Language in the news

Find out who has published memoirs, why top prizes can’t be awarded, and what rats, monkeys and humans have in common.

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This first column of 2005 - under a new title to better reflect what we cover - will connect you to Russia, China, Lebanon, Canada, Australia and even Geneva! Find out who has published memoirs, why top prizes can’t be awarded, and what else rats, monkeys and humans have in common.

AIIC translations

The association is committed to making our website truly multi-lingual. The basic documents that you will see listed in the left-hand column of our homepage are in the process of being translated into more languages. Our Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Practice can now be read in DE, EN, ES, FR, HE and PT. The AIIC Declaration on World Linguistic Heritage appears in those six plus AR, IT and ZH. And if you are wondering … we have a quick reference list of standard language abbreviation.

Language Diversity: Inuit finds a home on the net

Browser settings never supported the Inuit language, but attavik.net has changed that. Now speakers of this Canadian aboriginal language will be able to write, manage documents and make online payments in their own language. More information, as well as an example of the Inuktitut language, can be found at BBC News World Edition.

AIIC member publishes memoirs

Valerie Taylor Bouladon, writing under her married name of Barnes, has recently published a volume of memoirs. Her publisher, Random House Australia, says that “Valerie’s tales from home and abroad make A Foreign Affair a lively, funny, utterly delightful memoir.”

Why provide interpretation?

We’ve heard a lot about EU expansion and the challenge of meeting language needs, but one more article from the BBC won’t hurt, especially one that contains this quote: “Some critics argue it would be easier, not to mention cheaper, for the Commission to stick to just one official language. Ian Andersen, head of communication and information at the directorate-general, disagrees. ‘Our
view has always been that any country or organisation should be able to send their best expert to Brussels to meet with other countries, and not their best linguist,” he says.” (Emphasis added)

**Moscow club for translators and interpreters**

The Moscow Times reports that: “Meeting once a month at the Nikolai Ostrovsky Museum, the club is free for all comers. Regulars range from university students to Zoya Zarubina, an interpreter to Josef Stalin and Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the wartime Tehran and Yalta conferences. Each get-together begins with a lecture followed by wine and socializing.”

**And a bit more from Russia**

Not being a Russian speaker myself, I can’t judge the quality of this St. Petersburg Times article, but that would be a poor reason not to include it! Referral, after all, is not endorsement.

**Interpreter makes the news for refusing contract**

Freelance interpreter Fred Burkes collaborated with the US State Department for 18 years, but recently refused to continue doing so due to what he sees as “excessive government secrecy,” according to this Washington Post story. Burks offers his own explanation on the website he founded to research cover-ups.

**Arabic: a debate on modernization**

“In the corridors of Arab academia a debate is raging. It is not an argument about politics, not even about religion. It is, rather, a debate about the Arabic language, (or Modern Standard Arabic as it is today), and it is getting quite tense.” Thus begins an extremely informative and interesting article in Lebanon’s Daily Star.

**The culture behind the word**

“A Czech proverb that I cannot possibly pronounce declares something like: ‘To speak another language is to live another life.’” In this International Herald Tribune piece, C.J. Moore adds that “The saying also points to the fascination of learning a new tongue and, above all, of entering its culture. Because culture is where the dictionary ends and where the linguist finds real meaning, crossing over into the life and world of another people.”

**Top award left vacant in literary translation contest**

When an English-to-Chinese translation competition challenged all comers to tackle John Updike’s short story “Delicate Wives,” 637 translators and would-be translators responded. Yet not one entry was deemed worthy of first prize. Find out why from English.eastday.com.

**Rats, humans and Tamarin monkeys**

It seems that rats “got rhythm,” or at least “get it” when it comes to the music of Dutch and
Japanese. “Neuroscientists in Barcelona report that rats, like humans (newborn and adult) and Tamarin monkeys, can extract regular patterns in language from speech (prosodic) cues.” And songbirds (logical, no?) may be the next species to be tested, according to Medical News Today. If you want more on this fascinating story, try RedNova.

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Recommended citation format: