UEES
SCHOOL OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

Report on the ATA’s 50th Annual Conference held in New York on October 28-31, 2009

By Silvana Moreno
Introduction

The first time I clicked on the ATA web page, I immediately went to the annual conferences’ link. Attending an event like this became one of my goals, since I realized it would make the difference for me and it would even look impressive on my resume. Then I found out about the exams and it also became one of my goals. Attending this conference has opened my eyes to a more professional world.

Highlights

The ATA website always shows pictures from their latest conferences, so I was able to have a peek of what the conference was all about. However, the organization was impressive to me from the beginning. First of all, the location of the hotel could not be better. It was in the heart of Manhattan, in the middle of the world-famous Times Square. The building itself was impressive too, with those incredibly fast, cutting-edge elevators from which you could see everything inside the building.

During registration, everybody was given a nice bag containing all the information needed to optimize our experience as attendees. The best and most interesting item was the Final
Program booklet, which had the schedule, abstracts of the sessions, tips, and even a couple of blank pages to take notes. There was also a big table where one could go and grab colored stickers according to the type of languages you speak. The CD was also very helpful, since it contains more detailed information about some selected sessions.

The Welcome Reception was a real delight. It was held on the 8th floor at the very elegant Broadway Lounge, and they had arranged at least 20 carving stations and 10 hosted bars. There were a lot of people that night, but I do not think anyone went home hungry. The ballroom had a breathtaking view of Times Square and although it felt a bit awkward at first because no one else from our group was there, we (Gabriela, Lisette and I) had a great time and tasted some great food.

It was also very interesting and informative to visit the vendors’ tables and especially the Monterrey Institute stand. I grabbed a bunch of applications for T&I programs offered by them. To be honest, I’m not sure I will have the chance to actually use them, but I was curious so I decided I wanted to give them a look. Besides, you never know, it might be useful to me for any future translation project.

The Sessions

All the sessions were held in the ballrooms of the hotel. Many of them were a bit too small for the number of attendees, but all in all, they served their purpose. Except for only one, all the sessions I attended were very productive to me. It is also important to underline how important it is for them to evaluate everything they do. There were evaluation forms for every session. I truly think this is a
plus for the organization of the event, because that way they are aware of what works and what does not work.

All the handouts given by the speakers were also important for the attendees. This is an excellent way to increase our T&I database. The downside is that some of the handouts ran out as there were not enough for many of the sessions.

### New Terminology for a New Economic Environment
By Silvia Teresa Debonis

This session included a selection of texts extracted from Marketing and Economic reports and it was focused on the meaning and translation of terminology associated with the financial crisis. I collected tons of terms like *ballooning a balance sheet, fiscal easing, toxic assets*, etc., which I know will be useful to me at some time. The session was very interactive and it was clear that the speaker was an expert on this matter.

### Domesticación de Microsoft Word para traductores y correctores
By Xosé Castro

This session was the most practical and funniest. Not only was the speaker, Xosé Castro, an expert when it comes to giving functional tips on how to use our computers, but he is a real entertainer. He gave us some tips on how to use the mouse less and the keyboard more. It turns out that it is faster and saves time.
Castro managed to make a session that was very informative and handy. But more importantly, we will not be afraid of using our laptops from now on. Some other handy tips included how to make corrections, how to customize our computers and some interesting websites for more of those magic tricks.

This magic is indispensable for translators because it saves time and money and makes our lives easier.

**Spanish Language Division Annual Meeting**

By Gerardo Konig

This session was advertised as ‘a chance for members to meet and network’ but it was mostly a review of the activities during the past year, which I was not involved in, so I did not think it was necessary for me to stay.

**Prepare for ATA’s English→Spanish Certification Exam, Parts I and II**

By Rudi Heller and Julia Lambertini

To me, these sessions were the most important, as it is one of my goals to pass the ATA exam one day, hopefully. Some of the attendees submitted a practice test before the conference and the Spanish graders used participants’ practice test to lead a discussion on how graders reason through their grading decisions. The extracts translated were not really difficult for me, but I did notice a remarkable lack of knowledge of translation techniques in most of the participants. They had made a lot of rookies’ mistakes, which were unacceptable for the ATA graders. I must say that I felt incredibly happy with the knowledge I have now, due to all my previous training at UEES. I felt proud of myself because I knew exactly what the graders meant. I almost felt like standing up and explaining it myself. That proves that a trained translator is a real professional and his work is vital for the community.

Some of the rules for the exam were also revealed: it is handwritten; there are three sections, one is mandatory and the other is elective and the texts are
usually medical, scientific, judicial and commercial. This was important for me especially because I felt far more confident about the ATA exam than I used to.

**Sight Translation and Written Translation: Guidelines for Healthcare Interpreters**

By Bruce Downing

In this session we were educated on what the law says about how to deal with sight translation when encountering less common languages – other than English. Within the U.S., hospitals and caretakers are aware of every patient’s right to know exactly what is going on with their health and what the procedure to be followed from then on is.

Healthcare Interpreters –or interpreters in every field- are always facing difficult situations, such as patients who do not want strangers to witness their medical check ups, patients who do not trust interpreters and bring their own family members to do the job –causing numerous problems and even law suits. On the other hand, often interpreters are asked to do things that might catch them out off base, like sight translating certain documents that would be better to translate.

However, a professional interpreter must know how to deal with every case. For instance, documents that contain general background information and education materials are not appropriate for sight translation. Documents with specific instructions for the patient are appropriate for sight translation with the provider present, so that the patient’s questions can be answered by the provider. Legal documents, such as consent forms, should be translated professionally and then, if necessary, read out loud by the interpreter for the benefit of the client.

As a general rule, the NCIHC (National Council on Interpreting in Health Care) recommends strict limits on the length and complexity of documents that interpreters should be asked to sight translate. And the same applies to on-the-spot translations by the interpreter.
Modeling Terminology to Meet Your Needs

By Sue Ellen Wright

Several topics were covered in this session, as to how to save money and ensure high quality by managing the terminology we use every day. It is not very useful to just do a dictionary-like list of new words; it also helps to write synonyms, antonyms, put images and maybe some links related to the topic.

Overall, this presentation offered a highly accessible sliding scale of complexity designed to meet the long term needs of a variety of operating environments in order to achieve the most effective return for our efforts.

Going Beyond the Text: Culture-Bound Elements and Translation

By Silvia Firmenich

Authors like Newman and Baker were mentioned in this session—which was entirely read out loud by the speaker- and a lot of cultural terminology was mentioned. Some of the most basic rules to translate idioms and cultural terms were covered, and although we knew them very well, there were many attendees who were taking notes, since several idioms are not easily identifiable. With some last examples read, the session was over.

Conclusion

Attending this international conference made the difference between being a simple student and becoming a real professional. To me, being able to see things from an international perspective was incredibly important for me, mostly because I was able to understand all the topics of the conference and now I know how to apply those to my professional life.

All the sessions were invaluable to me, except for the last one. The speaker was not the best, she just read her speech aloud and that was it. There was no
interaction with her audience, no questions, no comments, nothing. But the rest of the conference, the organization and the material provided were designed to *wow* first time attendees.

It is part of the T&I Mission to prepare students for international stages; so it was fully accomplished. We were involved in the entire process—from the beginning to the very end—and how to deal with it was part of our training. The rest depends on us.