

INTRODUCTION

For this 10th anniversary issue we are very fortunate to have two extremely engaging conversations. They are both frank discussions on the state of the art of translation and its relevance today. We open with Henry Liu, recently President of the International Federation of Translators and close with a conversation between renowned scholars Susan Bassnett and Anthony Pym, who muse - over a glass or two - about the monster that is called 'translation'.

The conversation between the editor David Katan and Henry Liu, immediate past president of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), focused on three main areas. The successes and failures of FIT, the ongoing debate between textcentric and context based translating, and on multilingualism. Liu begins by listing the significant achievements over the past 60 years as well as what is still on the to-do list, such as improving the rights of interpreters in conflict zones. Katan then raises a number of elephant in the room questions, the main one being the future of the profession which he links to its insistence on 'mindless' and 'textcentric' ethics. Liu points the finger at academics, who are out of touch with the realities of the job, often responsible for the drawing up of professional guidelines. We will find two academics (Bassnett and Pym) concluding this issue, equally finger pointing – but in different directions. Liu creates a much more motivating vision of translation as a core skill to be learnt for a variety of professions, which will be echoed in the concluding conversation. Liu also tackles media criticism of the costs of multilingualism and translation by looking at a wider reality in the world, and that of the rise of 'non linguals'.

Patrick Leech carries the conversation forward, and notes along with Liu and Katan that it is 'communication' rather than language or languages that is often overlooked in policymaking. He begins with the EU's (varying) interest in 'language' and the knotty problem of how to promote both unity and at the same time safeguard diversity. Beginning with the EU enshrinement of the idea that all have the right to express themselves in their mother tongue, Leech documents the history of language regulation from 1958 noting the changing focus on multilingualism. The more recent policy documents focus on the economic benefits of language competences for businesses as well as the importance of a lingua franca (English). However, he concludes that in practice little investment has been put into multilingualism or into minority languages, due to the slow move away from static idea of one nation one language. With Brexit round the

corner, this could just be the time, Leech suggests, to re-open the debate on the relations between language and political institutions.

Michael Tieber opens the section on interpreting with a report on a survey of attitudes regarding language preference amongst conference speakers at the European Union. He begins looking at lingua francas and then at the rise of English as *the* lingua franca. The elephant in the room is again scrutinized, but this time from the point of view of the conference interpreter. It seems clear from the literature that increased use of ELF is already leading to a reduced need for interpreters. A second problem is that for the interpreter (and for any listener), English as a lingua franca (ELF) is usually more difficult to decipher than the use of a speaker's first language. What Tieber focusses on next is attitudes. He investigates, using a corpus of young conference speakers at the EU, why non-English speakers might prefer to use ELF rather than taking advantage of trained interpreters. Reasons given ranged from 'taking control', 'impressing others', 'saving time', and also familiarity of the subject in English. Interestingly, however, they did mention that having interpreters benefitted the community by levelling the language playing field rather than boosting individual egos.

Paola Gentile and **Michaela Abl-Mikasa** follow on, analysing the conference interpreter's perception and reaction to the feeling that 'Everybody Speaks English Nowadays'. Respondents noted that this trend, along with machine translation and perceived increase in multilingualism, was damaging the interpreters' profession in terms of remuneration, work and status. At the same time, they noted that the increased use of low level ELF was significantly reducing effective communication. This is compounded by the fast past technological improvement and increased use of the machine whether it be for translation or for distance interpreting. The result is an increasing commodification of the profession. So, for reasons of economy, English is becoming the language hub around which other languages are routed. Respondents also noticed increased ignorant or non-appreciative client attitudes, an issue touched on also by Liu in the conversation. Another aspect (also mentioned by Liu) is that the profession itself *is* expanding, though as Gentile and Abl-Mikasa point out, it is away from the traditional conference mode, to that of community interpreting – and is itself heavily reliant on ELF.

The next paper, by **Lorena Carbonara** and **Annarita Taronna**, takes us to ELF itself. The authors report on a survey of teaching practice (of Italian) in a refugee camp. They begin with a discussion of how 'superdiversity' well defines the multi-dimensional fluidity of the migrant experience. Here, numerous linguistic and cultural communities use ELF as a bridge between student and teacher to learn Italian as a Foreign Language. The discussion continues with an explanation of how ELF differs from EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Their survey of teachers of Italian and of refugee students investigated the 'translingual practices' that took place in the classroom within the larger

framework of a project designed to foster integration. So, for example, autobiographical accounts and self-translation were encouraged to help foster a sense of inclusiveness. In the language classroom, then, code-switching was the norm and the multilingual environment produced positive effects on the students. Teacher-talk was found to use more ‘mitigation’ strategies designed to foster more inclusiveness, compared with traditional EFL as well as teachers showing an active interest in the student languages.

