



New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts
Court Interpreter Program Newsletter



Partners...Assuring Equal Access for all New Mexicans

June 2009

Volume 1, Issue 5



New Mexico Center for Language Access

By Paula Couselo, Director, NM Center for Language Access

Inside This Issue..

- Learning Teams 2
- Learning Team Members
- Tell Their Stories.....3
- Cognitive Linguistics 4

DID YOU KNOW?

- **You can join a learning team if you have attended a skills building workshop or passed the written exam. Check the website for an application.**
- **You can be a learning team mentor if you are a certified court interpreter with five years experience. Please contact Pam Sanchez to find out more—aocpjs@nmcourts.gov**
- **For more info about NMCLA, contact Paula Couselo, Director at paulacou@unm.edu**
- **Partners needs you...your articles, photographs, news on what you're up to. Send these to aocpjs@nmcourts.gov to see your words, pictures, or story in the next issue, due out in July**

So much has happened this past year - the first conference for certified court interpreters in NM was held last year, and the New Mexico Justice System Interpreter Resource Partnership (JSIRP) was created by the State Justice Institute and the AOC effective October 1, 2008.

The mission of JSIRP is to ensure equal access to justice for individuals with limited English proficiency. The *JSIRP Higher Education Project*, a collaborative effort by the University of New Mexico – Los Alamos (UNM-LA), Doña Ana Community College (DACC), Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), and the AOC, created the *NM Center for Language Access* to provide training for bilingual individuals interested in helping those with linguistic needs throughout the Justice and Healthcare Systems. With leadership from UNM-LA and the support of the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Center will offer state-of-the-art training for a variety of career paths, such as court and medical interpreting, for bilingual employees (court clerks, nurses, correction and patrol officers), and for already certified or working interpreters through continuing education options and refresher courses.

Designed to cover different levels of complexity based on the track chosen by each student, the Center's multilingual programs will be one of a kind. An integrated combination of online-learning, face-to-face sessions and internships will make training both accessible and high quality. Because qualified interpreters are more employable, those who successfully complete the programs will be added to the Partnership's *registry*, which will be available to a variety of potential employers. Bilingual employees already working in justice system agencies, hospitals, and clinics will get the training necessary to act as efficient bilingual communicators, which increases their credentials and employability by professionalizing their work.

NMCLA Faculty Work Session (l-r), Jennifer Albright, J.D., Mohamed Ali, Ph.D., Paula Couselo, NMCLA Director



The Center will begin by offering three non-credit certificate programs. *Bilingual Communication* is designed to train bilingual individuals who may be called upon to interpret or translate in the workplace and for others who would like to work as informal or community interpreters in the Justice System or Health Care industry. Individuals in this program will acquire the necessary tools to improve the quality of their linguistic work as well as their professionalism when they are called to interpret. *Justice System Interpreting* will educate students to work professionally throughout the Justice System. Individuals interested in pursuing court interpreting certification are ideal candidates for this program. *Medical Interpreting* is designed to educate students who facilitate linguistic and cultural communication between patients and healthcare providers. A fourth program, *Technical Translation*, will be added in the near future. All tracks are multilingual. Languages to be included initially are: Spanish, Navajo, Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese, and American Sign Language. Additional languages will be accommodated as available and all students are encouraged to apply.

Such an ambitious endeavor would not be possible without concerted efforts of dedicated experts from different backgrounds who have been working collaboratively to make this project a reality. The Center's ultimate mission is to enhance access to justice and fairness in the lives of individuals with limited English proficiency by providing high quality and accountable interpreting services across New Mexico. **Watch for news of NMCLA website after 7/8/09.**

**Court Interpreter Advisory
Committee Meetings 2009**

Teleconferencing In?
Call 505-827-2300 from Santa Fe
Call 505-841-9100 from ABQ
Call 1- 800-934-3683 Toll Free

Enter the meeting ID listed below for
each meeting date when so instructed.

