THE GOTHAM TRANSLATOR

WHY IS TRANSLATION IMPORTANT?*

A message by Leonard Morin on behalf of the New York Circle of Translators to the buyers of language services

*This article proposes a framework to discuss the role of our profession in society and commerce. I submitted this article to the New York Circle of Translators listserv to seek input from the membership about how to best articulate the value of our profession to the public. The ultimate goal of this message would be to advance the interests of our profession and the broader public. The Outreach and Social Media Committee of the New York Circle is currently launching a translation awareness campaign to spread this message.

The invisible translator

It is often said that when the oral or written word is translated ably, the intermediating linguist becomes invisible. Perhaps this is why translators and interpreters are often taken for granted. The users of language services often are not aware of the skills required to perform the translation, and even bilingual individuals who have not immersed themselves in the task are not conscious of what it involves. Of course, from the perspective of a buyer of language services, it might not be advantageous to attribute value to the service you are buying, since that might tend to raise the price. But a greater understanding of the skill and expertise required of competent language service providers could help those buyers to appreciate that quality is worth the price.

What is translation and what is interpreting?

Translation in the broad sense comprises transposition of the written and spoken word from one language into another. In the narrow sense, translation is the rendering of a written source text into a written target text.[1]

Interpretation is the oral rendering of one language into another. Interpreting is generally broken down into three modes: simultaneous interpreting (the interpreter orally translates the spoken word with a lag of a few seconds while it is spoken); consecutive (the interpreter translates the spoken statement after it has been completed, usually after one or two sentences, but sometimes after a larger segment has been completed); sight translation (a hybrid of translation and interpreting; the interpreter briefly reviews a document in a source language and then verbally renders a translation).

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1 Roseann Dueñas González, et al. *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation, Theory, Policy and Practice*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1991. Pg. 295

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Where are they used?

There is an enormous need for translation and interpreting services that grows by the day as society steadily becomes more internationalized. In the legal sphere, litigation of monetary interests, housing, or the alleged commission of crimes are obvious examples. But an important subgroup would be everything having to do with social services, such as health insurance or public benefits, or practical matters such as sales negotiations and contracts. In the medical sphere, health and safety are routinely at stake, so translation or interpreting may be imperative and quality is a must. Another significant interest is anything related to mass commerce and marketing. What generally determines whether translation occurs at all is the economic interest involved. This goes some way to explain why foreign literature is such a minor segment of the translation market in the U.S.[2]

What skills do they require?

Translation requires native fluency in the target language and full fluency in the source language (it is very rare that one can translate bi-directionally, i.e. other than into one's native tongue). But these are basic requisites. Translation of documents is a skill in itself and requires specific knowhow. Although many translators do not have specific training in translation, they must develop skills to resolve the problems that are unique to translation, such as accurately rendering the meaning of the source text in the target text even if there is no obvious equivalent.

For instance, "*gracias, muy amable*" is a common phrase in Spanish that translates into "thank you, very kind." Just "thank you" might be a better translation, since that is what is actually said in practice, but one could object that this latter rendering leaves out some of the cultural nuance of the original. The translator has to develop a repertoire of solutions as well as the mental agility to solve the translation problems as they arise.

Some of the proficiencies required to interpret are a good memory and note-taking, the ability to listen and speak at the same time, and read and speak at the same time. One acquires these skills by study, practice, feedback, and self-critique.

Linguists in today's marketplace also use technology to improve and facilitate their work. Computer assisted translation (CAT) tools, which use memory of previous translations to speed up the process and unify terminology choice, have become a standard part of any translator's toolbox. Online, electronic, and hardcopy lexical research skills are essential to translators and interpreters. Interpreters' work is also greatly aided by simultaneous interpreting equipment, which they must know how to use.

What is at stake when considering hiring a professional linguist?

Last winter, I went to the hospital due to a lingering cold. At one point while I was in the waiting room, I pondered what the other patients might be going through that had brought them to the hospital. Although my imagination wandered and I sympathized, I found myself unable to fathom the depths of their despair. I went back to the hospital two weeks later, when my illness had persisted longer and started to cause me greater worry. Then I had a more profound sense of the suffering of the other patients.

