

Atlanta, GA 2026 | June 5-7

BEYOND AI

The Irreplaceable Human Element



JUNE 6 & 7 MAIN CONFERENCE REGISTRATION & SESSION INFORMATION

Registration includes access to sessions offered on June 6 and 7. This registration also includes admission for the registrant to the following events: The Friday Welcome Event, the Saturday Annual Meeting and Luncheon, and the Saturday Evening Reception.

	NAJIT Member	Non-member	Student*
Early-Bird Registration (now - May 8)	\$300	\$410	\$210
Regular Registration (May 9 - May 25)	\$385	\$510	\$280
Late Registration (May 26 - June 7)	\$485	\$610	\$350

*To receive the student discount, you must be a NAJIT student member and enrolled in a University T&I degree program.
STUDENT ATTENDEES ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE A CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE.

Items included with the Main Conference Registration:

- Morning and Afternoon coffee breaks with a light snack
- Friday evening Welcome Reception – Appetizers and cash bar
- Three-course lunch during the conference on Saturday
- Saturday Evening Reception – Heavy appetizers and cash bar
- Continental breakfast each morning of the Main Conference

BECOME A MEMBER

Join today and enjoy reduced-rate access to required continuing education sessions, opportunities for committee membership, and much more.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

Navigating Code-Switching in Legal Interpreting: Challenges and Implications

Presenter: Gulnara Shigabutdinova

Location: Buckhead A

Session Description

This presentation takes a closer look at a familiar but often misunderstood reality in the courtroom: many LEP individuals naturally move back and forth between English and their first language when they speak. Interpreters see this every day, yet the legal system often insists that witnesses choose only one language. Judges and other court officers may direct an LEP witness to “speak their native language and let the interpreter do their job,” believing this is the best way to stay accurate and efficient.

For many LEP speakers, however, this demand may do the opposite. This presentation will demonstrate that switching between languages is not a sign of confusion or lack of ability—it is often the most natural way for the LEP speaker to express what they truly mean, as their communication may reflect years of experience living between cultures, navigating family, community, school, and work in multiple languages.

This presentation will explain why code-switching happens, what it reveals about identity, memory, and emotional expression, and how forcing a ‘one-language-only’ rule can harm accuracy and fairness in the courtroom. It will also consider a timely question: as artificial intelligence begins to assist or even replace human interpreters, will technology understand hybrid language users—or will it make their voices even harder to hear?

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Recognize who LEP speakers truly are: Gain a clearer understanding of the diverse linguistic identities of LEP individuals, including those who naturally use hybrid or mixed language due to life in bilingual environments, and how this affects meaning, expression, and the interpreter’s ethical decisions.
- Identify the risks of restricting language use: examine how courtroom instructions discouraging hybrid language may unintentionally reduce accuracy, weaken testimony, and limit an LEP speaker’s ability to communicate fully and authentically.
- Consider the implications of AI in interpreting: explore how emerging AI tools may fail to account for shifting language patterns among hybrid speakers—areas in which human interpreters actively reason, question, and clarify.



Gulnara Shigabutdinova

Gulnara Shigabutdinova has had a fulfilling career in interpretation since 2016, working as a certified medical interpreter and a Master-level Court Interpreter. Her passion for languages goes far beyond words—she has long been fascinated by how we communicate, why we speak the way we do, and how language shapes our thinking (and vice versa).

She gained valuable experience serving as Chair of the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI), and she continues to focus on uplifting the interpreter community, advocating for quality standards, and helping shape the future of the profession.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

Balancing Accuracy and Empathy: Court Interpreting in Domestic Violence Proceedings

Presenter: Gabriela Espinoza Siebach, MATI

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description

Domestic violence cases present unique challenges for court interpreters, requiring a balance of technical skill, legal knowledge, and emotional resilience. In this three-hour interactive workshop, interpreters will gain insight into the courtroom dynamics specific to domestic violence proceedings, with an overview of applicable legislation in Maryland and how they may differ in other jurisdictions. Participants will explore real-world scenarios interpreters may encounter in these cases, practice interpreting emotionally charged testimony, and apply memory-retention and note-taking techniques tailored to this high-stakes setting. The session will also address the importance of maintaining neutrality in emotionally intense situations and offer brief guidance on recognizing and managing vicarious trauma.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify key features of domestic violence proceedings and compare relevant legislation across multiple jurisdictions.
- Demonstrate effective techniques for interpreting emotionally charged testimony using appropriate memory retention and note-taking strategies.



**Gabriela Espinoza Siebach
MATI**

Gabriela Espinoza Siebach, Spanish interpreter and Adjunct Professor at UMass Amherst, has spearheaded the development of multiple training and assessment programs throughout her career. Gabriela is a state-certified court interpreter in California and North Carolina and holds a graduate degree in Spanish translation and interpretation from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. Gabriela serves on the ATA's Government Division Leadership Council and the Interpretation Profession Advisory Committee as well as the NCIHC Policy, Education & Research Committee. Gabriela is also a member of CATI and NAJIT.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

When One Is Not Enough

Presenter: Nattalia Paterson, PhD

Co-presenter: Chantal Portillo, PhD

Location: Heritage C

Session Description

Team interpreting is one of the profession's most effective safeguards against interpretation failure, yet it remains chronically underused, underfunded, and frequently misunderstood in legal settings. When courts rely on a single interpreter for extended or complex proceedings, the risks to accuracy and due process increase significantly. This presentation introduces NAJIT's second position paper on team interpreting, a substantially expanded edition that builds on the association's foundational guidance with a comprehensive framework for planning, coordinating, and executing team assignments. The session highlights key recommendations from the paper and addresses common misconceptions surrounding team interpreting. Designed for interpreters, language access coordinators, and legal professionals, this presentation reframes team interpreting as a professional standard that protects quality, reliability, and the integrity of judicial proceedings.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Articulate the case for team interpreting as a due process imperative—not merely a scheduling convenience—using NAJIT's thresholds and access-to-justice framework.
- Apply the paper's decision-making framework to evaluate when team interpreting is required, including how to account for duration, complexity, and emotional intensity of proceedings.
- Implement effective team coordination strategies, including role responsibilities, switching protocols, real-time communication signals, and pre- and post-assignment briefings.
- Use the paper's tools, such as the Provision of One Interpreter Notice and the Interpreter Notice of Reservation, to advocate for adequate resources in professional settings.



Nattalia Paterson, PhD

Dr. Nattalia Paterson is a Portuguese interpreter and translator with a PhD in Linguistics from Northwestern University and a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics, Translation, and Conference Interpretation from PUC-Rio. She holds court interpreter certifications in multiple U.S. states and serves as a contract seminar interpreter for the U.S. Department of State, a qualification that enables her to work in U.S. federal courts. She is also certified in healthcare, conference, and translation services. Dr. Paterson has served as Board Chair of NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators) for two years and continues to contribute to the profession through the organization's advocacy, position papers, conference, and forensic-transcription and translation committees. She is also dedicated to developing the next generation of Portuguese court interpreters, providing training to help candidates prepare for state-certification examinations.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

Ethics Across Fields: A Comparative Analysis of the Code of Ethics in Healthcare, Legal, and Educational Settings

Presenter: Carola Lehmacher

Location: Augusta

Session Description

This presentation will explore and compare the codes of ethics that govern professional conduct in healthcare, legal, and educational settings. By examining the ethical principles and standards of practice of each field, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how ethics influence decision-making. Through a comparative analysis, the session will highlight both the similarities and differences between these codes, providing valuable insights into how each field addresses ethical dilemmas and challenges.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the codes of ethics used in different fields
- Analyze how collaborative and adversarial settings approach ethical decision-making
- Develop a deeper understanding of the role critical thinking plays in decision-making



Carola Lehmacher

Carola Lehmacher is a multilingual freelance translator and interpreter with more than fifteen years of experience working with government agencies and private industry at executive and operational levels. She holds two university degrees in Translation Studies and a master's degree in Conference Interpreting. She is a Federally Certified Court Interpreter (FCCI) and a Master Licensed Court Interpreter in Georgia. Carola works as a conference interpreter for various local and international clients and is one of the voices of a major news network. Moreover, she is a licensed trainer of The Community Interpreter® International and dedicates many hours to volunteering as Chair of the AAITE Ethics and Standards Committee, as Advisory Member of the Georgia Commission on Court Interpreters, a member of the Position Papers Committee of NAJIT, and as President of AAIT, the Georgia chapter of ATA.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

NCSC and State Court Interpreter Credentialing

Presenter: Brooke Bogue

Location: Buckhead A

Session Description

State courts across the nation are experiencing a shortage of credentialed court interpreters to better ensure more equitable access to justice for LEP court users. Court interpreters are an integral part of our justice system and are of vital importance to the full and fair administration of justice. This session will provide an overview of the steps for pursuing state court interpreter certification/credentialing, offer guidance on successful NCSC written and oral exam preparation, and engage in a question-and-answer session.

