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The Voice of Interpreters and Translators

The ATA

CHRONICLE

**International Payment Options for
Translators and Agencies**

**Introduction to Background Investigations
and Clearances**

Content Marketing Planning: Tips and Tricks



From the President Caitlin Walsh

president@atanet.org

Filling Words with Meaning



As the umbrella organization

for many distinct groups, ATA works to keep tabs on the latest developments in many areas. It is interesting to see how the government's predictions of substantial growth in the translation and interpreting industry—driven by a combination of demographic changes apparent in the latest U.S. census and the ongoing explosion of information—are playing out in real life. Below are a few examples.

Interpreters continue marching steadily toward increasing professionalization in all aspects of their field. Favorite discussion topics include the everyday application of codes of ethics and how to deal with the human emotions

that often fly in the situations in which interpreters find themselves, from the doctor's office to the courtroom to the battlefield. Interpreting practitioners often hold multiple certifications for many types of interpreting (and must meet continuing education requirements for all). In addition, national and international standards are emerging and being pursued actively to benefit both clients and practitioners.

Technology is also not standing still. Even as new tool vendors emerge and old ones merge, developments in the area of machine translation (MT) mean that we "traditional" translators will see a direct benefit. A direct fallout from ongoing conversations in both "camps" means that the MT folks are designing with humans in mind, both in terms of tools that support humans and real-world applications and quality metrics. The line between fuzzy computer-assisted translation matches and MT output just keeps getting fuzzier.

In terms of social justice, it is pretty easy to visualize how an interpreter levels the playing field, but translation in all of its forms also addresses real-life imbalances. ATA is involved with the International Federation of Translators, which strives to bring all of us together (and subsidizes less wealthy nations to do so), standards bodies with international representation, and offers institutional and member support for non-governmental organizations like Translators Without Borders. Add in lobbying for language education funding and support for programs that reach out to heritage language speakers, and it is clear we make a difference.

Keeping abreast of ongoing conversations with all of these stakeholders (and many others) involves countless hours by many volunteers on all sides working together to keep discussions going. ATA supports this concretely by providing platforms and resources for online and face-to-face meetings. But the real support is in our tagline itself ("The Voice of Interpreters and Translators"): providing a voice for all of us, amongst ourselves, certainly, but to the wider translation and interpreting community, ancillary organizations, and to the public at large.

As we continue to reach out in the coming years to diverse elements that make up our common future, it is my hope that the foundations we are building, both in terms of institutions and messaging, will provide for a bright future—for us all.

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By Erin Rosales and Rashelle LeCaptain

Interpreters working in the health care sector have the opportunity to inspire individuals to become champions and supporters of interpreter services by demonstrating exceptional customer service in their daily interactions.

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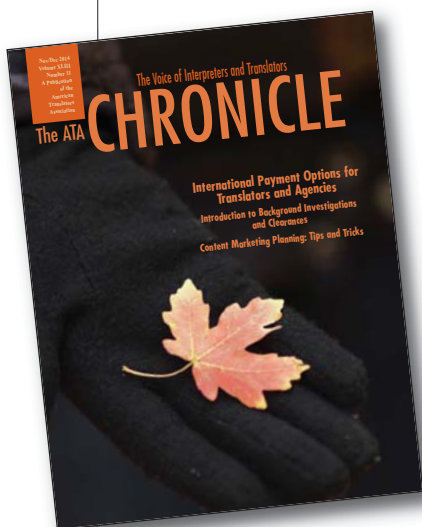


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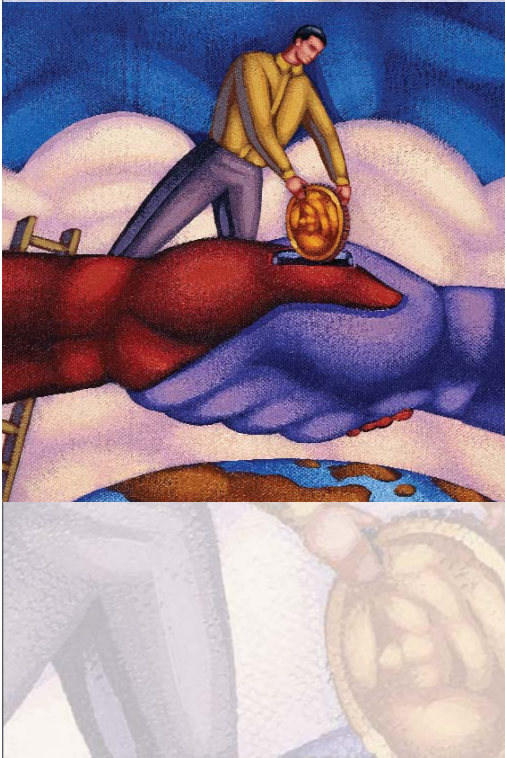


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www.translationzone.com/groupshare2014

25 University of Illinois
ma.translationandinterpreting.illinois.edu

31 University of Texas at Brownsville
www.utb.edu/translation

From the Executive Director Walter Bacak, CAE

walter@atanet.org



Closing Out the Year

As 2014 comes to a close, here are a few items of note.

Business Practices list: One of the valuable practical benefits of ATA membership is access to the ATA Business Practices list. Members post queries, provide information, share experiences, and discuss the responses. The topics run the gamut from marketing to contracts to getting paid and more. The list is moderated by volunteers, whose jobs are to keep the discussions on track while being sensitive to posters' concerns. For the past three years, the moderating was deftly carried out by Paula Gordon and Stephanie Tramdack Cash. They recently turned over the duties to Frieda Ruppenner-Lind, May Fung Danis, and Susanne van Eyl. Thanks to all of these volunteers for their time and work for ATA. If you are not

currently part of this dynamic list, please register (www.atanet.org/business_practices/bp_listserv.php).

eConference: Since 2005, ATA has provided recordings of the sessions at ATA's Annual Conference. The eConference is an economical way to access the wealth of knowledge offered at the conference. The recordings—audio synced to PowerPoint presentations—as well as handouts are offered online and on DVD. If you were unable to attend the conference or missed some sessions that you wanted to attend, please check out the eConference (www.atanet.org/conf/2014/econ.htm).

Changing of the Guard: With this year's election, a combined 26 years of experience is leaving the ATA Board. Director Lois Feuerle served for six years (two consecutive terms),

Director Tim Yuan served from 1999-2005, and then again since 2011, for a total of nine years. Finally, Director Virginia Perez-Santalla has served for 11 years, including two terms as secretary. Their dedication and experience will be missed. Thank you for all of your time and work for ATA.

Renew Your Membership: ATA membership is an investment in yourself. Continue that growth by renewing your ATA membership. Dues renewal notices will be sent in early December. If you have any questions about the many benefits of your ATA membership, please contact ATA Membership Manager Lauren Mendell (Lauren@atanet.org).

Annual Committee Reports: The foundation and work that make many of ATA's programs happen is done by ATA's 19 committees. See what they did in 2014 and what they plan to do by perusing the Annual Committee Reports now online (www.atanet.org/governance/committees_annual_report.pdf).

Farewell to Freek: Freek Lankhof, a friend to hundreds, if not thousands of translators and interpreters, announced that he is closing InTrans Books at the end of this year. At last year's ATA Annual Conference, Freek was recognized for exhibiting for 25 consecutive years. Thank you, Freek, for your long-time support of ATA and the professions. ■

Notice: ATA Ethics Sanction

The American Translators Association recently increased sanctions against Edith Trenou for violating a previous ban on holding ATA membership. She is now banned from being an ATA member until January 1, 2023.

According to ATA's bylaws, Article 3, Section 6.b. Disciplinary Actions, "All disciplinary actions are taken pursuant to procedures adopted by the Board from time to time, which procedures may be amended only by a two-thirds vote of the Board." The procedures are addressed in the ATA Policy on Ethics Procedures (www.atanet.org/docs/p_dm_ethics.pdf).

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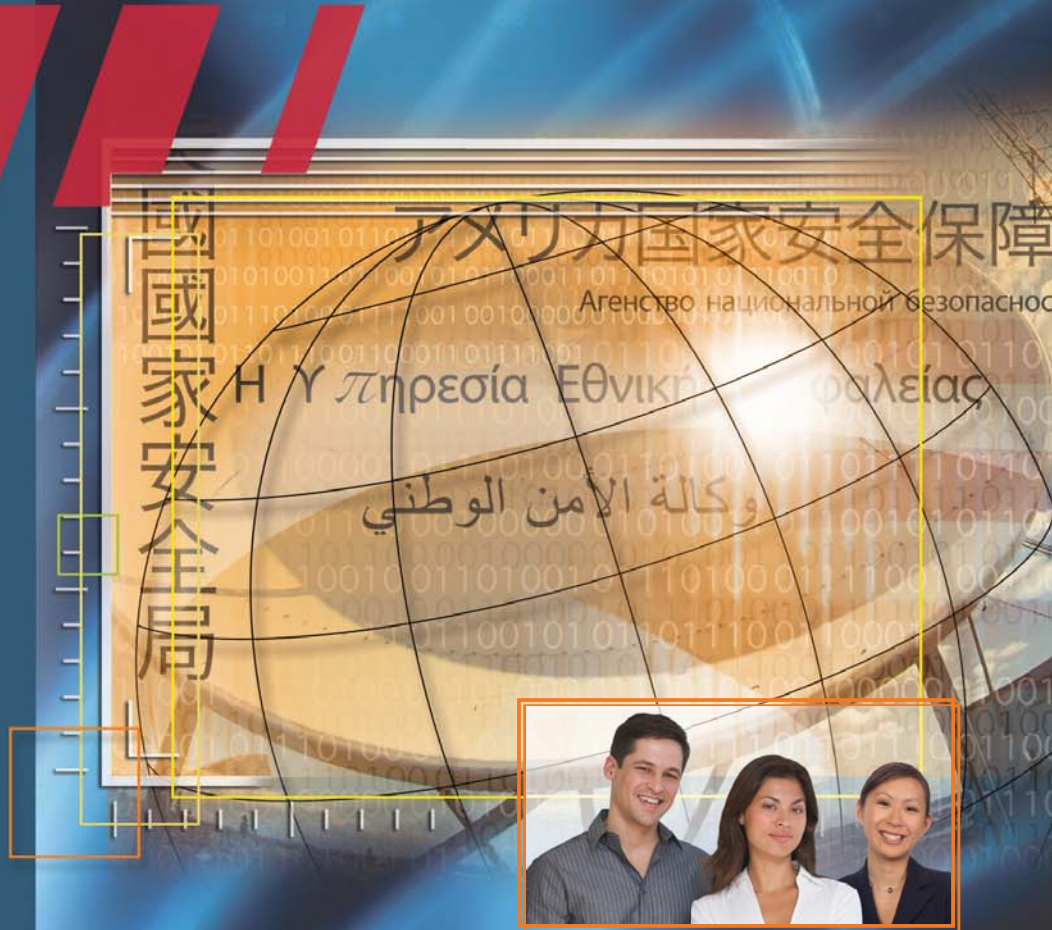
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International Payment Options for Translators and Agencies

By Eve Lindemuth Bodeux

The global nature of the language translation business, along with its heavy focus on subcontracting, results in a frequent need to send and/or receive payments across international boundaries. Although the translation industry is estimated to be worth an impressive \$33 billion,¹ many of its practitioners are individuals or small businesses. Transferring payments across international boundaries can be costly for both the sender and the receiver.

