

# 译风

THE ATA CHINESE LANGUAGE DIVISION NEWSLETTER

美国翻译协会中文翻译分会简报

Winter 2018



Party time for CLDers at the 2017 ATA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

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## FROM THE EDITORS

Happy New Year! The editors of the CLD Newsletter wish you a prosperous 2018!

In this issue, Beijing-based Jonathan Rechtman reflects on the ATA Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

Dr. Chaowei Zhu tells us about a translation project he and his students worked on at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

Jim Jones, our resident cartoonist, does the end page art work and continues his discussion on Chinese measure words.

Pency Tsai writes another brilliant essay in her always inspiring column *Bird's Corner*.

Finally, we need more CLD members to contribute articles for future newsletters!

### ABOUT THE EDITORS



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## **SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

Suggested lengths:

Articles: 800 to 1,500 words

Reviews: 600 words

Letters: 300 words

Include a brief bio and a photograph.

Illustrations and links, etc., are  
encouraged.

Submissions may be edited.

Opinions expressed in this publication  
are solely those of the authors.

Send submissions for future issues to

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Submissions deadline for the next  
issue: July 1, 2018

## Letter from the CLD Administrator



Pency Tsai is a court-accredited interpreter who is currently serving as the CLD Administrator. Translating keeps her mind sharp when she is not interpreting in business, medical, and tribunal settings. She is the owner of VoiceOyster. Contact her at [pency@voiceoyster.com](mailto:pency@voiceoyster.com).

Greetings, fellow Chinese Language Division members!

I thank you all for being proud CLDers and for making your presence felt, and your voices heard at the ATA Conference this past October. I think DC may have struck a chord and brought out the inner lobbyists in our hearts and made us speak up a bit. All kidding aside, I was super happy to see the large number of people taking an interest in the division meeting and was ecstatic at the passion displayed in that tiny room on Friday. Had I known what was to come, I would have put on some deodorant – you people are vicious ;P

I know the pressing issue had always been the Chinese-to-English certification exam and I was glad to share the news last month that the exam has finally gotten the green light and will be up and running in 2018. We must give thanks to all those who worked behind the scenes to make this happen and please, everyone, give yourself a pat on the back for bringing the issue forward and putting it in the spotlight.

Change is in the air and it's refreshing. Let's keep working at it and make 2018 a prosperous and plentiful year for us CLDers...18!!! 18!!!

Happy Holidays to everyone and keep them articles and seminar proposals coming. Let your voice be heard outside the shower.

The Bird

# Not Lost but Found in Translation

## Reflections on Joining the CLD Family at the American Translation Association



Jonathan Rechtman is a Chinese-English conference interpreter and co-founder of Cadence Translate. Based in China for over a decade, he has interpreted for multiple presidents and prime ministers, Fortune 500 CEOs, Hollywood stars, Nobel Prize winners, and a princess.

### Living in Two Worlds

Translating between two languages is like living in two worlds.

We travel back and forth across the text, from source to target, target to source. We shuttle across the linguistic gap, in the hopes of transcending it, in search of the text's true identity.

That sense of “living in two worlds” struck me powerfully this past week as I attended the American Translators Association (ATA) Annual Conference for the first time.

I am an American, but I live in China. I came back to America to attend this conference, but it was the time with my colleagues and new friends at the Chinese Language Division (CLD) that made me feel most “at home.”

The conference is over now, and I am writing this from 30,000 feet above the ocean, shuttling back across the great Pacific gap to my other world. Is China my source or my target? I'm not sure I know any more.

But I want to share with you, if I may, a bit about my experience attending the ATA Conference and joining the CLD family, because I think it, too — just like translation itself — is a search for identity.

### Finding My Home

It would be a bit disingenuous, to say the least, to claim that this was my first time at a conference. As a practicing Chinese-English conference interpreter, I have in the past found myself haunting the booths and ballrooms of almost 200 conferences a year, surrounded by passionate professionals from every sector imaginable: environmentalists at a climate conference, bankers at a finance summit, diplomats at the U.N.