Learning Objectives

During this session, participants will:

- Learn about the pathway to state court interpreter certification or credentialing, including eligibility and testing requirements
- Be able to identify successful strategies for written and oral exam preparation
- Have the opportunity to ask questions about the NCSC state court interpreter oral exams



Brooke Bogue

Brooke Bogue is the Language Access Services Section Manager with the National Center for State Courts. Her work is focused on language access and access to justice issues and the state court interpreter testing program. Prior to joining the NCSC, she served as the Manager of the Office of Language Access Services with the North Carolina Judicial Branch where she was devoted to expanding and improving language access services for LEP court users in the North Carolina's state courts and elevating the role of credentialed court interpreters as an integral part of the full and fair administration of justice. Prior to her work at the NCAOC, she served as an Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney in Tazewell and Fauquier Counties. She holds a Juris Doctor from the University of Baltimore School of Law, a Bachelor of Science from James Madison University, and maintains an active license with the Virginia State Bar.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

Doing What AI Can't Do: Skills for the 21st Century and Beyond

Presenter: Janis Palma

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description

We are entering a new era in the judicial interpreting profession that demands purposeful strategies when choosing equivalent terms and phrases in our target languages. Making intuitive choices is no longer enough to rise above the challenges posed by legislators and administrators who believe Artificial Intelligence (AI) can replace human interpreters. This course will briefly explain how Large Language Models (LLMs) feed AI-produced discourse, address the linguistic expertise required to make language transfer decisions that go beyond mimicking the source language discourse, and propose some strategies interpreters can develop to process information with greater precision than AI by incorporating syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic elements into the target language renditions. Instruction will be non-language-specific but will take some examples in Spanish from actual interpreting scenarios to demonstrate some of the proposed strategies.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand how meaning is constructed at the surface and deep structures of discourse to be able to replicate it with a comparative surface and deep structure in the target language
- Identify the role of grammatical constituents in spoken discourse and how to best transition from source to the target language by taking advantage of all available structural resources
- Evaluate their own performance vis-à-vis the expectations of AI-produced language transfers



Janis Palma

Janis Palma is a professional English-Spanish interpreter and translator with more than 43 years of experience working as both a staff and an independent contractor in state and federal courts, as well as for private clients in conferences on a broad spectrum of topics. She is certified by NAJIT, the U.S. Courts, and is a Texas Master-licensed interpreter. She holds a PhD in Language Studies, a Master's in Legal Studies (MLS), and an MA in Caribbean History and Literature. Janis Palma has been a volunteer with NAJIT since 1986 and was awarded a Life Membership in 2006. She has taught, written, presented at conferences, and published extensively on subjects related to interpreting, language access, and language rights. Her research interests are mainly focused on the intersection between language, law, and interpreting in legal contexts. She is currently working towards a second PhD in Rhetoric, Communication, and Information Design at Clemson University.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

Powerful Interpreting: Build Your Skills in 5 Steps

Presenter: Sharon Neumann Solow, M.A., CSC, SC:Le

Location: Heritage C

Session Description

The best time to start improving our work is NOW! This workshop will identify 5 critical skills which can be developed to improve our work immediately: deeper processing, memory, use of space, cohesion, and confidence. Whether you are just starting your journey as a student or are a seasoned interpreter, apply these 5 Steps to your work and you will see immediate and long-lasting positive results. Interpreters literally hold the lives of others in their hands. That responsibility makes us want to be the very best we can be, and yet it can be a challenge figuring out what to do to become stellar in our work—more efficient and accurate, more reliable and more deeply satisfied. You can up your game today and every day by applying the principles in this workshop, which are based on the author's six decades of experience as an interpreter, educator, author and diagnostician of interpretation.

With an eye to building on strengths and best practices, these key skills, practical tips, and examples from real life are presented with an engaging and uplifting perspective and are applicable to all interpreting audiences, including interpreting students, mentors, interpreters and instructors.

This workshop answers the questions:

- What can I do right now to improve my effectiveness?
- How can I improve my accuracy?
- What exercises can I do to develop my skills?
- What does confidence have to do with it?
- How can I apply greater cognitive processing?
- How can I feel more satisfied in my work?

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Give two examples of things they can apply from each of the 5 Steps
- Explain the relationship between poise, confidence and self-esteem
- Identify three strategies for increasing processing time
- Describe the first three steps they will take to improve their work
- Assess how to increase their own sense of confidence and competence



Sharon Neumann Solow

Sharon Neumann Solow works with great commitment and joy as an interpreter, trainer, performer, lecturer, author and consultant. Her career, spanning 60 years, has taken her around the United States, to Australia, Canada, Europe, Mexico, New Zealand, Scandinavia, and South America. She is the author of three books, *Powerful Interpreting: Build Your Skills in 5 Steps*, *Sign Language Interpreting: A Basic Resource Book* and *Say It With Sign* and numerous chapters, articles and handbooks. Television appearances include talk, variety shows, documentaries and stars on the Emmy-nominated NBC Knowledge series, "Say It With Sign".

She is a working interpreter, primarily in legal, community, classroom, and conference settings, with a long history of training and administration. She has taught interpreters and interpreter educators, including through the Monterey/Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

A member of many professional organizations, she has received numerous awards, and holds national legal certification, and is a Shimoff Happiness Coach.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

Defending your Translation: Providing Expert Testimony

Presenter: Javier Castillo, Jr.

Location: Augusta

Session Description

There is a good chance one will be called into court to testify. In this session, participants will learn some of the ins and outs of testifying as an expert witness and defending your work product. Participants will also get a chance to experience what it's like to be on the witness stand and learn how to prepare their testimony.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will learn:

- The standards for expert testimony
- How to become qualified as an expert
- Tips on writing expert witness reports
- How to prepare for testifying
- Tips for managing stress during cross-examinations



Javier Castillo, Jr.

Javier Castillo is President of Castillo Language Services, Inc. and an internationally recognized interpreter, translator, and trainer. His credentials include Federal Court Interpreter Certification, NC AOC court interpreter certification, Certified Medical Interpreter (CCHI) designation, and contract interpreter status with the U.S. Department of State. He has delivered specialized training workshops for court interpreters nationwide and has designed courses on working with interpreters at Campbell Law School and UNC School of Law. Javier has held prominent leadership positions including former President of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters (CATI) and former Chair of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT).

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track A - 2:00pm - 3:00pm

Interpreters in the Age of AI: How Interpreting Will Evolve, Roles Will Shift, and New Opportunities Will Emerge

Presenter: Nestor Wagner

Location: Buckhead A

Session Description

Interpreting is entering a period of rapid transformation driven by accelerating advances in artificial intelligence. This seminar examines near-future AI developments that will reshape the profession. As real-time AI interpreting systems improve in contextual accuracy, speech naturalness, and speaker adaptation, VRI, telephonic, and in-person interpreting will move from a fully human-delivered service toward blended environments where AI produces a first-pass interpretation and human professionals step in as linguistic, cultural, and ethical supervisors.