Eliminating or reducing per-transaction fees and improving exchange rates can result in significant savings.

Common International Payment Options

First, let's look at some of the payment methods that are common among translation industry professionals active on the international scene.

These include checks, wire transfers, PayPal, Skrill, and credit cards. The type of payment accepted by translation services providers depends on where their clients are located, their clients' industries, and the amount of

funds being transferred, among other factors.

Each of these methods has its own issues. Paper checks are archaic in today's banking system, but are still used by various clients. They may get lost when sent overseas and can be expensive to cash in a foreign currency. Wire transfers, while very common, are expensive to send and receive and are subject to various levels of fees per transaction. They may also include "hidden fees" for which neither the sending nor receiving bank seems to want to take responsibility. In fact, such fees are often charged by the intermediary banks required to complete international wire transactions. Another problem inherent in international wire transfers is that the bank controls the exchange rate when a foreign currency exchange takes place, and the rates offered by banks are often not favorable compared to market rates.

Payments received by PayPal and Skrill, especially in foreign currencies, are also subject to per-transaction fees based on the amount of money being transferred and also are subject to poor exchange rates. Additional fees may also be involved since PayPal and Skrill have complicated rate structures that depend on how payments are funded by the sender, as well as on the countries where the sender and receiver are located.

Per-Transaction Fees and Foreign Exchange Rates Are Both Important

Wires, PayPal, and Skrill payments and cashing foreign currency checks do not allow the recipient of the funds to control when the exchange rate transaction takes place. With large fluctuations possible in exchange rates among the U.S. dollar, Euro, and other currencies, this can result in significant amounts of money being lost. The ideal is for the person receiving the funds to be able to decide when to initiate foreign currency transactions. For example, when a larger volume of

The ideal is for the person receiving the funds to be able to decide when to initiate foreign currency transactions.

funds is transferred at once, as opposed to many smaller transfers from multiple clients, the larger amount may result in the foreign exchange provider executing the exchange at a more favorable rate. Also, only one per-transaction fee will be charged, instead of several.

These issues highlight the necessity of recognizing that both per-transaction fees (e.g., the one-time fee charged per wire transfer) and exchange rates (e.g., the rate offered when U.S. dollars are converted to Euros, or vice versa) are important. Eliminating or reducing per-transaction fees and improving exchange rates can result in significant savings. The question is, how can this be accomplished?

Alternative Solutions for Making International Payments

Alternative solutions exist that can reduce the burdensome nature of international payments. Each language services provider, from solo entrepreneurs to agencies, will need to assess these various solutions to see which best fit their particular business model. The ideal solution for making international payments will vary from practitioner to practitioner, but might offer the following: ease of use, low fees, competitive exchange rates, rapid transfer of funds, service to specific countries, and secure transfer. Your specific business needs may dictate additional requirements to be taken into consideration.

Foreign Exchange Companies

Solutions do exist that offer translation professionals more flexibility in managing foreign funds sent or received for services rendered. Foreign exchange companies are one of these options and include companies like Cambridge Mercantile ([\[bridgefx.com\]\(http://bridgefx.com\)\), American Express FX Payments \(\[americanexpress.com/ip\]\(http://americanexpress.com/ip\)\), and Western Union \(\[onlinefx.westernunion.com/business\]\(http://onlinefx.westernunion.com/business\)\). Other similar foreign exchange companies exist. These companies normally allow for foreign transfers to take place both into and out of U.S. funds. \(Please note that due to U.S. banking rules, this is not always the case for all international payment organizations.\)](http://www.cam</p></div><div data-bbox=)

These companies make a profit from the interest on the large amounts of money that pass through their possession from many customers, even if they only possess it for a short period of time (like banks and other institutions do as well). Because of this, and since their main focus is foreign exchange, they are able to offer exchange rates that are more competitive than those offered by banks. Note that some banks even offer the services of these foreign exchange companies to their customers, but add on additional fees. This is why working directly with the foreign exchange companies is usually a better choice.

Foreign exchange companies are international financial institutions (not banks) that offer foreign exchange transaction services to businesses of all sizes. To use their services to send funds, a translation professional needs a business bank account and must undergo an application process. A translator or agency then allows these third parties access to their bank accounts to facilitate making payments to bank accounts in other countries in a foreign currency at competitive rates. Recipients of these funds only need a bank account and do not need to sign up with the foreign exchange company being used by the sender. These institutions use electronic funds transfer to carry

out foreign exchange transactions, thereby avoiding the fees associated with wire transfers. Though these transactions are lower cost than wires, they are normally completed in one to three days, which is still fairly rapid.

A freelance translator who has bank accounts in more than one country can also use a foreign exchange company to transfer funds between these accounts. This allows the translator to choose the date and time when foreign exchange rate transactions occur, rather than being at the mercy of a bank's rates or timing. These companies' services could also be used effectively by a translation agency to pay multiple vendors located around the world in various currencies, and at a lower cost than through a traditional bank. This allows an agency to assign a project to the "best" translator for the job regardless of location, since the sender's overall cost of sending funds is less than doing so with a bank and the cost to the recipient of the funds is usually free. (The recipient will receive the exact amount specified by the sender, with no deductions).

The exact services offered by foreign exchange companies will vary. Some require a per-transaction fee on the sender's end while others waive it and charge the sender only the current exchange rate fee. In either case, foreign exchange companies offer some of the most competitive exchange rates available to solo entrepreneurs or small businesses. As the amount of money transferred internationally by an agency or freelancer increases, the exchange rate becomes more important to the overall equation. When transferring large sums of money, or small sums over time, these rates can result in savings of hundreds or even thousands of dollars. This is why it is important to consider the long-term monetary benefits of working with a specialized foreign exchange service provider.

Some foreign exchange providers may also offer additional services, including low-cost electronic domestic transfers (to pay domestic vendors

Fortunately, while helpful, multiple bank accounts are not required for an effective international payment strategy.

electronically) or U.S. dollar or Euro international payments for an additional fee. There is no currency exchange involved for overseas vendors who wish to be paid in U.S. dollars or Euros but, for example, are located in Asia. These additional services can be helpful if you are paying a variety of vendors around the world or receiving funds from a variety of clients.

TransferWise

TransferWise (transferwise.com) is another alternative to traditional banks for transferring money internationally. It is considered a peer-to-peer money transfer service and was established by the original founders of Skype (before Microsoft purchased the company), who were inspired by their own negative experiences trying to transfer funds internationally.

The original slogan listed on the TransferWise website was "Bye bye banks. You've had your fun. Banks charge a lot for foreign-currency transfers. We don't." The company explains it this way: "Banks charge huge hidden fees when you send money abroad. Now you can avoid them completely. Problem solved."

TransferWise targets the various microcosms that make up the international community, including expatriates, small international businesses, and students studying abroad. You do not need a business bank account to use TransferWise. As with foreign exchange companies, TransferWise offers exchange rates significantly more advantageous than those offered by banks. And as with foreign exchange companies, TransferWise does need access to your bank account to complete the transaction electronically.

TransferWise provides transparent

information on their website about how the process works. They spell out in mathematical calculations why, for example, sending 1,000 Euros to a U.S. bank account will save an estimated \$51 over using a bank to complete the transaction. (You could also use these same formulas as a model to calculate potential savings from foreign exchange companies.) TransferWise's stated focus is to help its customers avoid bank fees and get the most for their money when engaging in international transactions.

Multiple Bank Accounts

As mentioned earlier, having a bank account in more than one country can be advantageous to managing international payments and transfers. However, if your business does not already have multiple bank accounts it can be difficult to open them in today's era of tightened international and national banking laws. Residency and citizenship requirements come into play.

Fortunately, while helpful, multiple bank accounts are not required for an effective international payment strategy. Even if you only have a bank account in your country of residence, with a careful assessment of your business's payment requirements, you may be able to use some of these international payment alternatives. Using these newer methods along with more traditional methods, such as wires or PayPal, when necessary will help you craft an international payment policy that works to your advantage.

Defining Your International Payment Strategy


Your responsibility in trying to get the most for your money is to per-

form due diligence on any alternative international payment method you may be considering. Making the effort to define your payment strategy consciously will also assist you in finding the best fit for your specific business needs. Your goal is to save money and time when international transactions are involved. Asking and answering the following questions may help you decide which payment methods will work best for you:

- Do you work with direct clients or agencies?
- Who are your vendors or customers?
- What are their industry norms for payment?

Be sure to consider international accounting/tax issues and consult with the appropriate tax professionals so that you adhere to the rules of each country in which you hold funds.

- What currencies do they prefer?
- In which countries are they located?
- Which payment service providers offer services in these countries?
- What are the typical amounts of money involved in your transactions (many small amounts or less frequent large sums)?
- Which foreign currencies are you willing to accept (several, or do you require all payments to be in your home currency)?
- What payment terms do you accept (upon receipt, 15 days, 30 days, 45 days, 90 days, or other)?

By reviewing your replies to these questions and the services offered by each international payment provider, you can assess which payment 

Resources for Information on International Payment

Dillon, Sarah. "Getting Paid Across Borders: Multi-Currency Banking for Freelance Translators," <http://sumo.ly/z00>.

Sataline, Suzanne. "Looking Overseas, Businesses Learn to Master Currency Exchange," *The New York Times* (April 17, 2013), <http://tinyurl.com/pc53szv>.

"International Payment Methods: An Overview," *Speaking of Translation Podcast* (September 24, 2013), <http://speakingoftranslation.com/listen/international-payment-methods-an-overview>.

Other Links

American Express FX International Payments
americanexpress.com/ip

Skrill
www.skrill.com/en

Cambridge Mercantile
www.cambridgex.com

TransferWise
transferwise.com

Oanda Forex Trading
www.oanda.com

Travelex
www.travelex.com

PayPal Fee Calculator
<http://paypalfeecalculator.paymentprocessing.cc>
(Tells you what you pay in fees and the exchange rate when using PayPal)

Western Union
onlinefx.westernunion.com/business

XE Trade Money Transfers
www.xe.com/fx

methods best fit with your various clients, vendors, and payment scenarios. You can mix and match your options as needed and are not locked into using only one payment method. And, of course, be sure to consider international accounting/tax issues and consult with the appropriate tax professionals so that you adhere to the rules of each country in which you hold funds.

