The Linguist

Family trials

Interpreting insights into the hidden world of the family courts

Uni renewed

Are pandemic-related changes here to stay and is that a good thing?

Fly high

Why inflight magazine translation is trickier than you might think

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The Linguist

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CHAIR OF COUNCIL'S NOTES

How has your 2023 been so far? For CIOL, the weather report may be summarised as: overcast at first but with a much-improved outlook as the weeks have passed.

We have now exited our rented offices in Fleet Street, which we no longer need thanks to remote and hybrid working, and sold our investment property in Southwark, both of which had become drains on CIOL's finances during and since the Covid-19 crisis. There have been other operational changes to boost efficiency, too. While challenges remain, CIOL is in better shape than at any point since the start of the pandemic, something Council was quick to acknowledge when we met in July.

It's been a busy 2023 for me, and what our members think about their lives as linguists has been very much on my mind. Fair enough – it comes with being Chair of CIOL Council, especially a new one. When I took this role on, I applied a familiar mantra from my past professional life: find out what keeps people (managers, clients – and now linguists) awake at night. Of course, what's insomnia-inducing for one group may be less relevant to another with other priorities and concerns. Within CIOL, translators, interpreters, educators and other language professionals all share a common home but those broad categories mask important differences in practice, outlook, working conditions, client expectations and more.

The easiest way to understand how people think and feel about anything is simply to ask them. So, I embarked on 100 Conversations, a research study to get a clear sense of how translators first imagined life as a translator, what the reality has been, and how they see the future for themselves and for their practice – taking the profession's pulse with sufficient rigour to help me gather some meaningful insights to share with CIOL Council, members and our wider community of linguists.

I presented the first cut of findings at our very enjoyable Translators' Day in London in March. These seemed to resonate in the right way with many who were there. In July, I presented the findings again – to an international audience of PR academics in Slovenia – with an expanded data set (more survey responses, more conversations). When the study is complete, I'll share the full findings via *The Linguist*. Interpreters, education professionals and BPG (business, professions and government) linguists may say "What about us?" I plan to expand the study to encompass all four principal branches of our membership. By the end, I should know our membership well, members will feel they've had a chance to add their voice, and CIOL should gain something of value from the overall study. Time – and a lot of conversations – will tell.

Steve Doswell

EDITOR'S LETTER

You will notice in this issue that we have removed the Institute Matters section and brought its regular articles into Features and News. The Editorial Board noted that the section felt neglected at the back; we hope the change will make organisational updates (p.4 & 6) and our members' inspiring stories (p.17 & 23) accessible to more readers.

The board has always been one of *The Linguist*'s key strengths, offering a wide range of expertise and experience, and enabling me to work with some brilliant, insightful linguists over the years. Our board members are dedicated to making the magazine the best it can be, and three of them have contributed fascinating articles to this issue:

Karl McLaughlin shares his experiences of translating inflight magazines and the surprising challenges they bring (p.10). James Hughes reports on the situation in British universities since the end of Covid restrictions (p.18). Which changes have they kept and has this led to any notable improvements? Jessica Oppedisano writes a thoughtful piece on the challenges of interpreting for an international trial with speakers of multiple languages (p.8). The family courts have traditionally lacked transparency, but a pilot scheme has lifted reporting restrictions in some areas, subject to strict rules of anonymity.

In the first of our series 'The secret…', we examine the UK courts' response to jurors who are not proficient in English and the implications for justice (p.33). If you would like to write anonymously about a particular aspect of your work, please email the address below.

Miranda Moore

Share your views: linguist.editor@ciol.org.uk

News *The latest from the languages world*

Top of the pops

From Eurovision to K-pop, language diversity in pop music is booming, says Philip Harding-Esch

Multilingual diversity is flourishing in pop music and this was particularly evident when the UK hosted the Eurovision Song Contest on behalf of last year's winners, Ukraine. Not only did the contest feature songs from across the continent in many different languages, the proceedings also gave pride of place to performances from recent Ukrainian entries and Ukrainian co-presenters.

British actress Anna Waddingham, who co-hosted the show, impressed with her excellent French, "sending Eurovision fans wild" in the words of the *Evening Standard*. British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters also made headlines, especially Adrian Bailey, whose enthusiastic interpretation of runner-up Finland's 'Cha Cha Cha' gained him many fans on social media: "He is so brilliant, absolutely the best act there! Love him." Weeks later, the same phenomenon emerged at Glastonbury Festival when the Foo Fighters' BSL interpreter stole the show.

But the increased visibility of different languages in the pop landscape appears to be more substantial than one-off TV events. Eurovision this year delivered some enduring hits in the UK. Indeed, in the week after the final, four of the entries were in the UK Top 10, including 'Cha Cha Cha', which became the UK's first ever Finnish-language chart hit.

This is part of a wider shift in pop music tastes worldwide, which *Far Out Magazine* explored in an article analysing the rise of non-English hits in the US in the last five years. Looking back at the first non-English-language song to reach number one in the states – 'Nel Blu, Dipinto Di Blu' by Domenico Modugno in 1958 – it described how "occasionally foreign language tracks from the extensive fabric of world music have surpassed cultural barriers, and the trend is only continuing to grow".

Despite this, only nine non-English songs have reached number one in America – three of those since 2017. Latin music grew by over 55% between 2020 and 2022 in the US, nearly three times the rate of the industry as a whole.

Other majority non-English musical genres have taken the charts by storm, most notably K-pop. The West African-led Afrobeats genre, which was platformed by mainstream pop behemoth Beyoncé in her 2019 *Lion King* soundtrack album, has also grown in influence.

What the papers say…

News

A milestone for Lincolnshire

CIOL's Lincolnshire Society marked its silver anniversary with a celebration in April (*pictured*). As longstanding members and newcomers came together, Chair Candia Hillier thanked CIOL for the interest, support and grants it has given the network over its 25-year history, as well as for day-to-day support from staff. Thanks were also given to committee members, especially those who have volunteered over many years.

The society has welcomed a huge variety of speakers, and the spring celebration included a discussion on ChatGPT, drawing on the recent news story 'ChatGPT Poses Risk' (*TL*62,1). In closing the event, the Chair thanked participants, saying "without you, there would be no Lincolnshire Society."
www.ciol.org.uk/lincolnshire-society

Susie Dent joins CIOL leaders

In May, linguist and lexicographer Susie Dent became a Vice President of CIOL. The co-presenter for Channel 4's *Countdown* won the institute's David Crystal Trophy in 2017 and presented at its 2022 Conference. Her work in bringing etymology, the joy of words and language, and forgotten 'words of the day' to a wide audience fits CIOL's aims of supporting linguists and increasing awareness of global language needs and developments.

Last speaker of Yaghan dies

Cristina Calderón, the last speaker of Yaghan, a language spoken mainly in Chile and Argentina, has died. In a heartfelt obituary, *The Telegraph* referred to her as a "living human treasure", charting her life from nomadic beginnings in Chile's wetlands to her success making and selling traditional baskets, and her ultimate renown after writing an English-Yaghan dictionary and book of Yaghan legends.

Yaghan has a history of at least 6,000 years and the obituary encapsulates some of the sadness of what we lose when a language dies: the history, the knowledge, the wonder. *New Scientist* marked Calderón's death with an article exploring the importance of language 'isolates' – languages "utterly distanced from those used anywhere else in the world", of which an estimated 200 survive today. Scientists are urgently researching these languages as they believe they provide us with irreplaceable insights into human cognition and "how languages evolve and influence our perception of the world".

As the world becomes more interconnected online, *BBC Science Focus* predicted that the advent of AI tools for writing electronic communications "could be an equaliser, improving accessibility for people who have trouble" – but could also be the "death knell" for endangered languages. At the same time, some threatened languages are fighting back and experiencing a revival, as documented in a short film produced by the BBC with the Open University.

In the media

PHILIP HARDING-ESCH

More details were published of reforms in different jurisdictions to address languages education in schools. In England, the Pearson exam board gained Ofqual's approval for its new 'real world' French GCSE, which *FE News* said was "designed to better equip all students for life and careers in a global setting".

Schoolsweek reported that Oak National Academy had launched a bidding process for the creation of new curriculum materials in French, German and Spanish. The online platform announced it would no longer geo-restrict these materials, meaning they will be available to any organisation.

Improvements certainly cannot come fast enough in education, as *The Guardian* reported that languages and creative arts are "falling out of favour" with GCSE and A-level students, who are increasingly choosing vocational subjects. The British Council's Language Trends schools survey made headlines. The BBC revealed that Northern Ireland has the lowest rate of compulsory language lessons in the whole of Europe, while the *Daily Express* and *The Times* focused on the increasing popularity of Latin – now the fourth most popular language in English schools.

Several outlets highlighted the importance of language services in healthcare. Leading doctors called for "all hospitals to start providing appointment letters in other languages" to avoid delays, cancellations and miscommunications, according to *Eastern Eye*. While *Telegraph and Argus* shared a Marie Curie-funded study showing a link between language barriers for non-English speakers and poorer outcomes in end-of-life care.