But never before have I been surrounded by so many of *my people*, the translators, the interpreters, all those professionals for whom language is not just a tool of communication but rather our *raison d'être*: we work with languages for a living, and we live to work with languages.

So it was that when I first entered the ballroom where the ATA Welcome Celebration was being held, I was immediately overwhelmed by a rush of familiarity: “These are my people!” I exclaimed, “They live for what I live for!”

But alongside this familiarity there was a parallel sense of the exotic. Here were over a thousand people from all over the world, speaking excitedly in different tongues. Picking my way through the ballroom floor was like navigating a beautiful but incomprehensible maze of bodies and languages; a veritable Babel in the basement of a Hilton.

It was exciting to explore this new world, intimate and alien, and so for the first while I flitted about from here to there, this section to that, relishing in the lushness and diversity of foreign styles and sounds. But at a conference — like in life — one ultimately seeks a place of belonging, and a place of self, and the aimless wanderings of youth evolve into a more purposeful journey. So it was that I set out to find within that grand bazaar my own tribe — and a journey it was. I stopped by the Translation Company Division table, but it didn't feel right. I was wooed for a while by the Interpreters Division table, but still some mysterious force drew me away — drew me further, farther, deep into the heart of the ballroom, until all of sudden I had arrived.

I knew it instantly, instinctively. There was no one word that was said, no formal introduction made. It was the background chatter, the snippets and pleasantries — *xinghui! jiuyang! haojiubujian!* — the elegant parade of Mandarin syllables rising and falling in their crisp tonal dance.

All of the faces around me were smiling. The hands that I shook were warm.

The banner above the table read “Chinese Language Division.”

At last, I was home.

## **A Division United**

From chatting excitedly at the Welcome Celebration to our division dinner a few blocks away, I was struck on that very first night by the openness, warmth, and inclusiveness of the community.

It's a diverse group both in terms of demographics (gender, age, location-base) and in terms of professional tracks (translators and interpreters; students and experienced professionals; business operators, freelancers, and in-house staff).

Despite all these differences, though, I felt the division came together in a true spirit of unity and appreciation. Division Administrator Pency Tsai went out of her way to make sure that everyone in attendance felt welcomed and included, and after a round of warm self-introductions over dinner, it felt like we were all old friends, even though I'd only known everyone for a few hours.

This feeling of camaraderie would extend throughout the conference period. Amidst all the learning and networking to be done, some of the best memories of the conference were of just running into CLD colleagues in the hallways, or going to get coffee in between sessions, or just hanging out and having fun together in the evenings. Close to two dozen of us took over a big table at the Wordfast party, for example, and ate and drank and laughed while the party buzzed around us (plus we got to try a very interesting virtual reality tour provided by the party's charity partner, Nothing But Nets).

### **Content is King**

Merry fraternizing aside, of course, the conference was chock-full of powerful and instructive content, and CLD was no exception.

The Chinese Language Division Annual Meeting took place during lunchtime on Friday, with Pency Tsai and Tianlu Redmon sharing important updates on the progress our division has made in membership, outreach, engagement in social media — as well as an introduction to our new division website! There is still a lot of room for CLD to increase its representation and influence in the ATA as a whole, but we're still very proud of the great work that has been done so far and thank all of the administrators for their tremendous contributions.

Almost directly after the division meeting came a quick cascade of Chinese programming, with two CLD sessions following in quick succession: Ran Zhao and Jessie Lu shared their many years of experience and insight in **Lessons Learned from Grading ATA Practice Tests**, followed by an in-depth skills-building session by Evelyn Garland titled **Tighten It Up: How to Tame a Loose Text**. All of these sessions displayed a level of depth, commitment, and professionalism that our division — and especially the speakers themselves — deserve to be very proud of!

### **True Solidarity**

For the first three nights of the conference I had been sheepishly (shamelessly, you might say) promoting my own session, a dryly titled introduction to finance (**Private Equity or Price-to-Earnings? Finance and Ambiguity in Conference Interpreting**) which had been granted the immensely unenviable time slot of 8:30 am on a Saturday morning three-and-a-half days into the conference — typically not a time one would naturally associate with high levels of attendee engagement.



