

**From Cassandra to Pandora -
Thoughts on Translation and Transformation in a
multilingual and multicultural future.**

**A conversation with FIT Immediate Past President,
Dr. Henry Liu**

Henry Liu and David Katan

David: Dr. Henry Liu, it is a real pleasure to welcome you to *Cultus*. You have just finished your 3rd mandate on the FIT Council and as the 13th President of FIT. I know it is not a record, but it is certainly a long time. And now, even though you have retired you have been appointed Lifetime Honorary Advisor of FIT.

FIT, itself, has been going for over 60 years, and perhaps this is a good moment to reflect on where FIT is today, especially for those of us who were unable to attend the Congress in Brisbane this year.

Henry: Thank you David. It has been a remarkable journey serving the translators, interpreters and terminologists and our professional associations around the world for the last 9 years. I am surprised, honoured and I feel privileged that the XXI Statutory Congress of the Federation has appointed me as an Honorary Advisor, confined to 10 living members.

The Federation was founded by six national associations of Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Norway and Turkey in Paris in 1953 under the auspices of UNESCO, and now has members in over 60 countries and territories represents over 100,000 professional translators, interpreters and terminologists around the world.

During the last mandate, FIT has developed a much more visible profile with official visits to members in all the continents with regular press releases, position papers on pertinent and often controversial issues pertaining to our profession, a widely read quarterly magazine - *Translatio*, and a comprehensive social media presence across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest with nearly 10,000 followers.

I am privileged to be leading this Federation which arose from a very strong and solid foundation founded in Europe of governance, diversity and

accountability, bringing together experts across cultural, socio-economic, political and jurisdictional backgrounds working together for the betterment of our profession.

David: So Henry, what would you say were the key successes during your mandate?

Henry: Amongst the many memorable successes, the adoption of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 71/288 on May 24 this year has to be most visible. This Resolution recognises the role of language professionals in connecting nations and fostering peace, understanding and development, and declared 30 September, St Jerome's Day - patron saint of translators, as International Translation Day (ITD).

This brings into focus and prominence the importance of our work in all human endeavours, celebrated by all UN agencies and in particular as a key to Universal Access of Information, which UNESCO will be jointly celebrating with ITD. The European Commission will also celebrate ITD along with the European Day of Languages (26 September). Here I must also acknowledge the hard work and pioneering effort of our sign language colleagues and counterparts as they achieved their recognition of the International Week of the Deaf (IWD) which is also celebrated on the last week of September.

Other successes include a formal collaboration and joint effort with the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) (FIT 2015) and most exciting of all, the very first signed keynote address at this year's Congress delivered by none other than Prof Jemina Napier of Heriot-Watt University along with a dedicated stream on sign and spoken language research and collaboration, and the launch of an International Sign Accreditation system (World Federation of the Deaf 2015). Earlier this year, the first national professional association of sign language interpreters also joined FIT.

This mandate has been about visibility and collaboration. Earlier this year, the 2-year negotiation between World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and FIT concluded in a signing of another important Memorandum. This will make a new beginning where translators, interpreters, researchers, trainers, scientists and intellectual property and trademark legal experts work jointly in a multidisciplinary approach towards the protection and promotion of inventions as well as indigenous, traditional knowledge, cultural expressions and genetic resources.

Last but not least, literary translation is the heritage of FIT. During this mandate, and celebrated in Brisbane, is our formal collaboration with the European Council of Literary Translators' Associations (CEATL) and the worldwide association of writers (PEN). This is especially important for the issue of copyright and publication best practices and the promotion of both the Nairobi Recommendation (1976) and the Quebec Declaration on Literary

Translation and Translators (2015).

David: A really impressive array of collaborations. Clearly, it is far too soon to talk of anything more than Understandings at this stage. But why is this so? You must be more aware than most that these definite successes will also be evaluated within the context of how the second oldest profession has been treated to date. For example, in India, I discovered that literary translators are not only badly paid, but can actually pay for the privilege to have their translations published. In a global survey I conducted, it was clear that professional translators do not really see themselves as part of a 'profession'. Why is it that we, or rather you (!), have had to start from such a position?

