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Introduction

Languaging and the question of culture in ELF

As a theoretical notion, 'languaging' denotes a fluid system of communication that is constructed and performed by individuals during 'collaborative dialogue'. In language learning, the term 'languaging' has been defined as: "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain 2006: 98). Swain continues, likening languaging to reformulating, where the intent is not to change meaning but the form to improve learning (maybe writing down the thoughts, or talking about and explaining what has been written) so that the meaning is clear or acceptable to another reader or listener. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013: 61), in their discussion of intercultural teaching and learning, talk of languaging in terms of interaction, where personal accounts and experiences of language and culture are mediated.

This issue of *Cultus* focusses on this idea of languaging, taking English (teaching and learning, translation and use) as an example of a *Lingua Franca*. The definition of ELF, English as a lingua franca, is clear. It is "a 'contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication" (Firth, 1996). It is also clear, as a European Commission (2011) Study on *Lingua Franca: Chimera or Reality?* points out, that native speaker English is no longer necessarily the model on which norms and judgments regarding language use can or should be made.

One reason for the rise in interest in a hypothetical ELF is due to the surge of interest in other 'Englishes', and the questioning of the 'right' of standard British or American English to dictate what is correct. *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft et al. 2002) is one book which summarised in its title the point of view of those who felt that 'their' English formed on the edges of the old Empire should be just as valued. Kachru (1992) popularised the idea of the 'Inner Circle' varieties of mainly Anglo/American English which provide the norms, the 'Outer Circle' of mainly ex-Empire countries who develop the provided norms, and finally an 'Expanding Circle' of countries who use English as a lingua franca.

These countries - to date - have been very much on the periphery, and very much 'norm dependent'. However, it is not just other varieties of English which are seen to be on the periphery. In translation studies, Itamar Even-Zohar (e.g. 1990) has written much about languages at the centre and at the periphery. Those at the centre (basically English) tend to be more innovate and productive languages (and literatures), and are hence the source language for most of the world translation. Hence, it is languages on the periphery, targetted by the centre, which then tend to absorb the foreign into their own language (see **Martínez-Garrido**). The little which is translated from the periphery to the centre tends to be domesticated, or made familiar to those reading in English.

What is not clear, however, is if ELF as a homogeneous model or 'variety' actually exists rather than as a form of international English based on English and anchored in an Anglo culture. If EFL does exist as a separate variety, does this variety works efficiently as a global contact language? Our main interest here is not the politics of ELF versus EFL/ESL (Anglo-American English learnt as a foreign or second language) but more importantly, how can or does a *lingua franca*, which has no *particular* cultural roots, account for or speak to *particular* national-cultural realities?

Global, International or World English assumes that everything that gives meaning to a message can be subsumed into one mutually comprehensible language, with one single set of rules or understandings about what (wording / use of language) means what (meaning / message / intent). However, by 1978 there was already discussion about "World Englishes" and "the uses of English as an international and intra-national language".¹ The issue concerning "the uses" becomes compounded when we add the culture factor, which by its very nature is specific, grounded in local accounts, experience and realities. Not only; when we consider translation into English, as we do in this issue, there is always the problem regarding how the English language can account for non-English realities (such as for example references to a Catalan lingua-culture) or indeed how legal clauses or education terminology can be rendered into a *Lingua Franca* and be equally meaningful, relevant or viable across an array of lingua-cultures (discussed in **Martínez-Garrido**, **Scarpa** and **Palumbo**). In either case we are faced not only with the limits of a single 'use' but also by the competence of those who are producing the text.

¹ www.iaweworks.org/history.php

A number of themes in the interview are also referred to in the papers. The first, regards that of a way to by-pass the *lingua franca*, through the use of multi-lingual translation. In particular, what many see as the answer to our Babelic world is an automatic translation/interpretation system into and out everybody's language. *Google Translator* is already a reality. For the moment its application is limited, though already smartphone apps are beginning to produce rudimentary instant voice translations into the language of one's choice. The concept was already fleshed out in the 1960s in *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, a cult comic sci-fi trilogy written by Douglas Adams. He explains below how *The Babel Fish* translator actually works:

The Babel fish, said the Hitch Hiker's Guide quietly, is small, yellow, leech-like, and probably the oddest thing in the Universe. It feeds on brainwave energy received not from its own carrier, but from those around it. It absorbs all unconscious mental frequencies from this brainwave energy to nourish itself with. It then excretes into the mind of its carrier a telepathic matrix formed by combining the conscious thought frequencies with nerve signals picked up from the speech centres of the brain which has supplied them. The practical upshot of all this is that if you stick a Babel fish in your ear you can instantly understand anything said to you in any form of language. The speech patterns you actually hear decode the brainwave matrix which has been fed into your mind by your Babel fish.

