

CAPTIONS

Official Newsletter Publication of the Colorado Association of Professional Interpreters
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Page 1 of 3

UPCOMING CAPI MEETING

The next CAPI meeting will be held on **September 20th** in Colorado Springs. Everyone is welcome to attend. The location is the Colorado Springs East Library at 4440 N. Union Blvd., in the Conference Room. Doors will be open as of 10:00 am for socializing and the meeting will be held from 10:30 to 12:30.

If you are coming from the north, take I-25 south to exit 150 (Academy Exit). Turn left onto Academy Blvd. and go to Vickers. Turn left on Vickers and go to Union. Make a right on Union. The library (ELIC) is past the convenience store/gas station and in the back.

We look forward to seeing you there!



CAPI Latin Dancers!

CAPI EVENTS YEAR-TO-DATE:

On April 12, 2003 thirty-four people attended CAPI's court interpreter workshop for interpreters of languages other than Spanish. There were 34 attendees who represented a myriad of languages.

On April 17, 2003 Emy López, one of CAPI's original co-chairwomen, gave a seminar for the Denver District Attorney's Office on how to work with interpreters. Approximately 25 District Attorneys attended, representing both the Juvenile DA's and the County DA's. Many of those who attended had good questions and were very grateful to have information in writing.

P.S. Following up on Emy's activities this year, we are happy to announce the birth of her daughter, Sofia Belén, on July 8, 2003. Congratulations to Emy and her husband Luis!

On April 26-27, 2003 CAPI held a Spanish court interpreter orientation workshop. This workshop is required by the Consortium of States as a pre-requisite for any candidate wishing to take the court interpreter exam and had, earlier in the year, been scheduled for cancellation due to dramatic cuts in the budget of the Colorado State Judiciary department. Eighty people completed the workshop and, thanks to CAPI, the testing program will continue to survive until the state judiciary regains the funds to support it.

On June 22, 2003, the first annual CAPI summer picnic was held and was a red-white-and-blue success. Thanks to the dedicated work of the Membership Events Committee, whole coolers-full of bratwurst and hamburgers were grilled and consumed, frisbees flew, baseballs were whacked across parkland, sack races and three-legged races were enjoyed by adults and children alike, and the afternoon wrapped up with happy dancing to Latin music, as seen in the picture.

In July 2003, CAPI again collaborated with the State of Colorado so that the Consortium Spanish court interpreting examination could be given. Over thirty people took the test and results have not yet been received.

One final event! On September 8, 2003 at 3:14 p.m. Jorge and Jolee Espinosa celebrated the birth of their boy, Sandro, weighing 6lbs. 14oz. Congratulations!

If you have any news or reviews to share with the readers of Captions, please send it to cathy@spanishtran.com so it can be included in the next issue.

FUTURE CAPI EVENTS

Upcoming *Spanish court interpreter orientation* is set for November 8-9, 2003. Anyone interested in taking the Consortium court interpreter examination must attend this weekend-long workshop before they will be allowed to register for the test. To find out more and to register for the orientation, go to the CAPI web site at www.coloradointerpreters.org.

Newsflash! Newsflash! Newsflash! Newsflash!

CAPI will play host to the *National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT) annual conference* next year in Denver, at the Denver Marriott City Center at 1701 California Street. The dates of the conference are May 21-23, 2004. If you would like to be a presenter, or for more information, and to register for the conference, go to www.najit.org or call (206) 367-8704.

Visit CAPI's website!

You can find more information about upcoming events of interest to interpreters and translators, as well as resources for interpreters and those who are looking for an interpreter at

www.coloradointerpreters.org.

CAPI Member Profile

An Interview with David Fletcher by Isabelle Houlbrèque

Like others in this profession, David came to interpreting by circuitous routes. Just after graduating from St. Lawrence University in NY, he joined the Peace Corps. After several months of language training in conversational Spanish, David was sent to La Guajira, Colombia, where he worked with a local agency to establish town councils. He credits "El Tiempo", a daily from Bogotá, for helping him advance beyond survival Spanish. He was the only American within miles and had to speak Spanish constantly. After two years in Colombia, he was back in California at UCLA for graduate work in Latin American Studies. He also spent one year at the University of Madrid (1967-68).

In 1971 David followed his wife Jeannie (a Legal Aid attorney at the time) to Denver. After employment in the health care field came to an end in the 80's, David starting working as a free-lance court interpreter for local agencies. His goal at the time was to pass the Denver Certification Exam. After three attempts and a lot of studying, David finally passed the exam in 1998 and has been working for Denver County and District Courts ever since.

David Fletcher is the student **par excellence**. He is never seen without something to read and has something worthwhile to say about many subjects. He claims to have 15 grammar books, 25 dictionaries and numerous novels at home. His favorite novelists are Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mario Vargas Llosa. He regularly reads "El País" (Madrid) "because of its wonderful use of

language", and, "El Tiempo" (Bogotá). David admits that getting certified was a challenge. He recommends that court interpreters listen to a good radio program such as NPR and practice interpreting. "Write down words and expressions you don't know how to say in your target language. Don't look for only one solution. Watch Univisión and soap operas in Spanish. Use the hearing impaired feature so you can follow the text and listen at the same time." His message is: keep on studying, make word lists, consult dictionaries and read! Read! Read! And after certification? David took two advanced grammar classes at Metro to hone his skills.