Henry: Despite increasing intervention through visibility, collaboration and dialogue, the working conditions and remuneration of professional translators, interpreters and terminologists has not reached the level which reflects the important role we play. Translation and interpreting schools remain underfunded, and language departments continue to be closed or downsized. And importantly and most regrettably, the language and communications need of the wider society and international community, especially that of refugees, migrants and smaller NGOs and SMEs remain unmet.

In fact, at the FIT Congress in 2014, we resolved to call upon national governments and the international community to protect local translators and interpreters in conflict zones, ensure a life in safety and security during and after their work in conflict zones, respect the impartiality of their work and work for a UN Convention for the protection of translators, interpreters in conflict zones during and after their service. We have had very limited success. My country, New Zealand and Norway remain the only two who have provided refuge to conflict-zone interpreters engaged in Afghanistan and their family. In January, the coalition led by Red T (a US non-profit organisation), AIIC and FIT since 2010 and now joined by a number of other organisations including WASLI had a rare and qualified victory which reversed the visa ban on former conflict zone interpreters imposed by US President Donald Trump. On May 25, 2017, during the UN Security Council debate on protecting civilians in conflict zones, Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations, Ambassador H.E. Alexei Dapkiunas made the historical appeal on our behalf to the international community to protect translators, interpreters and linguists working in high risk settings working for military forces and peacekeeping missions. In doing so, they place their lives at risk and many of them are threatened, persecuted, prosecuted, incarcerated, kidnapped, and killed. However, an International Convention to protect conflict zone translators and interpreters remain elusive today.

David: Clearly translators and interpreters working in these areas are under intense pressures. But perhaps there is a note of optimism, in that academics,

Mona Baker being a notable actor here (e.g. 2006), have expanded their horizons and are now concerning themselves with, literally *Translation and Conflict* (the title of her 2006 book). But this is not the only challenges that face FIT is it?

Henry: FIT has been operating thanks to the good will of leading practitioners and academics from around the world. Monetary resources are limited. The funding model is predominantly based on subscriptions. There is always a tension between the contributions and concrete benefits one expects to receive. I often draw the parallel between that of EU and FIT, in that the distance between individual translators and that of FIT is similar to that of an individual European citizen and the EU. A lot of the important and resource intensive work are too distant from the daily grind of individual translators, interpreters and terminologists. Even though most of the aforementioned failures and successes are beyond the reach and capacity of national and even regional professional associations of translators, interpreters and terminologists, our profession is not immune from self-interest, nationalism, fear of globalisation and xenophobia. The tension between belonging to a bigger organization -with increased credibility, security, impact, influence and strength that comes with numbers - versus the financial contributions, the loss of autonomy and self-determination are much more palpable in the last few years. Perhaps, translation and interpreting not only encompass all aspects of human endeavours and are intrinsic to human conditions in this globalised world, but our profession or at the wider Federation level is also a microcosm of our times.

David: You mention our profession, and some of the problems. But there is an elephant in the room which we need to talk about. The future. So, let me paint a scenario, which I dearly hope you can get me out of. It begins like this: the translation profession is very much bound by conduit or instrumental understandings of communication. FIT, for this year's Translation Day *does* say that translators are involved in "challenging intellectual tasks that involve much more than mechanically matching up the words and phrases of two languages", and that "Only skilled human translators are able to perform these creative types of translation". That said, there still a huge constraint on being creative or interpretative; and making explicit what is tacit in the context is still a "no no" according to the FIT charter (the AUSIT charter is even more rigid on intervention). And many, such as the linguist David Crystal (Crystal and Jiang 2013) agree. Indeed, he says: "I don't expect my translator to be a mind-reader" (41). At the same time, research (and practice) is constantly underlining the 'zone of uncertainty', where the translator (though more often the interpreter) knows that communication could be improved through intervening on the text (adding, altering ...). But professional guidelines – and the market itself sees this as unethical or simply not their job.

If we combine this text-centred limitation on the translating professions along

with the rise in technology, by the year 2025, as some have said, we will be needing just a few copy editors to oversee the latest Google Translate and Interpret (along with a number of cultural mediators, transcreators, localisers etc.). And the word ‘translate’ will only collocate with ‘machine’.