It seems to me that this is similar to one's understanding of other languages and the skill involved in translation. If you do not have knowledge of another language, you tend to trivialize its complexities. The tendency is to experience it as an appendage of our own language.

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2 National Endowment for the Arts, "Translating Experience: NEA's International Literary Exchanges," http://www.nea.gov/about/nearts/story.php?id=p07_trans&issue=2008_v3 (*visited on August 21, 2013*).

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Similarly, without substantial experience translating, you do not have full awareness of the specific problems that arise in translation. It is a world that has not come to life. Would you be satisfied with a physician who was not intimately versed in the matters for which you are seeking his or her help?

An example of such translation problems would be the general rule in translation that names are not translated. Americans are generally familiar with the German "*Autobahn*." Why don't we just call it "the German expressway"? When interpreting in court, should I translate "The Legal Aid Society" as "*La Sociedad de Asistencia Legal*" or just say the English? Or should I, as one colleague of mine suggested, repeat the English and add "La defensoría pública," to be certain that the defendant knows what it is? Whatever option the translator chooses, he or she will have to tackle the challenge of maintaining consistency throughout a project or series of projects. This is easier said than done; every rule has its exceptions.

How do people become professional linguists?

I believe that it is fair to say that no linguist (with the exception, perhaps, of the very rare prodigy) has the requisite skill to be a translator or interpreter upon entering the field. Much is to be learned in the first days, months, and years. But the beginner has to have definite strengths, which I break down into three possible areas[3]: the most direct background is having completed an academic program in translation and/or interpreting. The second possible strength would be in an area of specialty, such as law or medicine (either through formal education or job experience). The third would be in letters, i.e. having studied the languages in question in-depth, including writing and literature.

If one has considerable strength in any of these three areas, practical experience and feedback will tend to make up for weaknesses in the others. Any of these strengths presupposes years of study and immersion. They also imply excellent command of both languages, which most likely entails years of study and having lived in countries where the two (or more) languages are spoken.

How does the language services market allocate resources?

Although translations have the potential to profoundly impact people's lives and in some cases save them, the need is often not met. Returning to the example of my hospital visit: when I saw the nurse, he asked my profession as part of the usual battery of questions. When I told him that I am a Spanish interpreter, he energetically declared that he could use me there. He told me that he continually runs up against a wall with his clients, of which one can only imagine the consequences.

Unsurprisingly, the biggest clients of translation services are corporations and governments. Economic interests make the purchase of translation services a priority and possibility. Sometimes vital interests are hampered by economic interests. In a 2005 article in *Health Affairs*, entitled "Pay Now Or Pay Later: Providing Interpreter Services In Health Care," authors Leighton Ku and Glenn Flores discuss serious underfunding for medical interpreting despite a crying need for it backed by constitutional mandates. The authors conclude that "We can either pay a small amount up front to ensure that all patients receive equitable, high-quality care, or pay a lot more later for unnecessary tests and procedures, preventable hospitalizations, medical errors and injuries, and expensive lawsuits."[4] This seems to suggest that at times it takes an economic argument to make a vital health issue compelling.

3 I am not familiar with a study into the most optimal preparation to practice as an interpreter, and even less so as a translator. My assessment of the necessary skills is based on what I can ascertain through my observation and experience in the field. Conclusive evidence of the soundest ways to become an expert linguist would be valuable, however, since it could serve as a justification for more efficient financial investment in the expert linguists of tomorrow. If the reader is aware of such a study, please send it my way (president@nyctranslators.org) and share it to the NYCT listserv.

4 Leighton Ku and Glenn Flores, "Pay Now Or Pay Later: Providing Interpreter Services In Health Care," *Health Affairs*. Available at http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/24/2/435.full (*visited on August 21, 2013*).

What needs to change?

The public and clients of translation services need to gain a better understanding of the work of translators and interpreters. This entails understanding the process of translation and the requisite skill but also the work conditions linguists face. Language services are inherently resource intensive. They require extensive training and experience and they are also labor-intensive. One oral presentation generally requires two simultaneous interpreters. It may also require the interpreters to prepare in-depth on the subject matter in advance. The translation of a 20-page document will generally take a week or more of work, involving a joint effort of editing, proofing, and project management by multiple individuals. Linguists are routinely not paid in proportion with the inputs of time, money, training, and other resources they invest in satisfactory performance of their job.