Finally, and realistically, it must be acknowledged that, while you can control payments you send to subcontractors or colleagues as well as trans-

fers between your own bank accounts, you cannot control how your clients choose to send you funds. However, as an agency or a freelancer, if you have a good relationship with your clients you may also feel comfortable sharing information and educating them about the various cost-effective options available to them for international payments.

And do not forget to keep an eye out for new options in international payments. Banks and PayPal are definitely not your only options. The fluid nature of today's international

and financial landscapes means that there is always the possibility of new alternatives becoming available.

Please note that this article is not offered as legal or financial advice and is informational only. ■

Notes

1. Kelly, Nataly, and Jost Zetzsche. *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World* (New York: Perigee, 2012), xiii.

Looking to Expand Your Portfolio of Direct Clients? ATA's Client Outreach Kit Can Help!

Reaching the direct client market requires a different marketing strategy. You have to go to them instead of waiting for them to come to you. ATA's Client Outreach Kit will give you the tools you need to attract direct clients by positioning yourself as a resource for translation buyers and users.

What is the Client Outreach Kit?

The core of the kit is a fully customizable PowerPoint presentation that you can use when speaking to potential clients—at chamber of commerce meetings, trade association events, professional seminars, brown-bag lunches at local law firms, or any other venue that would draw the kind of client you are looking for.

The kit also includes a set of practical, stand-alone Skills Modules to help you make the most of the core PowerPoint presentation. Topics include writing and delivering an elevator speech, developing effective public speaking habits, getting invited to speak, writing your own introduction, and handling question-and-answer sessions effectively.

The Client Outreach Kit can be downloaded free of charge by ATA members. To learn more, go to www.atanet.org/client_outreach.

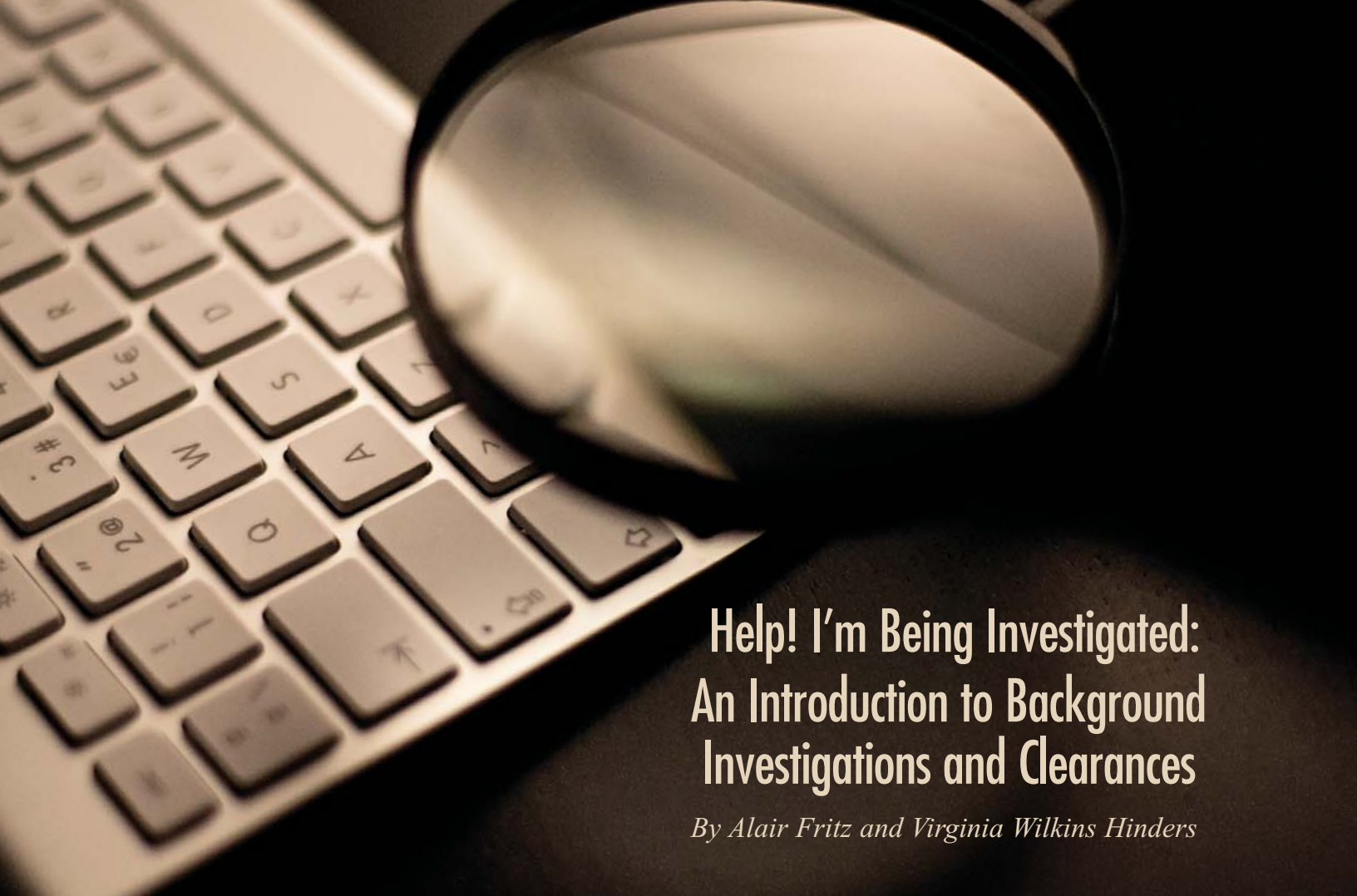
What you should be looking for:

1. **Experience** (ask for examples of previous work and run these past your foreign partners)
2. Residence abroad
3. **Someone who works into his/her native language**
4. Quality standards
5. Membership of professional associations



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Help! I'm Being Investigated: An Introduction to Background Investigations and Clearances

By Alair Fritz and Virginia Wilkins Hinders

There is no denying that the need for trustworthy individuals in linguist positions is high—security breaches in government agencies, corporations, individual computers, and even cell phones have made national and international headlines recently. More and more clients will be requiring their linguists to undergo background checks or even obtain security clearances before they can begin working relationships. If you are about to undergo a background check at any level you will want to be prepared. Here are some tips to help get you through the process as quickly and painlessly as possible.

What Is a Background Check? What Is a Clearance?

Though many people use “background check” and “clearance” interchangeably, the terms are actually quite different. It is important to find out what specific type of investiga-

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tion is required, since this will determine how much information you will need to provide.

Background Check: Any client, private or governmental, can request or require a “background check” or “background investigation.” This could involve any number of components depending on whom your client has hired to conduct the checks. Sometimes investigation services will just run your name through various local or national databases; sometimes they will need to talk to you or your

references. Different organizations within the federal government use different terminology and acronyms for various types of background investigations. (See the list on page 16.)

Security Clearance: If you are working specifically toward a “clearance,” that means you will be given access to classified information, so a federal agency like the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the U.S. Office of Personnel Management will run your investigation. There are many different levels of clear- ➔

ances, including confidential, secret, and top secret.

- **Confidential (C):** A clearance that provides access to information or material that may cause damage to national security if disclosed without authorization.
- **Secret (SC):** A clearance that provides access to information or material that may cause serious damage to national security if disclosed without authorization.

- **Top Secret (TS):** A clearance that provides access to information or material that may cause exceptionally grave damage to national security if disclosed without authorization.

Security clearances are used to control access to information that the government restricts on a need-to-know basis. Security clearance requirements are often found in federal agency job postings, specifically in positions that require access to restricted information.

What Will I Have to Do?

Expect paperwork—sometimes lots of paperwork. Many background checks also require fingerprint cards. You can have your fingerprints taken at local police stations, but there are also private companies that provide this service. Before you go, ask your prospective employer if you can have your fingerprints taken on cards supplied by the police station or if the agency has specific cards you need to utilize. Also, be sure to ask if they accept ink fingerprints or if they

Types of Background Investigations



The following is a list of different investigation acronyms (in order of increasing complexity):

Background Investigation (BI): The minimum investigative requirement; could consist of a combination of record checks (e.g., education, address, criminal record) and interviews in the public community (e.g., employers).

National Agency Check and Inquiries (NACI): A background investigation primarily for federal employees or contractors who will not have access to classified information. This investigation is appropriate for positions designated as public trust positions that require responsible and trustworthy employees, but with no national security impact. As a minimum, all NACIs include a check of records held by the FBI (name check, fingerprint check), as well as a check of the databases of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and U.S. Department of Defense.

National Agency Check with Law and Credit (NACL) and Access National Agency Check and Inquiries (ANACI): These investigations are for undesignated (military/contractor) or low-risk (civilian) positions that are noncritical sensitive and/or require eligibility for a confidential or secret security clearance. (See reference #2 below.)

Limited Background Investigation (LBI) and Moderate Risk Background Investigation (MBI): These investigations are usually conducted for moderate risk positions. The LBI has been phased out and replaced by the MBI or other investigation products. (See reference #3 below.)

Public Trust Investigation (PTI): Designated federal employee or contractor positions that, due to sensitive unclassified responsibilities, require personal security investigations.

Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI): Used to support critical sensitive, special sensitive, and high-risk positions and top secret clearances. Includes a personal subject interview and interviews with neighbors, employers, references, educators, and spouses/cohabitants.

Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI): A popular misconception is that SCI is also a type of investigation, but it is not. SCI is an access determination based on a need to access intelligence information. It is often associated with the intelligence community, but many federal agencies have SCI programs. SCI is granted after an investigation.

Information for this list was obtained from:

1. Office of Personnel Management FY2011 Investigations and Standardized Request Procedures, <http://1.usa.gov/1rBvTZO>.
2. Office of Personnel Management memo of August 29, 2011, <http://1.usa.gov/1CrJJUO>.
3. Office of Personnel Management memo of September 1, 2010, <http://1.usa.gov/1w9vZgt>.

require live scan prints. (Live scan is an electronic fingerprint system; the impressions can be printed onto cards or submitted electronically.) Call the fingerprinting location in advance to find out if they have the equipment you will need, if you need to make an appointment, and if there is a fee.

If you are being investigated by a federal agency, chances are good that you will encounter the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) system.¹ This is a secure federal government website where you will be able to fill out a form detailing your background information. Different forms will be assigned to you within the e-QIP system depending on the level of your investigation or clearance.

You may also need to fill out paperwork for the investigating agency, including nondisclosure agreements, loyalty oaths, and statements of confidentiality. In addition, many agencies require you to submit proof of citizenship; the specific requirement will vary according to the agency. Take the time to read each form carefully and follow all of the directions. Many people lose valuable time in the investigation process by having to redo a form because they just forgot to initial one box!

What Will They Ask Me?

The authors of this article are not adjudicators of background checks or clearances, but in their experience, the following are some of the most common topics brought up during an investigation. Topics will vary depending on the agency and level of investigation.

Citizenship: Are you a U.S. citizen? Do you have dual citizenship with any other country?

Residence History: Where have you been living for the past 10 years? Full addresses are required, including street numbers.