June 26, 2009
DATE CHANGE

Albuquerque, New Mexico
Second District Court
Third Floor Conference Rm
400 Lomas Avenue NW
Albuquerque, New Mexico
9:00 a.m. – Noon
Meeting ID 9133#

September 11, 2009
Santa Fe, New Mexico
Administrative Office of the
Courts Conference Room
325 Don Gaspar, Room 100
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501
9:00 a.m. – Noon
Meeting ID 1330#

November 13, 2009
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Commission for the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing
2500 Louisiana Blvd. NE
(Bank of Albuquerque Bldg),
Suite 400
Albuquerque, NM 87110
9:00 a.m. – Noon
Meeting ID 5027#



*Mentor Ann
Tran and
interpreter,
Juan Jose
Peña*

*Mentor Mi-
chael Kagan,
Jennifer Al-
bright, CNM,
Kristian
Chervenock,
Doña Ana
Community
College*



Mentored Learning Teams: A New Resource for Candidates for Court Interpreter Certification

Personal Learning—Spanish Learning Team by *Michael Kagan*

Personal learning or mentorship is a new initiative from the AOC which certification candidates with mentors.

Since March I have been working with a group of interpreter candidates, focusing on the specific needs of each learner in order to hone their skills and help them become better acquainted with what it really means to become a court interpreter.

Within the first encounters, the individual needs and learning styles of each mentee became clear, and we quickly realized that in order to become truly excellent interpreters, knowledge of the profession, awareness of the theory, and most importantly practice with the modes of interpretation were fundamental.

We also decided that it would very productive to have the meetings in Spanish, and that the more we meet face to face the better. So we have been meeting once or twice a week for about two hours each time. Before each session we e-mail regarding what type of meeting we want to have. At the meetings, we discuss assigned readings, ethical dilemmas or just delve into practice. We work around specific subject matter, such as immigration, drugs, or domestic violence. I try to send my mentees a general outline of the meeting so they can prepare for the face to face practices.

I think our work together has been extremely productive and I believe the learners are motivated. I am lucky to be collaborating with this accomplished group of individuals.

Our next step is to develop an on-line forum where learning team members will have access to material for practice as well as glossaries, and a place where we can keep having lively discussions about our profession.

Wonderful Opportunity- The LOTS Learning Team by *Ann Tran*

In March, I started to mentor a group of interpreter candidates—a Russian, a Thai, and a Vietnamese. Working with a group without a common target language and with various levels of expertise is a challenging journey of discovery and an opportunity to contribute to meeting our state's needs for interpreters of languages other than Spanish.

Much flexibility is allowed to meet the specific needs of each individual team member. After surveying the team members' strengths and weaknesses, I began to create and gather materials to meet the needs of the learning team: mastery of legal terminology, general vocabulary, and American idioms to prepare adequately for the first step in the certification process—the written examination.

Our team meets twice a month for a minimum of three hours per meeting. We cover topics spanning a wide spectrum: learning legal terminology, discussing how to be immersed in legal terminology on a daily basis, reinforcing legal terminology mastery through selected readings, doing quizzes based, learning American idioms, and building general vocabulary. During off-weeks team members get together as a study group to discuss assigned materials and other materials of their choice. In May 2009, we progressed to sight translation materials and memory exercises from the book *The Interpreter's Edge*.

We just completed our third month as a learning team. It has been an extremely rewarding experience for all of us. Besides sharpening my own skills, I have noticed tremendous progress by each team member. The team members have impressed me with their mastery of the legal terms we have discussed. In three short months, my learning team members have made a quantum leap in their progression toward their career goal: to become court certified interpreters.

What Learning Team Members Have to Say....

For me, the mentorship program has been the most significant new element in the court certification process. I took the orientation and skills-building workshop in 2006. Using "The Interpreter's Edge," I studied for at least an hour every day with a headset and CDs, but I did poorly on the simultaneous exam. I tried to keep my momentum going in order to retake the exam, but gradually the process began to feel repetitive and stale – and lonely.

To be honest, my expectations were pretty low when I signed up for the mandatory new orientation, and the revamped skills workshop, in 2009. I liked them, though. The emphasis on building a set of skills specific to interpreting was very useful. If I had simply gone home and put on my headset, however, I think the drudgery of working alone would have worn me down pretty quickly. Instead, I have been working with four other interpreter candidates and a wonderful mentor for three months now, and my energy for study and practice is rising -- not falling. The process seems more real this time. I have observed my mentor in court several times, listening to his interpretation on a headset. Our weekly two-hour sessions are intense, but we've developed a lot of camaraderie. It's reassuring to all of us, I think, to see that interpreting is not easy for anyone. We are all struggling with effective note-taking.

