sea and sky. I moved on. The wind was brisk and cold on my face. I turned my back to it for a moment and looked at the gulls again. They were disbanding. Several were already soaring over my head while others remained on the sand, strutting and flapping their wings.

In amazement, I watched as one bird ruthlessly attacked another. Lunging, beak open, he appeared to be going for the jugular of his comrade, who immediately took flight. Undaunted, the aggressor took to the air, too. The first, wings outspread against the sky, was soaring, zooming, gliding out over the sea, then, spiraling downward, turning suddenly, and moving toward the shore. His assailant was in hot pursuit. They were almost directly over my head when I realized that the first bird had something in his beak.

Suddenly, it all made sense to me. At that moment, I was privy to nature at its rawest: the quest for food, survival of the fittest, and the winner takes it all. Oh, how I wished I had a camera to record this spectacle. I was the only human observer. This must be how the makers

of nature documentaries feel. A part of me recoiled. Would what I was witnessing be suitable for young viewers? Would they be terrified by this graphic depiction of bird's cruelty to bird in the quest for food? Fascinated, I continued to watch the drama being played out overhead. It was an aerial dance of sorts with the two flying dancers coming together only to separate again.

Then, I gasped as I saw the morsel drop from the first bird's beak. What happened? Why had he dropped it? I instantly thought of the fable of the fox and the crow. What part had the pursuer played? He could not have asked the holder of the prize to sing. That was nonsense. The object continued its descent toward the sea. I caught my breath and watched as the gull, wings outspread, hovered an instant, and then dived down to reclaim it, only seconds ahead of the challenger.

Spellbound, I watched as the drama continued. Still with the tidbit in his beak, the first bird was diving, banking to the left, then to the right, then soaring upward, only to dive again. The pursuer, like a shadow was gliding and banking in counterpoint. Once more, the prize fell from the beak of the beleaguered bird and, once more, he dropped down and recaptured it, but he seemed to be tiring. With my heart pounding, I continued to watch as they alternately gained altitude, soared, floated in the air, and descended

again. How would it end? Who would be the winner?

Then, it happened. I watched the contested prize fall to the beach and come to rest near the water. Which bird would claim it? Would there now ensue an even more horrible spectacle of pecking and clawing as each of the two birds tried to establish his supremacy? I waited nervously.

But, much to my surprise, both gulls flew off to join a flock of their fellow creatures that had congregated farther down the beach to resume their surveillance of the sea. The bloody battle I had feared did not happen. The only sound came from the wind and the gentle rise of the sea flowing onto the beach. I began to think that perhaps I had imagined the entire incident. Then I remembered that there was tangible proof – the object that had given rise to the drama in the first place.

My curiosity then turned to that object which lay, discarded, on the beach. I had to find out what it was before the sea claimed it or some other creature came along to snap it up. I ran to the water's edge, bent down and found – a cork from a champagne bottle!

Then it occurred to me that I had been watching a game, a drama of conflict, which for the gulls, may have helped to dispel the boredom of a gray and gloomy February afternoon. ■

NYCT MARCH MEETING CONTINUING EDUCATION AND ON-LINE COURSES

by Lana Rachkovskaya

Milena Savova, Director of the Translation Program at NYU introduced new courses to the audience. Apparently, NYU offers not only on-site courses but also on-line courses. This latter approach seems to be rather convenient for those who do not live within a close proximity to New York City or simply do not wish to commute. "The experience of teaching on-line is different, but people still learn a lot," – explained Milena. Both instructors and students work very hard. On-line learning eases the students into the translation environment; it feels more like a real job, as we all deliver our projects via e-mail and do our research on-line. This approach blends Internet resources into education.

Milena noted that with on-line learning, student participation increases. When we take regular courses on-site, we are more likely to just sit there, without participating; we don't make contact with the teacher or the group unless we really have to. When you take an on-line course, you really do have to participate, and sometimes it is just easier when you do it via e-mail.

On-line education is a team effort – the entire IT team that deals with technical issues, instructors, educators and students. Instructors are located all over the world which makes global knowledge

access much easier.