The quality commission[5]

One possible way to raise quality standards and pay of translators would be to set up a quality review entity composed of practicing linguists. These experts could grade the quality of the services of agencies and translators and interpreters. The quality review commission could be funded by a tax on translations and interpreting. It is likely that such a commission would be unable to go over every translation submitted for review. But a random sample of the submitted translations would still make it possible for end users to gain a reliable picture of what they are buying for their money.

At first glance, a tax would not seem to entice the buyers of language services, but if they could be convinced this would likely improve quality significantly, they may be amenable to it. End users of language services are often unhappy with the services they get or, at the very least, they feel lost in an unfathomable and unpredictable marketplace. A commission of independent expert quality controllers could raise the awareness and appreciation of quality and cultivate the willingness to pay a premium to get it.

Translation agencies and the ATA have been working to design and promote standardization of the industry in recent years. The quality control mechanism I propose here could serve to insure that proper standards are lived up to in practice. It would be more in the interest of the end user if translators as opposed to agencies were to spearhead and oversee quality control efforts since seasoned translators by definition know quality translations and agencies are dealmakers first and foremost.

I further think that one should consider whether some type of educational subsidy would be desirable or necessary. If quality is mandated—which it should be—it seems obvious and fair that there should be a viable and clear path for promising linguists to come up to speed with the requirements.[6]

The translation industry holds great promise in a gloomy economy. If we can raise quality standards and translator pay, we could also bring back some of the jobs the U.S. has lost in the race to the bottom that has been characteristic of the language services sector for over a decade. This would lead to a virtuous cycle by attracting talent, enhancing quality, and creating a willingness to pay for quality. These effects would be magnified by the undeniable fact that this is currently one of the biggest economic growth industries.[7] In turn, this would have a global impact as other countries race to catch up with our leading example. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Leonard Morin has practiced full-time as a translator since 2004. He began his work as an interpreter not long thereafter. He currently works as a per-diem Spanish interpreter certified by the New York State Courts. He also translates legal documents from Dutch, Spanish, and German into English. He earned a propedeuse degree in law in the Netherlands and graduated magna cum laude from Columbia University with a B.A. in Latin American Studies. Leonard has received translation and interpreting certificates and won academic prizes for his Spanish and German. He currently serves as president of the New York Circle of Translators.

5 The following is a quality control mechanism for which I must thank my friend Tom Hafner, a commodities trader on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, who devised this scheme.

6 See note 3 above. Investment in future expert linguists is not only of interest to the novice linguists who would be the direct beneficiaries, but also to business, government, and civil society, who would gain in economic efficiency as a result.

7 Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, "Interpreters and Translators," *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2012-13 Edition. Available at http://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm (*Visited August 21, 2013*).

NYCT Member Spotlight

Teeas Bhattacharya

Interview by **Margarite Heintz Montez**

Q Thank you for agreeing to this interview. You recently joined the NYCT as a member; could you tell the readers why you became a member of the NYCT? What did you hope to gain and how has it benefitted you since you became a member?

A I was referred to NYCT by one of my translation instructors at NYU and one of the first things I did after I graduated was enroll as a member. I am working towards adopting translation as a full-time profession and I believe NYCT will provide me with the right exposure and the right network to build my own firm catering to translation and copy-editing services. NYCT has offered me the potential to meet translators from a wide range of backgrounds and afforded me a glimpse of their experiences. In addition I have already had the opportunity of working in a couple of projects obtained through the NYCT network.

Q How did you happen to start in the industry? Did you come from a professional program or did you come from another industry?

A I was hired by the Goethe-Institut (the cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany) in New Delhi, India as web administrator and content editor for the South Asia region. A sound knowledge of German was essential, as in addition to digital content management, my role required frequent translations from German to English. I am trained as a translator of technical, commercial, legal and medical texts from German to English. The other language pairs that I work with are Bengali->English and Hindi->English.

Q What do you find to be the major challenges in the industry so far?

