Looking Ahead to NETA’s 2019 Annual Conference

by Milena Vitali-Charewicz

NETA’s 23rd annual conference will be held on Saturday, May 4 at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Since 2016, our conference has been held in cooperation with UMass Boston’s Department of Latin American and Iberian Studies Department and the College of Advancing and Professional Studies Translation Program. We are fortunate to share this spacious and attractive venue as well as the opportunity to attend student presentations.

The theme for 2019 is “Innovation from Within: Interpreters and Translators Shaping the Present and Future of the Field.” Check in at the NETA website and Facebook page and Twitter for updated information. There will also be announcements by email and in further issues of this newsletter.

We are pleased to announce that Jonathan Levy will be our keynote speaker. The title of his talk is “The Linguist as Analyst: Where Expertise Adds Value.” This presentation will discuss how the unique linguistic and cultural insight translators and interpreters possess can be of great value to others.

Our end note speaker will be Ewandro Magalhães who will review basic yet powerful personal branding strategies specifically tailored to T&I professionals. Master the social media hacks that will get you in front of the people who matter and make them come to you first.

As always, the conference will offer many opportunities for networking with colleagues and companies who are interested in meeting and working with translators and interpreters and other freelance language professionals.

2018 NETA Translation & Birthday Bash

By Marian Comenetz

International Translation Day originated as a tribute to the patron saint of translators, St. Jerome, who died September 30, 420 AD and is best known for his translation of the Bible into Latin. In 1991, the International Federation of Translators (FIT) launched the idea of an International Translation Day on September 30 to promote the translation field. For the last 13 years, NETA has celebrated International Translation Day with a translation workshop that we call a “translation bash.”

NETA’s 13th annual translation bash took place on autumnal equinox day. It was certainly a pleasant way to start the fall season. Participants had been signing up little by little over the four weeks preceding the event and then arrived, translations in hand, ready for action. As always, the introduction included a welcome, some announcements, and an opportunity for attendees to identify their country of origin. It’s always fascinating to discover how broad a geographical spectrum we gather into one room for a particular purpose—plus sometimes connections are made between people from a given country. This year we enjoyed a very special visit, too: board member Diego Mansilla and active NETAn Adel Fauzetdinova arrived with their sweet son Adrian, age 1.

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Membership information  NETA accepts individual members only. A one-year membership is $50. NETA offers a $30 membership for students of translation and/or interpreting and individuals aged 65 or older. If you need a membership application or have other membership questions, contact: membership@netaweb.org. Subscription to this newsletter is included with your membership.
NETA 2018 Translation and Birthday Bash

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sporting a spiffy sailor suit and cap. Diego and Adel met at the bash several years ago, and Adrian is our very first NETA baby. Diego and Adel even brought a special cake to mark the occasion!

Four languages were represented at this bash. Spanish, of course, was the largest in size, but we also had small groups working with Chinese, French, and Portuguese. Each group plunged right in, debating the ins and outs of this year’s text, including subtle distinctions that lead to the choice of one word or expression over another, choice of verb tense, matters of register, and the particular challenge that comes from an ambiguous section of a source document.

The choice of a text that highlighted the damage done by plastic in our oceans, with straws as a specific example, inevitably led to consideration of the fact that the word “straw” is rendered in at least 10 different ways in Spanish, depending on which country one is in!

In the past, the chosen bash source text underlay the deliberations of each bash group. This year, though, thanks to the initiative of Anne Vincent and the kind collaboration of Andy Klatt, we also had groups doing Sp>Eng and Fr>Eng—in essence, a reverse bash within the regular bash. Anne and Andy kindly sought out texts that picked up on the environmental theme of the general text. While this meant that the full-group discussion that rounds out the bash each year was of necessity less targeted because there were three source texts instead of one, the new flexibility definitely brought in more participants, enriching us in that way. High spirits and positive energy prevailed.

NETA’s translation bash, which was approved for 3 ATA CEUs, continues to serve as a most appropriate way to begin our programming year. It gets at the process of translation, which is, after all, at the core of the professional mission of translators and interpreters alike.

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I got it in an email...

LEXOPHILIA - WHO ON EARTH DREAMS THESE UP?

A lexophile, of course!