The Pharmaceutical Journal published a piece calling for the language barrier to be addressed in pharmaceutical services. Pharmacies play an increasingly important role in healthcare delivery and the latest census indicates that one in six British residents was born outside the UK.

Philip Harding-Esch is a freelance languages project manager and consultant.

The **big** idea

Clément Boxebeld on setting up a platform to tackle loneliness in elderly people using their language skills

Q *What is ShareAmi in a nutshell?*
A ShareAmi is a programme to connect elderly French people with young people all over the world who are eager to learn and practise French. They meet online once a week for three months.

Q *How did you come up with the idea?*
A Oldyssey, our non-profit, started with a trip to visit old people around the world. In Brazil, we went to a language school which offered students regular calls with a nursing home in Canada. We found this idea so simple yet powerful that when Covid hit and we had to go into lockdown, developing the project in France seemed the right thing to do.

Q *What was your main aim?*
A We wanted, first and foremost, to tackle the loneliness that older people faced during the pandemic – but with a twist. Usually you'd find programmes only designed to 'help' them. Our programme is designed to enable two people from different generations and cultures to help each other by simply having a chat!

Q *What is your background and what new skills did you learn for this initiative?*
A My co-founders, Juliette Neyran and Julia Mourri, and I graduated from French business schools. We learnt about creating an economic model for a social and solidarity project, building communities, setting up a matchmaking platform, mobilising and retaining volunteers, making funding applications and monitoring outcomes.

Q *How is ShareAmi funded?*
A It is 90% funded by grants and donations, with the remaining funds coming from service

MAKING PLANS
Clément Boxebeld (3rd right) at a planning meeting with ShareAmi's associated board

fees as well as contributions from participants and volunteers.

Q *Why did you choose a non-profit model?*
A Because we rely on many volunteers and wanted to establish a participatory governance where the association is managed by its members. As the project is of general interest, this also allows us to be eligible for foundation sponsorship and tax exemptions.

Q *How many people work for ShareAmi?*
A We now employ five people (two full-time and three apprentices). A freelancer helps us guarantee that our platform is secure and GDPR compliant. Guillaume and Assa work on developing our network of operational and financial partners, while Ines is focusing on assisting our pairs and volunteers. Clara, who

joined us late last year, is developing a new 'in-person' experience in the French region. Finally Anne-Lou oversees our operations. I have to emphasise that none of this would be possible if it wasn't for our 50+ volunteers.

Q *What training do you give volunteers?*
A We have a whole onboarding process, complete with different trainings and a mentorship programme. It was important for us to have a set of guidelines to keep a consistent experience throughout the programme, but also to answer any questions volunteers might have. We're always working on improving those guidelines thanks to regular feedback from our volunteers.

Q *What plans do you have for the future?*
A First we want to establish the sustainability of the association model in France, and then work with partners to expand the programme in other languages across Europe.
www.shareami.org

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SAFETY OF THE CHILD

In a long and complicated assignment in the family courts, Jessica Oppedisano finds a series of worrying issues with interpreting services and conditions

During a recent assignment, I was called to interpret in a complex case in the Family Court in Leeds, which involved multiple defendants who were accused either of child abuse or of failing to protect the children from abuse.* The defendants were scattered around Europe – some in the UK, others abroad – and none spoke English to a sufficient level to understand legal proceedings. They all needed interpreters working with fairly common languages: French, Italian and Hungarian.

Hearings were held in a hybrid manner: the lawyers were mainly on site, whereas the defendants and experts initially attended remotely, and later in person where possible. I decided to attend in the same way as my client, one of the defendants, who was based in the UK. So for the first few months I was connected to the court through MS Teams and to the client over the phone. This allowed me and my client to communicate more flexibly without affecting the hearing.

Technical matters, such as the determination of jurisdiction, direction hearings, management hearings, and certain terms and roles, needed to be explained to the client, who was not familiar with English law and legal institutions.

BAD BOOKINGS

What really struck me was the difficulty of finding qualified interpreters from day one, even though so many professionals work in the required language combinations. Each defendant had their own interpreter, sourced by their solicitors, but while some were qualified and vetted, others were not. For the first hearing, one of the interpreters – booked by one of the parties through an agency – had no idea what an interpreter's role was.

I was shocked to realise that this person had not had any kind of interpreting training. For example, when the court asked the defendant a question, the person acting as an interpreter not only failed to relay the message to the client, but also replied, quite confused, "I don't know", as if they were the one being questioned. It then turned out that the person could not even speak the client's language (French) at a conversational level, let alone interpret in court for such important proceedings. I was left wondering how they had been selected by the agency, what criteria the agency had applied when hiring them, and what level of scrutiny had been used to verify qualifications and working languages.

For the upcoming hearings, a different interpreter was secured for the defendant, booked directly so as to bypass the agencies. To ensure continuity of service, the availability of the interpreters was confirmed when it came to setting the date of the next hearing.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to obtain a cheaper contractor for an assignment, one agency appeared to deliberately sabotage this continuity with some underhand tactics. They told the booked interpreter that the client had cancelled the job, and the client that the interpreter was no longer available, neither of which was true. They then advertised the job to their pool of interpreters at short notice in the hope of finding someone with lower fees. In the end the issue was resolved with the best outcome for the client and a guarantee that the case would not be reassigned, provided that the interpreter ensured their availability.

By this point I was appalled by the unprofessional behaviour of the agencies involved, who did not seem to care about anything other than profit. The interpreters, on the other hand, could clearly see the impact that these antics were having on the proceedings, on the defendants and on the children involved.

thelinguist.uberflip.com

The issue of finding a qualified interpreter presented itself again when the case reached the expert witness stage about one year into the proceedings. A court interpreter had to be booked, as foreign experts, based abroad, were to give evidence. Because of the complexity of the case, it was paramount for the interpreter to be a native speaker of the experts' language. However, once again, the interpreter sent by the agency did not have the requisite language skills. Despite having a good command of French, she made some major mistakes. For example, the expression 'if it is safe' was rendered as 'if it is possible', which is a serious mistranslation, especially as the court was using this evidence to determine the safety of a child's placement.

The interpreter for the French defendant alerted their barrister and the mistranslation was immediately flagged to the judge. Being a French speaker myself, I had noticed the mistake but it made me realise how easy it is for this type of error to go unnoticed when there is nobody present who can double check what is being said.

My client was quite nervous after witnessing this situation because they feared that their evidence might not be interpreted faithfully. Upon discussing this with their barrister, I was asked to confirm the quality of the interpretation when it was our client's turn to give evidence. Luckily, the Italian court interpreter was extremely accurate and able to render every nuance.

ON THE JOB CHALLENGES

Names were a major challenge for the interpreters. Several people were mentioned other than the parties involved, and many had two or more nicknames, which were used interchangeably. These were sometimes difficult for English speakers to pronounce and were mispronounced in a number of ways.

When the lawyers were questioning the defendants to reconstruct the events all of these names came up, and some proved more challenging than others. For the interpreters, this meant keeping track of how each speaker mispronounced the name, so as not to confuse the client. It was also difficult not to get confused ourselves, for example thinking that a mispronounced name may

refer to an entirely different person.

In the instances when I attended remotely, I noticed that the lawyers who were used to working with interpreters spoke more clearly and slowly. This allowed us to keep up with the information. The parties who did not work regularly with interpreters sometimes spoke softly and quickly, making our task more challenging. It was difficult to ask them to speak up or slow down because the interpreters were muted in the main room and our video feeds did not necessarily fit on the other attendees' screens, hindering our ability to make ourselves noticed.

When this occurred during a Direction Hearing, the only option was to interpret to the best of my understanding whatever I could gather from what the speaker was saying. During this type of hearing the court gives instructions to the parties on how they are to prepare the case. So although the situation was not ideal, the barrister was able to cover anything I might have missed during the conference after the hearing. My client was aware of the general topic of the Direction Hearing and that the information would not be life changing for them in the immediate future. However, as an interpreter, I felt that I was not serving my client properly if I could not hear what the speaker was saying.

One big advantage of having been involved in these proceedings from the very beginning was that I was up to speed with what was going on and could sometimes make out the

subject being discussed just from a couple of words. If I knew that a specific assessment had been requested, for example, and heard the speaker say the name of that assessment, I could tell my client what topic was being raised, even if I couldn't hear the details. Obviously, I would not have tried to guess the content of the update, but I could relay enough information that the client would be able to ask for clarification during the debriefing conference.

Despite the difficulties, this case was far from a complete disaster for interpreters: all the lawyers and court staff, and especially the judge, went the extra mile to make sure the defendants had the optimal service, both remotely and in person. One of the court interpreters is worth a special mention for demonstrating what a difference training and professionalism make in this kind of setting. The interpreter was working from Hungarian into English and we all relied on his English output to interpret for our clients. His clarity and precision made our task easier than expected.

This case was one of the most complex I have worked on. It was not without its difficulties, but the cooperation of all the professionals involved ensured a safe outcome, which is what matters most.

* This article is based on a court case in England. Details have been changed to ensure no case or parties can be identified.