Education: Did you attend high school? College? Graduate school? Where (full address) and when? Did you receive any degrees?

Employment History: What jobs have you held for the past 10 years? What are the full addresses and your supervisors' names? Have you ever been fired?

Family: What are the names of your parents, children, and siblings? Are they U.S. citizens? Where do they live? What are their dates of birth?

Foreign Travel History: What dates have you left the U.S.? Where did you go? For how long? Why?

Military Service: Have you served in the U.S. military? If you are male, did you register for the Selective Service? If not, why?

Criminal History: Have you ever been arrested? Have you ever received any traffic tickets?

Drugs and/or Alcohol: Do you have a pattern of substance abuse?

Financial History: Are you currently delinquent on any debts? Have you ever declared bankruptcy?

These are just some of the questions you might encounter. Be prepared to disclose your identifying information, including your Social Security number and date and place of birth.

You should provide as many details as possible so that the investigator has everything he or she needs to know. This may mean you need to get on the phone and contact family members, old friends, former coworkers, and other references. It is important to start that legwork as soon as you can!

Websites like the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's e-QIP page make their security policies easily available so that you can be confident that your information transmission is

safe. You also have a hand in keeping your information secure: never share, write down, or reuse your login information, and always use a strong, complex password.

I Have an Issue Regarding My Background that I'm Concerned Will Reflect Poorly on My Investigation. What Should I Do?

First and foremost, *tell the truth*. You are not alone—and having an issue in your past will not necessarily preclude you from passing a background check. But if you do not tell the whole truth up front, it might look like you are trying to hide something and the investigator could assume that the situation is worse than it is. If the investigator thinks you are being deliberately dishonest, that will definitely hurt your chances of passing the check. Here are some situations that could be cause for concern to an investigator:

- Criminal conviction with jail time of a year or more
- Current unlawful use of drugs
- Dishonorable discharge from the Armed Forces
- Serious repeated financial problems
- Intentional false statements during the investigation
- Repeated alcohol abuse
- A pattern of criminal conduct or rule violation

If any of these apply, you will want to make sure you have all of the details about the situation ready to give to the investigator. For example, if you have ever been arrested, make sure that you have the paperwork from the police station and (if applicable) any paperwork showing what happened in court afterward. If you have financial issues (e.g., delinquencies on debts, bankruptcies, etc.), gather paperwork that shows

Want to learn more about working with the government?

Office of Personnel Management

www.opm.gov/investigations/background-investigations

U.S. Department of Defense Defense Security Service FAQs

www.dss.mil/psmo-i/ps_faqs.html

U.S. Department of State's FAQs

www.state.gov/m/ds/clearances/c10977.htm#5

U.S. Government Security Clearance Information

<http://bit.ly/USgov-security-clearance>

U.S. Small Business Administration Obtaining a Security Clearance for Your Company and/or Employees

<http://bit.ly/SBA-security-clearance>

you have taken steps to resolve the debts. Proof of payments, payment plan agreements with the creditors, along with any correspondence with the creditors can all be useful to the investigator.

Is There Anything I Can Do to Make the Results Come Back Faster?

The timing of your results will vary depending on the complexity of the check. While some checks are run instantly, others may take a few days, weeks, or longer. If you are applying for a federal government clearance, you can expect to wait at least a month (usually longer) before you hear if you have been approved. Of course, there are some ways you can make sure the process moves along as smoothly as possible.

Get your information ready as early as possible. If you do not know your residential, employment, or educational history, start gathering that information. Look through your taxes, credit card statements, bank statements, utility bills—anything that might list your old addresses or employers.

Triple check the information you provide for accuracy, especially for addresses. Zip codes are crucial to many background investigators. If the zip code is wrong, the entire form you filled out might be rejected.

Run your own credit report. If your background check will include a credit check, you should make sure you know what is on your credit report. Many people have debts that they do not realize are unresolved. If you have to settle up an account in the middle of the investigation, it will certainly cause a delay.

Notify your references. Make sure your references know that you listed them. They may need to speak with an investigator or respond to a letter or e-mail. If your references are not watching out for the correspondence, they might miss it or think it is junk mail. The longer your references wait to respond, the longer you will be waiting for your approval.

Be on the lookout for interview requests. Some investigations will require a personnel security interview with your investigator. The investigator might contact you by phone, e-mail, or postal mail. Make sure to

respond to the request as soon as possible to get on the investigator's schedule. Failure to respond to an interview request can result in the denial of your investigation.

Preparation Is Key

The security leaks of the modern world make clearances and background investigations more valuable than ever. For applicants to jobs such as offsite translation, court and medical interpreting, and many more, having a background investigation can be an advantage or even a requirement. If you prepare your information, complete the necessary forms with all of the required details, and are open and honest with all of your answers, the background investigation process will be as smooth as possible. It may seem like a lot of work at the time, but once you have a background check or clearance approved, you can list it on your résumé, and you may find a lot of doors open to you. ■

Note

1. Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, www.opm.gov/investigations/e-qip-application.

content

Content Marketing Planning: Tips and Tricks

By Ekaterina Howard

Establishing a web presence is a necessary element of doing business for both independent translators and translation companies. However, a simple, static website might not be enough to attract new clients and may even reduce the chances of it being found via a search engine query. This is why so many companies and translators supplement their website with a blog or maintain an active presence on various social media platforms where they interact with peers or target potential clients. In the latter case, both blogging and an active social media presence can be used as instruments of a content marketing strategy—a continuous effort “to attract and retain customers by consistently creating and curating relevant and valuable content with the intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior.”¹

Content marketing is particularly useful for small businesses. Companies that blog regularly tend to attract more customers and visitors and improve their search optimization results.² Moreover, blogging or writing articles

increases a company’s credibility. It has been estimated that around 80% of potential consumers prefer to get company information in a series of articles, and around 60% believe that such articles help them make better decisions.³

The main problem: consistently creating content for a variety of social media channels and a blog can be time-consuming. The good news is that there are several ways to save some time before and after creating pieces of content by making them more specific, and, therefore, more efficient. “Before creation” activities can help concentrate efforts on the most relevant and important mar-

Both blogging and an active social media presence can be used as instruments of a content marketing strategy.

keting segments. “After creation” activities can help you analyze past performance and modify future content pieces to achieve better results. “Before creation” activities include planning, research, and inventory. “After creation” activities include promotion, monitoring, and reuse.

“Before Creating Content” Actions

In order to create “relevant and valuable content with the intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior” it is necessary to:

- Know for whom the content is being created (ideal cus- ➔

tomers, fellow specialists, or any other group of people you would like to reach).

- Determine which kinds of content will be relevant and valuable for them.

If you have been doing business with a particular group of customers for some time, then you probably already have a good idea of what interests your customers, what problems they face, and how to solve them. If you are just starting out or would like to work in a new segment, then finding answers to these questions might appear challenging.

Creating a Buyer Persona

One way to define a target consumer group and find out which types of content would be of value to them is to create a buyer persona. A buyer persona is “a semi-fictional representation of your ideal customer based on market research and real data about your existing customers.”⁴ Persona descriptions may include basic demographic information (gender, age, family status) and, more importantly, sales-related information (motivation for a purchase, preferred social media channels, etc.).⁵ The more detailed you are, the better. Creating buyer personas helps determine what will be relevant and valuable to specific groups of potential customers. Once you have specific target groups in mind, you will be ready to start planning content and topics.

Research: Tracking the Customer Journey

A very useful concept for content planning used by many marketers is to track what is referred to as the customer journey: “the complete sum of experiences that customers go through when interacting with your company and brand.”⁶ This journey provides a framework for content marketing by tracking the most popular types of marketing content and how/when they are most useful. The stages involved in this journey can

Planning and creating content are only the first two steps of the content management process.

vary depending on the marketing segment being studied, but three of the main areas usually included are buyer interest, information gathering, and seeking options. (A sample can be seen in Table 1 below.) For instance:

1) Interest: As potential customers become aware of their need for translation services, they might start with a quick search either for a translator, a translation company, or for such articles as “How to find a good translator.”

2) Information Gathering: After that, potential customers will probably realize that ordering a translation is not as easy as it seems and that additional research is required. They might look for this information by consulting industry best practices.

3) Seeking Options: At the next stage, potential customers will research a small number of companies or translators they have been considering to find the one with whom they would like to work based on previous customer experiences and testimonials.

To determine which pieces of content to use at each stage of the customer journey, you could use a

handy content grid designed by Smart Insights.⁷ This tool can be used to classify various types of content according to a particular stage in the customer journey in order to measure performance more easily, including emotional triggers that make content attractive (e.g., what type of content is shared the most). Interestingly, not all content pieces need to be rational to attract. In fact, according to Chris Lake of EConsultancy Ltd., creator of the Periodic Table of Content Marketing, emotions are the key factor of content popularity.⁸

Keyword Research Tools

Another way to find topics that would be interesting for your target audience is through keyword research. There are several ways to find which search query terms customers use most often to discover the information that interests them. For example:

- Pay attention to search engine suggestions.
- Take advantage of keyword finding tools. These tools help you analyze the keywords customers use in a structured way and to choose the ones that will be more likely to reach a larger audience, or the ones that have more poten-

Table 1: Sample Framework for a Customer Journey Showing the Content Type Most Relevant at Each Stage

Interest	Information Gathering	Seeking Options
Blog posts	White papers	Case studies
Social media	E-books	Demos
	Webinars	Testimonials
	Reports	

tial. Alternatively, these tools can provide a good idea of the kind of content for which your target audience is looking.

- Pay attention to search trends (for example, Google Trends). Sometimes it is possible to weave popular topics into your content. An example of this is Neil Payne's article on the *Huffington Post* blog, "Understanding the Importance of Interpreters through *Game of Thrones*," showcasing the value of professional interpreting services.⁹

Content Inventory

If you have already been blogging, now is a good time to review the material you have already created and delete the pieces that are not relevant or do not provide valuable information to your target audience. You should also identify what type of content your blog still needs to sustain interest throughout the customer journey.

A convenient way to conduct a content inventory is to organize it into a spreadsheet with the following information: title, post abstract, audience, goal, status (outdated/new), additional comments, popularity (number of views, comments, links, and social media mentions). This information will help you identify the most popular topics so that you can create new content on the same topics or reuse existing articles.¹⁰

Planning: Using Calendars

In terms of planning, it might be useful to create a calendar (or a number of calendars). For example:

- An **editorial calendar** with more details on each piece and ideas for potential use. For example, can certain content be reused as an infographic? Are there memorable quotes that can be tweeted to promote an article?¹¹
- A **content calendar** with messages sorted by channel, if you are using several social media channels. This type of calendar saves time by

allowing you to plan or schedule social media messages in advance.¹²

"After Content Creation" Actions

Planning and creating content are only the first two steps of the content management process. After publishing your new blog post or article, you will need to attract readers and then monitor the popularity of the piece for future reference.