Of course, the *Babel Fish* would have the same problems that have dogged human translation: how to account for difference and non-equivalence, or what Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009: 3) call 'an intercultural situation': "one in which the cultural distance between the participants is significant enough to have an effect on interaction/communication that is noticeable to at least one of the parties".

And this takes us to the second theme discussed in this issue, often known as the Whorfian (or Sapir-Whorf) theory, which is usually broken down into two parts. It would be difficult to find a linguist or interculturalist today who would support the first part, which states that "Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about" (Whorf, 1956: 5). Language clearly does not *determine* what we *can* think about. All of us can distinguish colours that we have no name for. English, for example, does not easily distinguish the Italian *azzurro* from

'blue'. This does not prevent the speakers of that language, though, distinguishing azure or sky-blue from other colour labels.

However, in everyday life, we do tend to follow the distinctions made by our own language, and lump *azzurro* into 'blue', which combined with the second part of the theory creates the classic culture-bump or shock communication problems:

We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language ... We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated (Whorf 1956: 213-214).

Various researchers have tried to 'calibrate' the English language so that one term has one meaning. This unique sign-signification match, once calibrated, will be fully shared whatever the first language background. In all cases, the call has been for a severe reduction in the terms to be used, and the enforced use of a simple grammar. The most recent is 'Globish', discussed also in the **Crystal** interview. Globish was coined by Jean-Paul Nerrière, then a vice-President at IBM, which has been defined in *The New Statesman's* review of the book *Globish: How the English Language Became the World's Language* as "a sort of 'decaffeinated English', unencumbered by the rules of grammar and shorn of its rich vocabulary, stripped down to a core set of words that are a means to a single end: comprehensible cross-cultural communication" (Bhattacharya, 2010).

Globish purportedly 'works' because it is the codified result of a naturally occurring pattern of non-native English. The fact that it is a simplified version of standard English, with a maximum vocabulary of 1500 words² means that (at least in theory) ideas are also simplified, clarified and made explicit. Nerrière is careful, though, to add a caveat: "Aware that purists may balk at his ideas, Mr Nerrière insists that Globish should be confined to international exchanges. Other languages

² <http://globishfoundation.org/globish-core.html>

— French, German, Italian as well as orthodox English — should be preserved as vehicles of culture".³

However, his caveat has not stopped others from developing the idea of simplicity to actually explain cultural concepts across lingua-cultural divides. Anna Wierzbicka (1996), for example, uses a basic set of clearly defined pan-culturally shared understanding of terms (e.g. good/bad) to define more local cultural concepts such as the Japanese phenomenon of 'self-effacement'. Once defined using simple concepts, which she calls 'cultural scripts', the culture-bound phenomenon can also be compared with a cultural 'other', such as the more Anglo need to maintain and cultivate positive feelings of the self:

<i>Japanese "self-effacement" script:</i>	<i>Anglo "self enhancement" script:</i>
it is good to often think something like this:	it is good to often think something like this:
"I did something bad	"I did something very good
I often do things like this	I can do things like this
not everyone does things like this	not everyone can do things like this
other people don't often do things like this"	other people don't often do things like this"

(Adapted from Wierzbicka (1996: 537) in Katan 2010: 86)

This idea has also been put forward in this issue (see **Shih**) in the form of 'controlled cultural writing', as a precursor to translation.

The final theme running through this issue is that of 'competence' and 'quality'. The *Babel fish* must not only guarantee mastery of the languages involved, but must also create the most appropriate "telepathic matrix" for *that particular* human receiver so that s/he can "decode the brainwave matrix" and understand the message as intended. To do this the fish must clearly also have full understanding of the different ways in which living forms in the Galaxy communicate, and be able to find ways of re-interpreting concepts that only have sense for other life-forms.