• How does Moses make tea? Hebrews it.
• Venison for dinner again? Oh deer!
• A cartoonist was found dead in his home. Details are sketchy.
• I used to be a banker, but then I lost interest.
• Haunted French pancakes give me the crêpes.
• England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.
• I tried to catch some fog, but I mist.
• They told me I had type-A blood, but it was a Typo.

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NETA Conference Debriefing

by Marian Comenetz

Good spirits prevailed at NETA's 2018 post-conference debriefing event, held on May 22. Each year, members of the past year’s conference committee and NETAns potentially interested in participating in conference planning gather to consider the results of the conference survey, share their own impression of how things went, and offer preliminary thoughts about the following year’s gala. The 2019 conference date has been set for May 4, 2019 and everyone is anticipating another successful conference. If you would like to get involved in any capacity, please send an email to ConferenceInformation@netaweb.org.

I got it in an email...

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• I changed my iPod’s name to Titanic. It’s syncing now.
• Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.
• I know a guy who’s addicted to brake fluid, but he says he can stop any time.
• I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.
• This girl said she recognized me from the vegetarian club, but I’d never met herbivore.
• When chemists die, they barium.
• I’m reading a book about anti-gravity. I just can’t put it down.
• I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.
• I didn’t like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.
• When you get a bladder infection, urine trouble.

NETA’s annual picnic was held in July

by Marian Comenetz

Holliston, MA was the site of NETA's annual summer picnic on July 21, and NETA board member Rokhaya Smith and her husband, Scott, were our hosts. A rare perfect-weather day provided the backdrop for a spirited session. At first people gathered in the kitchen, where potluck offerings proliferated and final food preparations unfolded. Then as Scott began to grill on the upper deck, NETAns made their way down to a large and attractive back yard, food in hand, and settled in to enjoy delicious fare and time spent together on a beautiful summer afternoon. There was a good mix of long-term NETAns and newer members. The conversation covered a large range of topics, including translation and interpreting, of course. While the number of people present this year was on the lower end of our usual range, the camaraderie was no less strong.

Clearly, as in the past, our annual picnic was a great success. NETA thanks Rokhaya and Scott for their very warm and very fine hospitality.
Interpreting for Multilingual Justice

NETA Monthly Meeting, October 2018

By Marian Comenetz

For inexplicable reasons, attendance at NETA’s October monthly meeting was lower than average, but our speakers, Ester Serra Luque and Loreto Paz Ansaldo, took full advantage of that situation by having participants sit in a circle, immediately using a linguistic icebreaker activity, and in general, encouraging maximum involvement of the fortunate individuals in attendance.

One favorite word

First, we were asked to share one favorite word. That simple request produced a striking variety of responses and prompted elaboration and personalization that contributed to forming a cohesive group. Then we were asked to share a situation where we, or someone else, felt linguistically excluded. Here again, the variety of responses was striking, as was the list of feelings evoked in such a context: adjectives such as “sad,” “isolated,” “left out,” “frustrated,” “uncomfortable,” and nouns like “culture shock,” “discrimination,” “less opportunity,” and “challenge.”

The number one goal of language justice is to involve everyone in any given context in “a language of your heart and dreams.” The inherent imbalance in encounters such as doctor/patient, lawyer/client, boss/employee, trainer/worker has to do with power. Economic justice is very much part of them too, and racial justice can certainly be a major factor.

Given the imbalance and the other factors involved, the question arises: how can interpreters work toward improving the balance? Even though they are neutral, impartial players in any given linguistic exchange, it’s supremely important for interpreters to have empathy and active awareness of the factors at play, and to shift the balance, as possible, so as to lend support to the LEP party.

Boston Interpreters Collective

Ester and Loreto then showed some slides as they presented the mission, the history, and the goals of the Boston Interpreters Collective, of which they are active members. BIC mainly offers simultaneous interpretation using equipment. The collective was founded in 2007 as a volunteer group whose goal is to strive for equal rights as it addresses the root causes of oppression. The group has evolved over time. Originally the members volunteered their services; since that was not sustainable, they transitioned to services based on a sliding scale and more recently have been accepting work from civic entities that can manage to pay closer to market rate, after which BIC uses part of those funds to support their work with community nonprofit groups that urgently need services but have no funds for interpreting.

Originally, BIC members were mostly white and had learned a given language by traveling abroad; now BIC has more members, and they are mainly people of color, immigrants, so the demographics have changed, and accordingly, the focus is increasingly on providing a living wage to those individuals.

