



# THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE WITHOUT YOU...WE'RE NOTHING

by Margaret Altieri

**T**he theme of this issue of the Gotham is all about “YOU”, and I’d like to build on this thought to talk about a larger issue — also about YOU. I have two points for your consideration. In my opening message to the membership back in January, I mentioned that the New York Circle of Translators draws its strength (and its board members) from its membership ranks. Board members are volunteers, and each year we struggle to field a full slate of officer candidates.

We are a small organization (a few hundred members) and many of our long-term members have already served on the board (and in other capacities). We have a good crop of new members each year who can surely provide a fresh

perspective for the Circle. This would allow our more senior members to volunteer as “committee chairs” for special chapter activities — such as mentoring — where an experienced hand is a definite plus. I know that people move away, life situations change, and I realize that many members are juggling multiple responsibilities — work, school, family, health issues. However, active membership participation in the Circle is something that we all have a stake in. In the rich multi-lingual and multi-ethnic environment that is the tri-state region, the Circle performs a vital function as a source of job opportunities for its members and as a language services beacon for the outside community. Your participation in the Circle is “the gift that keeps

on giving” (your effort reaps more visibility for you).

The other point about YOU concerns the Circle’s website and directory. Circle membership functions have always been, and continue to be, YOU-centric.

New members apply online to join; current members update their contact

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information and specialties directly through the membership screens. Employers search the online directory and contact potential candidates directly. E-mail lists and mailing lists are also extracted from the online directory. The advantages of this approach are two-fold: the member has complete control (and security) over the contents of his/her membership profile and can respond directly to outside offers; secondly, the Board can focus its energies on the programs and activities that benefit all members, rather than on the clerical functions that

are best performed by the individual members themselves. So please keep your profile up-to-date — it's YOU all the way. As we move into our fall schedule (our Program Director, Lana, has planned lots of interesting activities), we will also be issuing a call for nominations for board positions. Candidates for the President must be active (voting) members of the ATA, while other officers need only be individual members (either active or associate) of the ATA. Please consider participating because without YOU...we're nothing. ■

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## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

by Rosene Zaros

Language is slippery. We, as translators and interpreters, are

very aware of the semantic problems involving the use of pronouns, and semanticists have written at length about the inherent ambiguities. From a theoretical standpoint, it is fascinating to think about these “shifters.”

Especially intriguing are the first- and second-person pronouns and how they function in discourse. In practice “I” become your “you” and vice versa.

There is no noun subject that can replace either pronoun without altering the sense. Thus, “you” and “I” are very special. And, together, “you” and “I” become “we.”

In this issue, we are focusing on “you” in a variety of ways — “you” (singular and plural) as both subject and object. And, the implied subject of all imperatives is “you.” So, it really is “all about you.” But, in order that anything be accomplished, there has to be a shift to “I”. “I” can take action, “I” can choose to become involved, “I” can make a difference, and in the end, it is “I” who will also benefit from having taken action. “You” will be aware of my existence; “you” will know that “I” have done something.

Newsletters should fulfill many of the same functions for their readers as do

general newspapers. One of these is to make readers aware of what is happening in the field of Translation and Interpretation, and this goes beyond technical articles and articles dealing with the business of translation. The theme of our October 2005 issue was “A Profession Challenged.” In the current political climate, we have to face some difficult moral and ethical issues and oftentimes we do not have all the facts. Sometimes those in power go so far as to attempt to stifle the voices of those who would bring us the facts.

It is important that we read very carefully. As Helene Cooper pointed out in the New York Times on July 28, there is a big difference between “work toward an ‘immediate cease-fire’” and “‘work immediately’ toward a cease-fire.” We also have to be alert to language that deliberately obfuscates an issue. Is the information that we are being given relevant to the issue?

In an effort to keep all our readers informed, we have printed a number of articles dealing with the Mohamed Yousry case, which is still ongoing. In this issue, we are printing Aaron Ruby’s “Open Letter to NAJIT Members and Members of the Translation and Interpreting Profession in General” (which deals with a different issue) as well as a

draft resolution for adoption by NAJIT along with some references for the resolution. This draft resolution is in the hands of the Advocacy Committee which is charged with reviewing it and bringing it to the national board and then to the membership. Mr. Ruby was expelled from the Advocacy Committee by Isabel Frammer immediately following the conference without being provided a reason. He will be presenting the Resolution at the ATA Conference in November.

These are very important moral and ethical issues that are now facing our profession. The time has come to take a long, hard look at where we, as a nation, are going and what should be our role, as translators and interpreters, in shaping that destiny. Now may be a good time to think about these lines from John Donne:

*No man is an island, entire of itself  
every man is a piece of the continent,  
a part of the main  
if a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less, as well as if a  
promontory were,  
as well as if a manor of thy friends or  
of thine own were  
any man’s death diminishes me,  
because I am involved in mankind  
and therefore never send to know for  
whom the bell tolls  
it tolls for thee.*

Please express your support for the Draft Resolution to the Board of NAJIT

## Draft Resolution for Adoption by NAJIT

**Condemning the Cooperation of Interpreters and Translators in Physical and Mental Abuse and Torture of Military Prisoners and Detainees, and in Interrogations of Prisoners Held in Violation of International Law and the U.S. Constitution**

WHEREAS, it is the privilege of the Interpreters and Translators to facilitate communication across linguistic barriers in the service of humanity, to enable a greater understanding and respect between language groups, and to remove the language barrier to the extent possible to enable equal access to justice.