Can you get me out of this scenario, and let me face my new 1st year Translation students with a more optimistic view?

Henry: I love these elephant-in-the-room questions. I strongly believe that it related to the answer to your previous question – “us”. What do I mean by that? David Crystal, for whom I have the utmost respect, is one of the most renowned linguists and unusually, having been translated into many languages, approaches translation from an academic perspective. Professional Associations perform many roles. AUSIT, which until recently has been led by one of the *Cultus* interviewees, another prominent academic Prof Sandra Hale, has also approached the professional dimension from an academic perspective (Hale and Liddicoat 2016). Fewer and fewer practitioners are at the helm of professional associations. Furthermore, AUSIT is but one of the many such Associations at a cross road - acting as a gatekeeper, whilst by this very act limits its income and influence - imposes academic influenced “standards” however perfect or stringent but most intrinsically and inherently unenforceable or at least with the agent, that is the associations, lack both the will and the authority to enforce such standards. This leads us to the question of relevance - the wider profession and those who practice for whatever reason do not subscribe to the AUSIT model as it becomes more and more detached from reality. How many translators and interpreters working in so called exotic languages and refugee languages are members of professional associations?

David: That’s a good question! You already know the answer, but according to my own (unpublished) global survey, 40% of the translators/interpreters who mainly use European languages, are not members of any association – which is bad enough. The number shoots up to 63% for those (nearly 500) professionals who work with mainly non-European languages. But these are, if you like, the elite ‘professionals’ very few of whom are involved with refugees. So, yes, these professional bodies are not particularly relevant to what is going on in the real world.

Henry: The question of relevance also strongly relates to the market. This is one of the many reasons why translators and increasingly interpreters fear the day when machine would replace this profession. Why? This is due to a series of mismatches - mismatch of expectation between clients and translators (see Jayne Fox’s [2014] excellent blog post summarising one of my earlier talks on this); mismatch of demands with an ever increasing supply of translation and interpreting graduates in French and German whilst the market desperately needs

Syrian Arabic and Pushtu; mismatch of priorities with governments and corporates spending money on multilingual website and ‘pseudo’-localisation without any resources towards listening in those languages or monitoring of social media in the ‘other’ languages.

David: Unfortunately, though we’d love to branch into Syrian Arabic, Pushtu and a myriad of other languages that really would stretch our resources ...

Henry: Going back to your question of text-centred limitation. Too often, translations are classified into literary translation where it could be summed up as rewriting creatively in another language and non-literary translation where it could be summed up as transference of one written tradition to another via a transference of terms, script and orthography. Standardisation by its very notion is to iron out variations and now automation and Big Data extends this further by actively reducing heterogeneity and diversity by its very derivative nature.

David: If what you’re saying is that the great academic divide is one of the problems, and that only literary translation is counted as being creative – that’s certainly what Venuti seems to believe. Then ...

Henry: To counter, the term trans-creation is rebranding a particular segment of the profession.

David: Certainly, but at least it puts the ‘creation’ back into non-literal translation (Katan 2016).

Henry: I would argue that translation should be more akin to interpreting (and vice-versa, part of reason why I propose the term trans-terpreting, see below). Dr John Jamieson and I believe that there is a strong convergence of skills between translation/interpreter and musicians. We are “interprètes”, in the sense that we bring the text to life. We ‘perform’ rather than ‘carry out’, and this idea fits much better into the widening of our professional scope (Liu 2017a). The written text, is like that of the score. It is merely a written representation of an inherently human experience. No one will hold out the original printed score of Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* and call it definitive. We may have different opinions on Mr Bechtolf’s controversial Downtown Abbey version for the Salzburg Festival, but it is no more or less definitive.

David: Yes, his production of *Figaro*, according to one review (Sutherland 2016) “is transformed into a cross between a slightly down-market Downton Abbey and Queen Mary’s doll’s house”, referring to Bechtolf’s emphasis on captivating the audience with a lavish BBC style costume drama.