I arrived at the venue early Saturday morning genuinely afraid (and half expecting) that literally no one would show up — that I would spend the next hour showing Powerpoint slides to myself in an empty room.

But my fears turned out to be no match for the incredible enthusiasm and support given to me by all the eager participants in this terrific community, and in particular from all my new friends in the Chinese Language Division, who attended the session in tremendous force -- some of whom even woke up before sunrise and travelled from significant distances on the outskirts of D.C. to show their solidarity and support.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of you!

### **The Times In Between**

The ATA conference is over now, but the magic persists.

However hard we try, something is always lost in translation — but a good translator can transcend that loss, comforting and compensating the reader with fresh perspective.

The same, I think, is true with community. An annual conference takes place, by definition, only once a year — we cannot be together every day, and something is lost in the absence. But just as a good translation transcends that loss, so too does a good community grow closer and stronger in the times in between our meetings. We come together once a year to be energized, but even in the times apart we are a family — a family of many different cities and of many different backgrounds, but united always in our passion for these languages and the value we unlock in them.

It was an honor spending this conference with you all, and I look forward to transcending this time in between and seeing you all again at ATA'59 next year!

## Translating Multi-Disciplinary Source Texts (or What My Students Have Learned from Their Translation Project)



Dr. Chaowei Zhu teaches full-time at the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, Wake Forest University, NC. ATA-certified, he has translated several books and specializes in financial and academic texts. He may be reached at [zhuc@wfu.edu](mailto:zhuc@wfu.edu)

Earlier this year, an editor I know from Shanghai Truth & Wisdom Press reached out to me asking whether I am interested in translating one of Herbert Gintis's new books *Individuality and Entanglement: The Moral and Material Bases of Social Life*. Since the purchase of the copyright of the book, she has been searching for a qualified translator. "It will be a difficult book to translate!" she warned me.

Having read one of Herbert Gintis's books, I know he is "an American economist, behavioral scientist, and educator known for his theoretical contributions to sociobiology, especially altruism, cooperation, epistemic game theory, gene-culture coevolution, efficiency wages, strong reciprocity, and human capital theory."<sup>1</sup> Like his other books, Gintis ignores disciplinary boundaries in *Individuality and Entanglement* when discussing different aspects of social life. The disciplines covered in the book range from economics, political science, international relations, anthropology, sociology, psychology, game theory, to organizational behavior theory, making translating the book a fearsome challenge for any translator: as translators, we have been told or have learned through practice to only specialize in a limited number of domains so as to ensure better translation quality. Comparatively speaking, less attention has been paid to how to translate multi-disciplinary source texts.

I decided to accept the translation assignment for two reasons: first, as a translator, I myself have a diverse educational background in several disciplines; second, and more importantly,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert\\_Gintis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Gintis)

some parts in Gintis's book would make a great translation project for the first-year translation students I am currently teaching. I'd love to see how they, as future language industry practitioners, handle multidisciplinary source texts as a team.

From Nov 17-28, ten first-year graduate students were divided into two teams to translate several excerpts from the book (SL: English, TL: Chinese; WC: around 4,500 words; Translators in each group: 5). The disciplines involved in these excerpts range from organizational behavior, sociology, anthropology, to genetics. Some excerpts involving anthropology and genetics are completely new to these translators in training. After the translation, students were required to do a group presentation to report what they have learned from this translation project. Here is what they have to say:

1. Find out the true meaning of the ST by identifying the overall logic underlying sentences/paragraphs. For example:

(ST) We touch on the possibility of a core theory of political behavior based on the concepts of \*\*\* and \*\*\* in \*\*\*, based on an appropriately revised version of the rational actor model.<sup>2</sup>

(TT) 基于适当改进后的理性行为体模型，我们在\*\*\*中探讨了建立一个基于\*\*\*和\*\*\*两大概念的政治行为学核心理论的可能性。

At first, some students were confused by the two "based on..." structures. After carefully reading through the ST and group discussion, they came out with the revised translation as above. As Yuanyuan Zhang, who is one of the student translators, put it, when translating ST in an unfamiliar domain like this, translators should "try to integrate scattered points into certain parallel logic chain."