WHEREAS, the utmost respect for human life and dignity is to be maintained even under threat, and no use made of any linguistic knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity; and,

WHEREAS, the NAJIT Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibilities states in part:

“The function of court interpreters and translators is to remove the language barrier to the extent possible, so that such persons’ access to justice is the same as that of similarly situated English speakers for whom no such barrier exists. The degree of trust that is placed in court interpreters and the magnitude of their responsibility necessitate high, uniform ethical standards that will both guide and protect court interpreters in the course of their duties as well as uphold the standards of the profession as a whole.”

WHEREAS, Translators and Interpreters serving in non-combat roles and for the military are bound by the laws of humanity and international law to respect wounded combatants, injured civilians, and enemy prisoners and to report any evidence of abuse of detainees; and,

WHEREAS, the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, U.S. Army regulations, and the War Crimes Act require all military personnel not to engage in and to report acts of abuse or torture; and,

WHEREAS, professional associations including the World Medical Association, American Medical Association, American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association, American College of Preventive Medicine, American Public Health Association have adopted resolutions stating that professionals in their respective fields may not participate in or facilitate torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading procedures of prisoners or detainees in any situations; and,

WHEREAS, it has been widely reported that civilian and military Interpreters and Translators engaged with the U.S. military in Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan and Iraq and elsewhere may have failed to protect detainees’ rights, failed to promptly report injuries or deaths caused by beatings, failed to report acts of psychological and sexual degradation, and sometimes collaborated with abusive interrogators and guards; and

WHEREAS, it has been widely reported that prisoners are being secretly held in a state of exception, referred to as “extraordinary rendition” for purposes of secret interrogation commonly understood as torture, and such interrogations use Interpreters and Translators, and such treatment constitutes a violation of the laws of humanity, the United States Constitution, and specifically Article 3 of the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT), which states:

“No State Party shall expel, return (“refouler”) or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture;

THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED: That NAJIT condemns any participation in, cooperation with, or failure to report by Interpreters and Translators the mental or physical abuse, sexual degradation, cruel treatment, or torture of prisoners or detainees; and be it further

RESOLVED That NAJIT supports the rights of Interpreters and Translators to be protected from retribution for refusing to participate or cooperate in abuse or torture, or deprivation of rights in military or other settings; and be it further

RESOLVED That the work and participation of Interpreters and Translators must always be limited to a lawful setting governed by a system of rights and due process afforded all prisoners without exception in accordance with International Law and the U.S. Constitution, and absent the fundamental elements of justice, Interpreters and Translators must refrain from participation in or facilitation of such processes; and be it further

RESOLVED That NAJIT urges schools and programs responsible for the education and training of Interpreters and Translators to include training in ethical conduct and internationally recognized codes of professional behavior, and urges that the fundamental conclusions of this resolution be incorporated into Interpreter and Translator codes of ethics.

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## REFERENCES FOR RESOLUTION

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- American Public Health Association, Resolution: *Condemning the Cooperation of Health Professional Personnel in Physical and Mental Abuse and Torture of Military Prisoners and Detainees*
- American Medical Association Resolution E-2.067 "Torture," and proposed resolution 10 (A-05), "Opposing Cooperation of Physicians and Health Professionals in Torture" at [www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org).
- Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Accessed at <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/91.htm>
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- United States Army Regulation AFJ131-304. Accessed at [www.army.mil/usapa/epubs/multi\\_services\\_1.html](http://www.army.mil/usapa/epubs/multi_services_1.html).
- War Crimes Act of 1996 [18USC Section 2441] Accessed at <http://www2.uakron.edu/law/war%20crimes%20Act%20of%201996.doc>
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- APHA Policy Statements 7315(1/1/73): *Health Care in Jails and Prisons* and 200125(1/1/01): *Participation of Health Professionals in Capital Punishment*
- American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association, *Joint Resolution Against Torture*
- American College of Preventive Medicine, Policy Resolution # 03-05, *Opposing Cooperation of Physicians and Health Professionals in Torture*
- Official Policies of the American Psychiatric Association, *Psychiatric participation in interrogation of detainees* (forthcoming, May 2006)
- *Ethics and National Security*, Remarks by Olivia Moorehead-Slaughter, Chair of the APA Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security (PENS), published in the Monitor on Psychology, Volume 37, No. 4 April 2006. Accessed at <http://www.apa.org/monitor/apr06/security.html>
- *Abu Ghraib Doctors Knew of Torture, Says Lancet Report*, By Guardian Newspapers, 8/19/2004 Accessed at: <http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/8-19-2004-58101.asp>
- *Professor Accuses Doctors in Iraq Abuse*, By EMMA ROSS, AP Medical Writer, Associated Press, August 22, 2004

## AN OPEN LETTER TO NAJIT MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING PROFESSION IN GENERAL

Dear members of NAJIT:

We were shocked and deeply troubled that the NAJIT board decided to invite Everett Jordan of the National Virtual Translation Center as this conference's keynote speaker. NAJIT is an organization of professional interpreters and translators. If it is the desire of the leadership to bring in speakers representing specific views and activities, then in the interest of fairness opportunity must be granted to opposing points of view. It is disturbing that a representative of organizations widely condemned for violations of human rights and our constitution has been invited to give the keynote address at our conference. Why is this political agenda being forced upon members of NAJIT, especially as further governmental abuses involving the NSA become known?

Some might assert that Mr. Jordan's speech is merely about job opportunities in the intelligence field and is therefore not political. Such claims are simply not credible.