This was seen, possibly, as a case of dumbing down or overpopularisation.

The review continues, though, saying “there was excellent clarity of action”, and actually ends with a final “Bravi tutti” thumbs up.

Henry: The same for translation. Applying your very own Access model (if I may interpret your call for improved accessibility as such), translators are providing not only an invaluable insight but a wider audience access to that human experience, by bringing the text to life. This is what machines hitherto have been unable to perform and are unlikely to be able to perform in near future.

David: Couldn’t have put it better!

Henry: Secondly, too often we limit ourselves in what translators and interpreters can do. How big is the translation and interpreting market?

David: I’m sure you’re going to tell me.

Henry: For a variety of reasons, my estimate will not be based on the annual Common Sense Advisory survey of \$43 billion (De Palma et al 2017). Rather, I would encourage firstly your first year students that translation and interpreting as we know it has only met a tiny proportion of the true demand, some of which is known and only met partially or by “others”, some of which unknown and unmet. For example who is ‘trans-terpreting’ Tweets and FaceBook post to allow multinationals to monitor their customers’ satisfaction?

David: Well, I noted recently that “All the major social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook, and the more business oriented Evernote, now appear to depend more and more on volunteers to translate their websites and mobile apps” (Katan, 2016: 372). But perhaps you know of professionals who are actually getting paid. These would be in-house staff with bi-lingual skills?

Henry: There are some global corporations which employ translators, more akin to ‘trans-terpreters’, to monitor social media in target languages and to translate the relevant messages into English for their respective Communication Departments to act on them. They are of course highly paid. But they remain very niche. The overwhelming majority of international corporations only engage in unidirectional multilingual communications (see above).

What your question however highlights is another very important issue, who is translating? Of course, increasingly so, the ‘who’ is a Machine or Machine-augmented. The remaining corporates, especially start-ups, and tech companies, as well as NGOs, almost always crowd-source their translation. These volunteers have variable qualifications and experience, and variable skills. For example, for the ‘Cochrane Review’, all of the translation is volunteered (Elm et al 2013).

Significant resources are needed from paid staff to manage these free translation to ensure quality, not to mention coordination and project management. This not only significantly erodes the paid work available to professional translators, in this case, medical translators, it also distorts the funding model. There is evidence that the relative role and therefore cost of translation in multilingual communications is diminishing. Yet, there is ongoing complaint and therefore drive from corporates to cut the ‘translation’ budget, meaning more resources are needed for the editing or typesetting or terminology management.

David: We’ll come to this issue of translation budgets in a minute. But what about NGOs and the like, people who are not motivated by profit. They too rely on volunteer translators. Is this a ‘good’ thing?

Henry: NGOs in particular are quick to seek help from translators to donate their services towards particular causes, humanitarian or otherwise. Whilst it is noble to donate, this also distorts the market and therefore harms the very livelihood of other colleagues as well as diminishing the perceived value of translation and multilingual communication. Furthermore, the spontaneous provision of free translation services means that authorities and the wider society no longer see the need to invest in training of translators and interpreters. I have never heard in any post crisis debriefing where experts have highlighted the need to invest in translators and interpreters. Such priceless learning opportunities are lost.

David: You are right, but there is some glimmer of hope here. The EU is funding a project focussing exactly on this (see Musacchio and Panizzon, this issue). Translation scholars, working alongside engineers, are transcreating/transediting software to improve communication during emergency management in realization of the limitations of what I have called ‘mindless’ translations (Katan 2014). What was particularly interesting was the realization that “icons do not always travel well across cultures” (Musacchio and Panizzon, *ibid*), and that they need to be rethought ‘mindfully’, taking account of how different lingua-cultures interpret the visual.

Henry: Indeed, as I said in Alcalá (Liu 2017b), the future of translation and interpreting will be multidisciplinary and multimodal. For the more ambitious students, tell them to disregard the boundaries of our profession. For example, why shouldn’t translation studies graduate become copywriters for international publishers or heads of communications in multinationals or international bodies?