Come fly with me

How to translate inflight magazines. By Karl McLaughlin

Who has not read a travel magazine or supplement and felt jealous of the writers who are paid to visit appetising destinations? Among linguists, such travel possibilities tend to be associated with conference interpreters lucky enough to be recruited by organisations that organise meetings in attractive locations, with the chance to stay on for a few days afterwards.

However, translators can also access such opportunities to wing their way to interesting parts, albeit without going near an actual airport. Several major airlines publish inflight magazines in two or more languages, including Air France's *EnVols* and Iberia's *Ronda*, and the publications are a key part of their international visibility. Some smaller airlines also produce magazines in printed or digital format for passengers to browse on their flights.

The translation work for these magazines can be an important source of income. Many would jump at the chance of an annual contract offering around 20,000 words every month. However, as we shall see, translating inflight content can be anything but straightforward.

NT is the magazine of the Spanish regional airline Binter, which carries approximately 4.5 million passengers a year on its 200+ daily flights between the Canary Islands, to other parts of Spain and to 17 international destinations in Europe and North Africa. Offering detailed information on a range of topics, such as beaches, city visits and local festivities, as well as a monthly What's On guide covering several cities, it can be considered typical of inflight publications.

Also included are special features on each destination, covering its art and architecture,

and suggestions for walks in nature. Add to the mix a monthly interview with a well-known figure from the Canary Islands, snippets of business news and a selection of advertising features on anything from private hospitals and dental clinics to aquariums and museums, and you are guaranteed to never have a dull translation moment.

A working knowledge of the airline industry proves valuable given the regular coverage of topics such as airport operations and aircraft types. The magazine also contains frequent mention of the airline itself, including routes, purchases of new planes, cooperation with deserving social causes, passenger milestones, and a round-up of general news from the previous month, all designed to paint it in the best possible light. The benefits available to its frequent flyers, directly from the airline and through its many partners (discounts on hotel stays, car hire etc), are also regular features.

SURPRISING VARIETY
Binter's inflight magazine NT *covers everything from attractions to industry news*

Expanding vocabulary

Something you realise after just a few issues is the need to expand your descriptive vocabulary to convey the attraction of locations. The remarkably limited range of Spanish expressions used is striking, with almost every location billed as a *paraje único*, *entorno privilegiado* or *marco incomparable*. However, systematic and literal rendering as 'unique spot', 'privileged surroundings' and 'incomparable setting' would jar an English ear.

For texts offering hiking suggestions, one of the challenges is ensuring the descriptions of features encountered along the way (trees, other vegetation, rock formations, etc) match what the visitor sees rather than what you

think the term translates to initially. This often requires extensive research into specific locations, including a detailed study of maps, photos on official websites and even social media and Tripadvisor comments.

Not every *montaña* in Spanish is an actual mountain; it is often better rendered as a 'hill', 'mound' or 'mount'. Similarly, a *barranco* may not be a full-blown (and potentially off-putting) ravine. It is also important to check whether a *pista* or *camino* is a track, trail, path or even a road. In the case of city walks, this visual research proves crucial for clarifying references to the mythological creatures on Ammannati's Fountain of Neptune in Florence, for example, or selecting appropriate adjectives to describe the statue of María Pita, the 'heroine of La Coruña', on this city's main square.

Painstaking details

As with all travel publications, food occupies an important place in *NT* and it unashamedly seeks to generate interest in the local gastronomy of Binter's destinations. The focus is often on traditional dishes, all invariably billed as palate-pleasing, mouth-watering and the product of knowledge passed down from generation to generation. Coverage of the gastronomic wonders of a particular location takes the form of longer features (including recipes for the most

popular dishes) or shorter sections inserted into more general descriptions of a city.

Since many of the destinations are coastal, fish and seafood appear frequently. With lesser-known species, whose local names vary greatly within Spain, detailed investigation can be required to arrive at the correct name in English. A single sentence describing the local seafood on offer in La Coruña's restaurants listed no fewer than 18 different types! Occasionally, the effort causes you to question whether the job is worthwhile, but you pin your hopes on another page with more straightforward content to compensate for this Herculean labour.

These hopes were dashed in one recent issue where another of the regular features – an advertorial for a group of private hospitals – focused on breast reduction surgery. Considerable time was spent researching the topic and then remembering that English often uses plainer language than Spanish when describing medical procedures to non-specialist readers.

This is not to say that translating such content is not enlightening: I knew little about the benefits of 'zero drop' and 'barefoot' footwear before tackling a piece on correcting gait problems. Similarly, an advertorial for an orthodontist made me more knowledgeable on the benefits of

aligners, rather than braces, for straightening children's teeth.

Thankfully, some relief is generally at hand in the economy section, which usually contains interesting and, at times, humorous features (my favourite: 'Should you take a lawyer to a job interview?'), along with snippets of relevant business news such as the latest employment figures and post-pandemic tourism growth.

Here, the main concerns tend to be stylistic to ensure that the product reflects the expectations of analogous texts in English, which tend to steer clear of the more ornate and hypotactic approach of Spanish. However, it is important that the natural instinct to prune does not result in an excessive shortfall in word count and create a headache for the layout team, for whom the Spanish length is perfectly calculated for a quarter or half page.

The word count tends to be less problematical in other pieces given that, while English versions of Spanish texts tend to be slightly shorter, the differences are often negligible because brief explanations of cultural terms and bracketed clarifications of borrowings need to be added.

A perfect fit

In terms of workload, the process is a perfect fit for a translator with other professional commitments, in my case university-level ▶

teaching. An excellent relationship with the long-standing client (a communications firm, not the actual airline) means the texts of varying lengths (from 150 to 1,500 words) arrive in manageable batches, and I have gradually learnt to predict the most intensive parts of the cycle. Virtually the only aspect set in stone is the obligation to be available for half a day at the end of each month to check proofs before printing.

Apart from the obvious wage benefit, translating an inflight magazine provides insider access to enticing locations such as Pamplona and Granada in Spain, Madeira and the Azores in Portugal, and Marrakesh, Tangier and Fez in Morocco. These are destinations which I feel I now know inside out – every palace, museum, art gallery, walk and beach, not to mention the local food – although this wealth of knowledge would probably make me tiresome company on an actual visit.

To borrow from Forrest Gump, an inflight magazine is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you're going to get. That is what makes it a great way to hone your translation skills. The varied content from general tourism information to more specialised knowledge is guaranteed to keep you on your toes, even if some pieces become a little predictable and the output starts to flow more easily than it did at the beginning. *Feliz vuelo!*

SITES OF INTEREST
Inflight magazines often feature hiking trails – e.g. in the Anaga Hills of Tenerife – which present their own linguistic challenges

ANITA VAN ADELSBERGEN MEETS

JOSHUA BLACKBURN

The inventor of the languages game League of the Lexicon discusses his passion for words and why it is all about being curious

Joshua, you're a game publisher, a marketing specialist, a photographer and designer, you've co-founded an art gallery and written a book on climate change. That's a fascinating career…
You forgot about the book I made about launderettes! Even though it looks like there is no coherence whatsoever about my work, what all of this reflects is a sense of curiosity. I am a curious person. I ran a design agency for 14 years, specialising in ethical and social organisations. After 14 years I started feeling a bit restless so I decided to do something different. My wife was working in photography at the time and had been looking into setting up a photography gallery, so I set that up with her as it sounded like a fun thing to do. I started doing more and more photography myself and worked on this project photographing launderettes for a year.

It may sound silly but I have always been fascinated by London launderettes, and photographing these vanishing businesses became an obsession. The leap from launderettes to League of the Lexicon might seem odd, but it reflects my spirit of curiosity. I am not a lexicographer or a linguist myself, but I love words as they are inherently democratic. Words are there for everyone.

Do you have a similar curiosity for vanishing or revived languages as you do for vanishing businesses?
Absolutely. On the one hand you can look at languages as simply a tool for communication, and on the other, you can look at language in the sense of the people who are speaking the language, the region in which it is spoken, the culture it is embodying and expressing.

So how did you come up with the game?
As I was home schooling my two boys during lockdown I was deeply depressed by what they were doing in English at school. It was so joyless – endless comprehension exercises that nobody enjoys. I wanted them to discover how extraordinary language is, to inspire a sense of curiosity. So I came up with little games for them.

I started by looking at a whole pile of games and identifying the things that made them successful. I really liked games that had a narrative, a face or personality to them. I wanted it to have a story behind it. So that's how I came up with League of the Lexicon. But what started as a game for kids quickly grew into something much more grown up. It was important that the game remained inclusive, which is why the question cards come in two levels of difficulty, but even knowledgeable word lovers should be prepared for some tough questions!

Why did you decide to call it League of the Lexicon?
I had this idea of character cards based on famous lexicographers competing to collect artefacts associated with great writers and

languages throughout history. I liked the idea that they were part of some mysterious 'league', as in *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, and the name evolved from that. It felt quirky and mysterious.

Do you think you would have invented the game if Covid hadn't happened?
Well, I am a sort of 'serial maker'; I like making stuff. I felt that there was a huge interest in words and languages – just look at a game such as Scrabble or someone like Susie Dent. I know lockdown was a difficult time for a lot of people, but for me it was a creative and fertile period. This project would not have happened without it.