We will explore how interpreters' responsibilities are likely to shift toward quality control: ensuring fidelity and nuance, detecting omissions or algorithmic bias, refining register and pragmatic meaning, and safeguarding confidentiality and equity in communication. Rather than signaling the end of interpreting work, these changes open clear professional opportunities. The seminar highlights emerging pathways such as building specialized knowledge bases (by domain, region, and high-stakes terminology), continuously curating and updating them, and marketing these knowledge assets to AI platforms, institutions, and companies as high-value linguistic infrastructure.

Finally, the seminar introduces key AI advances that will expand or redefine the interpreter's traditional duties. The central message is strategic and realistic: AI will not remove interpreters from the communication process, but will elevate their role, pushing the profession toward greater specialization, authority, and leadership in the intercultural communication ecosystems of the future.

Learning Objectives Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Summarize the most relevant upcoming AI developments affecting interpreting and remote modalities.
- Explain how VRI, telephonic, and in-person interpreting are shifting toward hybrid human-AI workflows.
- Identify the interpreter's emerging quality-control responsibilities in AI-assisted encounters, including risk detection and correction.
- Assess key ethical and performance risks of AI output (e.g., bias, omissions, register loss) and apply mitigation strategies.
- Recognize and articulate new professional opportunities for interpreters, including knowledge-base creation, curation, and commercialization.



Nestor Wagner

Néstor Wagner was born in Argentina and holds a Master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from the University of Washington. A certified medical, administrative, and court interpreter since 1989, Néstor founded the Southern California School of Interpretation in 1993, eventually expanding to four locations across California and Nevada. Between 2002 and 2020, he trained more than 10,000 students at his Santa Fe Springs campus.

An innovative leader in educational technology, Néstor launched the first online training program for interpreters in 2006. Today, he operates a headquarters and studio in El Segundo, California, where he reaches hundreds of students worldwide via hybrid and online platforms. Recently, he earned an M.I.T. certificate in "Designing and Building AI Products and Services" and is currently integrating AI to enhance his renowned teaching methodologies. Néstor is set to unveil a unique training product recently approved for Superior Court interpreters on the East Coast.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track A - 2:00pm - 3:00pm

AI for the Analog Generation: Beyond the Hype to the Irreplaceable Human Interpreter

Presenter: Jaqueline Neves Nordin

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description

As AI moves rapidly into legal and court settings, interpreters are caught between professional curiosity, anxiety, and fatigue. In the justice ecosystem—where due process, confidentiality, and trust are non-negotiable—the pressure to “keep up with technology” often collides with everyday constraints: limited connectivity and bandwidth in courthouses, patchy infrastructure, tight timeframes, and practitioners whose expertise lies in human communication and ethical judgment, not software engineering. Designed with NAJIT members in mind, this session offers a friendly, realistic introduction to AI-supported, “tech-gentle” workflows that respect the indispensable human element of interpreting. Rather than showcasing experimental or opaque systems, it focuses on a small, low-stress toolkit examples to help interpreters prepare, organize knowledge, and debrief assignments—without outsourcing ethical judgment, contextual reasoning, or relational work to machines.

Using scenarios from court and quasi-judicial contexts, the presentation will demonstrate how interpreters can build offline or low-bandwidth-friendly glossaries, streamline terminology preparation, structure notes and post-hearing reflections for learning and self-care, and maintain personal knowledge bases under their own control. At the same time, it will highlight clear red lines around confidentiality, data ownership, and algorithmic bias, reinforcing interpreters’ role as guardians of due process and meaningful participation, not passive users of technology.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify at least three low-stress tools or workflows to support preparation, note-taking, and debriefing in court and community assignments without relying on constant connectivity.
- Differentiate between back-office tasks that can safely benefit from AI support and core human functions that must remain in the interpreter’s hands (e.g., ethical decisions, register, nuance, cultural framing).
- Sketch a personalized “AI-light” workflow for a typical NAJIT-style assignment that remains resilient to Wi-Fi failures and platform glitches.
- Evaluate AI tools against confidentiality, data-protection, and due process standards relevant to judiciary interpreters.



Jaqueline Neves Nordin

Jaqueline Neves Nordin is a judiciary interpreter, educator, and researcher with extensive experience in legal and community interpreting. A Brazilian-Swedish citizen, she has interpreted in Brazil for nearly a decade, specializing in criminal proceedings. Currently a PhD candidate at a Brazilian federal university, her research focuses on legal and court interpretation.

Jaqueline has been instrumental in developing interpreter training programs in Brazil and authored the first Portuguese-language book on ethics and professional standards for court interpreters. Since 2017, she has served on the NAJIT Training and Education Committee and has presented internationally on professional ethics. Holding a Conference Interpreting diploma from York University (Canada) and a specialization from Gama Filho University (Brazil), Jaqueline is dedicated to enhancing legal interpreting standards. Her interdisciplinary research at the intersection of linguistics, law, and technology includes developing ontologies to improve the accuracy and accessibility of court interpretation.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track A - 2:00pm - 3:00pm

Code of Ethics Facing AI

Presenter: Eliane Sfeir-Markus

Location: Heritage C

Session Description

Artificial intelligence is rapidly entering the language-services industry, raising new ethical challenges for interpreters. This session examines how core principles of interpreters' codes of ethics are tested in an AI-augmented environment. Participants will explore the capabilities and limitations of current AI tools and analyze real-world scenarios where ethical decision-making becomes complex when machines are involved. Through guided discussion and case analysis, the presentation clarifies the interpreter's responsibility as the accountable human decision-maker in high-stakes communication. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for evaluating AI tools while safeguarding ethical standards and preserving trust in professional interpreting practice.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Develop a clearer understanding of artificial intelligence and its growing relevance to legal interpreting contexts
- Examine how AI challenges essential ethical principles such as accuracy, confidentiality, impartiality, and professional responsibility, and they will apply those principles to realistic case studies involving high-stakes legal proceedings
- Be better prepared to assess the risks and limits of AI tools and to uphold ethical language access through informed human oversight



Eliane Sfeir-Markus

Eliane Sfeir-Markus, CHI, is an experienced interpreter, trainer, and industry leader fluent in Arabic, English, and French. She is a Certified Healthcare Interpreter and an Arabic court-certified interpreter in Pennsylvania and Delaware. As an Interpreter Expert, Eliane advises on industry standards, develops training materials, and provides guidance on interpreting ethics and best practices.

Additionally, as an Adjunct Professor at Widener University Delaware Law School, Eliane teaches court, medical, and foundational interpreting skills.

Eliane is also a trainer with the De La Mora Institute, where she co-designed and teaches a 'Train the Trainer' course. She offers training in medical and court interpreting and webinars on professional development topics like cultural intelligence.

She is a certified John Maxwell leadership coach, a DISC behavioral analyst, and speaker.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track A - 2:00pm - 3:00pm

The Symbol Solution: Faster, Sharper, and More Precise Note Taking

Presenter: Javier Castillo, Jr.

Location: Augusta

Session Description

Attendees will learn the fundamentals of the use of symbols in consecutive and simultaneous note-taking. Participants will practice incorporating standard symbols as well as learn to develop symbols that will be unique to their work environments.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will:

- Gain a solid foundation in using symbols for both consecutive and simultaneous note-taking
- Build confidence working with standard symbols widely used in the profession
- Begin developing a personalized symbol system designed around their specific environment.
- Dramatically improve the speed and accuracy of their note-taking
- Reduce mental fatigue and stay sharper longer during demanding legal proceedings
- Leave with a practical, proven framework for building a unique symbol system



Javier Castillo, Jr.

Javier Castillo is President of Castillo Language Services, Inc. and an internationally recognized interpreter, translator, and trainer. His credentials include Federal Court Interpreter Certification, NC AOC court interpreter certification, Certified Medical Interpreter (CCHI) designation, and contract interpreter status with the U.S. Department of State. He has delivered specialized training workshops for court interpreters nationwide and has designed courses on working with interpreters at Campbell Law School and UNC School of Law. Javier has held prominent leadership positions including former President of the Carolina Association of Translators and Interpreters (CATI) and former Chair of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT).

