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**The Transcultural turn: models, training and translation itself.  
New frameworks for training.**

*Introduction by David Katan*

Each of the papers offer a paradigm shift, whether they call it a framework or model, in response to the fact that though such a thing as ‘culture’ and ‘interculturality’ might exist and be useful if not critical concepts in communication, we can no longer presume to ‘locate’ individuals and cultures as neatly as before. The second set of papers reflects on the quality of the intercultural training for translators in particular and also of translation practice.

The Hofstedian revolution, during the 1980s and 1990s, along with Fons Trompenaas, E.T. Hall, and others provided extremely satisfying classifications for trainers looking for order and clear behavioural solutions to problems in communication. The result was a classification of separate cultures, self-enclosed entities of interculturality, which, if used superficially, resulted in the essentialist "Well, the [pick your own nationality] are/prefer/tend to ..." type of linear scales. Though these classifications still have their place, this modelling does not reflect enough of reality.

There are four main factors that will tend to affect if not override these classifications: ‘ecological fallacy’, ‘individuality’, ‘situationality’ and ‘transculturality’. The first three factors were already contemplated by Hofstede himself.<sup>1</sup> He has continued to underline the fact that the polar classifications refer to aggregate scores (of questionnaire responses) and cannot reliably explain individual encounters. Actual communication is performed by individual personalities judging the situation subjectively, whether this be working in a team, communicating in a virtual environment, writing or translating.

The fourth area is at the heart of this issue. We are, perhaps, only at the beginning of massive global movement, resulting in unprecedented daily virtual and face-to-face contact with people from outside our own milieu. Passport can no longer (assuming that once it could) denote language competence, preferred communication style or cultural background. Apart from immigration, we are all a mixture of cultural backgrounds, and have

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<sup>1</sup> See, in particular, *Cultus 2*, which includes an interview with him, and a discussion of this very point in “On Hofstede” (Katan 2009)

assimilated some language, style, habits and more of other cultures. In the words of Wolfgang Welsch we are all transcultural.<sup>2</sup> This view takes for granted that cultures are not self-contained, homogenous entities. Transcultural suggests not only that internally cultures themselves are complex, but that prolonged contact does produce both genuine change and linkage across what traditional models call cultural boundaries. However, Welsch (2009:15fn) takes things too far when he suggests that because there are universals and commonalities across population groups, "the hermeneutic view must be wrong – genuine understanding of the Other does exist". Possibly, but only in the sense that if you put a pig in a plane it will fly. In practice, when people communicate in what is for us a foreign language, we need language mediators - who are still struggling to find both a theory and a practice which might ensure 'genuine understanding'. If we are using the same lingua franca (usually English) corporations are well aware of the need for intercultural and change-management trainers to reduce the misunderstanding that occurs through internationalisation and assumptions of communality. And if we are using the same language, and even within the same family we all need, at some stage or another, the informal advice of friends or the professional advice of a councillor to begin the process of genuine understanding.

So, although there are commonalities we do consistently interpret the 'Other' through Self. Perhaps 'glocal' is a better way of describing the same phenomenon. At a 1997 conference on "Globalization and Indigenous Culture," Roland Robertson, credited with the popularisation of the term, said that glocalization "means the simultaneity - the co-presence - of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies." So, while glocalisation suggests dynamic tension between the global and the local, transculturation suggests change through fusion and assimilation, a concept originally perceived by Fernando Ortiz in 1940 (in Stein 2009: 255) to describe how 'weaker' cultures such as Cuban did not simply assimilate the stronger US culture but fused the two into a coherent body.

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<sup>2</sup> The fact that since 2010 there has been a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to *Transcultural Studies* hosted by the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg" committed to promoting the knowledge and research of transculturality in an interdisciplinary context" suggests that the term is now mainstream. The journal is published online by the "Cluster of Excellence, Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries and Cultural Flows", hosted by the Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg library. Online: [www.archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/transcultural](http://www.archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/transcultural).

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Bronislaw Malinowski's Introduction to Ortiz (in Stein 2009: 251) is clear: "transculturation ...is a process in which both parts of the equation are modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex ... a new phenomenon, original and independent".