It's true people have an interest in languages, but as translators we see companies replacing us with AI, so this interest doesn't always shine through...
I think there is a difference between the functional need (i.e. 'I need to have this text translated; how can I do that?') versus the curious and wondering side of languages as a bigger subject – as something to explore and discover and ask questions about. These digital solutions *seem* to provide a convenient way of getting the job done, but it's not until you start using a translator that you appreciate the craft of linguists.

Of the collaborators you worked with, who most surprised you?
I contacted about 150 people – academics, lexicographers and authors who knew about words and languages – to see if they wanted to send in a question. At least 50% gave us one question. But there were some who sent in more. I also worked with four illustrators to have the design as perfect as possible.

We received questions from the likes of Michael Rosen, Ben Schott, Simon Horobin, Lynne Truss and many more. Sometimes, these contributions led to exciting things. Jonathon Green, the world's foremost slang lexicographer, and Gaston Dorren, a polyglot language expert, were big fans of the game and this led to conversations about authored special editions. Now we're in production of

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a Global Edition written by Gaston and Jonathon's Slang Edition, due for release in September. It's amazing how it's grown. So many wonderful people contributed. If any readers are interested in being part of it, please do reach out.

As a designer and photographer, you paid a lot of attention to the aesthetics of the game. Do you think we could spark an interest in languages among more people by using attractive visuals?
Yes, absolutely. It could definitely help, but it's not just about design. Someone like Susie Dent isn't about design; she is about making it more accessible, beyond academia. She is basically telling the world about it. That is the real challenge. It is about accessibility, and design could be a part of that.

Is there a language you would like to learn yourself?
There are so many things I'd like to learn but if I had to choose one language it would be Portuguese. I now have Portuguese citizenship thanks to my family roots as a Sephardic Jew, so it may be good to learn more about the language.

What are your plans now?
I might come up with more editions, like the Slang and Global editions. I have also written a Junior Edition for younger players.

And, finally, how would you persuade a young person to engage with languages?
I feel that here in England we've a got a problem with teaching languages and with caring for them. It's a mixed blessing that everybody worldwide speaks English. There is a real cultural problem with foreign languages in this country that is fundamentally different in Holland or Spain, for example. In many countries learning languages is not optional.

To address the question of language learning in the UK we need to change the way it is set up and we really need young people to help in this effort. Coming back to my sense of curiosity, that is where it starts for me: a sense of curiosity and wonder and love of languages. It has to start there.

See www.leagueofthelexicon.co.uk for more about the game or to contribute a question to future editions. For your chance to win a game, send a letter for publication to linguist.editor@ciol.org.uk.

Family? What family?

Why Olivia Morton and Clare Suttie are no longer keeping quiet about their children when it comes to their work

There is a significant number of freelance translators who choose to entirely hide, or downplay, the effects of their family lives on their careers, endeavouring to glide like swans while frantically paddling under the surface to fulfil their commitments. There's nothing wrong with this approach, and there is certainly no obligation to share details of your personal life in your professional domain, but it is worth considering the reasons why translators make this choice.

As a freelance translator and an agency owner working together to provide translators with business training, we talk to a lot of parents who struggle to combine their translation business with the demands of parenting. And as parents we understand these challenges all too well.

We all have different reasons for keeping quiet about our family commitments. For Olivia, it was a way of appearing 'professional' and not giving clients cause for concern about her level of dedication to her work. For others, there may be a concern that clients will perceive them as less available for potential work, less capable of committing to a particular project or less likely to get the job done to a high standard if they mention childcare. Others may just choose not to talk about their private life in a professional setting.

Many of those fears start with the insecurities that can arise when working in isolation as a freelancer. We may worry that we do not measure up to an unachievable standard. Many of the translators Clare meets have a fear of being dropped if they don't accept every assignment they are offered. In reality, many project managers are juggling similar home/work commitments and understand that freelancers may not always be

immediately available. Building relationships that work for both parties is invaluable.

Finding common ground

When it comes to managing work and parenting, times have changed and hushing up our family commitments could actually be doing us more harm than good in some cases. What it means to be 'professional' and what it means to work from home have changed significantly in recent years. Perhaps we are also doing a service to the wider language services industry when we admit that being a working parent is a juggling act, and one that we can manage more or less successfully on different days. We speak to so many translators who struggle with this. Being more open about it might make us all feel less alone.

As a parent to a young child, scheduling translation work and looking after clients has been busy and stressful for Olivia at times, but also rewarding. The flexibility of working from home is second to none. For many freelance translators, this is a huge factor in our choice to enter, or stay in, the profession, and that's nothing to be ashamed about.

Rather than feeling frustrated by our busy schedules, why not take a different perspective? Many of our clients and colleagues also have children, so opening up about the challenges can be a great opportunity to add depth and connection to working relationships by finding common ground. Certainly Clare has a lot of positive feedback on her LinkedIn posts, where her honest and light-hearted discussions seem welcome.

Knowing our value

One reason for keeping quiet about the pressures we face is related to imposter syndrome and the fear that we are not, or will not be perceived as, 'proper translators'. This mindset can be difficult to overcome, particularly as we do not always give ourselves the grace and understanding that we might offer our colleagues.

For Olivia, the key to feeling positive about her ability to manage project work for clients has been leaving plenty of buffer time for unexpected events or delays and negotiating acceptable deadlines. Securing rates that justify the cost of childcare, and continuously reviewing those rates, has also been important. Recognising the value of her own time, both personally and professionally, has been significant in managing client relationships and working patterns to optimise her earnings and improve her working life.

Clare is supported by a small team of staff but works from home alone. With three children at three different schools, including one with special educational needs,

unexpected issues can arise and cause disruption to her working schedule. This can be stressful and unsettling. Time management and availability are undoubtedly issues for parents who are growing and maintaining a translation business, especially for the 'default parent'. Being unable to fully control our time and how we spend it – the need to navigate fixed timings such as school and nursery pickups and appointments – can reduce our availability for work.

At the same time, these non-negotiable start and finish times can present an opportunity to reconsider whether the hours we expect ourselves to work are achievable or desirable. A good question to ask yourself is whether you would expect an employee, friend or colleague to work as hard as you do.

Many people question whether they are truly full-time translators because they are not at their desks from Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. However, the concept of full-time work has changed, with four-day working weeks becoming increasingly popular. Clare's team at Atlas Translations works a four-day week, but Clare is the one person who doesn't take this opportunity as she benefits from very flexible working.

Quality of work

Being fully booked as a translator doesn't have to mean being overrun with work and feeling as if we must translate as much as possible, as quickly as possible. For Olivia, it's about being busy enough to fill the hours she wants to spend on billable translation work in any given week, with quality work for clients she likes working with. Managing our own expectations can be key here. However much work you do, there will always be a translator who is busier, has more capacity or works longer hours, so it's about finding the sweet spot that works for you and your finances. Knowing when and how to say no is key.

The increased financial pressures associated with having a family, at the same time as having reduced capacity for paid work, can be a major issue. It is worth remembering that we cannot compete on price alone, as there will always be someone who is able or willing to complete a job for a lower fee – and that applies to both translators and agencies. Ensuring that we position ourselves as niche providers of specialist skills can enable us to adjust our fees to reach a specific income threshold. Charging higher rates for quality work, rather than putting in unsustainable hours, may be the path you need to take.

Requests for freelance projects tend to be made hours, days or weeks in advance, which creates insecurities about our future workload. Parents need to commit to childcare months, or even years, in advance, so the lack of a ▶

MAKING CHANGES
Reevaluating how you organise your time can help to ensure the right work-life balance for a successful work life and a happy home life

reliable and predictable income can be worrying. Some of the translators we speak to feel they must manage without childcare as they cannot guarantee they will have enough work to cover the costs.

Responsibility for childcare often then falls on the freelance parent, which can lead to a vicious cycle for translators looking to develop their businesses as they have to turn down paid work in order to look after their children. Some find creative solutions in mutual support. Clare's son goes to a friend's house after school a couple of days a week, and she looks after his friend on other days, as there are no after-school clubs available to them.

The mental load

For the 'default parent' (usually the mother), the mental load is a hidden issue. These are the parents who make themselves available for appointments, parents' evenings, sick days, packed lunches and sports days – in many households covered mainly or exclusively by one of the parents. Handling all of these tasks while running a business leaves many translators feeling overwhelmed, and that they lack the emotional capacity and headspace to grow their business.

In these conditions, the need to 'get more clients' or 'earn more money' can feel like another endless task on the end of a long to-do list, crammed with doctors' appointments, school shoe shopping and packed lunches. However, working on your business is not one large task but actually a collection of smaller tasks. Understanding what these tasks are, and breaking them down into manageable chunks, makes the end goal of having a full diary of translation work feel more

achievable. These actionable tasks can be chipped away at every day.

Carving out an uninterrupted time and space for work is crucial. If you can only work one hour at a time, make that hour count. Accept that this hour is your time to work and use it to make a small but positive dent in your business-related tasks. Understanding how you spend your time, and what time you can block out to work on your business, should ease the stress and pressures.

If you need and want to do more work, be realistic about how you can achieve this and how you can give additional time to your work on a weekly basis. To figure out how to make that happen, you could keep a diary of how you spend your time. Manage your expectations of the hours you can and will work, and be kind to yourself.

If you are the 'default parent', was this an agreed decision or did it just happen? Are there tasks that a partner/co-parent could take on instead? A split of parental labour that works for your household is best, though it can't always be achieved all of the time. This may mean continuing with a 'default parent' dynamic but it is worth reviewing this periodically to make sure it is working for you. If the parental load is really getting you down, it's best to be open about this as your partner may not realise. Aim to have any discussion in a relaxed environment rather than during an argument about who's putting the bins out!

It helps to accept that juggling parenting and building a business may be a temporary period across the span of your long career as a translator. We would recommend taking small, deliberate, consistent and regular action. You might just achieve more than you expected.
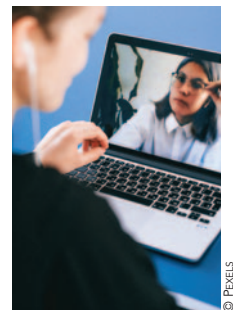
OPENING UP
Being honest with clients about family commitments can help you to connect and find common ground

Meet our members

Sara Horcas-Rufián

From standing in solidarity with unpaid translators to tips for finding interesting clients, candid insights from a new member

Tell us about your early experiences. Have you always had a passion for languages?
I vividly recall my fascination with the (big) wide world long before I could articulate it in words. As a child, I felt an exhilarating sense of adventure watching the cartoon *Around the World with Willy Fog*. I began writing short stories and for three years in a row I won a competition organised by my local council in Andújar, Andalusia in Spain. Each story concluded with a moral about how people can transcend language and cultural barriers to understand each other – a theme that resonated deeply with me.

Could you say a bit about your work…
I am a translator with a passion for teaching, and proudly hold the position of an Adjunct Professor at URV in Spain. I completed my (translation) university studies in Spain, which included an Erasmus year in the UK and an enriching six months in Russia, and began my journey as a freelance translator in 2013.

What has most surprised you about working as a linguist?
When I started my studies, I was advised to opt for a 'rare' language as it could offer better career prospects in translation. I was told there was an abundance of EN-ES translators, so I decided to pursue Russian. Interestingly, about 95% of my work has been from English to Spanish. The rest has been French to Spanish. Regrettably, I haven't had any opportunity to utilise my Russian language skills professionally.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?
My parents – they are behind all my accomplishments. Their influence on my life has been immense. They bestowed upon my sister and me the most valuable gift of all: education. We had a room we affectionately

called 'the library'. It was filled with books and I spent much of my free time there, engrossed in reading any book I could get my hands on.

And at the moment you're doing a PhD?
My research focuses on the competence of translation teachers. The aim is to identify and address any weaknesses, which I believe will enhance the overall quality of the teaching.

You tweeted that doing a PhD has completely changed the way you think…
Yes. Our understanding of the world remains limited, as evidenced by the pandemic. Engaging in research is a profound journey that sparks moments of enlightenment, unveiling new wonders of the world. The pursuit of knowledge is endless, and the thrill lies in continuously discovering more ways to learn and grow.

What is one of your bugbears with the translation industry?
The notion that translators should work for free, especially when it's considered to be 'for a good cause'. In my opinion, working for free can be detrimental to both our profession and the effectiveness of non-profits' work, and it may even raise ethical concerns.

Have you been following the case of the British Museum using Yilin Wang's translations without payment or consent?
Yes! The museum featured her translations of Chinese feminist poet Qiu Jin in the 'China's Hidden Century' exhibition without seeking her permission, compensating her or giving her credit. I stand in solidarity with Yilin. Although the museum eventually reached an agreement with her, it mishandled the situation and set a highly disappointing precedent in terms of how translators, especially women of colour, are treated.

Do you have a tip for fellow translators?
From time to time, I send cold emails to organisations that pique my interest. I reach out when my enthusiasm is genuine and I aim to convey that authenticity in my messages. This rather fearless, informal method has led me to some of my most valued clients today.

Have you made connections through CIOL?
I joined in February 2021. At that time, I was living in Spain, but I also had a temporary stay in Argentina, so I missed out on in-person events. I'm excited about my upcoming move to the UK and eager to take advantage of all the networking opportunities that CIOL offers!

@CIOL_Linguists

Universities: the new normal

Which Covid-related changes have language departments kept and are they any better for it, asks James Hughes

When I began my undergraduate languages degree at Oxford in 2019 and the books quickly piled up, I started to wonder how I would manage to memorise enough quotes to deploy in my exams. Four years and one pandemic later, I was confronted by a quite different reality in this summer's exams: online, open-book assessments for my literature papers. No need for extensive memorisation – this was between me, my notes and my laptop's search function.

While the pandemic forced universities' hands in many respects, moving teaching, assessment and student support online, I was curious to see how these changes were viewed now. Are traditional modes of academic assessment on the way out? Or is going digital not always the answer? Were Covid-induced measures appropriate only for their own unique circumstances, or have they catalysed welcome innovations that might have otherwise struggled to gain traction? We surveyed four UK universities (Birmingham, Cardiff, Nottingham and Sheffield Hallam) to find out which pandemic measures seem here to stay and why.

Examinations and assessments

Three of the four participating universities agreed that, to some extent, their methods of assessment have improved following measures taken due to the pandemic, with only one querying whether these changes amounted to a clear-cut improvement. At the same time, all four universities have rolled back some of the changes made to assessments. This reflects a general diversification of examination modes in the post-pandemic landscape.

We should seek to understand why universities are generally moving away from the in-person, handwritten forms of assessment with which we are familiar. While revising for my own exams this year, I was surprised to learn from a study skills lecturer that the type of pen used in an exam could impact my writing speed by approximately 10% – a good few hundred words, perhaps an extra paragraph, in some exams.

It seems that the pandemic has benefitted students and examiners by removing handwriting speed (and its usual victim in exams: legibility) as a key factor in academic performance. Online assessment modes enable students to make edits without turning their exam script into a piece of abstract work, while also facilitating proofreading.

For university staff, online submissions typically make for a smoother and more manageable marking process, with one respondent noting that while online submission and marking had always been an aspiration, it took Covid-related developments to make this an achievable norm.

Correspondingly, universities now exhibit a greater reliance on online assessment, in some cases dispensing entirely with traditional, hall-based exams for non-language papers. Essay-based exams are now less likely to be assessed in a *Countdown*-style race against the clock, or involve the tricky business of manually counting whether your submission falls within the word limit. Instead, these universities are favouring methods such as coursework, in-class tests and presentations.

Language and translation exams constitute an exception in this respect. These have returned to the in-person format in order to assess spontaneous language production and accuracy independently of physical and online translation resources. At Cardiff University, for instance, non-language modules are now assessed by coursework, while language modules are assessed under invigilation. In-person exams are, of course, not incompatible with typed submission, and the cumulative benefits of tidier and revised student copies, alongside easier submission and marking, may see more universities invest in this area.

Restoring a number of exams to the traditional, in-person format is arguably a welcome move. Sitting such exams with one's peers is something of a rite of passage, one that can feel particularly significant for cohorts whose university experience has involved rather more time confined to our bedrooms than we would have liked. I certainly felt a sense of grim solidarity with my peers,

and generations of students past, as we processed into the exam halls this year.

For all this, it should be noted that the current examinations and assessment landscape is not set in stone. The dust from the pandemic is still settling and universities will no doubt be keeping a close eye on how student performance and satisfaction vary from one set of practices to another, and from one institution to the next.

Teaching delivery and technology

As the pandemic struck, Microsoft Teams and other software 'Zoomed' to the rescue to salvage teaching delivery. However, it appears that many of these programs, particularly video-calling software, have been axed as quickly as they were adopted.

Despite my generation's well-documented fondness for screens, face-to-face teaching remains the norm and the expectation, and has overwhelmingly been reinstated in all universities surveyed. Significantly, students are not alone in this preference: some university staff worry about the potential negative impact of hybrid delivery on attendance, engagement and performance. Both acknowledge the social benefits of students being on-site for classes.

At the same time, some pandemic-related technological innovations seem set to stay, to the relief of students and lecturers alike. Sheffield Hallam has retained pre-recorded grammar teaching (using Panopto) as a complement to its live classes, where the pre-recorded material can be practised and discussed. This frees up time in live classes, which is used to cover points from the pre-recorded material that students wish to address or develop. Similarly, by providing certain core content online and updating it regularly, Birmingham University is seeking to avoid timetabling clashes and thereby to expand students' choice of options.

At Cardiff, an increase in lecture capture provision reflects a commitment to making the learning experience more inclusive, and giving staff and students greater flexibility to balance their work alongside other commitments. With this flexibility comes an increased amount of guidance: documents known as 'module maps' outline what students need to do on a weekly basis for each module, giving indicative time commitments for each task and providing links to resources, materials, assessments and learning outlines.