In the past two years, BIC has been experiencing rapid growth, and with it, in addition to simultaneous interpreting, they have introduced a little translation into their offerings, and importantly, they now offer a significant training component, with several trainings already lined up for next year. The number of languages BIC offers is also increasing.

In explaining the evolution of BIC, Ester and Loreto emphasized that BIC is not an agency. Rather, it concertedly pursues social justice by working regularly with local community groups with focuses on workers’ rights, LGBTQ equality, environmental justice, women’s rights, and more.

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Interpreting for Multilingual Justice
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Interpreting Scenarios

Lastly, Ester and Loreto shifted the focus of their presentation to a request for accounts of interpreting scenarios in which miscommunication occurred. Participants conferred in pairs.

One scenario emerged—a situation where a nurse, speaking with a Dominican woman who had just given birth, asked whether she was ready to go home with the nursery all set up to receive the newborn child. The woman said no, and the exchange disintegrated to the point where the nurse indicated she would need to bring in the state to take in the infant because the mother did not seem able to care for him. As it turns out, in Dominican culture, because of fear for the well-being of a new child, it is not usual for families to pave the way to receive a newborn at home. Only when it is clear that the infant is healthy and stable does the family set things up at home.

By role-playing the triadic encounter with two willing participants, Ester demonstrated how interpreters can lend essential clarity to such a fraught situation. Ester was resolute in adding, though, that interpreters cannot intervene in this way in court settings! At most, should an interpreter recognize potential misunderstanding in a legal setting, they might speak with an attorney outside the courtroom after a session has ended.

As they presented their material, Loreto and Ester alternated instinctively and flexibly. They involved participants actively. And their charm added immeasurably to this pleasant Saturday afternoon.

Links to Language News

NETA’s Yahoo Group http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NETA
Facebook Page www.facebook.com/Netaweb
Twitter twitter.com/NETAtrans

BBC.com Video of BBC News sign language interpreter giving the best explanation so far of England’s Brexit situation.

Forbes.com William Falcon’s article “Facebook’s AI just set a new record in translation and why it matters.”

ghacks.net Martin Brinkmann is a journalist from Germany. “DeepL Translation Service adds Russian and Portuguese to language list.”

npr.com Igor Korchilov, Interpreter for presidents speaks about the pressures of being an interpreter at a high stakes summit.


Slator.com Ester Bond’s article “US Federal Language Services Contracting Hit by Mistreatment And Fraud Claims”

nytimes.com Melissa Eddy’s article “Some Words Defy Translation. Angela Merkel Showed Why.”

wired.com Gretchen McCulloch is Wired’s Resident Linguist. She’s the co-creator of Lingthusiasm. One of her articles is “The Widely-Spoken Languages We Still Can’t Translate Online”
Cognates: Friends or Foes?

NETA Monthly Meeting, November 2018

By Marian Comenetz

This month’s speaker, Esther Bonin, has worked as a translator and an interpreter and has also taught translation and interpreting both in Spain and in New England. Currently she supervises the Interpreter & Translation Services Department at Baystate Health in Springfield. In that capacity, she oversees about 150 interpreters. While she no longer works as an interpreter herself, she frequently hears heated discussions among her staff members as they debate linguistic questions as to what is correct and not correct, and she finds herself mediating linguistic conflicts.

Clearly, medical interpreters need to be able to deliver content quickly and accurately, as the stakes are high. Often cognates cause particular problems when they are not identical in different languages.

What is a cognate?

Esther prepared a helpful plan to guide us through her discussion of cognates, asking questions like these:

1) What is a cognate?
2) What should we know about them?
3) Are all cognates equal?
4) What are our feelings about them?

A few examples between English and Spanish soon emerged. For example:

- “Congratulations on your embarrassment!” (embarazo)
- “I am so constipated I cannot breathe!” (constipado)
- “What a wonderful casualty!” (casualidad)

Esther then defined cognates as words that are the same or similar in nature because they are derived from the same roots. They are related by descent from the same ancestral language. In the case of Spanish and English, their origin is in the Latin. In English the French influence dates back to the Norman Conquest.

False Friends vs. Cognates

Cognates that are friends are an effective tool when one is learning a second language, Esther said. They help us acquire vocabulary faster. And they “ease cognitive load” during interpreting encounters. However, cognates can definitely be foes, too, since words that look alike or similar can be partial and nonidentical cognates. At this point Esther referred to the online English-Spanish False Friends Dictionary by Francisco Hidalgo and Lourdes de Rioja.