The mentorship is not a guarantee that you'll pass the next exam. Our group is proof of that. But no one in our group has dropped out, either. We're learning too much to quit now. If we keep working as a group with Michael Kagan, I'm willing to bet we all become certified at some point. I haven't felt this optimistic about court interpreting since 2005. *Tom Harmon*

I believe it was a great idea to organize mentored groups. I would never be able to achieve that learning level and get those high quality learning materials on my own. But I got lucky even much more. I happen to be assigned to the group of teacher Ann Tran.

Ann is very experienced and knowledgeable and extremely generous in sharing her experience and knowledge with us, the students. She answers every question we have, employs new and interesting teaching methods, stays late with us after every class in order to give us more advice, even stops by when we have our independent students meeting (at the same location she works at) to check on our progress. In just a few lessons she already provided us with a wealth of language and court practice material. *Lioudmilla Alexeenko*

Miss Ann is a very excellent mentor for my group, the ESL students from Russia, Vietnam and Thailand. She brought us a lot of materials to study in the class and also gave us to take home, plus loan us her own personal books of Focus on Grammar for ESL students and Advancing Vocabulary Skills. She explained about how to build the vocabularies, legal terminologies, vocabularies, definition of complete list of idioms. We had to write sentences from vocabularies that we learned from the handouts that she gave us... A lot of handouts that she got for us are from several places and sources to study in the class and take home... We are very proud to have a mentor like her to help us out to be ready to take the written test. I really appreciated her professionalism in helping us learn better, faster and understand everything. *Tikie Hodges*

My classmates and myself have gotten a lot of help and motivation from Ann. She anticipates what we need and finds the best way to help us to achieve our goals. Ann always spends extra time to help us understand the materials and to answer any last-minute questions. She is an enthusiastic teacher. We all love the program! *Ahn Nguyen*

Cognitive Linguistics and Access to Justice (Continued from page 4...)

sometimes very badly), translation becomes easier. Often, it is a matter of correcting mistaken concepts as much as creating new ones.

For the non-English proficient self represented litigant, the larger hurdle of first understanding the cultural metaphors must be conquered before the legal metaphors are then available to be jumped.

The term "process" is used in law as a metaphorical extension from the concrete uses of the term. But the term is so commonly used in its more abstract meanings that its concrete meanings are mostly lost to us, or distorted. There has long been a process for making cheese, but now, when we refer to "processed cheese", we are saying something different. And we now give to cheese that consists mostly of natural ingredients the name "non-processed cheese"! (And we have "organic milk" now, too.) Human discourse can do some very strange things to words. Cognitive linguists can help us sort through such permutations and help us understand and appreciate the richly imaginative power of legal discourse.

Editors Note: This article is the second of two excerpted from an essay written by Charles R. Dyer, a consultant to law libraries and court systems, an author and researcher with special focus on assisting courts in service to self-represented litigants. The author can be reached at charlesrdyer@clearwire.net for a fuller version of this essay. His website is www.charlesrdyer.com.)

Cognitive Linguistics and Access to Justice—Part 2

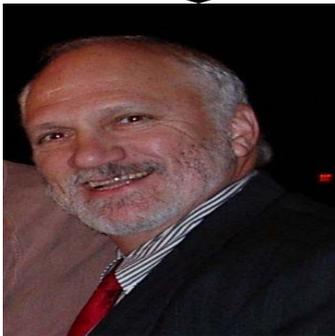
New Mexico
Administrative
Office of the Courts

237 Don Gaspar, Room 25
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Phone: 505-827-4800
Fax: 595-827-4824



www.nmcourts.gov



Charles Dyer, Author

Base Words Cognitive linguists refer to certain common words as “base words”. They are the kind of words that we have a strong conceptual sense of, a powerful, emotionally relevant meaning.