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track B - 3:05pm - 4:05pm

The Code of Ethics as a Shield: Should Your First Instinct Be "No"?

Presenter: Judy Jenner

Location: Buckhead A

Session Description

Attendees will strive to overcome the (understandable) knee-jerk reaction of saying "no" to requests without thoroughly analyzing the issue, understand what a conflict of interest really is when one is not a party to the proceedings, learn to follow best suggested practices when dealing with potential ethics issues, and process how to become a better advocate for the profession by interacting more effectively with other stakeholders from the judiciary.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Overcome the (understandable) knee-jerk reaction of saying "no" to requests without thoroughly analyzing the issue
- Understand what a conflict of interest really is if and when one is not a party to the proceedings
- Learn to follow best suggested practices when dealing with potential ethics issues
- Process how to become a better advocate for the profession by interacting more effectively with other stakeholders in the judiciary



Judy Jenner

Judy Jenner is a Spanish and German business and legal translator and a federally-certified Spanish court interpreter and conference interpreter. Judy is an accredited conference interpreter (ACI) for the institutions of the European Union for the English booth and Spanish/English seminar and liaison interpreter for the U.S. Department of State. She has an MBA in marketing from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, a Master's degree in conference interpreting from York University in Canada, and runs her boutique translation and interpreting business, Twin Translations, with her twin sister Dagmar. She was born in Austria and grew up in Mexico City. She serves as a spokesperson for the American Translators Association (ATA) and teaches interpretation at the University of California-San Diego and at New York University. She is the co-author of *The Entrepreneurial Linguist: The Business-School Approach to Freelance Translation*. Judy is a frequent speaker at T&I conferences around the world. She flies a lot for her interpreting work and one of her special talents is trying to memorize airport codes.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track B - 3:05pm - 4:05pm

Negotiating Team Interpreting: Conversations to Facilitate Mixed Team Interpreting Configurations

Presenter: Chantal Portillo, PhD

Co-presenter: Richard Hall

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description

Team interpreting, in any field and regardless of the team's configuration, is a partnership based on mutual understanding, negotiated collaboration, and trust. In this neutral language session, presenters Mr. Hall (ASL Interpreter) and Dr. Portillo (Certified Spanish Court Interpreter), with more than 45 years of professional interpreting experience combined, will lay out the parameters and conversations that interpreting teams must have to promote successful team interpreting practices.

Presenters will give a brief theoretical overview of the pillars that support an effective interpreting team, explaining foundational concepts like philosophy and schema as principles that guide and inform the interpreting process, and highlighting the importance of both trust and commitment to develop effective working relationships with interpreter colleagues.

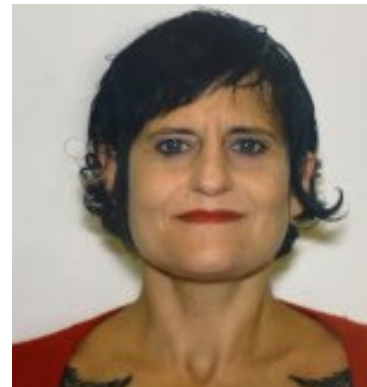
Then, using thoughtfully structured and guided conversations, attendees will learn how to discuss their expectations for the teamed work ahead and how those conversations can help delimit strategies to work in a more collaborative way while teaming, promoting the accuracy and completeness of the record. This collaborative approach also facilitates managing courtroom needs as a team.

To end, the presenters will use the techniques and guidelines shared during the session to demonstrate how a mixed ASL and spoken language interpreter team would work collaboratively and negotiate the teamed work, highlighting the importance of key aspects to this specific team configuration like relay arrangements, the role of the team leader, positioning needs both for the sign language and the spoken language interpreter pairs and negotiating breaks that are suitable to all interpreters.

Learning Objectives

During this session, participants will:

- Learn about the principals that make up a strong interpreting team and how to use structured conversations to negotiate the parameters necessary to work efficiently during any type of teamed assignment. Whether the field is legal, education, conference, community, or medical and independently of what the team's configuration is, these conversations, together with the capability of identifying individual strengths when organizing the task at hand, will result in improved teamed dynamics and more effective team interpreting.



Chantal Portillo, PhD

Dr. Portillo was born in the USA and raised in Spain, providing her with a bi-lingual and bi-cultural family background from a young age. This sparked her interest in languages and interculturality, which led to a Bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpretation first, and a Master's and PhD in fields related to intangible heritage, sustainable tourism and intercultural interpretation in the creation of sustainable cultural tourism products. Chantal was a conference interpreter in Spain and a Judicial Translator and Interpreter certified by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a decade. After moving to the USA and working as a certified medical interpreter for a year, she got certified as a judicial interpreter with the Oregon Judicial Department in 2014. In 2020, after being an independent contractor for 23 years, Chantal was hired as an on-staff interpreter by Court Language Access Services (OJD), her current placement. Chantal is also ATA certified. In her free time, she enjoys crafting, roller skating, hiking, and volunteering on several NAJIT Committees.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track B - 3:05pm - 4:05pm

Professional Opportunities for Interpreters in AI-Supported Environments - "Building and Selling Interpreter Knowledge Bases for LLMs: From Structured Expertise to Marketable Assets"

Presenter: Nestor Wagner

Location: Heritage C

Session Description As large language models (LLMs) increasingly power real-time interpreting tools, high-quality, domain-specific knowledge is becoming a critical asset. This seminar offers interpreters a practical roadmap for creating, packaging, and marketing knowledge bases in formats optimized for LLM integration. Participants will learn how to transform professional experience into structured linguistic resources that improve AI output while opening new revenue streams and visibility.

The session presents a step-by-step method for building LLM-ready knowledge bases: selecting a niche with clear demand; collecting and cleaning terminology, phraseology, and contextual notes; organizing content into retrieval-friendly structures—glossaries, intent clusters, scenario libraries, and bilingual-parallel examples; and adding pragmatic and cultural guidance that models often miss. We compare usable formats and explain which structures best support retrieval-augmented generation and fine-tuning.

Attendees will learn to position a knowledge base as a product by defining target buyers, choosing pricing and licensing models, demonstrating ROI through measurable gains, and building trust via versioning, validation, and ethical safeguards. The takeaway is interpreters can move from AI users to suppliers of the expertise that makes LLM systems accurate, safe, and culturally competent.

Learning Objectives Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain why domain-specific knowledge bases are increasingly essential for LLM-powered interpreting tools.
- Apply a step-by-step workflow for building an LLM-ready knowledge base, from niche selection to clean, structured entries.
- Organize bilingual terminology and contextual information into formats that best support retrieval-augmented generation and fine-tuning.
- Compare and choose appropriate delivery formats (e.g., spreadsheets, JSON/YAML, prompt libraries, vector-database collections) based on intended use.
- Develop a basic commercialization plan for a knowledge base, including target buyers, pricing/licensing options, and proof of value.
- Identify practical marketing strategies to launch and grow adoption of a knowledge base as a professional product.



Nestor Wagner

Néstor Wagner was born in Argentina and holds a Master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from the University of Washington. A certified medical, administrative, and court interpreter since 1989, Néstor founded the Southern California School of Interpretation in 1993, eventually expanding to four locations across California and Nevada. Between 2002 and 2020, he trained more than 10,000 students at his Santa Fe Springs campus.

An innovative leader in educational technology, Néstor launched the first online training program for interpreters in 2006. Today, he operates a headquarters and studio in El Segundo, California, where he reaches hundreds of students worldwide via hybrid and online platforms. Recently, he earned an M.I.T. certificate in "Designing and Building AI Products and Services" and is currently integrating AI to enhance his renowned teaching methodologies. Néstor is set to unveil a unique training product recently approved for Superior Court interpreters on the East Coast.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track B - 3:05pm - 4:05pm

A Nuanced Look at Cognates and False Friends in the Courtroom

Presenter: Izaskun Orkwis

Location: Augusta

Session Description

Cognates and false friends are well-documented linguistic hazards for professionals working across languages. Yet for court interpreters, these word pairs raise considerations that differ from those faced by translators, language teachers, or interpreters in other settings.

