

International Certification Study: Argentina

By Jiri Stejskal

With this article we enter the second year of the series on international certification, launched in the June 2001 issue of the *ATA Chronicle*. A year ago, my objective was to present readers with abstracts from the numerous letters and e-mails we received from institutional members of ATA, in addition to members of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), in response to our inquiry about certification procedures in their respective countries and their willingness (or lack thereof) to cooperate with ATA in the area of accreditation and certification. I was planning to go through the stack of the letters, write a few articles, and be done with it. This undertaking, however, turned out to be quite interesting, and the project has taken on a life of its own. As the study enters a more mature stage and as more issues become clearer than at its outset a year ago, I am actively seeking more information and feedback from officials and members of language organizations worldwide.

While the main objective of the study—to learn more about certification and similar programs of non-U.S. professional organizations for translators and interpreters—has not changed, the method of collecting information and the horizon of the study have changed substantially. Very soon after the launch of the study, I realized the risks of presenting information based on a single source, as was the case with the opening article on the Brazilian ABRATES. Since then I have made an effort to contact as many knowledgeable persons in the area of certification in the given country as reasonably possible, and to conduct adequate research for each article. To my delight, the response has been both positive and overwhelming, and the study has become more objective and

informational. This brings me to the expanded horizon of the study. I presented some background information and partial results of the study at the ATA conference in Los Angeles last year, and I am planning to present on this topic again at the FIT Congress in Vancouver and the next ATA conference in Atlanta. The purpose of these presentations is not to describe the study and reiterate what has been said in the pages of the *ATA Chronicle*. Rather, I am seeking input from the

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audience in order to come up with ideas as to how to interpret the collected information, as well as how to chart the future course of the study. Ultimately, with the help of all those who are willing, I would like to conduct a detailed survey on certification procedures in various countries in order to be able to produce statistically (and otherwise) meaningful results. These results will help us to reexamine our own accreditation process and, I hope, will provide an impetus for more active cooperation with non-U.S. language organizations.

It is only fitting that we start the second year in South America again. For the information presented here, I am particularly indebted to: Beatriz Rodriguez and Graciela Steinberg, president and treasurer of the Colegio de Traductores Públicos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires

(CTPCBA), respectively; Estela Herrera and Daniela Camozzi, both ATA members, certified translators, and active members of CTPCBA; Graciela Perillo, ATA member, certified translator, former member of CTPCBA's Executive Committee, and active member of CTPCBA; Marta Baduy, member of the Colegio de la Provincia de Córdoba and teacher at the Facultad de Lenguas of the University of Córdoba; and Miriam Golía and Natascha Ostroumoff, both ATA members, currently serving as president and vice-president of the Asociación de Traductores Públicos e Intérpretes de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (ATIBA), respectively.

In Argentina, the only way to become Traductor Público (i.e., sworn/legal/certified public translator [“certified public translator” hereinafter]), is to earn a university degree. In order to be admitted to such a program, prospective students must pass an admission language examination. The university programs vary from four to five years. Graciela Perillo has compiled a detailed list of participating universities and relevant syllabi. The scope of this article does not allow for such detailed information, but the data can be obtained directly from Ms. Perillo at perillog@lvd.com.ar. In most Argentine universities, the translation degree is offered for English and French, although the Universidad de Buenos Aires offers instruction in a number of other languages. In the last few years, Portuguese has been added in many universities, both public and private, in support of the MERCOSUR Treaty.

Argentine universities grant professional diplomas, for instance, in medicine, law, architecture, and, unlike universities in the U.S. and elsewhere, translation. In the translation studies program, students can earn either ➡

a scientific and literary translation diploma or a public translator diploma. University courses leading to the public translator diploma are focused mainly on legal translation. As such, the syllabi comprise many courses in law. A public translator can act as a certified public translator once licensed by a colegio profesional (professional board). Colegios, similar to U.S. Bar associations, have been created through a provincial law passed by province legislature. Registration with the colegios enables translators to certify their translations, but only in the particular provinces where these organizations exist. Only 5 out of the 23 provinces have a colegio (Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Santa Fe, Catamarca, and, the newest colegio, La Rioja). In those provinces where there are no colegios, translators can apply for their “matrícula” at the respective courts. Once licensed, certified public translators have their own individual stamp and are entitled to vouch for the accuracy of their translations (a similar arrangement exists in many European countries). To work as a scientific or technical translator, no license is required, and there is no certification program in place.