Though Douglas Adams wrote about encoding and decoding brainwaves, we now understand that meaning does not pass through a conduit unaltered from A to B, but is partly co-constructed. If we add the complexity of co-sign-signification construction to Whorf's principle of

³ http://www.globish.com/?page=about_globish&lang=en_utf8

linguistic relativity, we have the need for a much more creative and inventive fish. The fish must be able to make decisions based on probabilities, but even more importantly, be able to produce a text that is also coherent both with the original intended picture of the universe and with the receiver's necessarily different picture. Recent work in Intercultural Communication has focussed on the specific competence(s) necessary to live and work with cultural difference (for example for those who will be studying or working overseas for extended periods) (see Fantini 2007 for an overview, and discussed in **Ghonsooly et al**); and on the specific competence(s) necessary for those who work mediating the differences, such as translators (e.g. Katan 2009).

So, for the moment it is still the job of human translators and interpreters to act as *Babel fish*. They may well not be the "oddest thing in the universe", but they are certainly some of the most unnoticed. And yet globalisation could not take place without them, as it is usually through their words that books, films, product manuals, scientific articles and software are devoured worldwide. The assumption is that the task is fairly easy, due to the mistaken idea that there is a logical sign-signification match, especially for technical texts. Indeed, translation is considered rather like Globish: easily learnt and simple to produce. However, unlike Globish, translation has to deal with complex ideas and with particular lingua-culture bound concepts. Yet there is little or no control globally regarding individual competence or the quality of the output.

Though the main thrust of the papers on translation (**Martínez-Garrido, Palumbo and Scarpa**) is descriptive, discussing actual translator strategies, it does lead us to consider whether the translators' own languaging, "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language", does actually produce "a fluid system of communication"; i.e. are the translators up to the job of producing text in English for those who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture. Or put another way, how can we ensure that the complex task of transcreation is successfully achieved? That, as mentioned above will be the focus of *Cultus* 7.

David Katan

Interview and individual papers

David Crystal interviewed by Xiaoping Jiang David Crystal is a writer, editor, lecturer, and broadcaster on the English language, with "a hundred or so"⁴ books to his name. He is the script writer (or consultant) for the following national TV and radio series: "The Story of English", "The Routes of English", "Back to Babel" , "The Word on the Street", "Voices of the World" not to mention his involvement in the British Library's 'Evolving English' exhibition and is author of the accompanying book.

Jiang is Professor of English at Guangzhou University and teaches courses in Intercultural Communication. The questions put to Crystal regard lingua-culture and how language can or should be taught taking 'culture' into account. There seems to be general agreement that a cultural perspective should be intrinsic to language learning, and also that the English language itself has its own myriad of cultural perspectives.

For Crystal, these perspectives, or distinctiveness, are mainly lexical, with local cultural references or knowledge being the main obstacle to understanding. Indeed, he envisions 'culture' being organised taxonomically, and gives possible examples. This type of approach, and the problems inherent in classifying culture through the 'arborescent paradigm' (the classic top-down tree-branch classification system) are well discussed by Hale in *Cultus* 5 (2012). Hale, in fact, argues that this approach is unable to take account of the fluidity of culture, and the important appropriations, fusions and other links between what the top-down approach 'naturally' separates as 'different'. She argues, instead, for a 'rhizome' approach (2012: 104).

There is also agreement that English as a Lingua Franca cannot (yet) be considered a homogeneous variety of English, and that certainly Globish should not be considered an accepted standard or level of English for successful international communication. Clearly, however, there are many ways of defining 'successful'. The interculturalist view tends to distinguish 'cultural distance', 'length of stay', 'depth of rapport' and 'communication aim' or 'complexity'. Crystal, instead distinguishes very clearly 'formal' (e.g. business meeting, negotiation, presentation) and 'informal' (such as 'the coffee break'). It is at the informal level, or as he puts it those 'unguarded'

⁴ <http://www.davidcrystal.com/biography>

moments, which also includes the use of the more colloquial in formal situations, that culturally loaded language and assumptions create problems in communication.