For a complete list of translation courses available at NYU go to <http://www.scps.nyu.edu/departments/department.jsp?deptId=11>.

Jon Ritzdorf who teaches several translation-related courses at NYU continued the topic of education. Jon teaches a course on CAT tools which includes hands-on training on Trados and SDLX. "CAT tools enhance your productivity, reduce the time for translators to perform non-translation tasks, help translators to remain consistent and organized and work smarter, not harder," – says Jon. In the end, knowing how to use CAT tools brings you to the 21st century of translation. "If you don't know CAT tools now, you are a decade behind," – advised Jon.

The CAT tools course is available every spring semester and continues for 12 weeks. It's on Wednesdays, 6:20pm-8:15pm. Contact NYU to register.

Jon also teaches a Website Translation and Localization course. This course is for strong MS Windows users on PC.

The course is designed for someone with little or no experience with website content, creation, layout or design. I took the course myself and highly recommend it.

This course is basically Localization 101 – you will acquire a number of technical skills during this course and learn about

HTML and other web formats.

The Website Translation and Localization course is available every fall semester and continues for 12 weeks. It's on Wednesdays, 6:20pm-8:15pm. Contact NYU to register.

Jon will start teaching a new course in May which is called "Translating" Services into Success. This course explains the business of translation from inside out. Once you understand how the entire process works, it empowers you to become a better business person. This course is for people who want to get a comprehensive view of the entire industry. It is basically a review wherein you will increase your understanding of the "translation food chain" and all steps in-between. Students will learn to price themselves competitively. Most freelance translators run their business without a good strategy. In this course you will learn what drives prices, you will learn tips and tricks from agencies who work with high-end clients.

"Translating" Services into Success course is available every summer semester from 5/16/07 to 7/11/07. It's on Wednesdays, 6:20pm-8:15pm. Contact NYU to register.

The discussion about the power of education continued over sushi and chicken Teriyaki at Asuza of Japan. ■

NYCT APRIL MEETING FINANCIAL TRANSLATIONS: REQUIREMENTS FOR FREELANCE TRANSLATORS

by Lana Rachkovskaya

Tudor Stancu, Vendor Manager at Bowne Translations Services reviewed their requirements for financial translators with the audience and explained what translating financial documents really involves.

Bowne Translations Services believes that (ideally) the best translators/editors are most likely to live in a country where the target language is spoken, and that translators should only work (whenever possible) into their mother tongue(s). Of course, there are exceptions and there are some great translators translating into foreign languages working in the US, however, this is the preference when working with financial documents.

Tudor started a discussion about who the financial translator really is? Is he/she a translator or a banker? What is more important? It seems that both skills are equally important to being successful in this specialty. Tudor went over some basic and general requirements for financial freelance translators:

- Expertise in the world's leading financial markets and regulatory agencies.
- Familiarity with the latest regulations and laws affecting the global financial services industry.
- Detail oriented
- Ethical business practice (Confidentiality)
- Translation memory (TM) knowledgeable

The ideal financial translator would have the following characteristics:

- Full-time freelance translator for a

period of two years or more

- College Translation degree
- Industry experience in his/her field(s) of specialization (or significant experience translating specialized material), or industry-relevant degree
- Accreditation by IFT (International Federation of Translators) member organization
- Ability and willingness to edit the work of other translators, comfortable working on translation updates
- Follows references and directions well
- Easy to contact, pleasant to work with
- Technically savvy. Has some concepts of TM, knows PowerPoint and Excel. Knows how to use electronic mark-up/comment tools in Acrobat; knows how to use FTP, etc.

Tudor explained that there are several types of financial documents.

Transactional documents include Merger Agreements, Initial Public Offerings, Prospectuses, Stock Options, Preferred Stock Purchase Agreements, Bankruptcy documents, Mortgages. Compliance (corporate) documents include Annual Reports (10-K, Form 8-K's, 6-K's and Section 16 documents), Auditor Reports, Shareholder Reports. And, finally, marketing documents include Fact Sheets and Red Herrings.

What would be the main specifics of the financial documents? Typically, your best friends - Quick Turnaround and Quality.