Promoting

A minimal promotional effort may include posting new article notifications on social media, repeating the notification for the benefit of readers in different time zones, or engaging your audience, either by asking questions or by replying to comments. Other possible ways to attract more readers include sending out a newsletter, contacting influential industry media or bloggers, or engaging with them by leaving comments to posts.¹³

Measuring

A variety of metrics can be used to measure the success of each post or social media message.¹⁴ The simplest ones measure the amount of readers the post has attracted and how often it has been shared or mentioned on social media. Somewhat trickier would be measuring how much interest from potential customers a particular post has generated and whether or not it has helped you attract new clients. This is when setting up a web analytics tool (e.g., Google Analytics) can be helpful.¹⁵ With this kind of information you can determine which types of content have been the most efficient and then create similar content.

Reusing Content

This is especially pertinent for blog posts. A series of blog posts on the same topic can be combined into an e-book or a white paper, "how to" articles can become a presentation, and articles on processes can be easily turned into infographics.

Planning and Measuring for Success

Implementing these steps before writing your blog or social media content will help you target a specific group while spending less time brainstorming ideas. Analyzing the results after publication helps you become more aware of the topics that are most valuable to your audience and capitalize on it. ■

Notes

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6. Sorman, Audra. "The Best Way to Map the Customer Journey: Take a Walk in Their Shoes," Survey Monkey Blog (March 21, 2014), <http://bit.ly/SurveyMonkey-customer-journey>.

For additional information, I recommend Coursera's *Content Strategy for Professionals: Engaging Audiences for Your Organization*: www.coursera.org/course/contentstrategy. This online course is offered by Northwestern University and covers such topics as usage of social and/or mobile media, finding a voice for your brand, managing consumers' experiences, and user experience optimization.

Another excellent resource is: Court, David, Dave Elzinga, Susan Mulder, and Ole Jørgen Vetvik. "The Consumer Decision Journey," *McKinsey Quarterly* (McKinsey&Company, June 2009), <http://bit.ly/McKinsey-customer-decision>.
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Here is another how-to on infographics with some advice on design: Chua, Desmond. "The Nine Most Powerful Blog Promotion Tactics from Top Marketing Experts [Infographic]," ReferralCandy (May 26, 2014), <http://bit.ly/blog-promotion-infographic>.
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Are You LinkedIn?

What is LinkedIn?

LinkedIn is a free e-networking service that helps you create an online community of links to new contacts, prospective clients, and great jobs. Through a LinkedIn network you can discover inside connections and reach the clients you need to meet through referrals from people you already know and trust. Your professional relationships are key to building your business.

How Does It Work?

Begin by inviting colleagues and clients to join LinkedIn and connect to your network. Next, add to your community by searching LinkedIn for professional contacts you already know and inviting them to connect to you. Then, post a profile summarizing your professional accomplishments, associations to which you belong, schools you have attended, and places you have worked so that former business associates, co-workers, and classmates can find you and connect. Each connection expands your network. The result? Your network now consists of your connections, your connections' connections, and the people they know, linking you to thousands of qualified professionals. Take advantage of your ATA membership. Joining LinkedIn through ATA gives you an instant community with opportunities to grow your network quickly. Don't wait—get your online networking underway! To join, just visit www.atanet.org/linkedin.php.



Be the Choice, Not the Obligation: Winning Champions of Interpreter Services Through Exceptional Customer Service

By Erin Rosales and Rashelle LeCaptain

Janet arrived at her interpreting assignment out of breath. She was not entirely sure she had found the correct department on the hospital campus, but she was late, so she walked up to the nurses' station and interrupted two nurses to ask if this was the oncology unit. It was, they confirmed. Janet asked if the doctor for the patient in room 714 was on the unit.

"I'm sorry," said one of the nurses, "Are you a family member of the patient?" Janet unclipped her ID badge from her pants pocket and held it up to the nurse saying, "No, I'm the interpreter, and the doctor is supposed to be here now."

So, what happened? What's wrong with the scenario above? After all, Janet is a very skilled and talented interpreter. She earned national certification, has 15 years of experience, and is an active member of local and national interpreting organizations. Unfortunately for Janet, despite her on-paper qualifica-

The person contacting the interpreter or contracting with an interpreter services provider has a choice.

tions, she has done little to inspire confidence, much less collegiality, with the nurses she encountered.

Then again, what does it matter as long as she is excellent at interpreting and holds the proper credentials? Well, it matters a great deal, and this is why: her livelihood depends on people wanting to work with her. The same is true for every interpreter. And the person contacting the interpreter or contracting with an interpreter services provider has a choice.

Poor Customer Service Reflects Poorly on the Entire Profession

There is always a choice. There is a choice to call another in-house interpreter or contract with a different company. There is a choice to work begrudgingly with whatever interpreter

shows up. Even if there is only one interpreter on the planet with a particular language pair, there is even a choice *not to request an interpreter*. In most cases in the health care sector, health care providers are required by law (under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act or Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) to provide interpreters to patients when needed. Still, there are many instances where interpreting services are not being provided in health care facilities, regardless of whether or not it is legally required.

The bottom line is that there are consequences associated with providing (or not providing) an interpreter—sometimes negative consequences. For the self-employed interpreter it might mean less consistency and frequency of work assign- ➔

ments. For an in-house interpreter it might mean poor performance reviews. For the health care institution it might mean being exposed to risk associated with opting to work with more pleasant, but less skilled interpreters, or opting not to hire an interpreter. At the other extreme, choosing to work with the *right* interpreter often results in favorable consequences: increased work opportunities, positive performance reviews and longevity with the employer, and improved interpreting services provided at the health care facility. So, we need to do all we can to make a favorable impression, both in terms of how we present ourselves professionally and how we carry out our duties, to ensure that people make the right choice every time. Do not give people a reason not to hire an interpreter. Make it a decision they should not have to think twice about.

Excellent Customer Service Is No Guarantee, But It Helps

Does providing excellent customer service guarantee that interpreters will never lose clients or have complaints filed against them? Perhaps not. However, eventually the people responsible for making the decision about which interpreter to call, which company to contract with, or whether or not they will make the effort to contact an interpreter at all will be faced with a choice. The interpreter in the crosshairs might not be Janet, but it might be you or your organization. If these decision-makers are going to choose an option that leads away from you, do not let it be because you have a reputation for being unprofessional. Excellent customer service (which includes conducting yourself in a professional manner at all times) will help them choose wisely.

So, how do you *make* people want to work with you? The answer is, you cannot. You can, however, *inspire* people to *want* to work with you. (Now, there is a thought!)

There are many different ways for interpreters to inspire others to want to work with them. Focusing on

Inspire people to move away from an attitude of having an obligation to work with an interpreter toward an attitude of having a desire to work with one.

Janet's scenario as an example, there are several things she could have done differently to create a better impression and make her interaction with the nurses more positive. Here are just a few suggestions:

Arrive on Time: Interpreters must not be causal about their assignment arrival times. Every effort should be made to arrive on time. That said, there might have been a very good reason why Janet was running late. Perhaps her previous assignment ran long at the last minute (e.g., a patient had an allergic reaction to a vaccination administered at the end of the previous appointment). When this happens, at least acknowledge and explain the tardiness. If possible, inform the unit ahead of time or coordinate for another interpreter to cover the assignment. These things can go a long way toward maintaining a positive impression of you and even of interpreters in general.

Be Tactful at All Times: A day in the life of a medical interpreter is frequently chaotic and unpredictable. It is easy to get caught up in the stress of it all. However, interpreters are constantly interacting with others who also experience chaotic and unpredictable days, not to mention having their own unique priorities, concerns, and interests. Instead of interrupting the nurses abruptly, Janet should have opened with a gentle phrase or nonverbal gesture to catch the nurses' attention. Opening with an "excuse me," "pardon me," or "sorry to interrupt" would have been a more tactful way for Janet to make her presence known.

Identify Yourself First: Before asking the nurses to provide her with any information, Janet should have introduced herself by stating her name and her position. She also should have worn her ID badge in a place that would have been easy for the nurses to see. The nurses should not have been put on guard because they could not readily identify Janet as part of the medical team, possibly wondering if they would soon need to call in a "code green." Get the introductions out of the way first so individuals are not put on the spot.

Have a Strategy for Professional Interactions

In addition to the things Janet could have done differently, there are other ways for interpreters to be intentional and strategic about day-to-day interactions with others.

Learn Names: Make an effort to learn the names of the members of the medical team and other staff members. It is not sufficient to know only the name of the physician and the patient. Learning names, and addressing people in their preferred manner, is a way of demonstrating to individuals that they matter. And they do matter, even if they do not sign your paycheck.

Be Perceptive: Be aware of the needs of others you encounter and help out when and how you can. It might not be possible (a.k.a. ethical) for you to dress a patient's wound, but you can hold a door open or direct lost individuals to an information desk.

Do not give people a reason
not to hire an interpreter.

Be Pleasant: There are lots of ways to be pleasant. Smiling at appropriate times, acknowledging people you pass in the hallway, wishing people a good day, and thanking others for their service to you are just a few examples. These things might not seem like a big deal to you, but to someone who is immersed in stress constantly, these actions can be a welcome and much needed balm.

Occasionally, there will be opportunities to make a grand gesture and really impress those with whom you work. More often than not, the day-to-day grind will present a few small opportunities for you to leave a lasting positive impression. Keep your eyes open for these moments and seize them when you can.

Make Them Sing Your Praises

All of these things boil down to

providing exceptional customer service to the people you encounter during your professional interactions. Doing these things a few times will allow you to make a small difference in the moment. Doing these things consistently and over a period of time just might inspire people to become champions and cheerleaders of the services you provide. Positive interactions reflect favorably on the entire profession.

So, by all means continue to develop the skills that make you a strong interpreter, but do not neglect the importance of delivering exceptional customer service as well. Use both skill sets to inspire people to move away from an attitude of having an *obligation* to work with an interpreter toward an attitude of having a *desire* to work with one. Hopefully, that *one* will be you. ■

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Rosario, Argentina

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GeekSpeak

Jost Zetzsche

Hard Numbers

In a recent conversation,

David Canek, the founder of Memsource, shared some interesting observations with me that I would like to pass on. For those who do not know, Memsource is a cloud-based translation environment tool that has been around since 2010 and presently has about 30,000 registered users. That number might be a little misleading since it includes everyone who has ever registered, even if only to try the tool, but it is still a tool with a rapidly growing user base. And there are good reasons for that. While all of the resources are stored online (thus “cloud-based”), you can choose between a web-based and a desktop-based translation editor with virtually the same functionality. In fact, when I recently showed the web-based translation interface to European Parliament translators as one example of a user-friendly translation interface, you could almost see the unfortunate ghosts of clunky web-based interfaces of the past blowing out of their minds.