Esther highlighted the need to have an open mind about language in that it is not static. Today’s interference might become the norm in the future. In fact, what you are questioning now might already be a norm. Purists exclaim that you are “killing their language,” but despite the Real Academia, whose purpose is to set standards, language does change, often through interference from the dominant language being spoken, as is the case with Spanish spoken in the US. The influence of the dominant language can occur at different levels, like syntactic or lexical, not to mention the matter of pronunciation. Then, too, different terms for the same item are used in different Spanish-speaking countries. The bottom line is that language does change.

Significant Challenges

All of the above provides significant challenges to medical interpreters, most especially when they are interpreting simultaneously. The interpreter has to “suppress” interference, distinguishing between true and false cognates almost instantly. After all, the number one requirement of the National Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics is accuracy. Yet at the same time, the goal must be for all parties to understand what is being conveyed, and as Esther said, LEP patients are not in the hospital for a grammar lesson.

During the latter part of the meeting, Esther presented a scenario for the whole group to discuss, after which she paired attendees up and presented three practice scenarios replete with false cognates. Thus, first in pairs, and then as a whole group, much discussion ensued around words and phrases such as “Tiene un disgusto,” “educada,” and “consternada” in Spanish and “preservatives,” “remove,” and even “tuna” in English.

Esther Bonin was spirited, upbeat, and enthusiastic throughout. Her experience as a teacher was fully clear. She stated that she wanted attendees to have fun. And judging from the applause and the way people gathered around at the close of the meeting, her presentation and her engaging style were greatly appreciated.
NETA Board Meeting Minutes, September 29, 2018

By Erika Schulz

Board members attending: Lesley Andrews, Diego Mansilla, Erika Schulz, Alice Wolfe  Also attending: Diana Rhudick

The September board meeting took place in Worcester, MA, and the first topic that came up was how hard it has become to make a quorum for the NETA Board meetings, causing us to express our concern for this difficulty.

Treasurer’s report

The Treasurer’s report of the fourth quarter covering June-August, with conference financials included, was read and discussed, and since some items were not fully clear to all, it was decided to invite Crystal Zhong to our January 2019 meeting to explain the contents of the balance sheets in person. She will be compensated for her time.

Membership report

The main highlights of the Membership Coordinator’s report submitted by Antje Ruppert were shared, including that currently there are 294 active members out of which 45 are seniors and students. There is a new template for the membership card available in the Wild Apricot package. Lesley will work on the logo for the new membership card and may have a second design.

The board was made aware of one member’s difficult situation, and this member was awarded a lifetime membership due to these circumstances.

Discussion on various subjects

After discussing the “Statement of Opposition to the Participation of Interpreters and Translators in America’s Oil and Resource War” in detail during the June meeting, the board’s reply was drafted and extensively commented on via email. During this September meeting, the board reread and finalized the Response to Member Statement. It will be shared on NETA’s Yahoo Group.

After consideration of pros and cons and the possible implementation, it was determined that there is no need to change the bylaws at this time.

Given that the General Data Protection Rules (GDPR) became effective, Diana contacted our two members based in Europe to comply with the new standards.

Mass emailing has always been an ongoing topic, whether to contact members or for advertising events, so it was considered to expand Wild Apricot to allow for more than 500 contacts, but after analyzing the options, it was considered that it was not cost-effective at this time.

The website Community Plan is about to expire and increase its cost, so it was agreed to purchase the 2-year subscription saving 15%. Diana followed up on this and she will also start moving NETA documentation over to a Google Share drive.

Regarding programming, Marian Comenetz was able to secure a location for the 2018 fall Saturday presentations, and it might be renewed for the 2019 winter and spring meetings. Given this, the board is also researching optional venues, Erika will be checking for a Somerville location and other professional network options. Lesley is also working on the support needed for remote attendees.

Another recurrent topic is internet safety, and the possibility of offering a webinar on this has also been discussed. Lesley and Erika contacted prospective presenters, and it was discussed to have a free webinar in January 2019 after the ATA conference and major holidays. A budget and the possibility to record the presentation and saving it on Vimeo were discussed. More details to come.