David: Absolutely! But that means two things. First our courses need to be more communication oriented, more on creative writing with much more emphasis on soft skills and probably more background understanding about how business

works. Secondly, we also need students to be less conservative. We do attract students who themselves find the original text a good security blanket to keep close to. As Anthony Pym has said the “risk-takers will go into other cross cultural professions” (2008: 326).

Henry: Indeed, it is a constant struggle to get translators to free themselves from the shackles of the original text. Unfortunately, increasingly, interpreters are being trapped by this straitjacket also.

I see the multidisciplinary approach is key. Business studies are essential for the future. Also legal translators need to write like a lawyer, business translators need to write like a PR executive. I think this demand for a less conservative approach will also need to be placed on the professors and the wider academic structure. Translation and Interpreting departments are often placed in most secluded part of arts, humanities faculties focusing on the pure discipline. This is also exacerbated by the proliferation of translatology.

David: You are absolutely right, those of us who are drawn to ‘languages’ are probably divided into those of us who are drawn to the ‘langue’, the general rules regarding the language itself, or the ‘parole’, the communication itself. And, as fate would have it, ‘langue’ won the day, and our field grew out of Departments of ‘Language’ and not ‘Communication Studies’. Translators and Interpreters would be different animals had they grown out of ‘Communication Studies’.

Henry: There is ample evidence too to support the growing importance of social skills (Deming 2017; Torres 2015) and that the so called liberal arts degree with wider educational focus improve future employability (Hanushek et al. 2011). Not to mention that soft skills are the way that truly differentiate between experts and machines.

David: Indeed, a Mckinsey report (Mourshed et al 2014) on graduate employability reported that “many students are not mastering the basics, with Businesses reporting a particular shortage of “soft” skills such as spoken communication”. So, translators and interpreters should have the ability to communicate as their number one core competence.

Henry: Finally, I would also argue, this langue, text-centric limitation grossly underestimates the visibility and the power and influence our profession has and will have in the future, which is closely related back to the question of university funding.

Dr Hannah Burdekin at the University of Auckland is pioneering on a course which will emphasise Translation and Interpreting Studies as one of the fundamental skills in the ever more globalised world.

I am not suggesting that everyone who studies translation and interpreting ought to become practitioners. No, but I am suggesting that everyone who wants to operate at an executive level in the globalised world needs to know the basic of, the difficulty with, and most importantly the power of, translation and interpreting. How this could be harnessed in multinational marketing, implementation of foreign policy abroad and even just how to become a better global citizen. Now, this will no doubt entice those students frustrated by the irrelevance of MBAs and they will overwhelm Translation Departments worldwide.

Translation and Interpreting Studies will be the new Literacy of the Global Citizen! This is where we rightful belong.

David: Wow! You really have painted a great future, and my students will be heartened. Also, we should remember that the global survey I mentioned earlier had a question on pay, and I was surprised that, actually, well over half both translators and interpreters earn well over the national average. Over 10% earn up to 5 times the average, while nearly half (44% of the 428 replies) reported up to double the average earnings for their country. And less than 20% worldwide were reporting earnings of below the national average. Clearly, this does not represent all those who work in translation, but it does perhaps represent those who are aspiring to be, or have become, full-time professionals,

Henry: Absolutely! The range of remuneration for translators, interpreters and terminologists is as wide as the scope of our professions themselves. Just like rebranding translating and interpreting as core skills should open up many more university funding opportunities, for those of our colleagues who can prove they can provide unique specialist skills especially in the ‘parole’ part of language industry or even better giving advice to multinationals during reputational crises - the world should be their oyster.

David: This is a really dynamic vision for the future, putting translation professionals at the heart of effective global communication. And in 2017, the year of ‘Fake news’ (Collins 2017) and the rest, getting a message across - whatever ‘across’ means - is a minefield. Apart from politics, *The Economist* (2012) reports on the criticality of “Effective cross-border communication”, asserting that “Misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences present the greatest obstacle to productive cross-border collaboration”. We need some clarity and direction here. But who’s to help us with effective communication and improving access? This takes us back though to what you mentioned, this langue, text-centric limitation that FIT still constrains us with...