About his personal life, David says he is proud of having "raised three boys that are healthy and successful" and proud of having been in a loving relationship with his wife of 32 years.

David is proud of his involvement with CAPI. As one of the principal founders of the association he is pleased to have seen its ranks swell to 90 members and enjoys managing CAPI's healthy bank account as the association's treasurer. David and a handful of other interpreters were instrumental in getting CAPI off the ground in 2000.

And what of his goals now? David says he wants to "keep working and stay fit." He looks forward to taking and passing the Federal Court Certification Exam. At 64, he's "not ready to be sent out to pasture" anytime soon. We expect David to keep **us** young and on our toes for many more years.

Does being a good interpreter mean being a good translator?

Part II: What does it take to be a good interpreter?

by Cecilia Castro de Anderson

To begin with, it is crucial for interpreters to be familiar with context. We all have stories of incidents where we felt unsure when interpreting or realized later we had mistranslated something due to lack of context. Regardless of how much or little experience you have, you can always be surprised by a term or phrase. So, always be sure to know the context and never be afraid to ask for clarification. And if you ever realize you misinterpreted a term, do not feel ashamed to correct yourself publicly. Everybody makes mistakes. The difference is how we handle them.

Then, there is a set of tasks that we need to master when we interpret. Most people think it is listening and speaking almost at the same time. Those are definitely the main activities but certainly not the only ones. Interpreters do much more than that. It is called multi-tasking. We need to juggle a number of tasks "without dropping the ball".

Let us begin by analyzing the starting point: listening. We, interpreters, do not listen like everybody else. We listen for meaning. That is, we actively listen to understand and process information at the same time. Pay attention to how you listen when you are interpreting and how you listen when you are in a regular conversation, watching a movie or the news.

Then, we need to perform the obvious language transfer. This happens first mentally and then, verbally. It is so fast that sometimes it is hard to notice but there is a split second between the moment the translation happens in our brain and when it actually goes out of our mouth. It is in that split second that a good interpreter can change the mental version to provide a better verbal rendition.

But that is not where multi-tasking ends. Interpreters need to be able to render a "clean" version in the target language. To do that, we need to monitor ourselves to make sure we are making sense and to check for things like gender (feminine, masculine) and number (singular, plural) consistency. For example, the word in Spanish for people is *gente* but the verb is singular (not plural, "are", like in English) and feminine. So, while we are listening to "People are ambitious" (plural and gender-neutral), we are saying "La gente es ambiciosa", (singular and feminine). If we make a mistake while monitoring our output, we need to be able to correct it - which is yet another task- without losing track of what we are hearing.

Still focusing on cleaning up our output, we cannot disregard our pace, i.e. how fast or slowly we speak. Even though we can render a version in the other language that mirrors what was originally said, this rendition can be "smooth" (regular pace) or "choppy" (very slow at times, very fast at others). Good interpreters are able to pace themselves so that there is not a fast string of words... then silence... then a couple of words... then silence.

While doing all this, we also need to keep a balance between our input and output focus. This refers to how much attention we pay to what we are listening to and what we are saying. Sometimes, when we concentrate too much on our input (for instance, we have problems hearing or understanding someone), our output is compromised: we do not pronounce the words properly, or we need to skip a part because we are focusing too much on listening. Similarly, if we are paying too much attention to our output (saying the numbers correctly or using the exact words), we might lose part of what we are hearing. That is why it is important to keep a balanced concentration between input - listening and understanding - and output - translating and speaking.

A good interpreter cannot rely on "crutches". These are somewhat neutral words or phrases people repeat when they need time to think (like "basically", "you know", "etcetera", "for instance") or sounds like "eeh" or "hmm". If you need time to think while interpreting, just be quiet while you do it. Not only will it be less distracting for the listener, but it will not demand that extra effort from you to come up with a "filler". Of course, you cannot say 3 words and then be quiet for 45 seconds while you come up with that one word or phrase you needed. It all goes back to pacing yourself.

Another very important component a good interpreter needs to use effectively is intonation. Intonation in interpreting is like punctuation in translating. Imagine receiving a document with no capitalization, no commas, no periods, no question or exclamation marks. It would be so much harder to understand! The same is true for interpreting without proper intonation. So, interpreters need to make sure their listener knows where and what the punctuation is.

Finally, it can be a life saver to have a variety of structures and words at hand so you can easily resort to "Plan B" if you get stuck somewhere. For example, the English phrase started with a structure that is awkward in the language you are interpreting into. So, you can gracefully come up with that other way to say it more naturally.

Being a good interpreter requires mastering a full range of tasks that are as difficult as they are crucial. Check and see where you are standing, what your strengths and weaknesses are. The best way to improve is to continue raising the bar for yourself. You are the only one who can make your work better every time. They say practice makes perfect but practice without pushing it a little bit further every time does not make a difference. So, set goals for yourself. Work on your weaknesses one at a time and take every opportunity you can to make your work better.

Happy interpreting!