Beginning with the ironic fact that falso cognado is itself a false cognate of “false cognate,” this session will explore why these linguistic traps demand careful scrutiny from anyone working bilingually. Beyond their obvious semantic traps, cognates can trigger fascinating—and often unconscious—effects in the bilingual brain that directly impact courtroom communication.

Rather than offering yet another inventory of problematic word pairs, this session invites participants to think critically about the “why,” the “when,” and the “how” of cognate usage in court. When can (and even should) interpreters embrace the cognate, and when must they avoid it?

Participants will examine frequent courtroom terms with Spanish cognates and move toward a nuanced, context-driven approach to these terms. The goal is not to eliminate cognates from an interpreter’s toolbox, but rather to develop a deeper understanding in service of accuracy, clarity, and the interpreter’s ethical obligations.

The session will be presented in English with Spanish examples.

Learning Objectives

Participants will reflect on situations where cognates serve accuracy and clarity, as well as scenarios where they introduce ambiguity or distortion that could compromise the integrity of court proceedings. Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Navigate informed cognate usage in the courtroom, moving beyond a simple “avoid all cognates” approach toward a more nuanced judgment
- Learn about the cognitive processes underlying bilingual processing, enhancing their awareness of how cognates may unconsciously influence interpretation choices
- Have a strengthened ability to make defensible, case-specific decisions about cognate usage that uphold the standards of accuracy, impartiality, and clarity essential to court interpreting



Izaskun Orkwis

Izaskun Orkwis came to the world of court interpreting after more than 20 years’ experience working as a translator, mainly for international organizations such as the United Nations Secretariat, the World Trade Organization, and the Pan-American Health Organization. She currently works as a staff interpreter for the Virginia state courts. She holds a BA in Romance Languages and MAs in Institutional Translation and Communication. She is an ATA-certified English <> Spanish translator, a Federally Certified Court Interpreter, a Certified Court Interpreter in Virginia, a Certified Healthcare Interpreter (CCHI), and a sworn translator in Spain.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track C - 4:30pm - 5:30pm

Stab. Slice. Slash. Nick. Stick. Prick. The Language of Violent Crime is Both Graphic and Surprisingly Precise.

Presenter: Ellen Wingo

Location: Buckhead A

Session Description

This interactive terminology workshop explores how English encodes fine-grained distinctions in acts of violence—and why those distinctions matter in court. Interpreters are often expected to render these terms accurately and consistently, without softening or exaggerating the language, even when the precise degree of injury, the exact motion used, or the speaker's intent is unknown.

In this session, participants will work through clusters of related terms commonly found in police reports, charging documents, and witness testimony, focusing on how language describing violence is used and contrasted in legal contexts. The workshop will examine usage patterns, collocations, and legal implications, and will include guided exercises, group problem-solving, and discussion of cross-linguistic challenges. Attention will also be given to strategies for building and organizing personal terminology resources.

Designed for interpreters at all levels, this session emphasizes practical vocabulary development and precision in translation. The format is hands-on and fast-paced, with real-world examples and opportunities for active participation. The goal is to sharpen interpreters' ability to analyze and accurately convey the language of violent acts, without losing nuance, register, or legal significance. The session will be conducted in English.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will have:

- Strengthened their ability to recognize and analyze fine-grained lexical distinctions in English terminology related to violent acts as they appear in legal settings
- Become better equipped to evaluate how factors such as degree of force, manner of action, and implied intent shape word choice in testimony and legal documents, and to make informed interpretation decisions when such details are incomplete or ambiguous
- Gained practical strategies for organizing and expanding their own terminology resources in this semantic field and for approaching similar clusters of closely related terms in other areas of legal language
- Improved precision, consistency, and confidence when interpreting or translating language describing violence in court and other legal contexts



Ellen Wingo

Ellen Wingo is a state- and federally-certified court interpreter with over eighteen years of experience in courts and conference settings. Based in Washington, D.C., she has also worked as a contract seminar interpreter with the U.S. Department of State. In addition to her work as an interpreter, she is a longtime advocate for the court interpreting profession, with a particular focus on professional standards, ethics, and language access in the justice system. She is a frequent speaker at national and regional conferences, where she addresses issues affecting the field and the future of the profession. Ellen is a founding director and current President of the Virginia Legal Interpreters Association, where she works to strengthen the profession and promote high-quality interpreting statewide. She holds a Master's degree in translation and interpretation from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track C - 4:30pm - 5:30pm

Decoding Slang, Discourse Markers, and Idioms: Strategies for Preserving Nuance and Credibility

Presenter: Asmaa Sabre, PhD

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description Interpreters frequently encounter testimony filled with hesitations, regional dialects, slang, and culturally-embedded expressions—elements that do not transfer neatly into a formal legal register. Despite their critical importance, these features are often overlooked in conventional interpreter training, even though they can signal a speaker's intent, emotional state, credibility, or level of certainty. Misinterpreting or over-interpreting these elements can profoundly change the legal impact of a statement in high-stakes court settings.

This session offers a practical, skills-based approach to accurately handling discourse markers, idioms, slang, and code switching during both consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. Participants will learn how to distinguish meaningful discourse markers (e.g., those showing hesitation, clarification, emphasis, contradiction, or implied meaning) from empty fillers that should not be over-rendered. We will explore the evidentiary role of idioms and slang in cross-examination, asylum testimony, and criminal proceedings—highlighting instances where literal translation fails and how to apply meaning-based reformulation to preserve legal impact.

The session provides universal strategies for managing sudden code-switching between registers, varieties, and dialects that frequently occur in emotionally charged testimony. Examples will include Arabic to illustrate the complexity of diglossia and dialect variation, the techniques and strategies are applicable to interpreters working in any language.

Through short drills, real-world examples, and guided practice, attendees will strengthen their ability to preserve tone and critical nuance while maintaining the highest level of accuracy and legal register. This session is designed for intermediate to advanced interpreters of all languages who wish to deepen their understanding of pragmatic meaning and increase confidence when faced with idiomatic or culturally loaded language in court.

Learning Objectives Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Distinguish between meaningful discourse markers that must be rendered, and empty fillers that can be omitted or handled with minimal translation to maintain fluency and pacing
- Identify idioms, slang, and culturally embedded expressions in source testimony and apply meaning-based reformulation strategies to preserve the full legal intent and emotional nuance in the target language
- Manage rapid code-switching between formal and informal registers or regional dialects during both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation, thereby increasing their accuracy and confidence when handling sensitive or complex legal testimony



Asmaa Sabre, PhD

Dr. Asmaa Sabre is a certified court interpreter, applied linguist, and experienced interpreter trainer with extensive expertise in complex U.S. legal settings (EOIR, USCIS, DHS, and national law firms).

She holds a PhD in Second Language Studies (Applied Linguistics) from the University of Mississippi and two Master's degrees from Middlebury College—in TESL and TAFL. She earned a B.A. in English and Simultaneous Interpretation from Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

Dr. Sabre is a Master Licensed Arabic Court Interpreter in Texas, a Certified Court Interpreter in California, and a Professionally Qualified Interpreter for the U.S. Federal Courts. She actively interprets in state, federal, and immigration courts and teaches skill-building workshops nationwide, training candidates for state court interpreter certification.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track C - 4:30pm - 5:30pm

Not Artificial. Not Optional. Beyond AI: The Irreplaceable Role of Deaf and ASL Interpreter Teams in Legal Settings

Presenter: Juliana Apfel

Location: Heritage C

Session Description As technology continues to influence language access in legal environments, questions persist about what can and cannot be replaced in interpreting work. This session centers the complementary roles of ASL interpreters and Deaf interpreters as essential human professionals in legal settings where accuracy, ethics, and accountability are critical. Drawing from real-world examples in interrogations, evaluations, arrests, and court-adjacent proceedings, the session examines why these interpreting roles remain indispensable across diverse legal contexts.