Henry: Well then, let’s work on more of this future for the profession. Given the so called Nairobi II - the PEN Quebec Declaration - has been adopted in 2015, it

is probably time for FIT to review the Translator's Charter too. We have three years before the next Congress in Cuba. Shall we work together and then find a national association who would sponsor it? How would you reword it?

David: Well .. let's see. Cuba sounds very appealing. Something on the lines of a translator is responsible for deciding the communicative intent of the original, for agreeing the purpose of the translation with the other main stakeholders, and is responsible for creating a translation which accounts for likely reception, adopting whatever strategy appears most appropriate.

But, I also think I understand the challenge. I have just finished writing Encyclopedic entries on "Defining Translation" for Routledge, and realise that agreeing on definitions is not just immensely complicated but also immensely political. Three years might not be enough. We need someone astute. Henry, you will have to take charge here.

Henry: Sure! We have now a vision. And together we are stronger. You and I together we can make this happen!

David: Great! We definitely need a compelling vision. But, let's also deal with another thorny question, one which problematizes translation itself. This is possibly worse than the elephant – as it is already headline news everywhere (outside of translation/interpreting circles that is).

It's on multilingualism, the theme for this particular issue. Translation and interpreting has been heralded as a way of maintaining language and cultural diversity, and at the same time it has been under attack, for at least 2 reasons. Firstly, it's seen as a system of control with the Access approach you mention under fire, mainly from the academics, as a particularly covert form of globalising Anglo-American culture and technology. Secondly, the market itself sees it as you have noted not just as a cost, but, more pointedly, as a barrier to community integration. I quote from Research conducted by '2020health' (Gan 2012) on the British National Health Service (NHS): "In Nov 2011, it was reported that the Ministry of Justice spent over £100 million in six years on translation costs. The news was perplexing, particularly at a time when the Ministry is cutting its budget by £2 billion and has closed 142 courts across the country". And later on we have a human rights lawyer, who says "[Translators/Interpreters] are doing harm because they are reinforcing the language barrier which separates this community from the rest of Britain. They are de-incentivising Bangladeshis from learning English,"

Henry: This is because the focus has been on costing and cost centres. Instead, we should look at return on investment. The recent boom in sales of Korean literature in English speaking world and k-pop, South Korean pop with much use of English, in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond has been an exemplary case of

soft power management which is arguable in large part driven by translators and investment in translation training (Rao, 2016).

Actually, the attack on multilingualism is akin to the attack on globalisation - futile as well as contrary to evidence. What you have cited as harm associated with multilingualism are anecdotal at best, pure speculation to be generous. Admittedly, we are now in the post truth era. In fact, we now have increasing evidence on the benefit of multilingualism for individuals as well as societies, or rather the cost of multilingualism is trivial in contrast to the benefits it brings to societies (Gazzola and Grin 2013).

So assuming that we are not becoming more and more isolationistic, what do we have to do; what do we have to change to prepare for and harness this trend towards multilingualism? But is multilingualism inevitable? (see below).

Here I must add that until such time when genuine, universal and functional multilingualism in an area or in an organisation is close to being achievable, we must specifically and habitually cite the very agents - translators and interpreters - whenever we refer to multilingualism or even bilingualism.

What I would argue is that so far, any discussion on multilingualism remains mostly a slogan, i.e. it stands as a label, a shorthand, an ideal which is in contrast to the other. Very few societies or nation states are genuinely multilingual let alone invest in its continuation or development. This is equally true in trans-national and supra-national organisations. The EU and the UN are notable exceptions with dedicated budgets and investments in multilingualism and professional translators, interpreters and terminologists to support it. But this is constantly under threat. Why?

It is a common held belief that English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) ought to be sufficient and should be the most efficient way to conduct international affairs and exchange, irrespective of domains, akin to reliance of Latin or French in previous eras. Now, this really is globalising Anglo-American culture.