But I do not want to talk about Memsource, the tool, as much as about how users use Memsource. Since it is a cloud-based tool, it is easy for the Prague-based company to access aggregate statistical numbers across the entire cloud. David and his team recently looked at what percentage of users are using the translation memory (TM) and termbase features, what percentage are using machine translation (MT), and which MT engine (if any) they are using. Here are the results:

- **Translation Memory:** 28.8% do not use the TM feature (versus 71.2% who do).

- **Termbase:** 61.6% do not use the termbase feature (versus 38.4% who do).
- **Machine Translation:** 53.8% do not use MT (versus 46.2% who do).
- **Type of Machine Translation Engine Used:** Of all MT users, more than 98% use either Google Translate or the various options of Microsoft Bing Translator (versus less than 2% who use non-public engines, even though there are preconfigured connectors to the following MT engines: Apertium, Asia Online, KantanMT, LetsMT, MoraviaMT, NICT, PangeaMT, Systran, and Tauyou).

These are very valuable numbers. While I am sure they would differ to some degree in other tools, I would bet that the general direction is similar.

Let’s look at these numbers in more detail. The TM numbers are probably the most surprising. Almost a third of all users do not actually use TMs. In a certain sense that should make me happy as a long-time warrior against the term “translation memory tool,” but



it still seems odd that so many do not value TM. My guess is that most of these users are casual translators (there is a free Memsource edition for this type of user) who do not really understand the TM concept, or who are just interested in accessing MT content for the great variety of file formats that Memsource supports. If that is true, we need to keep that in the back of our minds for the remaining statistics.

The termbase numbers are somewhat unsurprising, although I might have expected an even lower usage of terminology databases. In this column (and elsewhere) I have often vented about the unfortunate underuse of terminology components in translation environment tools. In that sense, it is actually a positive development that more than a third of users are using the termbase—especially if our assumption about a segment of non-professional users is correct.

Now on to MT. There has been a chorus of voices in the past few years, especially in the MT community, claiming that even though so many translators are complaining about MT, a relatively large percentage of them are “secretly” using it. With almost half of all Memsource users proven to be MT users, I think we can say that there is some credence to that →

Information and Contacts

The GeekSpeak column has two goals: to inform the community about technological advances and at the same time encourage the use and appreciation of technology among translation professionals. Jost is the co-author of *Found in Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*, a perfect source for replenishing your arsenal of information on how human translation and machine translation each play important parts in the broader world of translation. Contact: jzetzsche@internationalwriters.com.

Member News

- **Eriksen Translations**, of Brooklyn, New York, was awarded a Bronze Stevie Award in the 11th Annual International Business Awards. Eriksen received the award in the Best Overall Web Design category for the redesign of its website, www.eriksen.com.
- The following language services providers have been named among the 5,000 fastest growing private companies in the U.S. by *Inc.* magazine. The *Inc.* 5000 list represents companies that have had significant revenue growth over three consecutive years, are inde-

pendent and privately held, and are based in the United States.

Certified Languages International
Portland, OR

CETRA Language Solutions
Elkins Park, PA

CQ fluency, Inc.
Hackensack, NJ

Dynamic Language
Seattle, WA

Interpreters Unlimited
San Diego, CA

Language Training Center
Indianapolis, IN

Propio Language Services, LLC
Overland Park, KS

ProTranslating
Coral Gables, FL

TransPerfect, Inc.
New York, NY

U.S. Translation Company
Salt Lake City, UT

GeekSpeak Continued

notion. Granted, we might have to take some percentage points off to account for amateur translators, but it is safe to say that significantly more than a third of all professional users of Memsorce are using MT (more than use term-bases!). Of course, it would be interesting to analyze those numbers further to find out, for instance, which language combinations are being used and to what degree, as well as how the MT suggestions are actually being used. However, David and his team chose to focus only on a high-level view of usage data.

Perhaps more striking are the kinds of MT engines that are being used. Almost everyone is using generic public engines (Google, Microsoft) where the source segment is sent to the MT providers to be processed further. In fact, in Memsorce's particular case, a large percentage of users even select to send the target segments to Microsoft. This option is called

"Microsoft with Feedback,"¹ and goes back to an agreement between Memsorce and Microsoft whereby users do not pay any fees if they use that option. In exchange, users send Microsoft the target segment as well. Note that you can also use the regular Microsoft engine with Memsorce.

This makes me wonder about the answers to two questions. First, has our concept of data sharing evolved to the point where we feel comfortable with much of our data being shared with large corporations like Google and Microsoft? I am guessing that many of our clients would answer that question with a fairly resounding "No." I do not want to stir up a hornet's nest here, but I would likely respond to those clients like this: "So, do you not want me to use Gmail or other web services in which data is also being analyzed?" In a way, that should settle the first question.

But this brings us to the second question. If so many of us are using

MT, why are we not using customized engines? After all, the MT community has been telling us that using these engines is the only way in which we will see some real progress. My hunch is that while many MT vendors tell us that (theoretically) it is easy to build custom MT engines and access those services, in practice that is not really the case. These vendors still seem to have a lot of work to do. Whether that consists of making access easier or showing us that the results are actually superior remains to be seen, and chances are it will be a mixture of the two. ■

Note

1. More information on the "Microsoft with Feedback" can be found at http://wiki.memsorce.com/wiki/Machine_Translation.

The Entrepreneurial Linguist

Judy Jenner



Do You Need a College Degree?

A few months ago, an acquaintance asked me whether she needed a college degree to succeed as a court interpreter. I had not really thought about this issue very much, as college tends to be a natural step in the lives of most professionals, but the question is more than valid. The answer is a bit more complicated than it seems, but basically I would say yes, you should probably have a college degree to make sure you put yourself in the best possible competitive position.

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, translators and interpreters typically need at least a bachelor's degree.¹ Of course, many in our profession have advanced degrees. However, especially in the U.S., these degrees are not necessarily in translation and interpreting. In Europe, things are different, as translation and interpreting degrees are offered at many universities, so it seems to me that a large percentage of translators and interpreters who work professionally in Europe have degrees in translation and interpreting.

Which one is better, a translation or interpreting degree, or a degree in another field, perhaps in your area

of specialization? Or is it best to have both? That is a topic for another column.

Now, is a degree strictly necessary to work as a translator or interpreter? No. Ours is a fairly unregulated industry and there are no hard educational guidelines, as opposed to, say, lawyers, who need to have a JD (or an LLM if they are coming from another country) to sit for the bar exam. Not so for translators and interpreters.

However, I only know a few successful interpreters (and no translators) who do not hold a college degree. The reality is that few professional jobs in this economy are open to non-college graduates, even though ours technically is. Newcomers to the profession have to compete with colleagues who might have more than 20 years of experience and hold graduate degrees, so any newcomer is well advised to have as much preparation as possible. Essentially, it all comes down to skills, but to break into the industry, a college degree and top-notch language skills are probably the minimum requirement to make any newcomer competitive.

I did some soul-searching and asked myself: would I work with

(= outsource projects to) a colleague who did not have a college degree? This is a tough question, and the answer is probably not, as I have a long list of colleagues with impressive credentials to whom I am more likely to outsource. Would I immediately discount someone without a college degree? Not really, but it would not make any sense for me to work with someone I do not know (which I never do) and someone who has less education than everyone else on my list. I am usually especially puzzled by those who are one class or a few credits away from finishing their degrees. Of course, oftentimes life can get in the way of finishing a degree, but, unfortunately, in education things are black or white in terms of credentials. Either you have a degree or not (there is no such thing as an almost-degree). While I do not want to draw general conclusions on someone's work ethic based on whether or not one has a college degree, having a few letters after your name does show dedication and stamina, which are important in our industry and any other.

Ultimately, you have to convince your clients that you are the right translator or interpreter for them, and having as much to back up your skills as possible is key. A degree is one of these elements. While it is not impossible to succeed in this business without a college degree, I would say it is probably the exception rather than the norm. ■

Note

1. *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm.

Information and Contacts

This column is not intended to constitute legal, financial, or other business advice. Each individual or company should make its own independent business decisions and consult its own legal, financial, or other advisors as appropriate. The views expressed here are not necessarily those of ATA or its Board of Directors. Ideas and questions should be directed to judy.jenner@entrepreneuriallinguist.com.

Judy Jenner is a court-certified Spanish interpreter and a Spanish and German translator in Las Vegas, Nevada, where she runs Twin Translations with her twin sister. She is a past president of the Nevada Interpreters and Translators Association. She hosts the translation blog, *Translation Times* (www.translationtimes.blogspot.com). You can also find her at www.entrepreneuriallinguist.com. Contact: judy.jenner@twintranslations.com or judy.jenner@entrepreneuriallinguist.com.

Check Out ATA's Guides to Services Agreements

ATA offers two guides developed by ATA volunteers to assist interpreters and translators in reviewing and drafting contracts. These free online guides offer practical explanations and commentary for standard terms, conditions, and clauses.

Interpreting

www.atanet.org/business_practices/interpreting_agreements.php

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Blog Trekker

People Management: The Secret Job of the Interpreter

(Posted by Athena Matilsky on the blog of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, <http://najit.org/blog>)

These days, when people ask me what it takes to be an interpreter, I tell them one part language skills, one part interpreter technique, and one part people management.

When we embark on our interpreting career, learning interpreting technique is a good beginning, but it is just a beginning. Quite separate from the hours we spend repeating simultaneous exercises and performing note-taking drills, we must learn how to manage the people we encounter in order to interpret effectively. This is what I term “people management.” The phrase refers, for example, to the capacity to address the sinister-looking judge who is an incomprehensible mumbler. It refers to the ability to deal with the litigant who becomes emotionally worked up and does not stop for breath. You know her: the one who, every time she pauses ostensibly to allow you to interpret, begins talking again once you start. It means managing the attorney who objects to his client’s utterance in Mandarin before the

judge has heard it in English, or diplomatically explaining to the packed courtroom that you need a break because no one realized that an eight-hour trial requires a team. It means having the confidence to request a moment to review documents before plunging into sight translations. We are often the only ones who know what we need to do our job correctly; if we cannot communicate this and obtain what we need effectively, we are not good interpreters.

By way of explanation: you may give a beautiful English rendition of the testimony you have just heard in Russian, but if the litigant is still speaking, the judge will not hear you. As interpreters, we must develop a firm and decisive way of appropriately asking people to pause once we have reached maximum capacity, and not simply begin speaking in the hopes that they will stop. We need an arsenal of quick phrases such as “Your honor, the interpreter was not able to hear the testimony, as both parties were speaking at once.” We must be polite but decisive. And when we are in the interpreting zone, it can be difficult to formulate our own sentences, so pre-loading our “arsenal” to prepare for these situations is a must!



We must also be empathetic. I understand that sometimes people keep talking on and on because they are worried they will not get another chance. One of the phrases in my Spanish arsenal is, “one moment please, then you can continue.” In this way I can quickly obtain the pause I need, and the party is now reassured that they will be able to say everything. My interpretation into English will end in such a way that the judge understands the party has not finished his or her thought, and I can then prompt the party to continue.