Mr. Jordan is the Director of the National Virtual Translation Center, which serves the CIA, FBI, National Security Agency and Military Intelligence, among others. Many of these organizations were directly involved in the Abu-Ghraib, Guantánamo and Afghanistan torture scandals as well as murders of prisoners. Specifically, U.S. Military Intelligence oversaw the infamous Abu-Ghraib and Guantánamo interrogations, rapes, and other forms of abuse. In fact, the administration is currently holding an unknown number of people without trial for indefinite incarceration periods in secret prisons around the world. Interpreters hired by these organizations are directly implicated in the physical and psychological abuse of prisoners, and in the violation of their religious and cultural beliefs.

The National Security Agency, with the indispensable assistance of the National Virtual Translation Center's translators and interpreters, is engaged in domestic spying and wiretapping of phones and email correspondence — as has been recently revealed. Equating lawful protests and political dissent with a security threat, millions of people in the United States, including religious centers and organizations, environmentalists, immigrant rights activists, civil and democratic rights organizations, anti-war protesters and political organizations are being spied upon.

A keynote speaker is the central figure at a conference. An invitation to be a keynote speaker is tantamount to an endorsement of that person, their organization and professional record. As other professional organizations have done, e.g. the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association, NAJIT has a duty to admonish its membership not to participate in acts of torture and not to participate in unconstitutional civil rights violations. To invite a high-level figure of an organization linked to such wrongdoing to be the keynote speaker at our conference lends an air of respectability to such activities and is offensive to the moral principles of our profession.

There are members of NAJIT who do not want to assist the government in its war, as they consider it to be illegal and wrong. There are members who do not want to assist the government in its spying on its citizenry, as they believe that is a violation of the Constitution. Let us not forget when Martin Luther King was deemed a threat to national security and Nelson Mandela was classified as a terrorist. Many members do not want to participate in interrogations or torture of prisoners held without rights. We recall the internment of the Japanese and now Abu-Ghraib. We believe that no one should have to abandon or be deprived of their rights, freedoms, or independent opinion.

By this letter we wish to state that we feel that the selection of this keynote speaker is unfair to the membership because it fails to respect the deep differences in opinion throughout this professional association and the United States. One of NAJIT's tenets is that:

*Members are encouraged continually to upgrade their skills, and to share their knowledge and expertise with the members of the profession and allied professions involved in education and the administration of justice.*

It is our hope that our professional organization will uphold its legitimate role of upgrading the profession of judiciary interpreters and translators, and not allow itself to be used as a potential recruiting station for unethical activities involving the translation and interpreting community. We are reminded of NAJIT's mission to promote due process and linguistic justice. We should aim higher.

Sincerely,

Aaron Ruby	Felipe Perez	Terri Shaw	Teresa Lopez	Victoria Kirchgessner
Madeline Ríos	Edward Bujosa	Diana Donatti	Patricia Rubio	Ola Joseph
James Clark	Rossy Franklin	Pablo Donatti	Bridget Hylak	Mariana Harari Froment
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Please add your name in support of this statement. If you sign this statement please send an email to [translationethics@swbell.net](mailto:translationethics@swbell.net) as well to confirm your support.

# NOBODY BUT YOU

by Rosene Zaros

If you translate into English, you can really identify with the song, “Nobody But You,” by the Backstreet Boys. In English, there is only “you.” It is formal, informal, singular, plural, subject, direct and indirect object, object of preposition, and so on. There’s only “you.” It’s easy. There may be an occasional problem when you have to make it clear that “you” should be understood as a plural.

This is not the case if you are translating from English into other languages where you may be faced with a myriad of choices for how to translate “you.” It is also a problem for English speakers learning another language. In the past, when my students would ask me, “How do you say ‘you’ in Spanish,” I would reply: “That depends...” It was difficult for them to comprehend why there was no simple one-word answer and that sometimes you didn’t even use a word. It’s “in the verb!”

Because I had lived in Spain and learned Spanish there, I also wanted them to be aware of the “vosotros” form. I had had the uncomfortable experience of being in a Spanish literature class with some people from Latin America who, when faced with the sentence “Dejad que cante el muchacho,” thought that we were dealing with “old Spanish!” I really wanted my students to be aware that, in Spain, the “vosotros” form actually is used, but having to decide which of four subject pronouns to use when they were used (pun intended) to dealing with only “you” was difficult for them. “Why do they do that?” and “Why can’t there be just one word?” and “Would they under-

stand if I just said...?” were constant questions.

I thought that it might be easier if they were aware that, in the past, English, too, had more than one word for “you,” and that they had separate and distinct uses. So, since I knew far less about the history of the English language than I knew about the history of the French and Spanish languages, I decided that some research was in order. I could not simply

mention “thou,” “thee,” and “ye”

when I didn’t even know how they had functioned. With this in mind, I decided to check out *Wikipedia*, which explained that the word “thou” is the nominative case form of a second person pronoun of the English language and “thee” is

accusative/dative. Since many of my students have difficulty with grammar, I decided to stick with subject and direct/indirect object. The words were not completely new to them and they were already aware that we continue to find the pronoun used in certain contexts:

- In some regional dialects of England and Scotland
- In some religious contexts
- In certain fixed phrases, e.g. “holier than thou,” “fare thee well.”
- By Quakers
- As an archaism.

The word “thou” originates from the

Proto-Indo-European “tu,” and is cognate with Sanskrit, Latin, French, Spanish, Catalan, Italian, Irish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Portuguese and Romanian “tu” or “tú.” In fact, a cognate form of this pronoun exists in almost every Indo-European language.

When “thou” was in common use as a second person singular pronoun, its second person plural form was “ye” as subject and “you” as object. Before the

Norman Conquest, “thou/thee” was used to address a single person while “ye/you” was used when addressing more than one. As French evolved, it became customary to address a social superior or stranger with the plural pronoun “vous” while “tu” was intimate, but could also be condescending or

insulting to the ears of a stranger.