However, when it comes to translation, and in particular the translation of pragmatically charged language, that views begin to differ, with Jiang taking a more 'translator as mediator' line. Though Crystal accepts that translators (rather than machine translation) can understand and account for 'identity' and cultural themes in a text, and suggests that a comparative pragmatics should be part of a translator training, he states "I don't expect my translator to be a mind-reader - which, in relation to pragmatics, means knowing about the presuppositions and intentions underlying the utterances made by the participants". This is where the linguist and the interculturalist must agree to differ, though the discussion will continue in *Cultus* 7. The issue, in fact, will focus on 'transcreation' (translation and the creative interpretation of participant's intention), and whether or not this is the translator's role, in theory and in practice.

Behzad Ghonsooly, Masoud Sharififar, Shahram Raeisi Sistani and Shima Ghahari

These authors begin with the Whorfian premise that there is no such a thing as human nature independent of culture, and in particular on how lack of cultural competences affects success in second language learning. The authors introduce Ang et al's concept of cultural intelligence (based on IQ and emotional intelligence) as "an individual's capability to deal effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity" (2006: 101). The capability to deal effectively in areas of cultural diversity is not culture specific, but focusses on predispositions and orientations to cultural difference, much like those discussed in previous editions of *Cultus* by Trickey et al. (2009) and Newington (2012). In these two articles, reference is made to "international transition", namely, the transfer of professional skills into less familiar cultural contexts" (Trickey et al 2009: 50). The questions the authors ask is what type of traits are more likely to result in more successful communication and in the more successful deployment of their already proven professional (technical, managerial, relational...) skills.

Ghonsooly et al. suggest that these traits will also be a clear indicator to successful language learning, and in particular on success in listening comprehension - regardless of language competence. The authors used psychometric tests, similar in concept to those used by Trickey et al and Ewington. CQ, however is simpler and clearer - though consequently less useful for any diagnostic work on the competences themselves. Indeed,

instead of Trickey et al's 22 International Profiler dimensions and Ewington's 10 International Preference Indicator Push-Pull competencies, CQ has only 4 factors in their Cultural Intelligence Scale: metacognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural.

Their research on student learners of English suggests that there is indeed a clear correlation between CQ and successful learning, particularly with regard to two components of CQ: motivational, the inherent interest in experiencing other cultures; and metacognitive, the ability to question cultural assumptions. The authors point out that though text books are now awash with cultural settings, these are isolated, atomised aspects of 'culture', and have little effect themselves on improving CQ, which in turn will have little effect on improving listening.

Hence their conclusion that language learning “must be grounded in a sound knowledge of the society in which the language is based”. This coheres to an extent with Crystal's vision of an integrated approach to learning. However, there are 2 important questions that Ghonsooly et al. implicitly ask us to consider which are not covered in the interview. First, how to develop the learner's motivational and metacognitive skills independently of language or culture learning), and second how to begin with a grounding in the culture, rather than integrating it with the language learning.

Federica Scarpa investigates what happens when globalization creates the need not just to translate legal information from one national legal system/language into another, but to internationalise local legal frameworks and create a lingua franca, 'an English', which in theory, independent of the source text language (and legal culture), will conform to the same variety of English as a lingua franca. As mentioned earlier with regard to the interview with Crystal, ELF cannot (yet) be considered a variety in its own right. So, the question arises: can or do translators translate into a standard international legal ENL variety? or alternatively do they translate the French, German and Italian legal texts into three ELF varieties? To what extent are the cultural specificities of national legislations mediated, and to what extent does the language conform to either an ELF legal variety or to standard legal English?

The real question that lies at the heart of the discussion is whether or not these unnoticed translators, whose work is vital to produce some form of lingua franca when discussing law across national borders, actually do their job. There is no institutionalised control or checking system, either of

a priori competence through qualification or certification nor any post-production quality control.