Zoom or Teams meetings with tutors are now much more common, and tutors at all the universities offer online sessions as an option. Some induction/admission activities and information meetings have also moved online.

Looking forward

Reading our survey responses, I was struck by the resilience and adaptability of universities and my fellow students. Cultivating these qualities will only become more important in the coming years, as students whose most formative years have been disrupted, and who may have rarely sat standardised exams, progress through higher education institutions.

Combining tried-and-tested tradition with judicious innovation will be integral to helping these students reach their full potential. In tandem with this, an increased willingness to discuss mental health on both sides of the lectern, as noted by our respondent at the University of Birmingham, should further contribute to the maintenance of supportive spaces for learning and teaching in our universities.

Certainly, the lessons to be learnt from the pandemic are subject to debate and are, in places, unclear. It takes time to gather reliable data on the effectiveness of different assessment and examination styles, and even then, a great number of other variables are at play within each cohort's results and satisfaction levels. But if students and universities continue to maintain an open dialogue about their experiences and expectations, we have good reason to hope that things will be better coming out of the pandemic than they were going in.
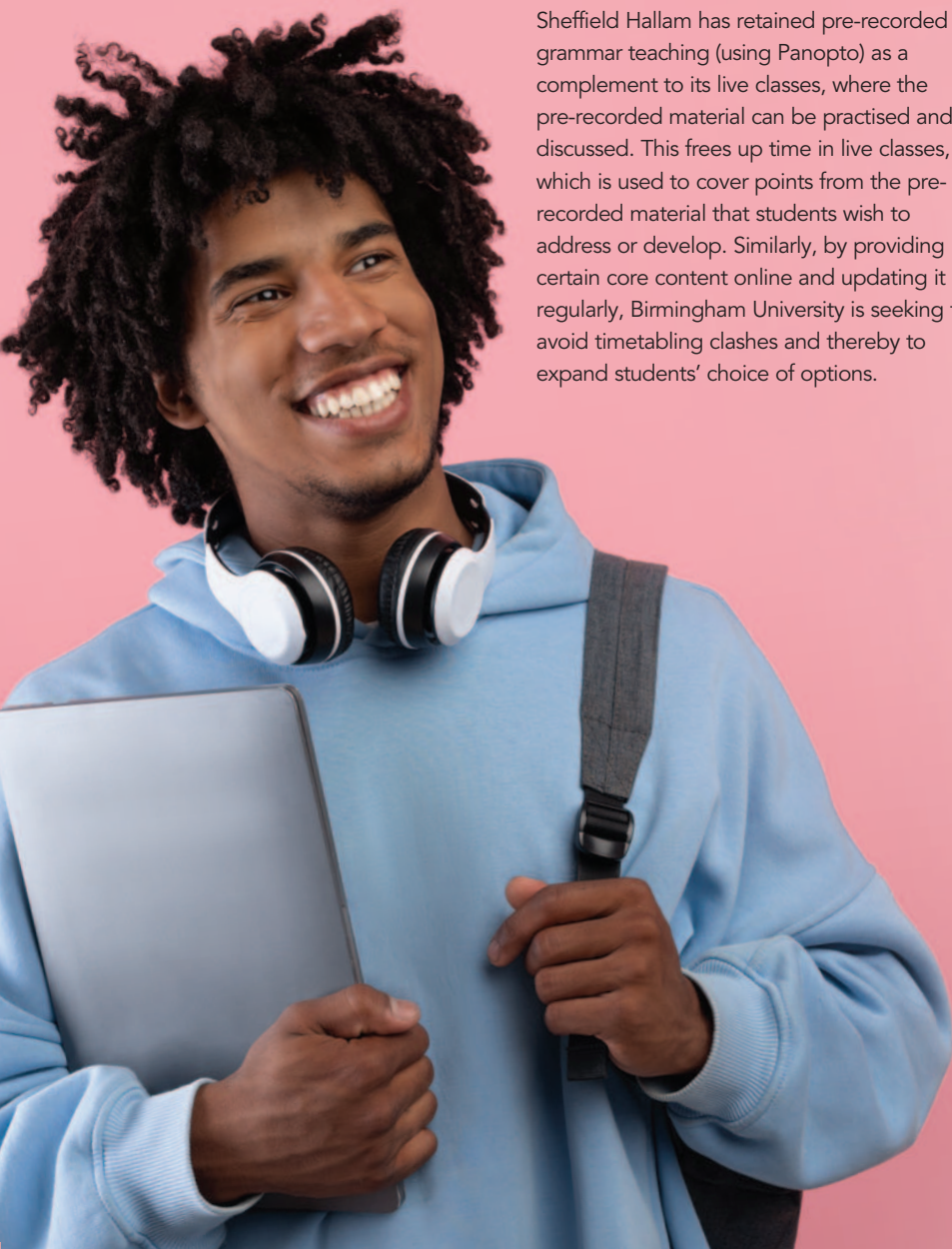
A will but not a way?

Wales has invested millions in its new Curriculum for Languages, so why is it on the pathway to a languages catastrophe? A group of language teachers speak out

In 2015, teachers were first introduced to the proposed new Curriculum for Wales and the document that would become the AoLE LLC (Area of Learning Experience: Languages, Literacy and Communication), the section of the new curriculum responsible for the teaching of languages in our schools.[1] As experienced language teachers we recall feeling a sense of elation.

To any reader of the new curriculum, it appeared that languages were now safe in the hands of this government; that the well-documented and overwhelming benefits of languages and language acquisition, both for personal development and for the economic development of Wales, were being taken seriously. Plans were being drawn up not only to steady the ship but to allow for the development of languages in all Welsh schools, including in primary schools, where an international language is now mandatory.

A new government agency – Global Futures – was also created in 2015 to replace CILT Cymru in promoting the learning of languages. Four Consortia were established to work with local education authorities and school leaders to ensure the pledges would be realised.[2] New initiatives, such as the Student Mentoring Scheme, which sent languages undergraduates from Welsh universities out into schools, were introduced as the panacea to the languages problem.

The reality of the new curriculum for languages in our schools is, however, one of a worsening crisis. Wales is witnessing a faster reduction of languages provision and opportunities in our secondary schools than ever before and a curriculum promise to our young people has been broken. Wales currently has the worst record for languages uptake of all four home nations.[3] So what is going wrong?

The languages landscape in Wales

That the reality for international languages since the creation of Global Futures has been one of accelerated decline in our secondary schools is irrefutable. Data from StatsWales paints a picture of decline for all international languages over the past seven years in Wales. French GCSE entries have fallen from 4,793 in 2015 to 2,611 in 2021, a decrease of almost 50%, while the numbers for German are equally alarming, dropping from 1,024 to 480. Less commonly taught languages (known as 'other languages') have not fared well either, with a drop in GCSE entries from 443 to just 74.

This decline from 2015 to 2021 – the fastest and most significant on record – has severely impacted entry levels for A level too, where German and French have dropped by roughly half and Spanish by a third. In 2021, Wales had only 206 A-level candidates for French and 48 for German.

Of course, there have been – and remain – significant external challenges to language uptake, but among the most significant barriers to language learning in Wales is the reduction of meaningful opportunities for our young people to study foreign languages in our secondary schools. This is a consequence of the closure of language departments and/or drastic reductions in timetable hours.

Data from the WJEC, the only exam board that Welsh secondary schools are permitted to use, indicates that the number of centres in Wales offering GCSE German fell from 52 in 2015 to 40 in 2021. The centres offering A-level German decreased markedly from 36 to a mere 19. The situation is similar for Spanish, with centres offering Spanish GCSE down from 114 to 96, and those offering the A level falling from 53 to 40. In essence, there are now fewer language departments in Welsh secondary schools and, as a consequence of this reduction in provision and opportunity, there are fewer exam entries. This is a vicious cycle that is worsening with every passing year.

Global Futures and its impact

So what of Global Futures and the Consortia? Global Futures came into being with the vision statement "that Wales becomes a truly multilingual nation".[4] A key strategic aim of the five-year plan was "to increase the number of young people choosing to study modern foreign language subjects at Level 2 (GCSE level or equivalent), at Level 3 (A level or equivalent) and at higher education level".

In 2020, the initiative was awarded a further two years. One of the new strategic aims was a promise to work with secondary schools and school leaders in the creation of a curriculum for languages. According to Gerard Pitt, lead government advisor, "if international languages are to thrive, they must be part of a school's holistic planning and not marginalised".[5]

However, the minutes of Global Futures meetings and the data acquired from the Consortia do not reveal how this strategic aim has been actioned. They do point to Global Futures focusing a significant amount of attention on the introduction of international languages in primary schools, and on finding resources and training for primary teachers who are inexperienced in delivering languages.