Tudor also explain what AAs (Author's Alterations) are. These are revisions to the document that could originate from

different sources. Two main types of AAs are: source AAs (revisions to the source document which typically need to be implemented into translations) and target AAs (revisions to the translations that could come from the legal department, in-country reviewers or any other internal reviewers – these changes are typically reviewed by the linguists and then are implemented into the documents). These changes could be both handwritten and electronic. And fast turnaround is the key here.

The following are the translation requirements for a financial translation:

- Comprehension
- Technical Accuracy
- Style
- Grammar / Spelling
- Vocabulary
- Presentation

Tudor also gave us a few examples of incorrect or tricky translations into French. The audience gladly participated.

The following list of on-line references was provided to the attendees:

www.nasdaq.com (National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc.)

www.sec.gov (U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission)

www.investorwords.com

www.nasdaq.com

www.specialinvestor.com/dictionary/r.html

Dinner took place at Dopo Teatro and the conversation continued over a nice Italian meal. ■

NYCT MAY MEETING PROJECT MANAGEMENT: IT TAKES 'THREE' TO TANGO

by Gloria Barragan

Kristi L. Gray, Client Services Manager, Eriksen Translations, gave a very interesting presentation on Project Management. She explained why, in this case, it takes 'three' to tango. She mentioned the importance of the 'three' main players involved in a translation project

Client > Project Manager > Vendor

A translation Project Manager is responsible for the overall coordination of any translation-related job for the client. The Project Manager is the link that connects the clients' needs with the vendors who are best equipped for the project.

As a Project Manager it is very important to have a background in the translation/localization field. A linguistic background is also very helpful. The Project Manager will be managing a team, making decisions when needed, and most importantly, taking the lead in the majority of cases.

Know your client – The project manager must know the client. Focusing on the client's needs will enhance the outcome of the project. It is important to carefully review and research the client's request before being too hasty to accept the terms. It is essential to keep the client happy and to confirm project specifications and requirements. Patience and calm are characteristics that good Project Managers should have. They should avoid rash or emotional decisions and

making promises they cannot keep. They should educate the client and when possible, design the workflow to include client participation. It is essential to provide updates to the client and the team throughout the project. Good Project Managers respect the fact that clients are deadline driven.

The Project Manager Needs To:

- Understand the clients' needs and set their expectations
- Establish the project team
- Ensure that the project team has the tools they need to be successful
- Manage many projects (this may mean five to twenty on any given day)
- Maintain the flow of information from the client to the vendor and from the vendor to the client
- Make sure the different phases are being completed
- Communicate with the client and with the vendor(s)

Qualities of an Effective Project Manager

- Detail oriented
- Diplomatic
- Able to solve problems and prioritize
- Able to work under pressure and meet deadlines (very important)
- Strong leadership skills
- Excellent communicator with strong negotiation skills

Steps in the Process:

- 1) The client who needs translation services either telephones, faxes, e-mails, or delivers a request.
 - (a) The project has to be analyzed;
 - (b) a quote has to be prepared;
 - (c) follow-up arrangements have to be made and carried out
 - (d) approval has to be obtained before the translation project begins. This process can sometimes take weeks.

General Guidelines:

Translation 2,000 to 3,000 words/day
 Editing: 1,000 words/hour
 Proofreading: 3,000 – 5,000 words/per hour (highly variable)
 DPT/Engineering
 Desktop Publishing/Formatting

- 2) The project scope has to be identified. The Project Manager has to make sure to have all the necessary information: Who is the client? What is the language combination? Do you have the finalized source document? What is the final delivery to the client? When is the due date? What is the budget?

In larger companies there are many people involved in the process. Determine who will answer your questions. Open communication has to be sustained with the translator, the editor and the reviewer. Important dates have to be identified.

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It is important to make sure the client specifies the target language required.

For example, if the client requires French, is it for Canada or France? If the client requires Portuguese, is it for Brazil or Portugal? If you don't know whether the Spanish required is for Latin America or Spain, universal Spanish is recommended. Take in consideration the country and target audience.