A The industry for translation services has grown substantially over the past couple of decades. I believe there is a strong demand for skilled translators. However, one of the challenges that I have faced is that some potential clients prefer to engage native English speakers, when English is the target language, despite my demonstrated competence with the language. In some respects, I would admit that I am more comfortable with English than I am with Bengali, my native language.

Q In addition to the NYCT there are other translator organizations, plus many online communities. What other organizations do you belong to? Which online forums do you regularly participate in? Why?

A ProZ was the first online community that I joined. I find ProZ forums very informative. That apart, their online courses and workshops are quite attractive too, especially those on Computer Aided Translation tools. I have also landed a couple of projects via ProZ. I visit the Leo forum almost regularly. I am also a member of translatorsbase.com, they offer a rich variety of translation projects.

Q What type of marketing do you use? Has this made an impact in your business?

A I believe word-of-mouth is the most effective method of marketing. I rely on it heavily and it has paid handsome dividends thus far. I must also admit that being in touch with people on facebook has helped me get a lot of work. I want to utilize social media to reach a wider audience - so a professional Facebook page is in the offing. I am on LinkedIn and I am in the process of setting up my website.

Q What do you do in your "off" time and how do you find balance for your work life and your family life?

A I have a four-month old daughter. So there's not much of an "off" time. The challenge of finding a balance between work and family life remains a daunting one. However, I must admit that I enjoy the process of translation and often it does not feel like "work" - I guess I am fortunate on that count. ■

CAT Corner is a monthly feature that looks at computer-aided translation software and other helpful tools for the translation industry.

CAT Corner

Localization World

by **Katie Botkin, managing editor, *MultiLingual* magazine**

There are translation conferences and member gatherings in abundance these days, but those who wish to network with heads of globalization, internationalization, localization, and translation (GILT) industry and learn more about localization might consider attending the upcoming Localization World conference taking place in Silicon Valley October 9-10, 2013. Or, if you're hankering to go abroad, there will be conferences in Asia in April 2014, and Dublin, Ireland, in June 2014.

Localization World is the premier localization industry conference and has been highly popular among the localization business elite in North America and Europe, and most recently Asia. It draws heads of globalization and localization teams from companies such as Adobe, Facebook, Microsoft, Sun Microsystems, Intel and Sony, as well as localization suppliers and gurus. The attendance, usually between 450-550 people in the European and North American conferences, is large enough to provide stimulating debate and information sharing, and small enough that newcomers don't get lost in the crowd. Attendees learn the basics of localization, deepen their knowledge and network with one another. "We strive to provide a friendly atmosphere where professionals from all aspects of the market can meet and learn from each other," says conference organizer Donna Parrish. "We have found that the networking opportunities offered at the conference prove to be one of the most valuable features for our attendees. E-mail and online meetings are great, but nothing can replace getting to know someone face-to-face in a relaxed setting."

Currently, there are nine tracks at the conference. Advanced Localization Management provides up-to-date information on trends, processes and technologies. The Inside Track is designed to deepen understanding of select topics in localization. The Language Service Provider Track presents information about how to run better organizations and increase profitability. There are also tracks covering Content Strategy, Global Business, Translation Automation and the Global Web.

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For beginners, Localization Core Competencies provides a good starting point. For those who like to think outside the box (or the regular conference format) there's the Unconference, where attendees themselves select topics, and then shape and steer the conversation.

Localization World's preconference events take day-long, in-depth looks at various topics in localization, including the life sciences and video (and increasingly online) games. It is also possible to attend half-day free sessions at the preconference, including an introduction to localization overview.

Other events are sometimes collocated with the preconference. The Federated Event for Interoperability Standardization in Globalization, Internationalization, Localization and Translation Technologies (FEISGILT) took place for the first time in 2012 at the preconference for Localization World in Seattle, Washington, and the second edition was collocated with the Localization World London June 11-12, 2013. Both years saw the International XLIFF Symposium as one of its tracks, and participants shared information about interoperability and standards over the two days of sessions. Many attended the full conference afterwards.

With the addition of Asia as a venue, there are now three Localization World conferences a year. The latest European conference was in the United Kingdom, at the Novotel London West June 12-14.