2. Translation of proverbs is always challenging; translators need to take care to maintain the flavor of these proverbs. For example:

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<sup>2</sup> Examples are from *Individuality and Entanglement: The Moral and Material Bases of Social Life*, unless otherwise specified.

(ST) When two disciplines deal with the same phenomena, each simply ignores the other's analysis, good taste advising against direct confrontation.

The “good taste” part has proved to be difficult. The two translation teams eventually decided to translate it as follow:

(TT) 当两个学科研究同一现象时，出于礼貌要避免直接冲突，这些学科的研究者们就索性无视对方的分析。

A similar example:

(ST) If possession is nine-tenths of the law, the answer is simple: Japan.<sup>3</sup>

(TT) 如果按照“现实占有，十诉九胜”的说法，那么答案很简单，归属国为日本

3. Probably the biggest challenge comes from the terminology. Students summarized their coping strategy as below: after compiling a glossary prior to translation, translators need to double check the translated terms to make sure they fit in the ST in a logically sound manner. In other words, we should not miss the forest for the trees. A good example is students first translated “fitness” as “适应性”, and then revised the translation as “适应度” to better reflect the variability of the term in the following source text.

(ST) Frequency-dependent selection is an evolutionary process by which the fitness of a phenotype depends on its frequency relative to other phenotypes in a given population. In positive frequency-dependent selection, the fitness of a phenotype increases as it becomes more common. In negative frequency-dependent selection, the fitness of a phenotype decreases as it becomes more common. This is an example of balancing selection.

I feel these reflections are worth sharing and might prove useful.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/08/c\\_134134631.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/08/c_134134631.htm)

## Measure Words, Part 3



Jim Jones, ATA and CLD member, began learning Mandarin 35 years ago. He does translation (to EN from ZH, DE, and ES), editing, writing, cartooning, and other things, and chairs the ATA Chinese into English certification workgroup. Jim has a BA and an MA in Linguistics. Find him at [LinkedIn.com/in/jimxlat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jimxlat), and at Twitter @han4yu3.

*First, some humble news: the ATA's new Chinese to English translation certification exam, which has been in development for the longest time, was approved by the ATA Board. Our efforts were approved at ATA 58 and regular exam sittings begin in 2018. Our team has done much to make the certification happen. A practice exam is available now, and can be ordered on [https://www.atanet.org/certification/aboutpracticetest\\_order\\_online.php](https://www.atanet.org/certification/aboutpracticetest_order_online.php), and is strongly recommended for those experienced translators who are thinking about sitting for the regular certification exam.*

In past issues measure words 量词 have been discussed. Rate 率 is not really a measure word but is in many words that are for making reference to something that is measured. Click through rate 点击率 uses the word, as does ratio / rate / percentage 比率.

Words having the character 率 can also mean another thing, with a different pronunciation, but many translators recognize this symbol as referring to a specific quantity related to rate or frequency.

Not exclusively though: here are eleven words that do not have 率 but that still have a rate sense

- 比价
- 地税
- 顶级
- 封顶
- 甲级
- 快
- 流
- 年均
- 速度
- 心动
- 增速

And the word 流量 has several rate related senses: flow rate, rate, throughput, and site traffic (Internet) are examples.

The words 一品, 头号 and 优良 can mean first rate. The common word 大小 has a rate related sense. I've known this word to generally mean size.

Back to 率: ten words using this character specifically are:

- 发病率
- 费率
- 功率
- 汇率
- 利率
- 命中率
- 收益率
- 速率
- 息率
- 增长率

Finally, in this election season the idea behind voter participation rate 選民參加率, another rate related expression that uses 率, is relevant.

The mdbg.net site was used in preparing this article.

## **Bird's Corner: Thank You for Being a Noob**

**By Pency Tsai**

Have you ever looked back and thought to yourself, "Man, I have come a long way since those early days when I was green and just a noob."

Now, flash forward to your current self and think about all the adventures, both good and especially the bad, and revisit those experiences that shaped you into the professional that you are today. Those are the stories that we should be tapping into when we get the chance to speak to today's noobs in our world. For those who aren't familiar with the term "noob" just look it up and add it to your vocabulary; just make sure that you don't interchange it with the word "n00b" or someone might just take offense (unless, of course, you meant what you said).