- 3) At the start of the translation project, try to confirm whether you have the final source document to be translated. Take in consideration possible changes and amendments that could affect the turn around time and the cost of the project.
- 4) Make sure you deliver in the format required by the client, e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, PDF file. Make sure the typesetting has been done.
- 5) Due date - Even though you are aware of the due date, you need to know the time, i.e. Monday at 5:00 p.m. eastern time. If the project is being delivered to a client in a different country, be aware of the different time zones.
- 6) Make sure you have remained within your budget. Budget and deadlines have to be combined.

Process

- Define your Project Plan and Team.
- Isolate and assign the individual tasks.
- Most translation projects include translation, editing, and proofreading.

- Other services such as typesetting may be part of the translation projects.
- Create the project plan and schedule.
- Manage the Team's communication. Write clear instructions and issue the Purchase Order. Have the files ready for translation. Provide reference material, e.g., glossaries. Keep a record of all queries and responses. Follow up throughout the project.
- Assemble reference material such as memory tools. It's a good idea to use references from a previous project. Be consistent with instructions. Manage any queries, ambiguity in text, incomplete sentences. Be aware of projects in many languages. Make sure all team members are aware of queries. Touch base with vendors to make sure everything is clear.

Quality Assurance and Delivery

- Review project specifications
- Review the final files
- Deliver
- It's important to validate client comments to ensure consistency and accuracy.
- Your translation team should review and implement the comments, if applicable
- Be aware of word changes, paragraph changes. Validate them. Tell the vendor/client why you cannot accept them. Make comments relevant to the process.

Building a Project Team

The following make up the project team:

- Project Managers
- Freelance vendors

- In-house resources

Each one plays a vital role

Vendor Focus

- Freelance translators are generally used for translation projects.
- Keep a database of freelance translators, their areas of expertise and project involvement for easy reference. Take into consideration prevailing rates in the market. PM must provide the tools for success – most importantly clear instructions and good guidance.
- Make sure vendors have all the tools necessary for the smooth delivery of the project.

Finding the Right Vendor

There is no magic place to find good translators:

- Academic programs
- Networking
- Existing relationships
- Translators involved in ongoing work
- Referrals

Feedback and collaboration can help to make a successful project.

Management of Costs

The PM has to calculate the allowance for each stage of production, and then look for vendors who have the qualifications for the job, with the right price. They should look for vendors whose fees allow them to have some flexibility.

- Find the right person for the job
- Employ vendors with the right style, expertise, who will add value to your efforts.
- Keep the lines of communication open.

Quality and Cost Control

- Develop ways of testing and providing feedback to new vendors.
- Establish translation terms.
- Efficiency and familiarity with the client's style will save time and money
- Show respect for your vendors.
- Treat them well; pay them well and on time. Be honest and open
- Be patient; listen; accept responsibility.

Kristi answered several questions on general guidelines to determine how many words a translator can translate in

a day. How many words per hour in the proofreading process? Comments were made as to how important it is to educate the client. The question of payment came up. Why are translation agencies taking so long to pay translators and proofreaders? Why are jobs being sent abroad where the competition is not fair according to our standard of living in the USA? Is the use of CAT tools a requirement for the translator and proofreader?

Some 28 to 30 members attended the meeting. After the meeting, 13 members went to Heartland Brewery to enjoy a

wonderful American cuisine networking dinner.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Kristi Gray is an in-house client specialist at Eriksen Translations. She is an account manager for several major clients in government and financial services, while also working closely with Eriksen's business development manager. Before joining Eriksen in 2005, Kristi worked as a senior account manager for Language Works, Inc. and in the translation department of the Merrill Corporation. While at Merrill, she was responsible for leading translation projects and coordinating workflow within production teams. Kristi Gray also teaches a course on Project Management at NYU. ■

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gets the scholarship, and I get more work. So, everybody is happy except me because of the little thought that keeps nagging at my conscience: I wrote that essay, I did not translate it. Other candidates whose essays were read in the language in which they were written were evaluated not just on what they wrote, but also on the way they wrote it.