In languages that use pronouns to express familiarity or social distance toward the addressee, this has come to be known as the T-V distinction based on the first letters of the pronouns in many of those languages. For example, in the Romance languages, we have the French “tu-vous” and the Spanish “tú-usted,” which is short for “vuestra merced.” Among Slavic languages, Russian has “Ты-Вы.” When English acquired some of this from the French after the Norman Conquest, there are even reports of “thou/thee” being used as an insult, but

*continued on page 13*

## WHAT IS THE WORD FOR "YOU" IN PORTUGUESE?

by Danilo Nogueira

This brief note is dedicated to all those who have spent a long time learning Spanish and want to add Portuguese as an easy "second" more or less in the same manner a German symphony orchestra would throw in a Strauss waltz as a "bonbon" to finish off an otherwise all-Bruckner night with a light touch.

**A** couple of years ago I flew to Porto Alegre. At the client's office and after introductions, a young man asked: *Você já conhecia Porto Alegre? (Had you been in Porto Alegre before?)*, addressing me as *você*, the pronoun we use for equals and inferiors. I replied that I had lived for some time in the city, liked it very much and demonstrated my love in a few short sentences. The man started addressing me as *tu*, the pronoun reserved for family and friends in Rio Grande do Sul. I had been accepted.

Elsewhere in Brazil, *tu* is dying out. People are either *você* or *o senhor*.

Judges, who should be *Vossa Excelência*, are often addressed as plain *o senhor* by witnesses (but not by lawyers). During press conferences, journalists address the president as *o senhor*; not *Vossa Excelência*. The Pope is still *His Holiness* but *o senhor* has to do most of the time for the Archbishop and for the Chief Rabbi. We have very little time for formality. We got a big country to run.

On the rare occasions when *tu* is used outside Rio Grande do Sul, it usually takes a third-person verb: *tu gosta?* instead of *tu gostas?* and always assumes an intimate relationship. You don't address a stranger as *tu* in Brazil. Strangers may be *você*, but never *tu*.

*Você* is a very interesting word. It always takes the verb in the third person: *você gosta?* and grammarians refuse to classify it as a pronoun. For all they know, *você / vocês* are *forms of treatment* and the second-person pronoun is *tu / vós*. From a historical standpoint, they are right: *você* is short for *vossa mercê* (*your*

*mercy*), and that is why it takes the verb in the third person. Historically, according to grammarians, when I say *você*, I am talking to *your mercy*, not to *you*. So I should address my words to *her* (mercy being of the feminine gender in Portuguese) and use the verb in the third person.

The same happens in English: *You know* but *Your Excellency knows*. The habit of addressing people indirectly through their honorific titles seems to have developed in Latin and passed on to several other languages.

As I said, diachronically, *você* may be a *forma de tratamento*, but it now functions as any other pronoun.

### Spanish Interlude

But, please, remember that the Spanish *usted*, through analogous to *você*, is *formal*, not *familiar* and *tu* is very much alive in that language. So you don't address a Spanish-speaking person as *usted* just because you would call him *você* in Brazil. On second thought, you might, since they are a lot more formal than us and often use *usted* when we would use plain *você*. But that is another story.

### Back to Portuguese, now in Portugal

This *você*-thing is more Brazilian than Portuguese. Even a few years ago, the Portuguese used *você* somewhat dis-

paragingly to address their inferiors, but never their equals. I still remember a Portuguese merchant spitting *vocês* at his employees, while he reserved *o senhor* for customers and *tu* for his partner. *Tu* is very much alive over there too.

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Now, Brazilian soap operas and music are all the rage in Portugal and our ways are affecting theirs. So you already hear a lot of *você* in Lisbon.

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Now, Brazilian soap operas and music are all the rage in Portugal and our ways are affecting theirs. So you already hear a lot of *você* in Lisbon. But they do not seem to

feel very comfortable with that.

In addition, in Portugal, they use pronouns a lot less than in Brazil and things like *would you like some more wine?* often came out as *o Danilo quer mais vinho? (Would Danilo like some more wine)* as if I were somebody else. This is possible in Brazil, but extremely rare, perhaps humorous, sarcastic or used to talk to children.

At a Lisbon restaurant, a colleague was addressed as *a doutora gostaria de...* (*would the doctor like to...*) again as if she were somebody else.

In Portugal, as in Rio Grande do Sul, *tu* is for family and friends.

Many years ago part of my family moved from Portugal to Brazil and I was astonished to hear them addressing me as *vossemeçê*, an intermediary form between *Vossa Mercê* and *você* used for young children at the time. I am not sure this usage is still alive. Maybe in rural areas. Didn't hear it during a recent visit

to Lisbon. Not that I am a child any longer either.

**Back to Brazil, this time formally**

*Você* is the most common form of address in Brazil. We have always been less formal than the Portuguese and are becoming more and more informal. *O senhor*, the corresponding formal address, is used less and less. When I was young, everybody whose age exceeded mine by more than a few years was *o senhor*. Today few of the youngsters I know address me as *senhor*.

Young children may add a *tio* (*uncle*) as a handle here and there, but it is usually *tio Danilo, você quer...* and not *tio Danilo, o senhor quer...*

Even professionals are often addressed as *você*. If I used anything but *Denise, você...* in talking to my dentist she would think something was wrong, but then she is young enough to be my daughter.

However, if you address someone as *você* and the addressee replies addressing you as *o senhor*, that can either show respect or a be a pointed remark meaning that distances should be kept.