It is this aspect of transculturality which is particularly interesting. More global contact is creating a new phenomenon, which is not the same thing as creating genuine understanding. A banal example involves coffee. A milky version of the Italian espresso, known locally as a *caffé latte*, has been assimilated through Italian-run coffee bars in the USA into a shortened latte and then exported globally through American owned franchises such as Starbucks, so that wherever there is a Starbucks, from Brighton to Beijing, the locals order a latte, convinced they are using Italian. If they order using the same language in the 'home' of Italian coffee they will be given a glass of milk. Hence, due to the ever greater contact with 'the other' through internationalisation of business, immigration and travel, both 'language shock' and 'culture shock', are actually even more prevalent.

This is due to the confusion over the Logical Levels of culture, whereby communality, and understanding of the Other at the surface level of "what" (milky coffee) is being described may well be global. However, it is through 'Self' and one's own context of culture that the "how" (*caffé latte/latte*) and "why" are logically connected – and these connections are more hidden. Transculturality may exist at any of the levels, but the logical connections between language, communication, practices and meaning can only be investigated through a better understanding and appreciation of the Other at all levels. This, of course, is only half the picture, for we need not only to understand but to be understood, to create an effect and to reach some satisfactory result. These are the issues debated in the contributions that follow.

**Petra Daryai-Hansen** and **Anna Schröder-Sura** discuss an innovative Council of Europe supported attempt 'to dissect and structure intercultural competence', called the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (FREPA). What is distinctive about this framework is the attempt to move from the classic listing of individual language and intercultural competencies to a plurilingual and pluricultural competence encompassing the full range of the languages available to the user. Traditionally, code-switching was thought of as a variant or sub-standard form of communication, but FREPA starts from the reality of (particularly teen) discourse. This

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Pluralistic Approach shows a marked desire to not only accept the hybridity and transculturality that is in us all, but to capitalise on this phenomenon. Though FREPA focusses most on the school environment, the thinking, descriptors, learning objectives and associated activities are of interest to all areas of training.

The authors describe the on-line FREPA resources including the training kit, designed to help teachers/trainers focus on training issues from a plurality perspective. There is a 5 point procedure which encourages the teacher to concretise the training issue, and to use the descriptors to then identify potential FREPA resources and materials. Daryai-Hansen and Schröder-Sura also include one full length training activity which explores the stereotyped images we have about people from other cultures.

**Susanne Konigorski** tackles the transcultural issue starting from the classic Hofstedian-Trompenaars type model limitations. As mentioned earlier, they been criticized for their essentialist culture-bound nature, suggesting – for novice trainees at least – that "Italians tend to be high context", "Chinese tend to be collectivist" and so on. However, rather than taking the extreme Welsch approach (see above) Konigorski experiments with matching cultural dimensions at the country aggregate level with the Reiss Profile, which is geared to measuring motivational patterns of an individual. Konigorski then examines each of the 16 'life motives' in terms of particular cultural dimensions. Seven 'life motives' are linked, while half (9) remain outside the country profiles, being more strictly related to individual personality. She then maps the aggregate country characteristics into the 7 Reiss life motives, which then allows an individual to match her own personal Reiss profile with that of the country she will, for example, be moving to. This helps the individual to understand what aspects of her own personality are likely to be accepted as 'within the norm', and also which aspects of personality in particular are likely to be affected. We are then shown 3 actual case studies of individuals who have benefitted from this approach.

**Helen Spencer-Oatey** and **Stefanie Stadler** offer their own intercultural competency framework, which they distinguish in terms of its grounding in terms of empirical reserch and its focus on communication. Although the ability to communicate interculturally is generally accepted as a core competence, there is very little literature on what this competence entails in practice. Crucially, discussion of intercultural communication competence is generally based on anecdotal rather than empirical data.

The authors bring together current insights on intercultural communication from a variety of sources, such as linguistics, business, and in particular focus on the 'International Profiler' framework provided by WorldWork, one of the very few frameworks to include language and communication. Their main contribution though is their own intercultural competency model based on the monitoring of an actual international team over a 6 year period. The authors provide examples from their individual written and interview corpus highlighting the communication processes and main issues working in an international team (British-Chinese). The results were used to build on the initial WorldWork framework, and provide an intercultural competency set which gives much more emphasis to 'communication' competence. In Spencer-Oatey and Stadler's framework it is now one of four competency clusters, with its own subdivision into 7 further competencies, which are all clearly explained with examples from the corpus.