Fortunately, these were all thoughts that ran through my mind the night before I began the translation and, since the essay was well written in the source language, I did not have to make any decisions. It certainly is not a black and white issue. It occurred to me that, in many ways, making something read well could also be considered editing except for the fact that it occurs in the interstices between languages.

Ever since my early college days, I have picked up a little extra money editing theses and dissertations – and with the blessing of the students' advisors. Many students have been told to get an editor. People get jobs based, at least partially, on résumés written by professionals. In ancient times, professional scribes even wrote love letters for swains longing for a mate. Surely, enlisting the services of a scribe who had a way with words would be an advantage.

These are just a few of the ethical issues facing translators today. They are not major issues – certainly nothing on the scale of an anti-torture resolution – and within our organizations, we may someday develop guidelines for dealing with them but, in the meantime, we are all on our own. ■

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A RECENT GRADUATE'S PERSPECTIVE ON NYU'S CERTIFICATE IN TRANSLATION PROGRAM

by Nicole Lisa

This spring I completed the Certificate in Translation at New York University. I had been working for three years as a Spanish to English translator with non-profit organizations and unions when I decided to complete the certificate program. I had three specific goals: make sure my translation skills were the best they could be, develop professionally and become more marketable as a translator. Overall, the certificate program helped me meet my goals, but not always in the way I expected.

SKILLS

While my instructors taught me that many of the skills and techniques I had developed by trial and error during my years of learning on the job had names and theory behind them, I came to the program already possessing many of the necessary skills. However, an instructor, unlike a client, tells you exactly where you've gone wrong and the many places you've gone right.

Still it was like starting out as a translator all over again. Software contracts, steel manufacturing, organic chemistry?! Homework assignments of less than 400 words sometimes took me seven hours. I needed enormous amounts of perseverance and discipline to struggle through assignments. It was like a crash course in contract law, steel manufacturing and petroleum refineries.

I saw classmates struggling with the

same issues and sometimes even dropping out of the program when the subject matter was too foreign for them. It made me wonder if there should be a class to bridge the gap between Introduction to Translation and the much harder classes in specific fields or if the program should be organized around students' already existing strengths and interests.

Beyond gaining a basic understanding of translating for different fields, my instructors shared many other tools that I use everyday, including online and offline glossaries, dictionaries and articles, many of which are considered industry standards. Even more importantly, discussions with instructors and my classmates helped me hone my research skills and I learned about online search methods I hadn't known existed.

I also learned invaluable organizational skills: never to change a file name unless a client asks you to, and how to create a terminology database, something I had only done haphazardly before. And because I took computer assisted translation, I also learned to use CAT tools and was convinced of their value in improving accuracy and speed and reducing the rote work that is a part of any translator's day.

I took three classes online and three in person classes and, as is necessary in any educational program, I tuned into the grapevine to learn what other students had to say about finding the best classes

and instructors. It was a challenge, since a large number of classes are now offered online and it's harder to make connections with virtual students. I solved it by finding two instructors I liked and taking all my classes with them. That's not necessarily the best answer however, and I really wished NYU had a program-wide chat room or list serve where students could ask each other questions such as: Is this instructor not only a good translator but also a good teacher? Does he or she know how to use the online technology to conduct a virtual class? I would have liked to learn from more instructors since I'm sure there are as many ways of working as a translator as there are translators.

The upside of conducting classes online is that it seems that there are fewer cancellations than when I first enrolled in the program almost four years ago and the classes you need or want to take are more often available. Online classes are also able to call on a wide range of instructors from translation programs around the world.

The downside is that you lose the face to face interaction that makes connecting with instructors and classmates just a little bit easier.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

While the NYU program provides a good grounding in translation skills and an introduction to the skills needed for

different fields, because professional development doesn't seem to be written into the syllabus anywhere, students must squeeze questions into the time allocated for translating.

My fellow classmates and I peppered our instructors with the questions that loomed large in our minds about what a translator's life looks like and how a translator becomes successful.

Instructors tried to answer our questions, but, however knowledgeable the instructor, there was always a frustrating sense that this was just one translator's perspective and a broader view of the industry as a whole was missing.