The idea of having a second seating for the ATA certification exam in Boston is still strong, though it was not possible to schedule it for this 2018 year. Diego shared background information about this.

2019 Conference

It is early for the Conference Committee to report updates, but the date has been set to May 4, 2019. The board approved using the 2018 budget for the conference, and Diego shared that the UMASS venue was available at the same price. Contracting efforts are underway. For the onsite paper registrations, Lesley and Marian are working on the implementation and Erika shared that QuickBooks has a card reader that Crystal could use for matching registrations, still, it is all internet-based.

2020 ATA Conference in Boston

Marian had brought to our attention that Bruce Popp was an active organizer in the 2011 edition with a Boston wiki; and Erika added that Rudy Heller had a good video inviting attendees. It was decided to invite both Bruce and Rudy to the January meeting.

Other Discussion

The last topic to be discussed was the possibility of forming an advisory board on poor translations as suggested by a member. It was carefully considered that due to professional legal liabilities and the potential for abuse, the board moved to decline the opportunity to create an advisory board.
NETA Board of Directors
Response to Member Statement

In June of this year, NETA member Ken Kronenberg submitted a statement for the board to approve as an official position of our organization. The statement is a strongly worded opposition to the involvement of translators and interpreters in “oil and resource wars.” While all NETA board members, its president, and its vice president are opposed to the wars referenced, the board will not endorse Ken Kronenberg’s text as an official NETA statement.

Board members debated this action for many hours and came to their conclusion mainly because adopting the statement is not part of our mission as a professional organization (See NETA Bylaws, Article 2: http://netaweb.org/page-18102). Board members also realize that some of our members may be past or present members of the military or surely have family or friends in the military. The Board does not wish to offend those with differing views. We are a professional group, not a political one. We also serve members who have expressed their dissatisfaction with the number of political posts on our discussion list.

While NETA has taken some “political” actions such as our support for Red-T and our statement against translators and interpreters cooperating with prisoner abuse and torture, these actions are more clearly and directly related to our work as translators and interpreters. We also had concrete facts and proof of abuses that convinced us to make those statements. We are not authorized to tell our members they should not participate in war, and we certainly would not want to “do whatever [we] can to persuade interpreters and translators not to lend their expertise and services in the prosecution of these...wars.” The sentence seems to suggest that we would also oppose participation in diplomatic negotiations to avoid war. Our efforts are more appropriately (and more effectively) centered on professional education and advocacy. Other organizations are better suited to pursuing the statement’s goals.

The language in Ken Kronenberg’s statement was highly opinionated and harsh, without factual proof to substantiate some of the claims. (“The mindset behind these invasions and wars and their costs make universal healthcare and free university tuition less likely for the people of the United States.”) While the board members can appreciate his passion for this topic, they do not appreciate the forceful manner in which it was presented. For all of these reasons, NETA’s board of directors will not endorse this antiwar statement.

Ken’s statement can be requested at board@netaweb.org.

NETA Board Ad Hoc Skype Meeting Minutes, October 9, 2018

By Erika Schulz

Board members attending: Lesley Andrews, Maiyim Baron, Antje Ruppert, Rokhaya Smith, Erika Schulz, Alice Wolfe

Also attending: Diana Rhudick

Once the news of Ken Kronenberg’s decision to discontinue his NETA membership was made public, the board members got together within a few hours to discuss this event via Skype, since an in-person meeting was not possible.

The shared feeling was that we were all extremely sorry to see Ken leave the association given his numerous professional contributions, which we all deeply value and appreciate.

The board’s response to the antiwar statement was reread and analyzed statement by statement, considering each time pros and cons and possible implications for members and for NETA itself as a nonprofit organization. The statement was carefully analyzed, as all members’ proposals are, thus, the response was considered with utmost care. It was concluded that the antiwar statement, as it was written and requested to be approved without any changes, was mainly a political piece and not so much a statement contributing to the professional development of members.

The board’s work and concern should be dedicated to all NETA members. All members are invited to participate for the growth of the profession.

The meeting was held amidst memories of Ken’s past professional contributions and heavy hearts to see him go.

After hours of discussing the options, it was concluded that no further changes would be made to the board’s response to the antiwar statement; a formal answer about Ken’s decision to drop his NETA membership would be shared in the NETA Yahoo forum; and a personal card would be mailed to Ken thanking him for his professional legacy over the years.