**Nigel Ewington** and **Tim Hill** who were also responsible for the WorldWork framework used by Spencer-Oatey and Stefanie Stadler also take a fresh look at their 'International Profiler'. While the Profiler was designed for an in-depth individual analysis of an individual and the development of an array of 22 intercultural competences, they have taken 10 of the competencies for the International Preferences Indicator (IPI), designed more specifically for the training room. Importantly, these 10 competences have been found to be strictly related to two meta-competencies; "push" and "pull". 'Push' refers to moving from 'inside' to 'out' and refers to pushing forward towards own goals. 'Pull', on the other hand, implies drawing others in, accepting and adapting to others' behaviours, ways and ideas. This organisation also maps the tension between 'self' and 'other', taking as given that individual influences and traits are as important as a person's cultural background.

A key factor is how to develop 'trust' when faced with others who act and react differently. Their focus is not only on 'understanding the Other', but on influencing and leading in an international context. Citing empirical research Ewington and Hill underline the fact that successful performers in intercultural interactions balance their distribution of energy, attention and emphasis equally across both the push and pull qualities.

Apart from systems theory, the authors cite both classical and recent theory on the central role of 'dialogue', understood here as "negotiating reality or meaning". Ultimately, as the authors state "the IPI underlines the importance of 'versatility' and the 'mastery of opposites'".

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**Nikola Hale** takes up the notion of how to master the opposites and offers us an insider's view of living and working in what she calls the 'cultural intermezzo', that liminal space of high uncertainty that distinguishes the intercultural encounter from a monocultural encounter.

Using her own field notes she discusses how the Western mind set, so grounded in closed taxonomies can benefit from this new space. She creates a framework of responses to the uncertainty (reaction, pro-action and contemplation) and creates further sub-categories, suggesting that training should seek to ensure the acceptance, development and balancing of all three responses. Hale points out that all too often the trainer herself may well have lost her own experience and even understanding of 'uncertainty' given that it is part of the trainers' remit to provide solutions - both for themselves and for their trainees. This, requirement for order has resulted in the institutionalisation of the classic tree diagram binary classification system ('if this then that'), which is no longer a useful model to represent an interconnected, unstable and dynamic reality. A more useful approach is Deleuze and Félix Guattari's 'rhizomatic perspective', whereby there is no linear logic, but dynamic interconnectivity. However, rather than continuing with the rhizome analogy Hale uses the Mobius strip as a practical demonstration of how to follow a logical path while accepting the infinite variation. She sees the strip as a way of reconciling communality and variability in an intercultural encounter, flexibly incorporating the global with the infinitely variable local. It is also a useful approach to help the trainer move away from depending on the predictable "to feel again the rawness of being on the edge".

### **University training and translation**

**Jacquelyn Reeves** takes the question of transculturality, and the level of 'commonalities' to task in her analysis of German and American use of the global Facebook. To what extent, has this common interface led to the type of fusion and assimilation envisaged by Ortiz and Welsh? She takes Trompenaars' 'Sphere of Influence' ('Peach and Coconut') model, as the basis of her investigation. In this model we have "The Danger Zone", that area of commonality of 'space', with potentially very different ideas as to whether the space is perceived as 'private' or 'public'. As Reeves explains, while Facebook is a global phenomenon it is a very local, American imbued 'Peachy', platform. Her focus group study of German university

student Facebook users showed some signs of transculturality at the level of language use, code switching similar to that discussed in Daryai-Hansen & Schröder-Sura's contribution, but also classic German culture shock responses of 'condescension and scorn' of the American intensely public use of Facebook. Reeves concludes that Mark Zuckerberg's vision is to turn the Peach and Coconut inside out, making virtually all communication public. She then makes the point that while Germany not only protects individual privacy culturally but also through legislation, Americans are in danger not only of assuming transculturality where it does not exist, but are in danger of losing their own jobs and careers through the unregulated use and misuse of their postings.

**Marián Morón-Martín** focusses her contribution on the transnational education experience, and what in reality is achieved by periods of study abroad. She carried out a study on a group of 100 'Applied Language Europe' (ALE) language and translation students, the vast majority of whom were also professionally active. The respondents had all participated in ALE, a joint university study programme which led to double or triple degrees and designed to encourage "transcultural and transnational cooperation". The research begs questions at the heart of training for interculturalists in general, and in particular for interculturally competent translators, interpreters and mediators. As she points out, although a great deal of energy has been spent and legislation enacted to develop the complex competences necessary for a new generation of European and global citizens, training programmes vary greatly from country to country. Her detailed survey focussing on the transcultural experience shows that there is much personal and linguistic satisfaction and reported all-round perception of success; while improved cultural awareness depended much more on the home course being followed, and professional satisfaction for those already in work was weak. Once again we have a mismatch between training and the workplace (see Katan 2011) and little evidence of much convergence at a European level.