You'll encounter noobs who will remind you of yourself and, as someone who has been the recipient of the guidance from many mentors and colleagues, it should be your duty to pay it forward and step into that role yourself. I recently had the opportunity to impart some of my bird wisdom to one such person and below, I am sharing an excerpt of a bit of what I had to say. Hopefully, they were taken as words of encouragement.

Education and role playing is always a great start when taking on a career. You have to give yourself credit for taking that step. Stepping in and jumping into the deep end is the only way to move on to the next level. Kudos for not shying away from that challenge. Now, let's talk about the performance.

Several factors combined to make this a nightmare assignment. Lack of experience was a contributing factor but it wasn't the only reason for the subpar performance.

Subject matter is always important and the only way to be able to handle this is by being prepared. It's what separates good interpreters from poor ones. How is your approach when taking on medical interpretation? Are you constantly reviewing terminology? If not,

how do you cope with terms that you're unfamiliar with? Studying for an assignment is needed just like studying for an exam is required in order to do well.

Cramming for a test the night before usually doesn't end well if it's a new topic, so retention of knowledge would be lacking; the same is true for work. It's unfortunate that your first big test delved into topics and issues that were very complex but that's how the chips fell. The next question for you is how are you going to handle it?

Confidence is important...in...every...thing...you...do! Act timid and scared and it is reflected in your face and in your voice. Be confident and be in the moment. You shouldn't have time to worry about whether you are living up to expectations or whether you said this correctly. It means that you're not listening to the person that you are interpreting for.

You are an interpreter. Remember that it is not your words that should be coming out of your mouth. It is other people's words. You are just the mouthpiece. That being said, you have to be careful not to change what is being said. If you are unsure of what was said, you need to remember your job and be assertive. Ask. I didn't hear that...I didn't understand that...could you repeat that? These are the tools that you have to use.

Nobody in the room should intimidate you or make you uncomfortable. Every person was once in your shoes at one point in their life, regardless of their position in life at the present. We all started somewhere and it would not be surprising if someone in the room might still be experiencing what you experienced. Fact is, we have all had bad days and oftentimes the darkest ones are in the early days of the game. Taking pleasure in another person's plight shows an inward ugliness of an insecure individual. Should you care about such a person's view of you? I wouldn't. The person has probably been in your situation many times and is now relishing the idea that now it's someone else's turn. Do you need the affirmation or the approval of this person? If not, then why should their presence affect your performance?

We don't always follow through and reflect on our own performance, after the fact. I take that as a reflection of our desire to do well, in any profession. Many people choose to deny



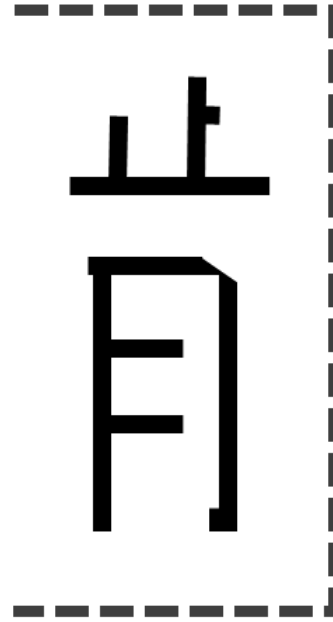
their misgivings and turn a blind eye to things that they should take ownership of. Worse yet, they blame everyone but themselves for their poor performance. You've taken a step in the right direction.

If I gave up after my first conference, I wouldn't be where I am today. Let your failure drive you to succeed.

Learn about taking good notes, practice the art of listening, immerse yourself in a wide range of topics, prepare, and work, work, work. You've already stepped out of your comfort level and you're still alive. Now it's time to expand your bubble and add more to your repertoire.

I'd like to thank the noob who shared with me this "tale of torture" and inspired me to revisit my own past. It brought a smile to my face when I thought of my own humble beginnings and an even bigger smile that I, myself, was just a noob and not a n00b.

The Bird



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