Maria Teresa Musacchio and **Raffaella Panizzon** investigated the use of ELF and multilingualism from another angle, that of their own localisation of an emergency management software system. They report on the (g)localisation of a user interface focussing in particular on the icons and other visual indicators. The researchers first observed existing national emergency management systems, and looked at to what extent they were multilingual, and if and how they had been localised or transcreated. In their research they noticed different cultural ‘conceptualisations’ that affect the language used to describe disasters. For example, earthquakes were described as ‘an event’ or as ‘a risk’. The researchers also noted cultural differences favouring either the use of abstract or concrete language. Importantly too, the authors showed how iconic information was lost if not adapted.

In a rare case of translation professionals being actively involved as consultants as well as translators, Musacchio and Panizzon created a comparable corpus, termbank and translation memory based on contextual equivalencies and pragmatic adequacy. Of particular interest is the fact that employing translation professionals proved to be cost effective and made the software much more accessible to a global audience.

Renato Tomei conducts a particular case study of what can happen when state language planning policies encounter community-engendered speech-forms. Tomei, in particular, analyses the predominant role of prestige formation in linguistic choice dynamics. He begins sketching the background to the case study in Ethiopia, focussing on the Oromo. They represent the largest ethnic group, yet their language (Oromo) is not the official *Lingua franca* of Ethiopia, which is Amharic (and is also spoken by fewer people). At the same time, the constitution states that: ‘All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition’. To complicate matters English has spread through the school system and the media not as a colonising but as a liberating, *de facto lingua franca*. Tomei then adds a further candidate for a *Lingua franca*, Jamaican Speech Forms (JSF) of English, brought by the Rastafarian community who have repatriated from the Caribbean. His study analyses JSF used particularly in DJ talk, which is promoting ‘translanguaging’. Participant observation and recording revealed the influence of the Jamaican ‘way of communicating’, which was shared by the youth across different ethnic groups, regional states and political parties, and is now assuming the role of supra-regional *lingua franca*. This demonstrates just how strong communities of practice can be, upending the traditional ideas of colonial, or

state imposed language policies; and in this case, even undermining the strong Oromo ethnic claim to language dominance

Dominic Stewart approaches the issue of multilingualism from the point of view of 15 ex-pat writers who recount their experiences in a foreign language and culture (Italian) in another language (English). Stewart analyses the novels for evidence of what Bhabha would call their third space experiences. He breaks down his analysis into a number of areas including how language errors are reported, allusions to foreign language level and progress, and discussion about language learning. Much attention is placed on the use of direct quoting. Given the protagonists' low competence, speech literally translated is generally avoided. The important exception is for the Italian characters, whose imperfect English is translated for comic effect. The most popular strategy is 'homogenisation', hereby it is impossible to determine the language (or fluency) of the original words. Stewart suggests this is an example of covert (rather than overt) translation procedure. The covert domestication produces a linguistic 'fog' over what is the most problematic aspect of adapting to a new culture, but also helps foster the idea that deficiency only pertains to the linguistic other. As Stewart concludes, though the homogenising convention is commercially viable, the reader is detached from the most important reality, that of the language barrier.

We end this issue with a particularly candid conversation between **Susan Bassnett and Anthony Pym**. We find them at "one of those interminably repetitive translation conferences" discussing and demolishing a number of sacred cows. Pym begins suggesting that translation is not necessarily the (only) solution to interlingual problems. Indeed, it has become a monster denying the reality of lingua francas. Bassnett not only concurs but wonders about the exponential growth and direction of Translation courses and indeed of Translation Studies itself. Following the same lines as other papers in this issue, there is an understanding that communication requires translation, but that translation courses and practice are not necessarily helping communication. There was a time when Bassnett was promoting Translation Studies as an umbrella for Comparative Literature, but now the very term 'translation' seems totally up for grabs. The authors suggest that translation be a core subject integrated into a number of other disciplines, echoing very much Liu's ideas. What transpires in this conversation is that the study of 'language' appears to have lost much its relevance, while 'translation' has already expanded into (or been hijacked by) a number of other subject areas. Pym concludes, though, on a more positive note. At yet another translation conference, he finds much vibrance and energy. Translation is clearly going places, though the direction is not quite what was planned.

David Katan