The presentation explores how legal communication extends beyond words and signs to include intent, power dynamics, cultural nuance, and cognitive processing. It highlights the limits of automated or surface-level solutions when working with Deaf individuals who use nonstandard language, experience language deprivation, or require visual and embodied communication. Emphasis is placed on how ASL interpreters and Deaf interpreters collaborate to support clarity and comprehension in high-stakes legal interactions.

Attendees will gain a clearer understanding of when Deaf interpreters are necessary, how interpreter teams function, and what legal professionals can expect from effective interpreter collaboration. The session provides practical guidance for recognizing communication breakdowns, supporting appropriate interpreter use, and ensuring professional accountability throughout legal proceedings. Designed for judges, attorneys, court staff, and legal stakeholders, this session offers concrete insights into strengthening communication access while upholding ethical standards in legal settings.

Learning Objectives Upon completion of this session, participants will:

- Develop a deeper understanding of the distinct and complementary roles of ASL interpreters and Deaf interpreters in legal settings and why these roles cannot be replaced by automated or technology-based solutions
- Gain clarity on the types of legal interactions where human judgment, visual-cognitive processing, and ethical decision-making are essential to effective communication
- Be aware of common communication breakdowns that may occur when technology is relied upon without appropriate human support
- Strengthen their understanding of how interpreter teams function, what effective collaboration looks like in practice, and how legal professionals can support professional accountability and meaningful access in high-stakes legal environments



Juliana Apfel

Juliana Apfel McClure (she/ella) is a Certified Deaf Interpreter with extensive experience working across diverse interpreting settings, with legal interpreting at the core of her practice. Her work spans high-stakes environments including interrogations, evaluations, arrests, court-adjacent proceedings, and other contexts where accuracy, ethics, and accountability are critical. Juliana brings a Deaf-centered, justice-focused lens to language access, emphasizing professional judgment, responsibility, and meaningful communication in legal settings.

In addition to her fieldwork, Juliana is an educator, trainer, and national presenter who facilitates workshops on ethics, decision making, and Deaf interpreter collaboration. She holds advanced degrees in forensic psychology and healthcare interpreting, which inform her interdisciplinary approach to legal access and professional practice. Juliana is committed to strengthening ethical standards, supporting interpreter integrity, and advancing responsible, human-centered approaches to language access in legal systems.

Main Conference Session, June 6

Afternoon Track C - 4:30pm - 5:30pm

Human Advantage in the Age of AI: Strategies for Independent Interpreters in Government and Institutional Settings

Presenter: Ella O'Brien, MBA, CSCM

Location: Augusta

Session Description As government agencies, courts, and large institutions increasingly incorporate AI and automation into their language-access systems, independent interpreters may question how to stay competitive and grow their businesses. While technology can support workflow efficiency, it cannot replicate the uniquely human capabilities that contracting officers, program managers, and legal professionals rely on when selecting interpreters. This presentation examines how independent contractors can leverage the irreplaceable human element—not despite AI, but alongside it—to expand their professional opportunities within government and business environments.

Drawing on experience supporting federal and state interpreting programs, we explore the factors that most influence hiring and contract renewal decisions: reliability, ethical reasoning, rapport with stakeholders, cultural and contextual intelligence, and the ability to handle ambiguity in real-time. These qualities not only shape performance in the courtroom or interview room, but they also shape how interpreters are perceived as business partners. We will also highlight practical ways interpreters can adopt AI-assisted tools responsibly to improve preparation, terminology management, and administrative efficiency, while maintaining full ownership of their professional judgment.

Participants will learn strategies to position themselves as indispensable in a market where automation may change processes but cannot replace relationship-driven service. By emphasizing professionalism, communication, adaptability, and ethical conduct, independent interpreters can strengthen their business prospects, expand their customer base, and build lasting partnerships with agencies and language service providers. The future belongs not to machines, but to human experts who understand how to integrate technology without losing the personal qualities that clients trust most.

Learning Objectives Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the vital human skills that government and institutional clients highly value—capabilities that artificial intelligence cannot duplicate
- Explore practical methods for integrating AI tools to boost efficiency, while ensuring they retain full control over their professional decisions and consistently uphold ethical standards
- Cultivate strong relationships and adopt effective business development practices, all of which are critical for increasing their competitiveness and securing more opportunities in government and agency contracting environments

Ella O'Brien, MBA, CSCM

In her role as a Small Business Liaison Officer, Ella O'Brien has played a pivotal role in supporting the local GovCon business community. She successfully launched and managed a support program that aided over 500 small businesses, advocated for and secured funding for key initiatives, and organized events that connected business owners with experts and partners. Her collaborative efforts with local government and organizations have led to impactful policies and programs tailored to small business needs. Outside her professional life, Ella enjoys golfing, hiking, and volunteering, which contribute to her balanced lifestyle. Her entrepreneurial experience and dedication make her an influential advocate for small businesses, driving economic growth and fostering sustainability. Ella's commitment and proactive approach have established her as a trusted resource for the community, ensuring continued support and empowerment for small business owners.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

The Interpreter As A Sleeping Beauty: Topics and Strategies

Presenter: Dulce Bustamante, MA, LMHC, FCCI, WACCI

Location: Buckhead A

Session Description

In recent years, researchers and clinicians have focused on the effects of poor sleep upon our daily functioning. High-level cognitive functioning is essential in bilingualism, and even more so for interpreters and translators; yet we remain unaware of the importance of good sleep in order to achieve and maintain optimal professional and personal functioning. The goal of this presentation is to bring awareness to attendees about the stages of sleep, key aspects of healthy sleep, impact upon cognitive functioning, and practical strategies for optimal sleep health. This session aims to create understanding of the health benefits derived from good sleep habits, which will support cognitive/emotional domains that are critical for the interpreter/translator.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the critical role of sleep for interpreting and translating, and to be able to implement healthy sleep strategies
- Recognize and describe normal sleep cycles, identify key aspects of the brain and healthy sleep, and explain the direct impact of sleep upon cognitive, social and emotional functioning of the interpreter



Dulce Bustamante
MA, LMHC, FCCI, WACCI

Dulce Bustamante is a passionate advocate for healthy sleep, blending her interpreting and clinical skills to support the profession. A federally-certified English-Spanish Court Interpreter, she is also certified in Washington State for both court and medical interpreting. Dulce is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Certified Specialist in Psychometry, specializing in neuropsychological evaluations. Alongside her husband, she co-runs a neuropsychology clinic and frequently presents on clinical issues and bilingualism.

She co-authored a chapter on cognitive-behavioral therapy for sleep disorders in the textbook "Medicina del Sueño." By integrating her diverse expertise, Dulce aims to help interpreters achieve healthy sleep, emphasizing its impact on working memory, attention, and processing speed. Attendees will receive practical tools for optimal sleep hygiene and creating a "sleep sanctuary." A member of NAJIT and NOTIS, Dulce enjoys Shotokan karate, photography, and, of course, sleeping in her free time.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

AI vs. Reality: What Machines Miss in High-Stakes Interpreting

Presenter: Ric Dominguez

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description

Generative AI can translate sentences—but it cannot shoulder responsibility, read a room, or weigh the downstream legal and clinical consequences of a choice. This session demonstrates, with live examples, the irreplaceable value of human judgment in real assignments: fragmented speech under stress, overlapping talk, dialect mixing and slang, sarcasm and implicature, guarded disclosures, and ethically sensitive moments where how we render meaning can alter outcomes on the record. We'll unpack decision points interpreters face—register shifts, hedging, attorney strategy, objections, and clarifications—and contrast them with what today's AI can do (and cannot ethically do). Attendees will practice micro-exercises using realistic clips and transcripts, then debrief the choices against ethical canons, rules of procedure, and real-world constraints (time, fatigue, advocacy pressures). You'll leave with a concrete decision framework and ready-to-use drills you can take back to your practice or classroom—plus a clear, confident way to explain to stakeholders where AI helps, where it risks harm, and where only a trained interpreter can protect accuracy and due process.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify at least five scenario features that cause AI-assisted output to fail (e.g., implicature, sarcasm, dialectal code switching, overlapping speech, euphemism).
- Apply an ethical decision framework to choose between literal, near-literal, and sense-for-sense renderings under courtroom/clinical constraints.
- Articulate to judges, attorneys, and clinicians when interpreter interventions (clarifications, notes to the record) are warranted.
- Distinguish productive uses of AI (terminology prep, parallel-text discovery) from high-risk uses during live proceedings.
- Use three classroom/CEU-ready drills to train nuance recognition and decision-making under pressure.