The largest of the colegios, the Colegio de Traductores Públicos de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, was created by National Act No. 20,305 of 1973, which governs the profession in the City of Buenos Aires. Pursuant to Article 4 of this Act, in order to act as a certified public translator you are required:

- To be an Argentine citizen (if naturalized, you must have had Argentine citizenship for at least five years);
- To be of age;
- To have a university degree granted by:

1. a national university, or
 2. a provincial or private university duly authorized by the Federal Executive (Ministry of Education), or
 3. a foreign university (provided the diploma has been recognized by a national university); and
- To register with the competent collegiate/professional body.

Also of interest in terms of legal certification procedures is Act No. 7834, which controls and governs the practice of certified public translators in the province of Córdoba, and which has been adopted as a model by groups of translators in different provinces of the country that are working to become translator associations. Detailed information on this Act is available from Marta Baduy at msbaduy@esl.unc.edu.ar.

Upon registration with a colegio, translators take an oath that they will accurately translate all documents. They are then given a license number which they have to use when signing a statement at the bottom of their translations:

“I, [name], an Argentine Certified Public Translator practicing in [city], license No. [license number], certify and attest that the foregoing is, to the best of my knowledge and ability, a true translation into [target language] of the original document in [source language] which I have had before me. Given under my hand and seal in [city] on [date].”

Certified public translators are considered to be assistants to justice. While they can perform activities in any field of translation and interpretation, they are the only ones authorized to act in an official capacity as court assistants,

experts, and/or interpreters. Certified translations are required in a number of official contexts: personal documents, certificates and diplomas, public deeds, documents that are involved in legal actions, expert witness reports, and also for commercial documents such as contracts, balance sheets, and corporate documents (bylaws, etc.). A certified translation will also be required in circumstances involving other types of documents, such as medical reports or expert opinions that are part of a legal procedure or an audit or a claim in an insurance company.

There are many different organizations for translators and interpreters in Argentina. The umbrella organization is the Federación Argentina de Traductores, or FAT (Argentine Federation of Translators). Similar to FIT, it is an association of translation organizations with no individual membership. FAT currently does not have a web presence, and information on its activities is not readily available. According to Beatriz Rodriguez, president of CTPCBA (see below), FAT currently represents more than 7,000 translators and interpreters through their respective colegios. The Federation was founded by CTPCBA together with three other colegios, namely those of Córdoba, Santa Fe, and Catamarca.

The colegios are the all-important organizations in Argentina when it comes to certification. The above-mentioned CTPCBA is the oldest colegio in Argentina, and boasts approximately 3,500 active members working in 34 different languages. The main role of CTPCBA is to represent certified public translators and to investigate, develop, promote, and share with the public the work and function of these professionals. It is the only body in Buenos Aires that formalizes member registration in the

profession, administers the resources of the association, ensures the strict observance of professional ethics, and controls and administers the registration of certified public translators as supporting technical experts within the Argentine justice system in the City of Buenos Aires. When registered, members of the Colegio agree to abide by the respective codes of ethics. Complaints or claims regarding professional conduct are dealt with by a Tribunal de Conducta (Ethics Committee).

CTPCBA, a member of FIT, is a nonprofit, noncommercial, nonstate association of public law, and its revenues come from registration/certification fees, annual member dues, the courses, seminars, and symposia it holds, and the authentication services it renders. CTPCBA has organized three Latin American Congresses on translation and interpreting in Buenos Aires. Our own Tom West, current ATA president, attended the II and III Congresses and was one of the keynote speakers. CTPCBA's commitment to professional translation and quality is reflected in a profuse academic training agenda, which includes not only courses, seminars, and symposia organized by the different CTPCBA committees, but also a distance training program, which includes translation into Spanish and Spanish for editing. Although distance training is designed for Argentine translators, CTPCBA is also planning to launch a new program customized for translators in the United States. CTPCBA belongs to the CGP (General Professional Coordinating Board) and is an active member of the CEPUC (Coordinating Board of University Profession of the City of Buenos Aires). During the last three years, CTPCBA has also been hosting ATA accreditation exam sittings.