Of course, good technique and people management are mutually beneficial. While we must firmly and politely request that people pause to allow us to capture everything said, it is absolutely essential to know how to take notes in order to allow people the freedom to express themselves without being interrupted.

Moral of the story: technique is essential when working as an interpreter. However, we also must be aware of the importance of navigating our surroundings and delivering accurate renditions no matter the circumstances. Through observation of other interpreters and critical self-analysis, we can improve our professional skills. When something does not go the way we wish it would have gone, troubleshooting and planning will make it go smoother in the future. We are always encountering new challenges, but the more we are able to manage the people involved effectively, the more we can put our interpreting skills to good use. ■

Information and Contacts

Internet blogs are rich sources of information for translators and interpreters. They allow users to post questions, exchange ideas, network, and read news and commentary on a specific subject. The topics featured in this column are actual blog postings concerning issues pertinent to your colleagues in the field today. For more blog listings, visit www.atanet.org/resources/blog_trekker.php.

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Upcoming Events

November 21-23, 2014

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Annual Convention & World Languages Expo
San Antonio, TX
www.actfl.org/2014convention-expo

November 22-28, 2014

International Association for Advancement in Language Technology Translating and the Computer Conference
London, England
www.translatingandthecomputer.com

January 8-11, 2015

Modern Language Association
130th Annual Convention
Vancouver, Canada
www.mla.org/convention

January 29, 2015

Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia
"Translating Official Documents: Discussion on Procedures"
Vancouver, Canada
www.stibc.org

February 16-18, 2015

Israel Translators Association
ITA International Conference
Jerusalem, Israel
www.ita.org.il/index.php

March 14, 2015

Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters
28th Annual Conference
Raleigh, NC
www.catiweb.org

April 24-26, 2015

International Medical Interpreters Association
International Congress
Rockville, MD
www.imiaweb.org/conferences

May 15-17, 2015

National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators
36th Annual Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
www.najit.org

June 1-7, 2015

Middlebury Bread Loaf Translators Conference
Ripton, VT
www.middlebury.edu/blwc/bltc

June 21-24, 2015

Society for Technical Communication
STC Summit
Columbus, Ohio
<http://summit.stc.org>

September 30-October 3, 2015

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Dictionary Review

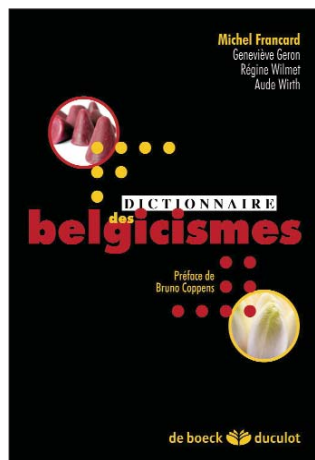
Reviewed by

Isabelle Berquin

The Dictionary Reviews are compiled by

Peter A. Gergay

Dictionnaire des Belgicisms



Authors:

Michel Francard, Geneviève Geron, Régine Wilmet, and Aude Wirth

Publisher:

Duculot

Publication Date:

2010

Number of pages/entries:

400 pages
2,000 entries

Price:

€29.50 (around \$40)

ISBNs:

978-280-1116084
978-280-1116081

Specialty/Field:

Linguistics (regional language variants)

Available from:

<http://superieur.deboeck.com>

Belgicisms, those often colorful words and expressions specific to Belgian French, had long been considered barbarisms that needed to be eliminated from the language. Thankfully, they are now recognized as integral parts of this regional variant of French, enriching the language and reflecting the country's history, culture, and geography. Belgium has three official national languages: Dutch, French, and German (in decreasing order of prevalence), along with several dialects, most falling under the two broad groups of Flemish and Walloon (related to Dutch and French, respectively). As such, the French language spoken in this country has been shaped by these languages as well as by other influences. So, if you thought "Belgian" was the language spoken in Belgium, then the *Dictionnaire des Belgicisms* (written in French) should be enlightening and provide you with hours of informative and entertaining reading. Although this dictionary was published in 2010, it is still valuable today, as few works of this type have been published on this topic over the past decade, and fewer still were as thoroughly researched and validated in the field.

Contents and Layout

The bulk of this work is an alphabetical dictionary with approximately 2,000 entries. It includes definitions of each word or phrase along with phonetic transcriptions in the International Phonetic Alphabet, labels indicating parts of speech and register, and cross-references to related words.¹ While concise, the definitions give enough contextual information and examples to help the reader understand in what circumstances a word or phrase is used. One distinguishing feature of this dictionary is that each entry is followed by information on its "vitality" (frequency of use) and diffusion in Belgium (the extent to which it is spoken in various parts of the country). Most entries also include a note on word origin. When available, equivalents in standard French are shown. The authors define this "*français de référence*" as the language represented in traditional French dictionaries and grammar books, but excluding anything too markedly regional or restricted in use. Extended cultural notes further illustrate a handful of terms, many with a touch of humor. (For instance, there is a reference to the *Tintin* comics series above the entry for *lambique*, a type of beer made in the Brussels area.)

This main dictionary section is preceded by a preface by Belgian humorist and comedian Bruno Coppens, as well as an introduction by the authors. The short, humorous preface, packed with Belgicisms, Franglais, and cultural references, would be better described as a foreword and, in my opinion, does little to inform the reader on the subject. This is especially true for readers unfamiliar with Belgian French, for whom the meaning may be too obscure to decipher without the help of this dictionary (but perhaps that was the goal). More informative, the 10-page introduction presents the purpose of this dictionary, the method used in selecting entries (which include the most common terms from the French variants spoken in Brussels, the capital, and Wallonia, the southern portion of the country), and provides guidance on how to use this dictionary. A seven-page bibliography lists the main sources used.

A few entries include black-and-white maps showing geographic distribution of usage in the Brussels area and the French-speaking provinces of Belgium. Apart from these maps, there are no figures or tables, but illustrations are not essential for this type of work. The design of this paperback

dictionary is somewhat plain, but the binding and paper are of good quality and the fonts used are clearly legible. Typographic elements (bold, italics, font types, arrowheads) help the reader to navigate the different parts of each entry.

Completeness

As described in the dictionary's introduction, the authors selected words and meanings that were understood by at least 50% and actually used by 30% of the hundred or so respondents they surveyed. Some entries are words borrowed directly or adapted from other languages. For example, *tof* (great), which is borrowed from Dutch, is derived from the Yiddish word *tov*. Some are terms of French origin that have changed meaning over time and can be considered archaisms in standard French. Examples include *déjeuner* instead of *petit-déjeuner* for breakfast, or *cru* (adj., literally "raw") for cold and humid weather.

The *Dictionnaire des Belgicisms* makes an effort to include words of various origins that are mainly used in Brussels (e.g., *babeler*; *ketje*, *en stoemeling*, *vogelpik*) or Wallonia (e.g., *balle pelote*, *ducasse*, *maieur*; *péquet*), as well as different types of regionalisms. Linguistic regionalisms are words or expressions that refer to realities that are not specific to Belgium, but for which different words are used in Belgian French relative to standard French. Some examples include:

- *Praline*, a filled chocolate confection known in the U.S. as "Belgian chocolates" and in standard French as *chocolat fourré*, *bonbon au chocolat*, or simply *chocolat*. (In France and elsewhere, *pralines* are roasted almonds coated with sugar).
- *Clinche* or *clenche* (door knob; *poignée* or *bouton de porte* in standard French). Note that this term is also used in some regions of France, in Luxemburg, and in Quebec.

By contrast, encyclopedic regionalisms refer to realities that are specific to Belgium and for which standard French does not have an equivalent term. Many examples of these can be found in Belgian culinary specialties, including:

- *Coug nou* (a Christmas brioche)
- *Flamiche* (a savory pie made with cheese or leeks)
- *Kriek* (beer fermented with tart cherries)
- *Manon* (a cream-filled white chocolate *praline*, see above)
- *Waterzooi* or *waterzoï* (fish or chicken stew with vegetables and a cream sauce)

Other examples of encyclopedic regionalisms reflect the administrative structure of the country, such as *bourgmestre* (mayor) or *échevin* (deputy mayor).

For a book of its size, this dictionary is rather complete, and I found it difficult to identify words or expressions that were missing. The first 20 Belgicisms that I looked up were included as main entries. I then referred to a glossary of Belgian French terms published online by the *Union des Français de l'étranger* (French Foreign Union).² I checked the approximately 180 terms and phrases listed on the website to see if

there was a corresponding entry in the *Dictionnaire des Belgicisms* and if the meaning in standard French was equivalent. Most of the terms were included and were ascribed the same meaning in at least one definition. As would be expected, the descriptions of corresponding entries are much more complete in the *Dictionnaire des Belgicisms* than the brief "translations" shown online, as the various meanings of terms are explored in some detail.

I only found a handful of missing terms that might have been expected to be part of the dictionary:

- *Gag* (adj., amusing/fun; *amusant* in standard French)
- *Vlek* (n., item of poor quality; *du toc*)
- *Wasserette* (n., laundromat; *laverie*)
- *Zot* (n., idiot; *idiot*)

However, due to the method used to select terms for inclusion in this work, it is possible that the words above were not used actively enough by the respondents. On the other hand, I did not get the impression that this specialized dictionary of Belgicisms included any "filler" words. However, some of the entries are more widely accepted in standard French, and some are shared with other regional variants, such as those spoken in Switzerland—e.g.,

Information and Contacts

Isabelle Berquin is an ATA-certified English↔French freelance translator. She was born and grew up in Belgium, but her French mother, *Brusseleir* father, and frequent trips to France made her more aware of regional variants of French. She has a BS in zoology/molecular biology from the Université Libre de Bruxelles and a PhD in cancer biology from Wayne State University. After completing postdoctoral studies at the University of Michigan, she continued her research in cancer biology as an assistant professor at Wake Forest University for nearly a decade before becoming a full-time translator.

Have an idea for a dictionary you would like to see reviewed? Contact Peter A. Gergay, chair of ATA's Dictionary Review Committee, at pgergay@aol.com.

septante (seventy); *nonante* (ninety)—or Canada—e.g., *Ça te goute?* (Do you like it?).

As the French-speaking Belgian population is by no means a homogeneous group, linguistically speaking, some may find issues with the word selection. However, for those looking for a reference book that is representative of the most commonly used Belgicisms, this dictionary should be a good place to start.

Overall Evaluation

This *Dictionnaire des Belgicisms* is a very good compilation of terms and expressions that are used by the French-speaking communities of Belgium. Its rigorous and scientific approach, clear definitions, and helpful contextual notes make it a worthwhile investment for the translator or other language professional who deals with regional variants of French. I would also recommend this book to anyone who enjoys reading in French and wants to learn more about the way Belgian francophones live and express themselves. ■

Notes

1. More information on the International Phonetic Alphabet can be found on the website of the International Phonetic Association, www.langsci.ucl.ac.uk/ipa/ipachart.html.
2. Union des Français de l'étranger, www.ufe.be/Le-Lexique-du-Parler-belge.html.