So, what for secondary schools? It is impossible not to feel that we have been overlooked as Wales is, according to all evidence, looking to rebuild languages from the bottom up. Primary schools must now introduce languages to their pupils and meet some form of progression. Secondary school leaders, on the other hand, have merely been given guidance for developing their curriculum. ▶
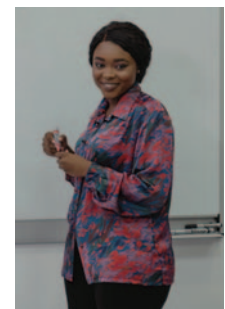
DISILLUSIONED
Teachers were enthusiastic about Wales's investment in languages, but are concerned that the decline has continued

© PEXELS

▶ Secondary school language departments, where the real language specialists and expertise lie, have largely only received support through the Student Mentoring Scheme and Routes into Languages Cymru Language Ambassador projects, which are supported by the universities. These are cheap add-ons for teachers as we look to encourage learners to continue with their language studies, but the continued decline in GCSE and A-level opportunities indicates the limits of what they can achieve. If secondary school language departments are closed, there will be no pupils to influence.

What needs to happen next

There is still time to save languages in our schools but we are at the eleventh hour. Firstly, the closure of language departments in secondary schools must be halted immediately. These closures are leading to secondary school language specialists leaving their posts, many even leaving the profession. In a climate where difficulty in recruiting teachers is a serious issue, losing the languages experts who can teach to exam level is foolish. The Welsh government is aware of the problem but asserts that it has no influence over the curriculum that individual schools offer and is unable to enforce its own curriculum.

Secondly, school leaders must be engaged and challenged on the curriculum that they intend to offer to meet the AoLE LLC requirements. On the flipside, they must also be listened to by the government. It will take time to reseed languages in our schools. If school leaders feel unable to run a course due to low numbers,

or schools require more finances to subsidise international languages, then providing this resource should be a priority.

According to the Welsh Conservatives, the Welsh government has spent almost £6 million on languages alone in the new curriculum. Any future funds should be spent on supporting successful language departments to maintain their success and share best practice. Funds need to be made available to all schools where the staffing is available to teach a language to exam level.

The promotion of the benefits of language learning is equally crucial. This message is not being heard in secondary schools, where STEM has excelled in tuning young people – and, indeed, some school leaders – in to the value of maths and science, often to the detriment of languages, as well as the arts and humanities more broadly.

The project to equip pupils, as citizens of a bilingual Wales in a multilingual world, with the ability to use Welsh, English and other languages in a plurilingual international environment unravels when secondary schools lose their languages departments. This is most certainly not the curriculum that teachers devised or envisaged.
Written by the All-Wales Network of German Teachers.

Notes
1 cutt.ly/deraCurriculum
2 cutt.ly/deraGF
3 cutt.ly/LangTrends22
4 cutt.ly/qwwrhBJo
5 Pitt, G (2023) 'Wales Leads the Way?'. In *The Linguist*, 62,1

BIG DIVIDE
Primary schools have received a much-needed boost in funding while secondary school language departments are closing at an alarming rate

© UNSPLASH

A life with languages

From stamp collecting to supporting families through the adoption process, Natchaon Chucherdsak MCIL CL tells her story in Thai and English

ความชอบภาษาของฉันเกิดจากการที่ฉันสะสมแสตมป์เป็นงานอดิเรก ฉันชอบแสตมป์ชุด '1988 Australia Living Together' แสตมป์ชุดนี้มีสีสันสวยงาม ทำให้ฉันอยากรู้มากขึ้นเกี่ยวกับที่มาของแสตมป์ชุดนี้ ระหว่างที่ฉันเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาฝรั่งเศสที่โรงเรียนในกรุงเทพ ฉันเข้าร่วมโครงการนักเรียนแลกเปลี่ยนและฉันเลือกไปเรียนที่ประเทศออสเตรเลียเป็นเวลาหนึ่งปี นั่นคือครั้งแรกที่ฉันได้รับประสบการณ์ในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในชีวิตจริงพร้อมกับเรียนรู้วัฒนธรรมด้วย

ฉันกลับมาประเทศไทยในปี 1997 เพื่อเรียนปริญญาตรีและต่อด้วยปริญญาโทสาขาการแปล ในตอนนั้นสาขาการแปลเป็นสาขาที่ค่อนข้างใหม่และมีสอนในมหาวิทยาลัยเพียงไม่กี่แห่ง ฉันเลือกเรียนการแปลเพราะอยากทำอะไรที่แตกต่าง

ขณะที่เรียนการแปล ฉันก็ทำงานเต็มเวลาในฐานะผู้ช่วยทนายความที่สำนักงานกฎหมายของอังกฤษในกรุงเทพ วิชาการแปลช่วยเสริมการทำงานของฉัน หลังจบการศึกษา ฉันทำงานแปลในเวลาว่าง และต่อมาก็ทำงานแปลเต็มเวลาในปี 2011 โดยเน้นแปลเอกสารกฎหมาย

เอกสารทุกประเภทต่างก็มีสิ่งที่น่าสนใจ ตอนแปลคำพิพากษา มันเหมือนฉันกำลังอ่านนิยายซึ่งตอนท้ายก็ทำให้ประหลาดใจในบางครั้ง ส่วนการแปลเชิงเทคนิคนั้น คำศัพท์ที่ได้เรียนรู้ระหว่างกระบวนการแปลก็กระตุ้นสมองของฉัน งานแปลเอกสารรับบุตรบุญธรรมเป็นงานที่ทำให้อิ่มเอมใจ ฉันรู้สึกยินดีเสมอที่จะรับงานแปลเอกสารรับบุตรบุญธรรม (พร้อมให้ส่วนลด) เพราะรู้ว่าเด็กด้อยโอกาสคนหนึ่งกำลังจะมีชีวิตที่ดีขึ้น

เนื่องงานของฉันเปลี่ยนแปลงไปมากตั้งแต่ฉันย้ายมาอยู่ประเทศออสเตรเลียภายใต้วีซ่าผู้ย้ายถิ่นฐานที่มีทักษะ (อาชีพนักแปล) ในปี 2012 เดิมฉันแปลเอกสารศาลและเอกสารกฎหมายให้นักลงทุนในประเทศไทย แต่เมื่อย้ายมาอยู่ประเทศออสเตรเลียแล้ว ประเภทของเอกสารเปลี่ยนเป็นเอกสารประกอบการย้ายถิ่นฐานและเอกสารเพื่อการสื่อสารสำหรับผู้ย้ายถิ่นฐานและผู้มีถิ่นที่อยู่ที่เป็นชาวไทยในประเทศออสเตรเลีย เอกสารเพื่อการสื่อสาร เช่น แผ่นพับข้อมูลการดูแลสุขภาพ และประกาศของเทศบาล มีปัญหาในการแปลอยู่บ้างเนื่องจากความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม ระบบกฎหมาย และระบบราชการ

ปริมาณงานในคู่ภาษาของฉัน (ไทยและอังกฤษ) ลดลงมาพักหนึ่งแล้ว ดังนั้นฉันจึงตั้งใจว่าจะพยายามรักษาลูกค้าเดิมไว้และขยายบริการ ฉันเริ่มรับงานตรวจแก้คำแปลที่แปลด้วยโปรแกรมอัตโนมัติ และจะรับงานโครงการขนาดใหญ่เพิ่มโดยจะทำหน้าที่เป็นผู้จัดการโครงการเพื่อบริหารงานแปลของนักแปลเก่งๆ ในทีม สำหรับในอนาคตนั้น ฉันอาจลองพิจารณาเป็นพี่เลี้ยงหรือติวเตอร์การแปลเพื่อแบ่งปันความรู้และประสบการณ์ของฉัน

My interest in language started with stamp collecting. I loved the issue titled '1988 Australia Living Together'. It was a colourful set of stamps that made me want to know more about its background. While studying English and French at school in Bangkok, I participated in a one-year student exchange programme and chose Australia. That was when I first gained practical experience of learning the English language as well as the culture.

I returned to Thailand in 1997 to study a BA and then an MA in Translation. At that time, this discipline was quite new and it was offered at only a few universities. I chose it because I wanted to do something different. While studying I also worked full-time as a legal assistant at an English law firm in Bangkok. The study complemented my work. After graduation, I took translation jobs in my free time, becoming a full-time translator in 2011 with a specialisation in legal documents.

All materials are interesting in some ways. Translating a court judgment is like reading a novel and sometimes the ending surprises you. For technical translation, such as surgery equipment, learning the terminology stimulates my brain. Adoption jobs are very fulfilling. I always feel glad to accept them (at a discount), knowing that an underprivileged child is about to have a better life.

My work has changed significantly since I migrated to Australia under a Skilled-migrant Visa (Translator) in 2012. It shifted from court and legal documents, which were translated for foreign investors in Thailand, to migration documents and communication materials for migrants and Thai residents in Australia. Materials such as health leaflets and council announcements raise some difficulties due to differences in the cultures, legal systems and government systems.

Work in my language combination (Thai-English) has declined, so my objectives are to retain my clients and expand my services. I have started taking post-editing jobs, and will accept more large-scale work and act as a project manager with help from a lovely team of translation contractors. In the future, I might consider becoming a mentor or a tutor to share my knowledge and experience.