**Ana Gregorio Cano** follows on, also looking at the effects (if any) of the harmonisation process under Bologna Declaration and the European Union's 'Mobility in Higher Education'. Her aim was to provide a further perspective on translator training and developing intercultural competence. She begins with an overview of competency models, focussing on those (few) models that take the 'intercultural' as fundamental to translation competency. She then moves on to how this competency is, and may be, taught.

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The main thrust of the paper is her questionnaire survey to over 1000 first and final year students regarding their (developing) perception of their own intercultural competence. Her basis for evaluating the competence comes from an EU supported "Intercultural Competence Assessment" (INCA) suite of tools, which covers "six essential spheres of intercultural competence". INCA was designed first for industry, but is one of the few (along with WorldWork discussed earlier) to emphasise as one of the essential spheres "Communicative awareness", and which also specifically links Intercultural competence to language (and subject knowledge) competence.

Cano's questionnaire survey based on the INCA questionnaire and portfolio provides much food for thought along with some useful suggestions for further research. Basically, translation students do not appear to make any significant cognitive advances in their perception of 'the other' during their 4 years of study in Spain. This may well be true globally, which further reflects poorly on the state of translation theory, training and the profession itself.

**Katia Peruzzo** and **Isabel Durán-Muñoz** continue, taking translator training materials to task. They open their contribution with a comment on the haphazard approach to materials selection and use in university training. Their main thrust though is on how to exploit 'texts' so as to uncover their linguistic and transcultural elements. Their research focusses on the 'glocal' in language in the increasingly transcultural market sector of tourism. They use web-based travel insurance policies as an example, uncovering the various layers through the use of a carefully constructed bilingual comparable corpus of over 500,000 words to highlight convergences and divergences between Spanish and Italian.

Following their study, at the macrostructure level the information contained in the Spanish and the Italian corpus is the same (due to EU harmonisation) but 'how' the information is displayed is the result of local legislation and usage. At the macro level, text organisation differs along lingua-cultural lines as do a number of seemingly 'obvious' legal definitions; and the "Extralinguistic Cultural Reference" divergences between these two closely related countries still require careful translation decisions. Interestingly, in terms of transculturality and plurilingualism, it appears that both languages have imported important terms in tourism from different donor languages, and have also fused them to their own language (as in the Spanglish expressions found in the corpus), thus, rather



than transculturation resulting in increasing commonalities, which would simplify the translator's task, further divergences are created.

Finally, the authors show how the features of travel insurance policies and the creation of comparable corpora can be exploited to satisfy the translation competence requirements of the 'European Committee for Standardisation on Translation Services'.

**David Limon** investigates the problem of cultural transfer with regard to a corpus of 1000 English (mainly US) film titles, and their translation into Slovene. His analysis is not only of translation strategy but is also an attempt to discover 'why' the translators tended to follow those strategies. He also investigates why on-line forums tend to criticise the translations, even though as he notes the majority of films are transliterated, and actually retain at least a part of their original title. Those films that are translated divide themselves between explicitation and simplification. In general the translators focus on explaining the content of the film, rather than dealing with cultural allusions, wordplay or any other features associated with the eye-catching or persuasive function of film titles. Limon also focusses his attention on the (surprising) number of "unmotivated shifts". In the second part of his investigation he discovers the subservient and risk-avoiding status of the translator, whose translation will generally be back translated for ratification by other monolingual decision makers. It is these others who dictate translation strategy, requiring transparent content-friendly translation, and who reserve 'serious translation' (using literary and rhetorical devices) only for serious films. And yet, as Limon notes, locally produced Slovene film producers themselves, whether serious or not, treat titles seriously.

To conclude, we can say that all the contributions point to a more complex world of changing commonalities and ever increasing divergences. The first part of this issue offers us innovative, and more flexible models, frameworks and methods of analysis. However, as the second set of articles show, though we have a "transcultural turn" in terms of frameworks and intercultural communication theory, we are still very far from "genuine understanding of the Other" in practice. In particular, though the state-of-the-art with regard to ensuring genuine understanding using a lingua franca is certainly advanced, it is clear that translation itself still has some way to go in terms of theory, training and practice.

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