Reminder: Beware of Scams

If it's too good to be true, it is probably a scam. A number of e-mail and online scams have specifically targeted translators and interpreters. Stay vigilant!

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The Translation Inquirer

John Decker



The Translation Inquirer is quite certain that the word “blog” did not even exist when he took over this column from Peter Wheeler in April 1993. Some years after the word became an institution in multiple languages, the Translation Inquirer reproached himself that he did not have a blog. Just today he realized that, in effect, this column has been his blog, and that none other is really needed.

New Queries

(Dutch>English 11-14.1) To obtain qualifications as a welder, the statement was made in a Dutch text that *Je beschikt over de benodigde certificaten en **doorstempellijsten** minimal volgens EN 287-I norm*. What is with the plural word in bold print?

(English>French 11-14.2) This query involves high finance and concerns a “qualifying floating charge.” Here is an entire sentence for context: “The holder of a **qualifying floating charge** over the assets of the defaulting party has become entitled to appoint or has appointed an administrative receiver.” Surely with some effort good French can be found for this.

(English>Portuguese 11-14.3) What is a “U-frame graft” in the area of rhinoplasty? There is not much context to provide with this query, but

perhaps there is just enough to make it possible to provide good Portuguese: “Augment the dorsum with a **U-frame graft**.” I am not sure whether this is ordinary rhinoplasty, or specifically a procedure to make the nose more attractive.

(Russian>English 11-14.4) The translator posting this query initially thought that a good translation for восстановление энергопотребления was “energy consumption recovery,” as in “low boiling point for an easy and low **energy consumption recovery** through simple distillations.” Was she on the right track? The context in which this term appeared had to do with the deparaffination of oil.

(English>Swedish 11-14.5) A colleague encountered the following while translating material for an online course on lighting solutions within the manufacturing sector: “narrow area presence detector troublesome: Workbench task lighting will only be ON when the workbenches are occupied. This can be done by simply combining the task lighting over the workbench with a **narrow area presence detector**. The lighting over that workbench will detect when someone is there and switch the lights on.” The translator was fine with translating “presence

detector” as *närvarodetektor*, but was uncomfortable with “narrow area.” Can anyone provide a solution?

(German>French [English] 11-14.6)

This query has to do with harvest management software. A relatively short sentence (just seven words) proved troublesome: *Der Harz zeigt sich in bestem Wetter*. Let us provide sufficient extra context: *Ortswechsel – eine knappe Autostunde westlich von xxx in der Nähe von xxx. **Der Harz zeigt sich in bestem Wetter**. Die Schläge liegen in der Hügellandschaft auf durchschnittlich 300 Meter Höhe. Die Ernte hat zwei Wochen später als in xxx begonnen*. What do the words in bold mean?

(German>Polish [English] 11-14.7)

This query involved pure mechanical engineering. Classical mechanics, in fact. The problem term, *Handkonterzug*, is defined as *handbetriebener, über ein Betätigungsseil zu bewegender Prospektzug, bei dem durch ein geführtes Gegengewicht die Traglast direkt ausgeglichen wird*.

(German>Spanish [English] 11-14.8)

For the first time, I venture to offer a contextual explanation in Spanish for the problem word *Falzgrund*, specifically *Vorbehandeln des Falzgrundes*. A colleague added the following: *Se trata de unas instrucciones de uso para herrajes de ventanas y puertas*. Of course, I realize I just made it less likely that someone will offer the English for this.

(Italian>English 11-14.9) It is rare for anyone in our profession to escape difficulties involving contract law. Here is an excerpt from a franchising agreement, with the troublesome

Information and Contacts

E-mail queries and responses by the first of each month to jdecker@uplink.net (subject line: The Translation Inquirer). Generous assistance from Per Dohler, proofreader, is gratefully acknowledged.

words in bold print: *Il presente Contratto non può essere ceduto in tutto o in parte dal PARTNER né conferito in società o in partecipazione e, comunque, esso non può essere oggetto di alcun atto di disposizione senza autorizzazione di XXX.* What is this all about?

(Italian>French [English] 11-14.10)

In architecture, what does *pavimentati in signino* mean? Paving stones? Slabs? The original text reads: *Le strutture sino a ora messe in luci si compongono di un muro di fodera delle pendici del Cidneo e di due ambienti ad esso addossati e pavimentati in signino, disposti in successione da est a ovest, aperti verso meridione e separate da un tramezzo ligneo rivestito da affreschi di primo stile.*

(Portuguese>English 11-14.11)

Dez appears to be a very arcane unit of measure by which offset is measured in the automotive world. Here is the brief context: *Faixa do valor. Offset (valor médio): 34 dez até 74 dez.* What on earth is it?

Replies to Old Queries

(English>Polish 9-14.1) (*display polyester*): Greg Radwanski suggests *poliester wystawowy* for this if it will be used for display purposes, and *poliester dekoracyjny* if it will be used in decorations.

(English>Portuguese 9-14.2) (*bund ditch*): Leonid Gornik is not able to supply us with the Portuguese for this, but he brings us closer by pointing out that this is a ditch that is protected by a containment window or low-profile dam on one side of the ditch. This is often used in rice fields.

(English>Russian 9-14.4) (*raiding*): Leonid Gornik defines this as an invitation of employees from other companies, and says that standard Russian for this practice is заманивание. Thus, in this context, it is заманивание другого работника, который ещё находится в найме.

(German>Russian [English] 9-14.6)

(*Gaumenfreuden*): Tina Banerjee Chittom and Susanna Bunzel-Harris like “culinary delights” for this. Susanna adds that the text appears to be about some molds that can be used to prepare party-sized dishes.

María Graciela Otoya Diehn says that the positive quality of the food is that it is a “palette’s delight.” Ilse Andrews points out that although the term in question is not listed in the usual German dictionaries, a related one is *Gaumenkitzel*. It means “joy to the palate” or “joy to the taste buds.” For Ilse, *Gaumenfreude* is a more elegant word.

Ellen Yutzy Glebe offered a literal and a more loose translation of the entire sentence. The literal one: “From delicate seafood salad and traditional pasta to lamb curry with couscous or falafel—the large forms perfectly present dishes that will **please the palate** for your next festive event.” Her less literal translation repeats the first 14 words, but after the dash adds “the festive presentation in these large forms will **make every dish more appetizing.**”

Does anyone want to try the Russian? Surely it would involve the use of лакомства, but what else?

(Greek>English 9-14.7) (διαταραχής της αιματώδους): Ilse Andrews calls this a “disturbance in the generation of blood (hematosis).” She states that in modern Greek, two or even more genitives in succession are a standard form.

(Polish>English 9-14.8) (*łatwy w użyciu I zacieraniu chodzi o cement*): For Greg Radwanski, the word *zacierać* in this context pertains to cement being easily mixable with other ingredients to create a consistent concrete mix that does not leave lumps on the surface of a ready and applied concrete. This makes it easy to get a smooth finish on the surface (*zacieranie*).

(Romanian>English 9-14.9) (*ghida-jele de reazem de pe masa*): Melissa

Tetzner consulted a native Romanian speaker who translated the entire sentence as: “**The supporting guide on the table** can be installed in different positions, depending on the type of material used.”

This was a well balanced combination of interesting queries from the early fall of 2014 and excellent responses to queries from midsummer 2014. If you were involved in either, pat yourself on the back! ■

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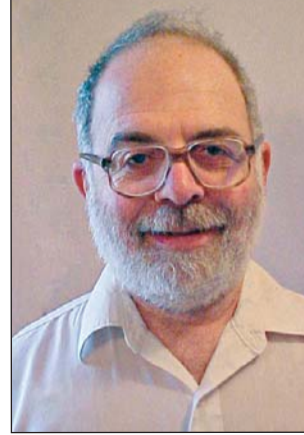
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Humor and Translation

Mark Herman



Who'd A Think It?

There is a well-known tendency, in the absence of prescriptive rules, to make words more regular; that is, to eliminate deviations from some norm. For English verbs, that usually means making the past tense and the past participle the same as the present-tense stem and adding “-ed.” An example is “shined,” the standard past tense for “shine” used transitively, which is also rapidly becoming the standard past tense for

“shine” used intransitively, replacing “shone.” Or, the past tense and the past participle can be made identical, as in the still far-from-standard “I go, I went, I have went.” Or, though it rarely happens in actual speech, words spelled like or sounding like each other in the present tense, but having very different past tenses or past participles, can be made to have identical past tenses and/or past participles.

An example of verbs forced into past-tense and past-participle agreement is, following the example of “sing,” the very nonstandard “bring, brang, brung.” Such forced agreement lends itself to parody, and a classic example of this is “The Lovers,” written by the American satirical poet Phoebe Cary (1824-71). I thank Deborah Spector for submitting it to me. It is presented here with some modernized spelling and punctuation.

The Lovers

Sally Salter, she was a young teacher who taught,
And her friend, Charley Church, was a preacher
 who praught,
Though his enemies called him a screecher who scaught.

His heart, when he saw her, kept sinking and sunk,
And his eye, meeting hers, began winking, and wunk;
While she, in her turn, kept thinking, and thunk.

He hastened to woo her, and sweetly he wooed,
For his love grew until to a mountain it grewed,
And what he was longing to do then he doed.

In secret he wanted to speak, and he spoke,
To seek with his lips what his heart long had soke;
So he managed to let the truth leak, and it loke.

He asked her to ride to the church, and they rode;
They so sweetly did glide that they both thought
 they glode,
And they came to the place to be tied, and were toed.

Then homeward, he said, let us drive, and they drove,
And as soon as they wished to arrive, they arrove,
For whatever he couldn't contrive, she controve.

The kiss he was dying to steal, then he stole;
At the feet where he wanted to kneel then he knole;
And he said, “I feel better than ever I fole.”

So they to each other kept clinging, and clung,
While Time his swift circuit was winging, and wung;
And this was the thing he was bringing, and brung:

The man Sally wanted to catch, and had caught;
That she wanted from others to snatch, and had snaught;
Was the one that she now liked to scratch, and
 she scaught.

And Charley's warm love began freezing, and froze,
While he took to teasing, and cruelly toze
The girl he had wished to be squeezing, and squoze.

“Wretch!” he cried, when she threatened to leave him,
 and left,
“How could you deceive me, as you have deceft?”
And she answered, “I promised to cleave, and I've cleft.” ■

Information and Contacts

*Submit items for future columns via e-mail to mnh18@columbia.edu.
Discussions of the translation of humor and examples thereof are preferred,
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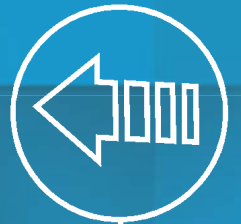
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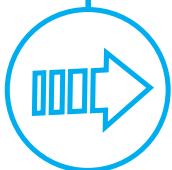
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