



The MITA Reader

Artistically Speaking

By Carol Shaw
Reader Staff

Among the arts, communication plays the most obvious role in translation and interpreting. Perhaps less apparent is the influence that the other arts have on our craft.

MITA's **Mike Mahler** (Accento, The Language Company) gave a singular presentation to assembled MITAns this past April 2, 2005, entitled Art and the Interpreter.

The arts are interrelated. A work of literature can give birth to a sculpture. Paintings may find their way into songs or theatrical productions. Within this constant movement the arts are interpreted by, and contribute to, each language and culture they touch.

As interpreters and translators, Mike says, it is our job to learn not only the works of art, but also their place in the languages we work with. Often the names will change:

for example, the "Mona Lisa" in English, "La Gioconda" in Spanish and "La Joconde" in French.

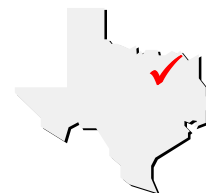
In addition, the arts provide us with context for language. Classical and modern literature put words to use in ways we might never otherwise see. And when we are exposed to language in context, it becomes much easier to use and manipulate language in translation or interpreting. Often, the arts give rise to metaphors or idioms. We understand these expressions better when we see them in their original surroundings.

Above all, art is the creative expression of human emotion and thought and Mike challenged us all to immerse ourselves in these modes of expression, so intimately linked to our own work.



METROPLEX INTERPRETERS
& TRANSLATORS
ASSOCIATION

Serving DFW and North Texas



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In this issue:

- *Workshop Day, May 21*
- *Invisibility in Interpreting*
- *Profile — Martha Villarreal*
- *Art and Interpreting*
- *June picnic*

Invisibility and Success

By Mariana Peterson
Reader Staff

How far you can go to help a cause while working as an interpreter? Are you the type who strictly adheres to the literal words without stepping into any further territory? Or perhaps you feel some leeway to exercise judgement. When it comes to the role of an interpreter, boundaries can easily get blurred.

Take as an example the medical field. Medical professionals use inter-

(Continued on page 2)

SOCIAL!
5:30 pm, Saturday,
May 21, 2005
Ashley-s
Hwy 114 @ Esters
(Sheraton Grand Hotel)
Irving
Following the workshop
day held at the Holiday Inn
Select on the opposite
side of the greeway.
Join us for the workshop
and dinner, or just the
dinner!
RSVP:
maria@mariaelzalde.com

WORKSHOP DAY!!

It's not too late! Walk-ins will be welcome at the workshop day hosted by MITA on **Saturday, May 21**. The exciting agenda includes court and medical interpreting, grammar, computer maintenance, web marketing, cultural communications, and a discussion on freelance work. The ATA will give up to 6 CE points for attendance, and some lucky attendees will receive door prizes! The workshop will be held at the Holiday Inn Select North, 4441 Hwy 114 @ Esters Road, in Irving. Registration starts at 8:30; following the last session, around 5:30, attendees and MITA members are invited to gather at Ashley's Restaurant (across the highway from the hotel) for dinner and good company.

Invisibility and Success

(Continued from page 1)

preters who are often bilingual staff or employees. He or she might act as a mediator, mentor, helper or even as an advocate, especially when helping a child. As caring people, we hope ideally that the outcome is successful. In fact, somewhere I heard that the "spirit of intent" should be our guiding light; that we can be even more than mediators, that we are there to clarify things that reach beyond interpreting. But beware. Can't this be a set-up for liability? Of course it can.

The story is told of a woman who, with the "assistance" of an interpreter, had signed her authorization for surgery without knowing the possible side effects and recovery time it would take. Guess who got blamed? We can indeed be easy scapegoats in many situations.

Keep in mind that I am speaking of the medical field. Health issues seem to allow for more clarification, more flexibility. This raises then another issue. Should we always use the first person when interpreting? You might say, "Yes, of course", without another thought. But here again, there can be boundary problems. I heard from an angry Middle Eastern woman who complained that her interpreter had no right to give her a prescription for her bladder problems - that the doctor was supposed to do that! This typical type of culture clash can add to the uncertainty. The patient is unaware that the role of the interpreter is to say, exactly and in the first person, what the doctor is indicating. In addition, she may have felt violated by having another person instructing her and "knowing" what she was going through.

This, and many other situations, have prompted medical professionals to rely on the third person when interpreting. Of course, we should ask the client what he or she prefers before we embark on a process in which we must remain consistent and sensitive to cultural differences.

On the other hand, we would all agree that in the legal field, in a court, deposition or hearing, we should be as transparent as possible, using always the first person. A very important step that should not be missed, is the pre-session where we can clarify with the client, attorney and/or ombudsman what generalities we are going to address. The strict protocol and gravity in court is quite different from being in a doctor's office. We must remember that in the court setting a court reporter is recording every word that is said. As interpreters, we can be as liable if we step out of our precise role at any time.