In Brazilian mailing lists, where everybody is *você*, a message to *senhor X* or referring to *o senhor* spells trouble. As soon as the sky is bright again, people start *vocêing* everybody else.

**What about vós?**

*Vós*, the plural of *tu*, has died out in Brazil. The last person I heard addressing a group as *vós* was president Juscelino Kubitschek, back in the late fifties. Now it is either *vocês* or *os senhores*. *Os senhores* is considered too stiff and we often address a group as *vocês* even if we would address individual

members as *o senhor*.

*Vós* as a polite form of address to a single person has also disappeared, even in addressing God. When I learned to pray, back in the fifties, it was *que estais no céu* (*who art in heaven*). Now it is *que está*, indicating that the Lord is either *você* or *o senhor*—but certainly not *tu* or *vós*.

Strangely enough, *tu*, which was considered too rude for use when addressing the butcher, was often used to address God. The theory behind this is that, God being our best friend, we ought to address Him as a member of the family. Not very convincing, I tell you.

**Of handles and articles**

If you feel you should address people as *o senhor*, you must add a handle to their names too. Curiously, we can add handles to first names. So, people who address me as *senhor*, also call me “*seu*” *Danilo*. This particular “*seu*” is always used between inverted commas in written Portuguese. (Spoken Portuguese does not use inverted commas...) The reason is “*seu*” is a shortened form of *o senhor* developed by slaves and it seems the quotes are useful to explain that we know it is wrong, but...

Even doctors may be addressed by their first names, with handles. If I were a doctor—which I am not—it would be *Doutor Danilo, o senhor gostaria de...* Also, we can freely add articles to names: *o Danilo disse que ...* (*Danilo said that...*). In other countries, people may add articles before proper nouns to show contempt or scorn, but not here.

Even my mother says *o Danilo*—and I am her only son. This is quite Southern; however, North of Rio, names do not take articles. Don’t forget that the population of Brazil is concentrated in the center and south of the country.

**The President and I are on a first-name basis**

Even members of government are usually known by their first names, a custom that creates some strange differences between English-language texts on Brazil and what could be their Brazilian counterparts: *President Cardoso: o Fernando Henrique; President Quadros: o Jânio*. My parents have always referred to the *Vargas Era* as *o tempo do Getúlio*.

As long as he is the President, the President will be addressed as *Presidente*, but informally referred to as *o Fernando Henrique*. If he were not the president, he would probably have been *o Doutor Fernando*. His full name is *Fernando Henrique Cardoso*, and his has always been *Fernando* or formally *Fernando H. Cardoso*, but he had to select two components as his political name when elected to the Senate and thought *Fernando Henrique* would be better.

Very few Brazilians are addressed by their family names. When a Brazilian prefers his family name it usually means that his first name is very common and he wants to be seen apart from the herd. It may also mean he hates his given name for some reason we better not discuss here.

The case with writers is even more interesting. Because we often keep our mothers’ maiden names as a middle name, most of us have double family names (My full name is *Danilo*

*continued on next page*

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When a Brazilian prefers his family name it usually means that his first name is very common.

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*Ameixeiro Nogueira*, good for a great laugh, because it means *Plumtree - Walnuttree*). Many writers use those double family names as their pen names.

We usually know them by the first of those names, but foreigners usually prefer the last—if they know the guy at all. So *José Maria d’Eça de Queirós*, who signed his writings *Eça de Queiroz*, may be *Queirós* or *Queiroz* to you, but is *Eça* to me. Same with *Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis*, (*Machado de Assis*) which may be *Assis* abroad, but is *Machado* in Brazil, and was always called *Machado* by his friends.

**Dealing with females**

The correct handle for a woman’s name is *dona*. If you ever meet my wife and decide you should address her as *a senhora* (which I recommend you don’t), it would be *dona Vera, a senhora quer...* Better go the *você* way: *Vera, você quer...*

Never, never, never address a Brazilian woman by her husband’s family name. If you call her *senhora Nogueira*, my wife probably wouldn’t even notice that you were referring to her.

*Ruth Cardoso*, the President’s wife is *Doutora Ruth* (she has a degree in anthropology) or *Dra. Ruth Cardoso*, on formal occasions. She probably won’t mind being called just *dona Ruth*. But don’t call her *senhora Cardoso*, please. If you want to know the name of a married woman whose husband you know, ask someone *como se chama a esposa do doutor Antônio?* (*What is the name of Dr. Antonio’s wife*) and you will hear

something like *Ah, a dona Márcia?* And, of course, *senhorita* has been dead for ages. The way we address a woman in these parts does not depend on her marital status.

We place our pronouns where we damn well please and say things like *Me dá o livro!* using the pronoun to start a sentence, which is taboo in Portugal, even worse than using a preposition to end an English sentence with.

Women still add their husband’s name to theirs when they get married. A woman that makes a professional name for herself before getting married often continues signing her maiden name at the office to avoid the trouble of telling everybody that *Márcia Antunes* is now *Márcia Antunes da Silva*. She will sign a check with her full name, though. In any case, she will

probably go on being *Márcia*. Or something like *Márcia da Contabilidade*, if the company happens to employ several *Márcias* and this particular one works in Accounting.

Unfortunately, American companies refuse to accept this local custom and make a point of having their e-mails as *SilvaMA@br.something.com* a demonstration of cultural intolerance that creates a lot of trouble locally. We most learn that *Márcia Antunes* is *SilvaMA*, and keep an index cross-referencing such things.