“Bird” is a base word. Studies have shown that, if you ask a number of people to think of a bird, they will most often think of a sort of stick figure similar to a common songbird, like a robin. Very few would first think of a penguin or an ostrich, as these birds don’t act like the birds we most commonly see. Even hawks and eagles are less popular, as indeed there are fewer of them, since they are predators. The word “bird” is one of those words a child learns very early, as birds are readily distinguishable from cats, dogs, and humans.

So “bird” becomes a base word. Most of our monosyllabic nouns are base words. As we get older, we learn subordinate terms, e.g., robin, eagle, penguin, sparrow. Notice that “cat” and “dog” are base words, even though they do not represent as large a taxonomic group as “birds”. But as we get older, we learn subordinate words for them as well, e.g., Siamese, tabby, German shepherd, and terrier. With education, we begin to learn superordinate words, such as “mammal”. But we don’t have prototypical visual concepts for superordinate words.

“Car” is a base word. “Ford” and “Pickup” are subordinate words. “Vehicle” is a superordinate word. Cognitive linguists study how people learn base words, both as children and as adults learning a second language. They also study which words are real base words common to all, and which are only common to some. Note the next section.

Legal Discourse *Discourse* is a term used in a variety of ways, so much that practitioners of discourse analysis have to explain the sense they are using whenever they write their papers.

When using the term “legal discourse” here, I am referring very loosely to words and logical and rhetorical patterns that are recognizable by most American lawyers or that are recognizable by lawyers within a given jurisdiction or field of law, but that are not easily understood by the public at large.

Discourse in this sense, i.e., a professional discourse, is to cognitive linguists, cognitive psychologists, and neuroscientists no different than any other learnable specialized sub-language. Musicians’ discourse or sub-cultural dialects, like Eubonics, would qualify as discourse in this sense.

Neuroscientists have shown that when a person learns something through repeated use, e.g., how to play a G chord on a guitar or how to use a particular word, our initial attempts require concentrated, conscious effort, utilizing a substantial number of neural pathways throughout our brains. As the activity becomes routine, we begin to employ its use without conscious effort. In so doing, our brain uses considerably fewer neural paths, often excluding the extensive use of the frontal lobe (which is always employed when making a conscious effort). The gain in speed, from a number of neuroscientists that I have read, is on the order of 16 or 20 to 1. (Their experiments are of different types, so the times are very different, but the gains are all always of about this magnitude.)

The brain is also capable of stringing these learned activities together, and in so doing, condensing several into one. That also happens by repeated action under conscious effort that eventually becomes routine, and thus unconscious. So musicians learn to play whole songs unconsciously, thinking instead about the crowd they are playing to or listening to the cues from the other musicians so as to stay together.

Similarly, children learn to talk. The fascinating thing about children, toddlers up to about age ten or so, is that they can learn words very readily with less repetition than is required later in life. A three-year-old learns an average of ten words a day! But the words they learn are the easiest ones because they represent perceptual, concrete things. They are base words. As they build a repertoire of such words, and as they become more practiced at metaphorical extension, they can then eventually begin to develop abstract concepts. The brain doesn’t slow down from this process until one is in the mid-twenties, when the brain gets rid of many unused neurons in order to streamline its efficiency. That is why the habits we develop as teenagers (and the music we listen to) are harder to change later on. But it can be done.

Learning a second language is basically the task of learning a lexicon of base words and the grammar of the language, plus the rudiments of the patterns of metaphorical extensions common to the second language.

Both Chinese and English employ the metaphor ANGER = HEAT, obviously based on the physical flush in the skin that the emotion of anger produces. So there is a direct translation of “He is hot under the collar.” But the metaphor of ANGER = A HEATED CONTAINER is not present in Chinese, so the sentence “He got very steamed up about it,” has no Chinese equivalent. A person fully fluent in both English and Chinese can understand the English sense of “steam” in this context, but he also knows that it is untranslatable to Chinese. The underlying abstract concept just isn’t there.

Legal Discourse, to both the English proficient self represented litigant and the non-English proficient self represented litigant, is like a foreign language. However, for the English Proficient self represented litigant, most of the abstract concepts are created by metaphors from concepts he does know. Add onto that the fact that our culture is infused with uses of legal discourse (albeit
(Continued on page 3...))