Ric Dominguez

Ric Dominguez is a court interpreter and educator based in California, full-time staff interpreter at the San Bernardino County Court and a former adjunct faculty member at Moreno Valley College. He trains interpreters across criminal, civil, family, and medical settings and builds bilingual glossaries and skills curricula (simultaneous, consecutive, sight). Ric is the founder of InterpGenius.com, a new online platform, where he develops CEU-eligible courses and practical drills grounded in real-world practice and ethics. He has been a presenter at the AAPT conference for two consecutive years.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

Beyond Words: Human Cognitive Skills at the Heart of Interpreting Performance

Presenter: Johanna Parker

Co-presenter: William Giller

Location: Heritage C

Session Description

Every seasoned court interpreter knows that mastering two languages is only the beginning. The real key to success lies in the cognitive skills that help us make quick, accurate decisions in the heat of the moment, while also balancing the unique challenges of legal terminology, courtroom procedures, and ethical dilemmas. At a time when AI tools increasingly replicate surface-level language tasks, these human cognitive competencies remain the cornerstone of accurate, ethical court interpreting. This session shines a spotlight on those often-overlooked mental muscles and why strengthening them can transform the way you work.

The Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI) has spent more than a decade studying interpreter performance through ongoing Job Task Analyses—research that defines what interpreters do on the job. In 2023, CCHI took this work to a new level by asking a different question: How do interpreters think while they do it? This led to the groundbreaking EtoE Project, which identified ways to measure the mental skills that support competent interpreting across all languages.

Although developed within healthcare settings, the findings offer valuable insights applicable to judicial interpreting, where the cognitive load is intense and performance thresholds are unforgiving.

This session invites interpreters to examine their cognitive competencies through targeted, interactive exercises that isolate mental skills from linguistic production. Participants will explore how strengthening these universal cognitive processes can enhance accuracy, completeness, and professional resilience in courtroom environments.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Analyze how specific cognitive competencies directly influence performance in interpreting and distinguish these core cognitive skills from language proficiency and interpreting techniques
- Understand how cognitive skills can be fairly assessed across languages



Johanna Parker

Johanna Parker has an MA in Translation and Interpreting (Spanish <> English) from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MIIS) and is a federally-certified court interpreter and Certified Healthcare Interpreter. She is a freelance conference interpreter and contract conference and seminar interpreter for the U.S. Department of State. She trains interpreters around the country, is the lead interpreter for education and training at Stanford Health Care, and is on the faculty at MIIS, where she has taught conference, community, and medical interpreting. She is the Chair of the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track A - 9:00am - 10:00am

Words That Shape Families: Key Family Court Terminology for Portuguese Interpreters

Presenter: Nattalia Paterson, PhD

Location: Augusta

Session Description

Family court proceedings are one of the most linguistically complex and emotionally charged settings in which court interpreters work. Mastering specialized family law terminology is essential to ensuring meaningful access to justice for limited-English-proficient parties navigating the court system.

This presentation offers an overview of the essential terminology used in family court, focusing on four major areas: divorce and marital dissolution, child support, child custody, and guardianship proceedings. Participants will explore frequently used legal concepts and procedural terms critical to effective interpretation in domestic relations cases.

Attendees will gain familiarity with standardized Portuguese terminology for key legal instruments, including restraining orders, parenting plans, and support modifications, as well as procedural terms essential for navigating family court proceedings. The session also examines common terminological challenges, including false cognates that can lead to misinterpretation and culturally specific concepts that may lack direct equivalents in Portuguese.

Designed for interpreters at all levels of experience, this session provides practical strategies, materials, and increased confidence in handling the linguistic demands of family law interpretation.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify and accurately interpret key family court terminology
- Recognize false cognates and terminological pitfalls
- Apply standardized Portuguese terminology for legal documents and procedures
- Access resources for professional development in family law interpretation



Nattalia Paterson, PhD

Dr. Nattalia Paterson is a Portuguese interpreter and translator with a PhD in linguistics from Northwestern University and a Bachelor's degree in linguistics, Translation and Conference Interpretation from PUC-Rio. She holds court interpreter certifications in multiple U.S. states and serves as a contract seminar interpreter for the U.S. Department of State, a qualification that enables her to work in U.S. federal courts. She is also certified in healthcare, conference, and translation services. Dr. Paterson has served as Board Chair of NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators) for two years and continues to contribute to the profession through the organization's advocacy, position papers, conference, and forensic transcription and translation committees. She is also dedicated to developing the next generation of Portuguese court interpreters, providing training to help candidates prepare for state-certification examinations.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

Analyze, Prepare, Achieve: Applying Discourse Analysis to Interpret Faithfully and Accurately

Presenter: James Plunkett

Location: Buckhead A

Session Description

Through a varied list of scenarios, participants will learn to listen more analytically to how judges, attorneys, and parties traditionally speak. With this fresh look at these court participants' discourse, attendees will leave better equipped to interpret at court hearings. The session is interactive and requires participants to have headphones and a recording device available.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Analyze oral discourse in legal settings to produce accurate, complete, and faithful renditions in the simultaneous mode
- Identify the different types of discourses heard in court settings, analyze sample texts, and reformulate them in their target languages
- Prepare an accurate, complete, and faithful interpretation through the use of a self-study method



James Plunkett

James Plunkett is a nationally known interpreter instructor and trainer of trainers. He also trains new judges and court staff on how to work with court interpreters. He is certified by the AOUSC as a Spanish and English court interpreter. He is a rater for a national credentialing program for interpreters. In his 31 years of professional experience, he has worked as a court interpreter for the 13th Judicial Circuit in Florida and as the Coordinator of Interpreting Services and the Language Access Program for the District of Columbia Courts. He is a staff interpreter of the U.S. District Court in Tampa, Florida. He holds a BA degree in general social studies from Providence College. He was raised in Lima, Peru. He also communicates in Portuguese, intermediate French and basic Italian.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

First Time in Federal Court? Start Here.

Presenter: Katty Kauffman

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description

The first time you're asked to interpret in federal court can be both exhilarating and terrifying even if you are state-certified in a language other than Spanish or a newly minted FCCI. The stakes are high, the pace is fast, and the jargon can feel like a world unto itself. This language-neutral session demystifies the experience for colleagues entering the federal arena for the first time, whether they're called to interpret at a detention center, a proffer session, or in the courtroom itself.

Drawing on decades of combined experience in the federal system, Katty Kauffman and Javier Castillo will guide participants through the realities of the federal interpreter's workday—what happens before, during, and after a hearing—and share lessons learned the hard way. From mastering abbreviations like FDC and CJA to working effectively with defense attorneys, AUSAs, and the court itself, attendees will come away with a clearer sense of what to expect and how to prepare.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the key types of proceedings and out-of-court assignments federal interpreters encounter (hearings, proffers, detention center visits, etc.).
- Recognize the institutional culture and expectations specific to federal work, including confidentiality, role boundaries, and decorum.
- Apply practical strategies to prepare for and manage first-time assignments in these settings.