**Of subjects and objects**

But I’m letting myself go astray, as usual. *You* is both object and subject, as you know. In Portuguese, as in other languages, the *you* in *you know him* is different from the *you* in *he knows you*. Here, guys, we have a real mess.

Because *você* is a *form of treatment* and not a darned simple second-person pronoun, it should take the same object forms as *he*. So it is *I gave you the book*

*yesterday* should be *dei-lhe o livro ontem* and grammarians insist it is. Only it is not.

First, *lhe* is perceived by most of us as only applying to the third person or to the formal *senhor*. That is not what the grammar book says, I know, but this is not a grammar book and if you want one, by all means, buy one. I don’t give a hoot. I am telling it like it is, what I hear all the time and what I read, for instance, in translators’ mailing lists or in my daily paper. Not what grammarians claim I should write if I cared.

So, again, grammarians notwithstanding, *dei-lhe o livro* is usually felt as meaning *I gave him the book*. Or, at most, as another form of *eu dei o livro ao senhor*. Not as *eu dei o livro para você*. In addition, *lhe* is rarely used, because it is felt to be too stiff. If you gave him the book, please say *eu dei o livro para ele*, not *eu lhe dei o livro*.

But the object form of *você* in colloquial Brazilian Portuguese is *te*: *Te dei o livro ontem*. That makes the hair of our brothers across the Atlantic stand on end. Because *te* is *átomo* (*unstressed*) it cannot be placed before the verb except under special circumstances. They would say *dei-te o livro ontem* (notice the hyphen, please).

However, Brazilian pronunciation long ago lost the difference between stressed and unstressed words. Portuguese pronunciation distinguishes between *te*, the pronoun, and *tê*, the letter “T”, but the difference is felt very faintly or not at all in Brazil, and, in any case, the *te* is as stressed as the next word, so we don’t see why we should place it elsewhere.

**Where do I place this little #@\$%\$! of a pronoun?**

The rules for placing *pronomes pessoais do caso oblíquo* (*personal pronouns in the objective case*) are taught in Brazil at length and with little success.

As proof that we can place our pronouns as well as our European brethren, our grammar books and teachers often quote Machado (*Assis*, in English), whose pronouns are usually “correctly” placed. However, it is often said that he always let his wife Carolina correct his originals because she knew grammar a lot better than he did. *Dona Carolina* was Portuguese.

We place our pronouns where we damn well please and say things like *Me dá o livro!* using the pronoun to start a sentence, which is taboo in Portugal, even worse than using a preposition to end an English sentence with.

**Mesoclitically speaking...**

In addition, except in very formal style, we have abandoned *mesóclise*, the curious habit of inserting the pronoun inside the verb: *Dar-te-ia* (*I would give to you*), or its more serious cousin *double mesoclis*, in which we insert two pronouns inside the verb: *Darvo-lo-ia* (*I would give it to you [plural]*), or its even more serious cousin *double mesoclis* with contraction: *dar-to-ia* (*I would give it to you [singular]*) where *o* (*it*) is merged with *te* to give *to*.

The Portuguese still use those forms a little bit more than us, but they too are getting tired of them. We say *Eu daria para você*. Only if you say you are going give someone something, please, specify what you are willing to give. Saying that you will give without saying what is to be given has sexual overtones, which may be undesirable. Yes, it’s that complicated.

**Of Accusatives and Datives**

There is another second-person object pronoun: *ti*. Technically, *te* is accusative, *ti* is dative. In practice, we use *ti* with

prepositions and *te* without them: *Perguntaram alguma coisa a ti?* is equivalent to *perguntaram-te alguma coisa?* with some difference in emphasis, however. This is current in Europe, but not in Brazil. We say *Te perguntaram alguma coisa?* and *Perguntaram alguma coisa para você?* *Ti* is also disappearing in Brazil. Yes, that much simplification.

**The press and the pronoun**

The press is very uncomfortable with those things and they want to write right which they believe to be the way the grammar book says, and the people who write grammar books in turn think that *right* is what Machado (*Assis*, in English) wrote, and Machado thought his wife knew better. And so the Brazilian press tries to write as *Dona Carolina*

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We have entire books on the right place to put a pronoun, as if we had nothing better to do.

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would, which they cannot for several reasons. I’ll spare you the explanation why not.

But it is very funny. The Brazilian press edits all interviews trying to make even illiterate *favela*-dwellers talk as if they had studied at the University of Coimbra. *Disseram-me que*, where the guy obviously said *me disseram que*, for instance. But the operative word is *trying* because the journalist wouldn’t be able to place the pronouns right and would make grievous errors in the direction of hypercorrection. You often read *que disseram-me*, which is against the rules, since *que* “attracts” the pronouns to a position in front of the verb. It goes on and on.

We have entire books on the right place to put a pronoun, as if we had nothing better to do.

**Of Pigs**

I was forgetting that *you* in utterances like *you pig!* is *seu*: *Seu porco!* (We

don’t call cops pigs, however. I call police officers *senhor*; because my mom told me that anyone who’s got a gun deserves to be addressed as *senhor*. People with a less formal education may call them many things, but never *porco*.)

*So seu porco!* is used for someone who picks his nose in public or eats with dirty hands. *Seu porquinho* (*you little pig*) ditto, if the pig under discussion is a child, spouse, or near-spouse; very endearing. *Seu porcão* (*you big pig!*) is even more endearing and *seu porcalhão* (*you really big pig*) may show real loving care. Or not, depending on the intonation. But that’s another story.