Last but not least, we should keep in mind that we can be a powerful (if accidental) ally to either the defendant or prosecutor if we don't adhere to our job. Remember the famous OJ Simpson's case where OJ's maid said in her testimony, "I was thinking of going to Mexico on vacation". The interpreter translated it as, "I was making plans to go to Mexico on vacation". That slight difference cost the interpreter her job for the rest of the process. If we add, delete, beautify, clarify, modify words or entertain the thought of venturing down that road, we move from our role of interpreter into one of advocacy for either party and that could influence testimony... not where we want to be at all!

The Interpreters Code of Ethics was made available in August of 1980, but wasn't recognized at a State level until 1991. Have you given much thought to what it asks of us? I, for one, want to find out.

Interpreters. We all come in different shapes, emotional patterns and points of view. Regardless, we all need to try as much as we can to leave all personal and emotional matters at home and not take them with us either to the hospital or to court.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS — meet on the second Saturday of odd-numbered months.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS: first Saturday of even-numbered months.
TechSIG at 2:30 p.m.
General Meeting starts at 3:00 p.m.

Hackberry Creek
Country Club
1902 Royal Lane
Irving, Texas 75063

May 2005						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 MITA
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

We Have a Date!

May 21— MITA Workshop Day
June 4—MITA picnic / Monolingual demonstration
June 4—Literary Translation Workshop (Austin—AATIA)
July 8— Translation Tools Seminar (Chicago-ATA)
August 6—MITA general meeting
October 1— MITA general meeting
Nov. 2-5— ALTA Annual Conference
Nov. 9-12— ATA Annual Conference

Helpful Links:

AATIA www.aatia.org
ATA www.atanet.org
HITA www.hitagroup.org
MITA www.dfw-mita.org
NAJIT www.najit.org
TDLR www.license.state.tx.us/court/court.htm

Martha Villarreal Trades Buildings for Words

Profiling our fellow MITAnS

Detail is a hallmark of **Martha Villarreal's** professional life. A registered architect in her native Mexico, Martha moved to the USA and worked in city planning for two Texas cities, Grand Prairie and College Station. She also did engineering and design for Texas A&M (where her younger daughter currently attends college.) Since Martha began working with words, however, she hasn't looked back.

In 1995 Martha met MITA's **Héctor Rodriguez**, who invited her to join the association. "I've never regretted it," says Martha. "I love my work!" As a technical translator (English>Spanish), Martha keeps busy with operation and maintenance manuals and other industrial volumes. She also translates texts dealing with regulations, consumer information, health care and variety of other subjects. "But I don't get into legal or medical translation," she adds. In addition to MITA, Martha is a member of the ATA (American Translator's Association) and the NCTA (North California Translators Association.)

This precision of detail and the humanity of language are also seen in Martha's investment in those around her. Martha served for several years as a volunteer at the Rape Crisis Center. In past years, she has been MITA's membership registrar. With her busy schedule, she depends on friends such as fellow-MITAn **Arlette Quervel**, keeping her posted as to social activities within the translation community. "I go to lunch with [other translators] as often as I can," she says.

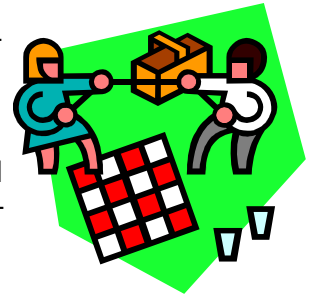
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Mark your calendars! June 4th is just around the corner!

Monolingual. It's what keeps us all in business, isn't it, other people being monolingual? But how does one go from monolingual to multilingual if there are no textbooks or grammar classes to pave the way?

Come to MITA's June picnic to enjoy a monolingual demonstration provided by linguist, author and translator Bruce Moore. In this fun demonstration, Mr. Moore will limit himself to the use of a South American tribal language (Tsáfiqui), to demonstrate the linguistic process of learning a different language when teacher and student have no common tongue. New MITA member **Billy Chang**, speaking only a Chinese dialect, will be assisting in the demonstration.

In addition, attendees are invited to bring their family members and enjoy a picnic dinner. Conversation, presumably, will be fairly multilingual.



The Power of Linguistics

Nobel nominee Dr. Kenneth L. Pike once stated that, between mathematics and linguistics, linguistics was the more powerful science. "After all," he said, "linguistics is far more powerful. If I say that 'two plus four equals six', it is both good mathematics and good linguistics. But if I say that 'two plus four equals seven', it is poor mathematics—but still good linguistics!"

Profile, Martha Villarreal

(Continued from page 3)

It was a fellow translator who gave Martha the advice she passes on to newcomers to the field.

"When I started, I had the great advantage of having the ATA Spanish Accreditation Head living here in the Metroplex," explains Martha. "She told me that there are three things we must always follow. 1) Quality. Without that, the clients will never send you additional jobs. 2) Seriousness. If you say you are going to deliver one day, at certain time, make sure you do it even if you have to pull an all-nighter. And 3) Make this your business and not your hobby. Following these three things, I have been able to have a successful and satisfying career for many years.

Martha and her husband of 27 years have two daughters, a cat named Abu, and - it would seem - one ladybug.

Martha Villarreal, hard at work



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