Katty Kauffman

Katty Kauffman is a seasoned conference and court interpreter, a member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and The American Association of Language Specialists (TAALS), and has served as an instructor at York University's graduate school (Glendon MCI). Trained in Chile and the United States, her extensive experience includes presidential summits, OAS General Assemblies, and U.S. Department of State assignments. A federally- and state-certified interpreter (FL, MD, CA, DC), she has served on staff at the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

Business Basics for New Interpreters

Presenter: Ernest Niño-Murcia

Location: Heritage C

Session Description

Attendees will be able to identify and implement key actions to launch their careers with regard to marketing, online presence, billing, and accounting, among other areas.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify key business practices for launching an interpreting career, including marketing, billing, and accounting.
- Recognize the importance of establishing a professional online presence and organized business processes.
- Implement practical steps to support career growth and day-to-day business management as a new interpreter.
- Apply basic business strategies to build and promote an interpreting practice.



Ernest Niño-Murcia

Ernest Niño-Murcia is a freelance interpreter based in Des Moines, Iowa. State- and federally-certified, he has interpreted legal proceedings and prepared translations, transcriptions and expert witness reports/testimony for clients in the private and public sectors.

As a conference interpreter, he is a member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and has interpreted for public figures such as President Joe Biden, Senator Bernie Sanders and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

As a speaker and trainer, he has presented live and online sessions through organizations including the National Center for State Courts, NAJIT, the University of Arizona's National Center for Interpretation and the U.S. Department of Justice, among others.

Additionally, Ernest is a Jeopardy! Champion (2012), whose greatest achievement on the show was beating an attorney to the buzzer on 'co-defendant' in the "11-letter words" category.

Main Conference Session, June 7

Morning Track B - 10:30am - Noon

For If the Flies

Presenter: Vinka Valdivia

Location: Buckhead B

Session Description

Interpreters need to perform mental gymnastics every day in their work to be able to interpret correctly. In this whimsical presentation, idioms will be presented as literal translations in English, and the audience will be asked to give the original idiomatic expression in Spanish and then any actual translations into idiomatic or correct English. This will be a participatory session.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- 'Reverse-translate' to come up with original idiomatic expressions and their correct interpretations



Vinka Valdivia

Vinka Valdivia is a California-state and federally-certified Spanish court interpreter and conference interpreter who also works for the U.S. Department of State. She has more than 30 years of experience and is a regular presenter at NAJIT and ATA conferences.

Panel Session, June 7

1:00pm - 2:00pm

Future of Ethics (AAITE, ATA, NAJIT)

Panelists: Giovanna Carriero-Contreras, AAITE; Christina Green, ATA; Janis Palma, NAJIT

Location: To be announced

Session Description Codes of ethics have long served as the foundation for professional conduct in the language services field. Since the mid-1980s, professional associations have developed ethical frameworks to guide interpreters and translators, often tailored to specific settings such as healthcare, legal, and education. As a result, language professionals frequently navigate multiple codes developed by organizations such as the American Translators Association (ATA), the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC), the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT), the National Center for State Courts, and the American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education (AAITE), among others.

Since March 2024, conversations about interpreter and translator ethics have taken place across multiple professional venues, bringing leaders and practitioners together to reflect on how ethical frameworks guide the profession in an increasingly complex landscape. These discussions have highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses of existing ethical traditions and the challenges faced by professionals who work across multiple settings and must reconcile differing ethical frameworks.

The recent announcement of a new draft revision of the NCIHC Code of Ethics adds an important dimension to this ongoing conversation and invites the profession to reflect on the future of ethical guidance.

At the same time, the language services field is undergoing significant transformation. Advances in artificial intelligence, changes in funding structures, and shifting administrative priorities are rapidly reshaping how language services are delivered and valued. In this context, ethics becomes more than a set of professional principles—it becomes a defining element that distinguishes professional interpreting and translation from purely transactional language exchange.

Learning Objectives Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

- **Advance a Shared Understanding of Ethical Practice Across Specializations:** Establish a common foundation by identifying core ethical principles that transcend individual codes of ethics, helping practitioners move beyond siloed frameworks toward a more integrated and coherent professional identity.
- **Equip Practitioners and Trainers to Navigate Ethical Complexity in Real-World Contexts:** Explore how interpreters and translators can develop ethical competence—not just code familiarity—by strengthening their ability to analyze dilemmas, manage competing responsibilities, and make sound, context-sensitive decisions across sectors.
- **Foster Cross-Association Collaboration to Strengthen the Profession’s Ethical Future:** Promote dialogue among professional associations to clarify convergences and divergences in ethical frameworks, model collaborative leadership, and create aligned strategies that support practitioners working across multiple domains.



Panel Session, June 7 - Panelists

AAITE



Giovanna
Carriero-Contreras

Giovanna Carriero-Contreras has been a noteworthy leader in the language industry for 30 years, with a specialized focus on training and education. Her dynamic leadership as Founder of Cesco Linguistic Services, T360nBeyond, Chair-Elect of the American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education (AAITE) and in other committees, has resulted in groundbreaking achievements.

Giovanna played a pivotal role in releasing the AAITE National Code of Ethics for Translators and Interpreters in Education. She is co-author of *The Community Interpreter® International*, a seasoned trainer and trainer-of-trainers, Chief of the ISO T37/SC5 U.S. Delegation, and a member of the ASTM F43 Committee on Language Services, the ATA Standards Committee, and the ALC Language Access and Advocacy committees. Throughout her career, Giovanna has developed and implemented comprehensive interpreter training programs and continues to shape the future of the industry through her work, presentations, and publications.

ATA



Christina Green

Christina's linguistics leadership began after studying Modern Languages at Universidad Central de Venezuela.

She is fluent in English, Spanish, Italian, and French, with conversational skills in Portuguese. Three years after moving to the U.S. in 2000, she founded her agency, Green Linguistics.

Christina has served as an expert witness for both the defense and prosecution and has interpreted for nationally televised live gubernatorial and presidential events. She devotes her time to various causes, including supporting children with disabilities and international refugee relocation efforts.

She served as the President of the Midwest Association of Translators and Interpreters (2012–2014, 2020–2022) and on the Board of Directors of the American Translators Association (2022–2025). Additionally, she was the Administrator of the Interpreters Division and is the current Chair of Advocacy for the ATA.

Christina was elected Chair of FIT North America, the Regional Center of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs / International Federation of Translators (2025–2028).

As an ATA-certified Spanish translator, Christina was one of the first certified judicial interpreters in the State of Wisconsin. She is also an authorized Italian interpreter for the courts. She provides dedicated services to various Wisconsin school districts, translates textbooks and standardized testing materials, and interprets at educational conferences.

Panel Session, June 7 - Panelists

NAJIT



Janis Palma

Janis Palma is a professional English-Spanish interpreter and translator with more than 43 years of experience working as both a staff and an independent contractor in state and federal courts, as well as for private clients in conferences on a broad spectrum of topics. She is certified by NAJIT, the U.S. Courts, and is a Texas Master-licensed interpreter. She holds a PhD in Language Studies, a Master's in Legal Studies (MLS), and an MA in Caribbean History and Literature. Janis Palma has been a volunteer with NAJIT since 1986 and was awarded a Life Membership in 2006. She has taught, written, presented at conferences, and published extensively on subjects related to interpreting, language access, and language rights. Her research interests are mainly focused on the intersection between language, law, and interpreting in legal contexts. She is currently working towards a second PhD in Rhetoric, Communication, and Information Design at Clemson University.

Moderator



Eliane Sfeir-Markus

Eliane Sfeir-Markus, CHI, is an experienced interpreter, trainer, and industry leader fluent in Arabic, English, and French. She is a Certified Healthcare Interpreter and an Arabic court-certified interpreter in Pennsylvania and Delaware. As an Interpreter Expert, Eliane advises on industry standards, develops training materials, and provides guidance on interpreting ethics and best practices.

Additionally, as an Adjunct Professor at Widener University Delaware Law School, Eliane teaches court, medical, and foundational interpreting skills.

Eliane is also a trainer with the De La Mora Institute, where she co-designed and teaches a 'Train the Trainer' course. She offers training in medical and court interpreting and webinars on professional development topics like cultural intelligence.

She is a certified John Maxwell leadership coach, a DISC behavioral analyst, and speaker.