*Seu* in this case does not need quotes, because it is the possessive pronoun and adjective, not slave-talk for *senhor*. Curiously, the usual possessive pronoun for *você* is *teu*, not *seu*, following the rule that *você* takes the second person. This is very logical, for *você* is second person, although originally was third. Of course, you can say *teu porco*. But that means *your pig*, not *you pig!* However, a pig belonging to someone to whom we owe some form of respect is *o seu porco*, because the possessive of *o senhor* is *seu*, not *teu*. But many people believe *seu* should only be used for *his*, and render *your pig* (*with respect*) as *o porco do senhor*.

Now, perhaps, you would like to hear a bit about how we translate *be* or *there* into Portuguese. But not today, I am sure. Perhaps some other time. ■

*This article originally appeared in the July 2000 issue of the Translation Journal* (<http://accurapid.com/journal>)

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Danilo and his wife Vera have been in the translation business for over thirty years. They live in Greater São Paulo, the financial heart of Brazil. You can learn more about him and access some of his glossaries at: <http://www.nogueira-translations.com.br>

# ARE WE TRULY BILINGUAL?

by Lana Rachkovskaya

**M**y mind was captivated by this question since I started taking courses in Psycholinguistics a very long time ago. The “old school” tells us that we can only be truly bilingual if we acquired the knowledge of a foreign language and submerged ourselves into the language environment from early childhood. Different people use the term in different ways. For some, bilingualism means an equal ability to communicate in two languages – and I used to agree with this statement. For others, bilingualism means the ability to communicate in two languages but with the possibility of greater skills in one language. I used to correct those who thought being bilingual meant speaking two or more languages – to me it simply meant: yes, they are able to speak those languages but they are not truly bilingual.

When I came to the United States as a Russian translator, I quickly found myself adjusting to the simplicity of American English – I loved the fact that I was in the actual language environment. I read, communicated and watched TV a lot – which I found very

useful – when I saw the visual expression and heard the language, I discovered that I could adapt to the American dialect and idioms extremely quickly. So I lived surrounded by the language which I knew well but could not speak as a native. Then in a couple of months something really interesting happened – I stopped having dreams. That was rather strange. I thought – well, maybe it’s because I am adjusting to the new lifestyle, making new friends and acclimating to a new environment.

Who knows? I didn’t really pay much attention to it at the time. Obviously, being Russian, I used to dream in Russian. Then after having no dreams for about 3-4 months, I suddenly started dreaming in English. I was

astonished that all the characters in my dreams were now speaking English, including myself. I was so happy when I realized what this meant – the language was in my system!

Now after living in the United States for over 8 years, I keep asking myself how native-speaking can I possibly be? Is it possible that I am a bilingual? I am certain I could never speak as a native speaker since I came to the United States as an adult; however, I cannot get rid of the feeling that English is my second native language

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For some, bilingualism means an equal ability to communicate in two languages – and I used to agree with this statement.

For others, bilingualism means the ability to communicate in two languages but with the possibility of greater skills in one language.

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– I dream in English, I write in English, I speak English at home, I work with the language professionally. But, these are not the most important reasons. Have you ever had a feeling that you don’t have to think about how you say things in the English language? It just comes out naturally, as if

you were speaking your own native language. And when you are trying to recall something, which language naturally comes to you first, most of the time? Do you have to force yourself to “switch” to English, like we do when we interpret, or does it come to you naturally and your mind simply functions in English? It appears to me that this is the key to “native-ness”. Even though our vocabulary is smaller than that of a native speaker and our sentence structures are somewhat simplified, we still find ourselves being able to think, act, speak and dream in English using the same tools as the native speaker does. So, it turns out that knowledge of the language is not enough to be bilingual. You have to sense the language as you can sense the touch or the warmth of your loved one, without thinking about it, without hesitation. We can sense the language, we can tune in.

Now going back to the subject of bilingualism, I believe that there are different levels of language “native-ness” or “bilingualism”. And I truly believe that different people may be at different levels. At which level are you? ■

If you would like to share your thoughts on the subject, please write to our editor at [editor@nyctranslators.org](mailto:editor@nyctranslators.org).

*continued from page 5*

the distinction never became part of standard English in the same way that it did in the Romance languages.

When William Tyndale translated the Bible into English in the early sixteenth century, he wanted to preserve the singular and plural distinctions that he found in the Hebrew and Greek originals. For this reason, he consistently used “thou” as singular and “ye” as plural regardless of the relationship of the speaker and the addressee. Tyndale’s usage was carried over to the King James Bible and, thus, remains familiar to this day.

Shakespeare at times seemed to use “thou” as an expression of familiarity and intimacy, but the use is inconsistent. It may be that a close study would reveal that he combined the two forms of address to suggest various levels of a relationship or ambivalence in social status.

In modern times, the use of “thou” to suggest informal familiarity has completely disappeared. It is now used only in solemn ritual ceremonies, in readings from the King James Bible, in classical literature, and in some literary works to convey an air of solemnity.

Interestingly, most languages that continue to use both a formal and a familiar second person pronoun use the familiar pronoun to address God. This is undoubtedly because the original distinction between the pronouns was in number rather than in degree of familiarity. Thus, the fact that “thou” is perceived as being more reserved and formal than “you” in current English, its use in translations of the Bible does not really convey the intended meaning.

With the passage of time, “thou/thee” fell out of ordinary use as did “ye,” and “you,” the second person plural pronoun, became standard for both the singular and plural forms. This was bound to create problems, not so much in writing where the reader has the

opportunity to evaluate the context as in speech where the person addressed may assume that “you” is singular when, in reality, it is intended to be plural. The need for a plural form of “you” gave rise to a number of colloquialisms, none of which I, personally, find very satisfactory. In much of North America, “you guys” (used to address both sexes) seems to be the choice. In the southern United States, “y’all” has become the second person plural. In the New York area, you hear “yous” or “youse guys.” In the Midwest, quite frequently, it is “you’uns” It bears repeating that these expressions are colloquialisms and should not be used in formal speech or writing. I always cringed when the principal of the school where I taught began meetings with: “Thank yous for coming...” I would much prefer “all of you” or “both of you” or something along those lines.