What is more alarming is that competence of English is often over-estimated. If we can believe that competence of English in Scandinavia or in the Netherlands sits at high 70%, it means that the reliability of any interaction, discussion or negotiation held in English remains at the level of drawing lots or worse. And I have not even talked about para-linguistic features (see, for example, Albl-Mikasa 2015). Why is that important? Well, I argue that this is the reality at Greek or Italian refugee camps and worse still at camps for the Rohingya (Liu 2017c), who have for decades been fleeing Myanmar in droves. Officials must determine if an individual is a refugee or rule out that they are security threats. There will be imperfect English on both sides, or with untrained, unaccountable language mediators. Is that how we value human lives? And at a more selfish level, is that how we ought to have confidence in security measures to protect our societies and the values we hold dear?

Addressing the specific concerns over the NHS, there is growing evidence that provision of translation and interpreting lowers the overall cost of healthcare

provisions in migrant and non-dominant speaking communities and increasing compliance and overall health index (Flores 2006). This is based on the existing asymmetric and inequitable approach towards translation and interpreting in most Western countries. I have not begun talking about indigenous languages and Sign languages, both of which will be key to successful implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet, language services in general let alone translation and interpreting in particular remain invisible within the inventory of deliverables of humanitarian operations (Tesseur 2017; Liu 2017c).

When we speak of multilingualism, it mainly refers to a shorthand of official languages and often conjures up images of a line of glass booths full of simultaneous interpreters. This has become more and more evident, as FIT has become more active in its mission in development, we see the desire of many societies or organisations to emulate that of the European Union. We must be mindful that it is one of the many models. The reality of multilingualism on the ground like implementation of the EU directive (Eur Lex 2010) on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings is closer to multiglossia or polyglossia. This is another aspect where Machine Translation or Interpreting will continue to struggle. No automation can facilitate exchange between a heavily accented Welsh farmer and that of his/her counterpart speaking one of the dialects of Napoli.

So barriers to multilingualism are not just bigotry or misinformation. In fact counter-intuitively, the rise of prominence of fake news, the lack of trust and the echo-chamber effect have meant that there is increasing appetite towards sources outside of what is provided by algorithms. This is certainly a heightened awareness of international collaboration in journalism like Panama and the Paradise Papers and with it, multilingual journalism.

But is multilingualism always positive (still assuming that it is attainable)? I am fearful of sounding like Cassandra. The hypothesis to which I have been attributed (Pochacher 2016: 219), I would prefer to properly attribute, calling it the Liu-Pöchhacker Paradox given its collaborative origin over a coffee ‘mélange’ one beautiful Viennese night with Prof Franz Pöchhacker. What this Paradox surmises is that the more multilingual the society is, the less respected, and hence less remunerated translators and interpreters are. This confirms the observation you cited in India earlier in this conversation. But it is equally valid in richer multilingual societies like Singapore and Switzerland. Thankfully, for translators and interpreters, and more importantly for aspiring translators and interpreters, this level of multilingualism remains a distant goal.

Which conveniently brings me to talk about the future. I am not sure if multilingualism as a trend is necessarily inevitable. But what I am confident is that provision of language services will be very different, not just due to the increasing level of Globish, or the relentless cuts in translation and interpreting budgets, but rather to the rise of the non-linguals. With shifting population, there is a rapidly rising proportion of population who received their formative

education in different language environments, whilst working in a third and married to a spouse speaking a fourth language and with children going to schools in fifth and sixth languages. What is his or her mother tongue? And how is that relevant?

This is an example of a highly functional non-lingual. The challenge is for us as societies to provide services to the less privileged non-linguals, those who have fled threats across long distances with no formal education and often with disabilities and trauma. Which sign language interpreter should we provide with the psychologist at any one of refugee camps when you have a deaf teenager who fled his/her country of origin at age 5 has never had formal education and has arrived at one of his/her many refugee camps 10 years later. And what services do we need to provide to and to engage with his/her siblings who are hearing and speaking with features and vocabularies of a mixture of 4 or 5 languages within one sentence. The answer will not be in a booth or in a dictionary! I would dare to say the answer will never be in an app or with AI!

David: Now we really are moving forward, from multilingualism to pluralism, and from Cassandra to Pandora. At which point we must stop – at least for the moment. Henry, many thanks indeed!

Henry: Thank you David, for this precious opportunity. I look forward to continuing our conversation.

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