Conference organizers always attempt to provide attendees with a pleasant, rewarding and informative overall experience. To that end, there are regular networking events, usually resplendent with finger foods, and there are extras as well. At the last conference, UK-based Alpha CRC's choir opened the June 13 keynote by singing a musical arrangement that included selections from "What a Wonderful World," originally recorded by Louis Armstrong, and Michael Jackson's "Heal the World." The keynote itself was given by David Smith, economics editor of the United Kingdom's *Sunday Times*. He discussed advanced economies in the post-crisis hangover, and said advanced economies are stuck in a low-growth trap. The United States has had the weakest recovery in the post-war era: "America is not good, Europe is even worse," said Smith. "The euro will survive, but not necessarily with all its members." However, as Smith reminded the audience, world trade is actually currently higher than it was pre-crises. "The global upturn is being very much led by the emerging economies," which are growing roughly three times as fast as the advanced economies, Smith noted. The volume of imports is highest in Middle East, emerging Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe. "I don't think this is just a temporary phenomenon," said Smith. The June 14 panel discussion keynote

also touched on the long tail of language and economic commerce, even in the emerging world, where some communities have "leapfrogged" the PC and gone straight to mobile.

The economy and the expanding influence of mobile phones in the developing world have been topics of discussion for several recent conferences, particularly the keynotes, which are drawn from businesspeople, economists and authors who might offer new insight into a particular global phenomenon and whose expertise intersects with the GILT industry.

For example, author and marketing guru Jamie Turner, a keynote for the last US conference, held in Seattle October 17-18, reminded his audience that there are currently 4 billion texts sent per day, as opposed to 2.9 billion Google searches.

Localization World's first annual Asian conference was held at the Shangri-La Hotel in Singapore from April 10-12, 2013. The conference focus was more heavily weighted towards the Asian market than its Western iterations, and it was possible to attend sessions specific to Asia for the duration of the conference. At the same time, it was possible to find familiar tracks on life sciences and machine translation, for example.

Manu Bhaskaran from Centennial Group, the keynote on April 11, discussed the global economy. He predicted that the year 2013 will be turbulent, but the global economy can manage the risk. There will be clearer global recovery from 2014 onward, which he said he believes the United States will lead. "A powerful US recovery will help all of us," said Bhaskaran. Specific to Asia, he stated that China's rising wages will affect the competitiveness of their cheap goods, but China will move up the value chain to produce better-quality goods, as Japan did in the 1980s. Tech spending is an important component in Asian growth. In Asia, the middle class is growing, and laggard economies such as the Philippines and Myanmar are rising. The challenge, said Bhaskaran, is to adjust to change; Chinese policy will have to keep up with their rise and put structures in place to deal with their friction with longer-established powers.

The balmy weather, just past monsoon season, cooperated for the networking events, and the Moravia-sponsored dinner cruise aboard the Cheng Ho, a replica of the famous Ming Dynasty imperial vessel, was a particular hit. The conference dinners are often memorable experiences, usually off-site, in which case attendees are provided with bussing to and from the conference center in question. The London 2013 conference dinner was held at Altitude 360, a high-rise venue located in central Westminster at the top of the Millbank Tower. In Seattle 2012, the dinner overlooked downtown Seattle from the Columbia Tower Club. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Katie Botkin is the managing editor of *MultiLingual*, the leading magazine for the localization industry. *MultiLingual* is offering a free one-year digital subscription to readers of this newsletter — eight issues plus the annual *Resource Directory*. Visit www.multilingual.com/promo and enter the code D9PCEC to take advantage of this offer.

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The following interview is reprinted with kind permission from the author and editor of AIIC's webzine as well as with permission from Red T.

Interview with Maya Hess of Red T

by **Luigi Luccarelli**

Linguists working in conflict zones and other contexts face various risks. Maya Hess believes that a paradigm shift in how translators and interpreters are perceived and treated is needed.

Red T was established in 2010 to advocate for the protection of translators and interpreters working in conflict zones and other high-risk settings. Changing the way linguists are usually perceived by those who employ them and by the broader public is an essential part of that effort.