As my students learned more about their own language, they ceased to look at language as something static, something that had been “created” ready-made for its users. Instead they began to see it as a living thing, a means of communication that had evolved with use and that would continue to evolve with use. I told them little anecdotes from literature that illustrated the *tuteo* in use, but I also cautioned them that the language is evolving and that in some countries, especially among young people, it is becoming more acceptable to use the *tuteo* with a wider group of people.

In reality, the greatest problem for my students was with thinking of “Ud.” and “Uds.” as “you,” because these second person singular and plural pronouns use the third person forms of the verb. I am really looking forward to their first encounter with the *voseo*. I keep telling them that they are, indeed, fortunate that English is their native language because, give or take the possibility of “you all” for plurals, in English, there’s nobody but you. ■

# CIRCLE NEWS

## ■ CHARLES M. STERN AWARD — REMINDER

Nominations for the Stern Award will be due in early fall. As mentioned in an earlier Gotham, the award was created in the late 1990s as a bequest from Charles M. Stern, a former member. It is awarded annually to active, needy members of the Circle, one male and one female. So, please start thinking about possible candidates. The nominations should be in writing, contain a brief biography of the candidate and some documentation as to how the award would be applied.



## ■ ATA ANNOUNCES OPPORTUNITY WITH THE NATIONAL CIVILIAN LINGUIST RESERVE CORPS (CLRC)

CLRC volunteers may be called upon during a national crisis of one sort or another, such as supporting preparations for evacuations before and after natural disasters. The National Virtual Translation Center invites ATA members to help with this worthwhile endeavor. To be clear, placing your name in this database does not imply ultimate employment by the NVTC or anyone else, but you are certainly welcome to also register with NVTC at

<http://www.nvtc.gov/employment.html>

For more information and to register for the CLRC, please go to <http://www.nvtc.gov/forms/lingust.php>

## ■ MESSAGE FROM MARIAN S. GREENFIELD, ATA PRESIDENT

We are all interested in what is going on with all of you. Please email news to [editor@nyctranslators.org](mailto:editor@nyctranslators.org)

## ■ FALL MEETINGS

We now have dates set for the fall meetings:

Thursday, September 7, 2006

Thursday, October 5, 2006

Thursday, November 9, 2006

More information as to speakers, topics, etc. will follow, but remember – we have a new location:

American National Standards Institute  
25 West 43rd Street, 4th Floor  
(between 5th and 6th Avenues)  
New York, NY 10036

## ■ 47TH ANNUAL ATA CONFERENCE

Sheraton Hotel in New Orleans, Louisiana  
November 1-4, 2006

Details and Registration at [www.atanet.org](http://www.atanet.org)

## ■ 29TH ALTA (AMERICAN LITERARY TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION) CONFERENCE

Seattle/Bellevue, WA

October 18-21, 2006

Details at [www.literarytranslators.org](http://www.literarytranslators.org)

## ■ ATA MEDICAL INTERPRETING SEMINAR

August 26, 2006

Visit <http://222.atanet.org/pd/medicalinterpreting>

## ■ MEDICAL TRANSLATION SEMINAR

September 16-17, 2006

Visit <http://www.atanet.org/pd/medicaltranslation>

## Comparisons between Spanish and other languages

Source: Wikipedia

Spanish	Latin	Portuguese	Catalan	English	Notes
<i>nosotros</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>nós</i>	<i>nosaltres</i>	we(-others)	Quebec French: <i>nous autres</i>
<i>hermano</i>	<i>germānum</i>	<i>irmão</i>	<i>germà</i>	brother	
<i>martes</i>	<i>dies Martis</i> (Classical)	<i>terça-feira</i> (Ecclesiastical tertia feria)	<i>dimarts</i>	Tuesday	
<i>canción</i>	<i>cantīōnem</i>	<i>canção</i>	<i>cançò</i>	song	
<i>más</i>	<i>magis</i> or <i>plus</i>	<i>mais</i> (archaically also <i>chus</i> )	<i>més</i>	more	Fr. <i>plus</i> , It. <i>più</i> , Rom. <i>mai</i>
<i>mano izquierda</i>	<i>manūm</i> <i>sīnistrām</i>	<i>mão esquerda</i> (archaically also <i>sēestra</i> )	<i>mà</i> <i>esquerra</i>	left hand	Basque: <i>esku ezkerra</i>
<i>nada</i>	<i>nullam rem</i> <i>natam</i> (lit. no thing born)	<i>nada</i> (archaically also <i>rem</i> )	<i>res</i>	nothing	French: <i>rien</i>

### CALL FOR PAPERS

The Gotham Translator accepts and welcomes contributions of articles about all aspects of translation and translator-related issues. These may include, but are not limited to, specific translation problems or approaches to translation, legal issues, and the business of translation. We also welcome dictionary and hardware/software reviews as well as reviews of books, conferences and workshops. The "Members' Voice" section of each issue is devoted to translations, stories, and poetry written by members.

In general, articles and other submissions should be limited to around 1500 words. All text should be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word format. We prefer unpublished contributions. In the case of previously published submissions, please advise us of this fact at the time of submission. ■



**THE GOTHAM  
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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).

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