Following Scarpa's findings, it would appear that with regard to online legal texts, where an internationally accepted use of language and interpretation of the language is essential, translators are still unaware of the importance of their task. Her study of the legal terms and conditions of use in the international websites of Fiat, Renault and VW (which have been translated from the respective Italian, French and German original texts and discuss the very same caveats concludes that they provide very little in terms of coherent use of legal terms). It also appears that Italy remains within its own strong legal-cultural orientation in that, unlike the other countries' legal documents, the privacy-related issues, and even discussion of the very same concept of privacy took up 80% of the entire legal document, with extremely little space being given to the equally important 'terms of use', whilst the other two sites dedicated a maximum of one-third to the issue of "privacy".

Giuseppe Palumbo focusses his attention on ELF and "educational terminology", and in particular on the provision of information in English on Italian University websites. Once again we have the use of "a contact language' between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication", and the problems of finding a common use of the language to deal with the individual culture-bound realities. Palumbo's investigation is also based on first-hand experience as translator and reviser for one particular University. He underlines an important difference between 'localisation' (also discussed in Shih) and 'internationalisation', which is where ELF comes in. Localization, as the name suggests, means creating a text for a particular 'locale', while, as Palumbo points out, the web reader of a University portal will usually not have an Anglo background. Unlike Scarpa, who finds discordant translation strategies from her interlingual corpus, his research is intralingual with an investigation of the English produced by Italians. His findings suggest an Italian preference for direct translation rather than more idiomatic standard native-speaker English (as in University 'rector' instead of University 'vice-chancellor'). He suggests that this strategy may be a conscious one, which would signal an ELF (rather than an EFL/ESL) approach, which he discusses in terms of Christane Nord's functionalist model of translation and 'instrumental' versus 'documentary' translation. There is also an explicit reference to transcreation. It may also be said,

returning to the problem of translation quality, that direct or literal translation may also be a sign of limited translator competence.

Gemma Martínez-Garrido finds a different set of translation strategies taking place in her investigation of film subtitling; and these differences she finds are logical within the important role of film in the spread of English as a language of international communication. In particular she looks at the rendering of what she calls culture-bound elements (CBEs). Her corpus is a number of subtitled Ventura Pons' films and her focus is on the audiovisual constraints, interculturality and translation techniques. Pons' films are in Catalan and represent a rare example of an Even-Zohar 'periphery' language breaking into the centre (through, in this case, subtitling). Though she begins with the ideological debate, her research actually takes Toury's and Chesterman's strictly descriptive norms as her starting point, and follows authors such as Gottlieb, Aixelá and Pederson for her research into translation procedures.

The main problem, as Martínez-Garrido sees it, is how to create subtitles that will foster understanding and accessibility across cultures. She breaks down the CBE translations into two particular procedures, a foreignising 'repetition' (retention or as close as possible to the original), and the more domesticating or familiarising 'generalisation'. Though she notes interesting differences, particularly between drama and comedy, it appears very clear that the periphery becomes thoroughly domesticated when translated, and many of the Catalan elements locating the film are lost rather than made accessible. This is certainly a case of homogenisation, where languaging means loss of difference, and the internationalization here points to further Anglicization.

The final article by **Chung-Ling Shi** suggests a possible solution to some, if not all, the translation problems discussed, and refers implicitly to Scarpa's discussion regarding the importance of source text writers 'internationalising' their documents prior to translation. The EU has already begun a "Fight the Fog" policy for all in-house document writers to facilitate the translator's task, but Shi goes two steps further, taking her cue from world-ready 'internationalised' technical texts used in the localisation industry. These tend to be software programs, operating instructions or on-line manuals, and are usually strictly constrained by the needs of digital technology.

Shi's proposals relate to non-technical texts, and in particular to highly culture-bound texts, which she suggests can be equally primed for internationalisation and to machine translation. Controlled cultural writing

works on the principles of simplicity (short single-concept sentences) and explicitation. She adapts Chomsky's transformational grammar to render the complex surface-structure text into a much larger number of grammatically simplified SVO single idea deep-structure sentences. She also notes that languages such as Japanese will need to be first written in SOV. She then takes ideas from Relevance Theory to further modify the deep structure sentences to ensure that optimal relevance is achieved across cultural divides. The 'translator' here works primarily intralingually in bringing the hidden deep structure ideas to the surface. Her analysis with *Google Translator* used before and after controlled cultural writing offer much food for thought.

David Katan
Cinzia Spinzi

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