CTPCBA is currently in contact with sister organizations in Latin America in a joint effort to organize the Latin American Regional Center for Translation. CTPCBA publishes two magazines, one of them for distribution among its members (also available on CTPCBA's website), and an academic magazine, *El Lenguaraz*, which comes out on a yearly basis. In addition, CTPCBA maintains a discussion list, "El Lenguaraz Electrónico." Detailed information on CTPCBA is available at the Colegio's website at www.traductores.org.ar (Spanish only).

Two years ago, the Comisión de Interpretación del CTPCBA (Interpretation Committee) was established. One of the objectives of this committee was to create a list of certified public translators who are also certified conference interpreters. To be included on this list, certified public translators have to prove they have the appropriate training and experience (usually by submitting client certificates). The minimum requirement is 340 points. The maximum number of points one can get for training is 100 (the number of points granted for a university interpreting diploma). The remaining points are granted for eight-hour days of interpreting, with one hour equaling one point. For example, an interpreter with an interpreting diploma (100 points) needs to prove interpreting experience equaling 30 days (240 hours) to reach the target 340 points.

There are just a handful of colleges where interested parties may study interpreting in Argentina, although there are many private organizations offering interpreter courses, mostly run by active interpreters. One such organization, the Asociación de Intérpretes de Conferencia de la Argentina, or ADICA (Argentine Association of

Conference Interpreters), is a professional association for interpreters of all languages that has been active for more than 20 years in Argentina and includes many AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence) interpreters. Aside from prospective members showing that they have worked at conferences, together with referrals from two or three active colleagues, there are no restrictions or certification exams to pass to become a member. Further information on ADICA is available at www.adica.com.ar.

Among active organizations for translators and interpreters in the Greater Buenos Aires area is the Asociación de Traductores Públicos e Intérpretes de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, or ATIBA (Association of Certified Public Translators and Interpreters of the Province of Buenos Aires). This association was organized in 1997 in order to support translators, train them for the corporate world, and assist them in finding a position in the community. ATIBA's publication, *Molinos de Viento*, offers interesting articles on the profession, language- and translation-related news, seminars, news about translation fairs, and all sorts of related activities (contact molinosdeviento@atiba.org.ar). In order to prompt translators to use all the electronic tools available, ATIBA has started a "Translator's List." This virtual community now has over 300 members. All interested parties may participate by submitting inquiries on difficult terms, language-related queries, and news related to the profession. ATIBA president Miriam Golía, who was recently invited to give a lecture on present market conditions in Argentina at the II CIATI International Congress of Translators and

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you actually do not want to be doing translation in the area you have chosen (Ref. 4). It is never too late to change your subject or focus. Be clear that you are changing subjects or your approach, not because you are afraid of reaching your goals or are too discouraged, but because you are not interested in the subject itself.

Also, once you determine what your personal goals are, you will want to have a network of people who can support and help you realize these goals (Ref. 5). Your support network can take many forms. You may simply want to meet with a local organization of like-minded professionals to be able to share your experiences and network. You may want to create your own personal network of 7-10 indi-

viduals who you value. Each of you may come from different industries and backgrounds. You can meet and brainstorm together on how you can all meet your different personal goals. You may need only a network of one person (a mentor or a significant other). Whatever form your support group takes, it is important that you establish one as you embark on your career as a freelance translator.

Now that you have determined your goals and the related activities needed to accomplish them, set up a timeline and DO IT! The only thing keeping you from reaching your goals is yourself. You are the one creating this career and it is in your best interest to implement the activities that will help you reach your goals.

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4. Stuber, Robert. "Creating Your Ultimate Destiny." Nightingale-Conant Corp. cassette.
5. Wilson, Larry, and Spencer Johnson. 1986. *The One Minute Sales Person*. Avon Books.

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Interpreters in São Paulo, Brazil, held in May 2001, will be happy to supply further details (contact presidente@atiba.org.ar). Further information on ATIBA is also available at www.atiba.org.ar (Spanish only). Among other active regional organizations for translators and interpreters is the Asociación Argentina de Traductores e Intérpretes (AATI), which represents non-certified public translators (scientific, literary, technical) in the Buenos Aires. AATI is also a member of FIT.

In the next issue, we will examine the certification procedures in Norway. As the editor of this series, I encourage readers to submit any relevant information concerning non-U.S. certification or similar programs, as well as comments on the information published in this series, to my e-mail address at jjiri@cetra.com.

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(see pages 54-55 for more chapter and group information)

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