Founder and CEO Maya Hess is a forensic linguist who has provided language support and expert witness services in many high-profile terrorism trials. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate in Criminal Justice at the City University of New York.

LL Maya, thank you for agreeing to this interview. Could you start by telling us how the idea to found Red T came about?

MH Thank you, Luigi, for this opportunity.

The germ of the idea came to me on February 10, 2005, as I sat in a U.S. federal court listening with disbelief to the guilty verdict against an Arabic translator/interpreter on charges of aiding and abetting terrorist activity. The government and the jury construed interpreting at attorney-inmate conversations as material support to terrorism and thereby altered the landscape for interpreters in the United States. In reaction, I decided to write my dissertation about this trial. While doing the literature review, I became aware of other unjust T/I-related prosecutions and the threats faced by linguists in conflict zones. I grew increasingly outraged and wanted to do my part in addressing our colleagues' extreme vulnerability. So I established Red T to advocate for translators and interpreters in high-risk settings.

LL Your literature mentions "worldwide advocacy on behalf of linguists at risk." Could you give us some examples to illustrate the scope of these activities?

MH While Red T is U.S.-based, our mission transcends national boundaries. We are in constant contact with linguists in Afghanistan and Iraq, respond to their queries, and connect them with resources. Through such exchanges, we gain insight into what's going on in these contexts, which then informs our advocacy strategy. For instance, the stories told to us flowed into the guidelines we've been drafting together with

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your association and the International Federation of Translators (FIT). Our first joint publication, the *Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of Their Services*, is being translated into multiple languages and widely disseminated. Its purpose is to advise both parties of their rights and responsibilities, the knowledge of which will enhance their safety.

Within this same partnership, we have also begun work on a more extensive document, the first *Safety Handbook for Translators & Interpreters in Conflict Zones*. In fact, your current president, Linda Fitchett, and I were outlining sections when Hurricane Sandy flooded the Red T office and we had to exchange our pens for buckets.

A more recent venture with a transnational focus is our partnership with Soshio, a company that monitors social media chatter in China. We have some anecdotal evidence of T/I abuses in that country but hope that, with a more systematic approach, we'll be able to pierce the information curtain.

Another important aspect of our work is providing research and contacts to the media. For instance, we collaborated with Swiss TV on a documentary about the impact of the Twin Tower attacks on linguists working in the terrorism arena. We also furnish comparative country data on visa programs for T/Is – or the lack thereof – to journalists as far away as Australia, and connect documentary filmmakers with our colleagues in war zones so that their stories are told in as many venues as possible.

LL What have been some of Red T's other accomplishments to date?

MH In addition to the activities I just mentioned, we have been doing a great deal of awareness-raising, be it on social networks, in academic journals, or at universities and conferences. For instance, to alert the industry and the general public, I have been speaking domestically and abroad about the dangers confronting interpreters in conflict zones as well as translator prosecutions in the United States. As you know, these issues have garnered significant attention in the mainstream media, which is in part due to the work of AIIC's Project to Help Interpreters in Conflict Zones, the List Project, the Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project, and Red T.

Another accomplishment, if you will, is the Open Letter Project that we started last year in partnership with AIIC and FIT, and this year we've been joined by the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI). I am very happy about this development because it means that, for the first time ever, these organizations have united to advocate on behalf of colleagues worldwide who are subject to unjust persecution, prosecution, and imprisonment, and to address government policies detrimental to T/Is.

And then we do quite a bit of behind-the-scenes work. For instance, we link criminal justice scholars with interpreters in the field so that our professional practices and concerns are represented in their studies, which may be used to formulate counter-terrorism policy, etc.

We think it is essential to gain visibility in this area and make sure that there are sufficient safeguards in place for T/Is. In that vein, I published an article in the British journal *The Translator* discussing how the so-called Special Administrative Measures, i.e., U.S. federal prison rules that are imposed on high-risk inmates, are negatively affecting T/Is, and also put forth some policy suggestions.

LL Which of your ongoing projects could potentially help linguists the most?