Because I felt that the classes required for the certificate did not address questions such as resumes, pricing or finding work, I'm taking Translating Services into Success: The Business of Translation from the Inside Out, a new class offered for the first time at NYU that is not a part of the certificate but should be. I'm halfway through the eight week class and it's been jam-packed with practical information so far.

NYU also holds a seminar once a year in the spring that I highly recommend. The topic for this year's seminar was How to Get Into the Translation Business and featured speakers from three agencies and a freelance translator. The speakers were excellent and the attendees avidly took advantage of the Q&A session at the end. The seminar is available online at http://nyuonline.scps.nyu.edu/translation/03_24_07event.html.

Other opportunities for professional development come through networking,

in this case with other students. I've made friends and contacts among my peers that I hope will last for years. I've already referred them for jobs in languages or fields I don't work in, and I hope they will do the same for me.

Because of the NYU program I've established a community of translators and although I still work alone at a computer, I don't feel as isolated as a translator. Now when I enter a classroom or a NYCT meeting, there are even more friendly faces than before.

MARKETABILITY

At the end of six classes and almost two years of education, have I achieved my goal of becoming more attractive as a translator?

I have gained confidence in my skills, and that is an invaluable part of marketing oneself. I take advantage of opportunities more often, because of that confidence. And I've finally figured out what a translator's resume should look like.

I have a better understanding of the extent of my expertise, and its horizons are both wider and closer than I thought. I learned that becoming a translator to escape past careers is impossible, because it's precisely that experience that makes you valuable to clients and agencies. For example, I now capitalize on the fact that I've worked with lawyers in the field of women's health and family law for ten years in my resume and marketing strategies. Skills from former career incarnations are still useful and may be in as much demand as translating skills. The need for freelancers in the

industry goes beyond the need for translators; agencies and clients also hire freelance project managers, editors, proofreaders, desktop publishers and engineers, just to name a few.

I have just begun the process of courting agencies and different types of clients but I believe that my new perspective on myself as a translator and the time I have invested will pay off with more clients and bigger projects.

WHAT YOU MAKE OF IT

Like any other program, the NYU certificate is what you make of it and you get out of it what you put into it.

I put in a lot of hard work and an eagerness to learn and get to know my classmates. In return, my instructors were generous with their time and knowledge, my classmates feel like colleagues, and I've built a powerful network of peers and mentors whose expertise I can tap into. I gained confidence in my skills as a translator and new insights on what I need to do to continue to move forward.

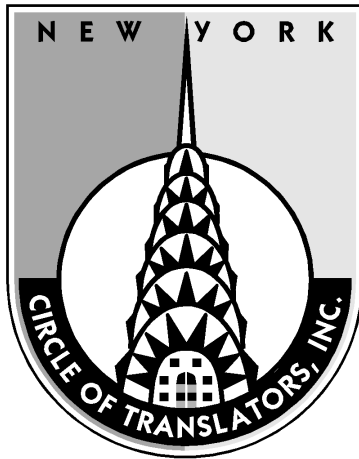
In a few more weeks, I should also have a piece of paper stating I have successfully completed the certificate program. Every time I see it, I will remember to look back at what I've learned and apply it to the future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Nicole Lisa works as a Spanish to English translator, editor and web manager for clients such as Doctors without Borders and UNIFEM. She specializes in the intersections between women's health and rights, human rights, the environment and law. She can be contacted at nltranslation@yahoo.com. ■



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The New York Circle of Translators (NYCT) is a New York State not-for-profit corporation grouping independent translators and interpreters as well as companies and organizations. It is a chapter of the American Translators Association (ATA) which is, in turn, an affiliate of the International Federation of Translators (FIT).

NYCT members work in a variety of languages and specialties. Our members are committed to the exchange of ideas and mutual support. One of our goals is to educate the general public about the professional nature of interpreting and translating.

NYCT members enjoy the following benefits:

- Free monthly meetings featuring speakers on all aspects of the translation profession
- Networking opportunities at monthly dinners and annual holiday party
- Professional development workshops and seminars
- Subscription to our newsletter, The Gotham Translator
- Listings in the NYCT Online Membership Directory and the annual NYCT printed Membership Directory
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