MH At this juncture that is difficult to assess, since different projects are at different stages. But, as symbolized by the red-and-white color scheme of our logo, we are very hopeful that our awareness-raising for the Red T vision – that linguists in conflict zones will be considered humanitarian personnel and granted protected-person status akin to ICRC staff – will ultimately bear fruit. This vision is shared by AIIC's conflict zone interpreter group; under Linda's leadership, they have successfully lobbied the Council of Europe, and parliamentarians of all stripes have signed a declaration calling for the protection of conflict zone interpreters. I also want to acknowledge Eduardo Kahane, who was the first in the industry to passionately bring this issue to the fore. I will never forget reading about his "shoebox" full of newspaper clippings attesting to the murders of our colleagues, and I firmly believe that through our collaboration this vision will become a reality in our lifetime.

Another Red T project that will be very instrumental in the long run is the database we're building. I personally have a large archive of terrorism-related research involving T/Is, and for the past couple of years we have been collecting T/I incidents from across the world. Having empirical data to support our cause is a prerequisite to issuing effective safety publications and influencing policies so they are protective of T/Is. Until recently, linguists in high-risk settings have been a footnote – if that – in the mind of the public and, especially, of governments. That is slowly changing.

LL In the T/I community the emphasis is often on conflict zones. I notice that Red T adds "and other adversarial settings"? What does that encompass?

MH This refers to military, legal, and quasi-legal settings, including detention camps, prisons, courtrooms, law offices, etc. In such settings, T/Is, primarily those working in languages critical to the War on Terror, are often viewed with suspicion, harassed, or even prosecuted. Consider, for instance, the ordeal of Ahmad al-Halabi, an American of Syrian descent who worked as a prison translator in Guantánamo. When he was set to leave for Syria for his wedding, he was arrested and faced a toxic stew of 30 criminal charges, ranging from aiding the enemy, which carried a potential death sentence, to giving bakhlava pastries to inmates. In the course of a year, most of which he spent in solitary confinement, the case unraveled, and ultimately he pled guilty to minor infractions, such as taking pictures of the guard towers in violation of military rules. Of note is the military's admission that a number of soldiers were caught doing the same; moreover, photos of the naval base towers were all over

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the Internet. Al-Halabi, however, was the only one singled out for investigation as a spy.

LL You have studied the "translator-traitor mentality." How is that commonly manifested?

MH The "translator-traitor mentality (TTM)" is the shorthand term I came up with in my dissertation to capture the continuum and spectrum of distrust T/Is have been subjected to throughout the ages. The manifestations of this distrust run the gamut, with uneasiness about an unfamiliar language/culture at one end, and the abduction, torture, and killing of T/Is at the other. While certain manifestations of TTM are not language-specific, its more extreme forms are generally linked to a particular linguistic culture during a specific era that is defined by a particular political context. For instance, during the Cold War, linguists were exposed to Russophobia; post-9/11, TTM is coupled with Islamophobia.

LL What is your personal experience with TTM?

MH Having worked in the terrorism arena since 1993, I have found that TTM is common in settings involving Middle Eastern languages. Especially post-9/11, this mentality has proliferated, propped up by ignorance of the interpreting process, English-only mindsets, institutional biases, prosecutorial zealotry, anti-Arab hysteria, and the political expediencies of the day. While certain causes of this distrust can be addressed by increasing professionalization of the trade and by educating legal practitioners and the public regarding the role of interpreters, distrust arising from the cruder forms of bigotry is another matter.

LL Have you found terminology, e.g. what translators and interpreters are called in various settings, to be a part of TTM?

MH Certain terms are not helpful to our professional image and may engender distrust because of their inherent associations. For instance, being called a "fixer" implies that a linguist will engage in extra-linguistic tasks, whatever their nature. And the farther an interpreter ventures beyond the traditional boundaries of the profession, the more exposed he/she becomes to being scapegoated when things go awry. While "fixers" will always be hired in conflict zones, in the interest of changing prevailing perceptions, I prefer a less loaded label such as "liaison interpreter." The latter term emphasizes cultural and linguistic bridging as opposed to outright agency.

LL Lastly, what would you say to anyone reading this who might like to become a Red T volunteer?

MH Help protect the most vulnerable members of our profession by contributing to our effort in any way you can. Be part of ushering in a paradigm shift in how translators and interpreters are perceived and treated. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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