Mind the gaps

Eyhab Bader Eddin considers semantic voids and how they can both help and hinder inclusivity and diversity

Semantic voids or *lacunes* (French), sometimes referred to as blank spaces or gaps, are defined by Menachem Dagut as the "non-existence in one language of a one-word equivalent for a designatory term found in another".[1] They are found solely at word level, as larger text units may always be conveyed in the target text. Such voids can result from a variety of factors, including cultural taboos, historical events and linguistic constraints.

They may be glossed in the target language but different approaches may apply depending on the type of void. Dagut classes them into four types – environmental, cultural, lexical and syntactic – and suggests they reflect "the unconcern of the target language speakers as a whole with this aspect of 'reality'." For instance, a society may lack a term for a certain colour or emotion because it has never been culturally relevant or emphasised. Alternatively, a word may have been lost due to social or political changes.

Environmental voids

This first type of semantic gap results from the untranslatability of natural phenomena. One common reliable way to deal with them is through transcription, with the transcribed forms frequently accepted into the target language, as with *tundra* (тундра; Russian).

Examples from Arabic include *Haboob* (هبوب; a type of intense dust storm that is common in the Middle East and North Africa), *samoom* (سموم; a hot, dry wind that blows across the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf region, often carrying sand and dust with it) and *wadi* (وادي; the channel of a watercourse that is dry except during periods of rainfall). While there are related concepts in English, such as dust storms and sandstorms, the specific environmental and cultural contexts are unique to Arabic. Similarly, 'cyclone', 'hurricane' and 'typhoon' are unique to certain geographical areas. A typhoon, for instance, is a tropical cyclone in the western Pacific or northern Indian Ocean.

Cultural voids

Further categorised into religious and secular voids, cultural voids include items such as *huppah* (חֻפָּה; Hebrew), a canopy under which a Jewish couple stand during their wedding ceremony, *samovar* (самовар; Russian), *shura* (شورى) and *haram* (حرام; Arabic). They are generally more translation resistant than their environmental counterparts and do not easily yield themselves to translation.

Shura is a type of advisory committee that is common in Arab societies, particularly Islamic ones. While there are similar concepts in other cultures, such as 'parliament' or 'cabinet', the specific cultural and political associations of *shura* are unique to Arabic. The same applies to *haram*, which refers to actions or behaviours that are forbidden in Islamic culture, including consuming alcohol or pork. Some may suggest translating it using concepts such as 'taboo' or 'prohibited', but this misses the specific cultural and religious overtones. Similarly, Eid (عيد) refers to religious festivals such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, and is most effectively rendered in the target text by means of transcription, with a footnote or explanatory note in brackets if necessary.

Lexical voids

This type of void occurs when a single word that denotes a particular set of semantic features can only be expressed by a phrase in the target language. In contrast with cultural and environmental voids, it is sometimes possible to find an adequate formulation to fill a lexical void. Three translation tactics are commonly used: selecting a one-word equivalent which covers part of the original meaning; paraphrasing selected features of the word (although this is sometimes unacceptable for stylistic reasons); and omitting the word altogether.

Examples include *tsundoku* (積ん読; Japanese), *sisu* (Finnish) and *Fernweh* (German). *Fernweh* describes a feeling of homesickness for a place that one has never visited, often experienced by travellers or those who have a strong attachment to a particular culture or location. While English speakers may use phrases like 'longing for a place I've never been', there is no single word in English that captures this feeling.

Tsundoku refers to the habit of buying and collecting books but never getting around to reading them. This may resonate with many English speakers but they have no direct equivalent. *Sisu*, meanwhile, refers to a kind of resilience and determination in the face of adversity, with a complex cultural context that cannot be fully captured by any single word or phrase in English.

In Spanish, examples include *sobremesa* (the time spent lingering at the table after a meal, enjoying each other's company),

NO DIRECT EQUIVALENCE
(Clockwise from top left) tundra, Eid, sobremesa, huppah and tsundoku

estrenar (to use or wear something for the first time), *empalagar* (to be so sweet or rich that it is unpleasant or cloying) and *tocayo/a* (a person who shares the same first name as you). These words offer a glimpse into hispanic cultures and help us to appreciate the diversity of the world around us.

Recent research has explored the ways in which lexical voids can be used as a tool for intercultural communication. Scholars have suggested that identifying and exploring such voids can help people to recognise and appreciate the cultural diversity of others, and to better understand the nuances and complexities of different cultures.[2]

Such gaps can also have significant cultural and social implications. For instance, the absence of words to describe certain mental health conditions or experiences can make it more difficult for individuals to seek help or feel understood. Similarly, the lack of vocabulary relating to a particular culture or ethnic group can contribute to feelings of marginalisation or erasure. As such, efforts to recognise and address lexical voids can be an important aspect of promoting diversity, inclusivity and understanding in society.

To understand the nuances that a word may contain we can look to related words and synonyms within the same language. For example, though they all relate to combustion and fire, the verbs 'scorch', 'singe', 'cremate', 'incinerate', 'combust' and 'scald' could not be used interchangeably by a translator.

In translating lexical voids, we are left with solutions such as using a hypernym or superordinate term, which usually encompasses more general semantic properties. One illustrative example is using 'burn' as a superordinate term, instead of using any of the more nuanced verbs listed above. The translator may then add words to pinpoint the meaning more accurately.

Syntactic voids

Syntactic voids arise when the target language has a suitable equivalent but it can only be used following a syntactical rearrangement or change in word order. In this scenario, a particular syntactic structure or pattern does not have a direct equivalent in the target language. Translating *podruga* (подруга; Russian) as 'girlfriend', for instance, involves adding a separate gender marker.

The gerund and many phrasal verbs in English have no direct equivalent in Arabic. Arabic does not use operators, which are auxiliaries that negate finite clauses and form interrogative clauses (among other things) in English. Syntactic voids pose challenges for translators and language learners, requiring a deeper understanding of the underlying structure and meaning of the language.

Bridging the void

Semantic voids reflect the complex and intertwined relationship between language and culture, and can provide insights into the unique ways in which different cultures understand and interpret the world. While they present challenges for communication and translation, they also serve as a tool for intercultural understanding and appreciation.

Strategies for translating semantic voids include borrowing words from the source language, creating new words in the target language, using loanwords and explaining the meaning through a footnote or gloss. The choice of strategy will depend on factors such as the target audience's level of familiarity with the source language, the purpose of the translation, and the cultural and linguistic context of both languages. Translators need to consider the implications of their choices carefully and strive to maintain the intended meaning and cultural nuances of the source.

Some challenges for dealing with semantic voids in translation include understanding the cultural and linguistic context of the source and target languages, identifying the intended meaning and cultural nuances of the source text, and determining the most appropriate translation strategy to use.

Additionally, translators need to be mindful of the potential for mistranslation or misinterpretation, and for unintended cultural or political implications. They must consider whether the target audience is sufficiently familiar with the source language and culture, and ensure that the translated text is clear, accurate and culturally appropriate.

Notes
1 Dagut, M (1978) *Hebrew-English Translation: A linguistic analysis of some semantic problems*, Haifa: University of Haifa, 45
2 Piller, I (2011) *Intercultural Communication: A critical introduction*, Edinburgh University Press

The Age of Translation

Adnan K Abdulla considers the transformative Translation Movement and one of its most disastrous legacies: the Arabic translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*

*I*n the annals of translation history, a single event, known as the Translation Movement, stands out. It lasted 350 years (800-1150 CE), and its centre was Baghdad, the newly built capital of the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1258 CE). It has been hailed as "an astounding achievement"[1] and an unprecedented process of cultural transmission and transformation.

This movement involved many segments of society, including rulers, courtiers, copyists, intellectuals and translators. It covered every subject studied at the time: astronomy, medicine, philosophy, ophthalmology, magic, mathematics, pharmacology, oneiromancy, agriculture, religion, cooking and sex. Working from three languages – Greek, Persian and Sanskrit – the translators were mostly non-Arabs (Persians) and non-Muslims (Syriacs).

Two of the earliest disciplines that attracted the attention of the rulers were astrology and philosophy. Astrology was an important pursuit for Persian royalty because it enabled the emperors to affirm that their rule was determined not by people but by the celestial bodies: they were chosen by the stars. No wonder this appealed to the Abbasids, whose power was challenged by many factions.

The interest in translating philosophy was different. It was born out of pure curiosity, as the rulers wanted to acquaint themselves with the wisdom of the great Greek philosophers whose civilisation was so famous. Later, it was encouraged by an interest in argumentation and dialectic, which became the tools for refuting opposing religious ideas from Manichaeans, Christians and Jews.

Aristotle's *Poetics* was a key work in this endeavour. It was translated from Syriac in 932 CE by Bishr ibn Matta, also known as Matthew. A Syriac scholar of considerable fame, he was considered an outsider by his contemporaries, as he was neither an Arab nor a Muslim, and was often ridiculed for his poor knowledge of Arabic language and literature.

Judging by his debate with the grammarian Abu Said Al-Sirafi (d.978 CE), Matthew was a formidable character who was feared by other intellectuals and did not shy away from challenging the accepted views of the establishment. Contemporary critics did not think highly of his translations and this assessment has not changed in modern times. Today, the translations are described as obscure, difficult and meaningless[2] – the same accusations levelled at him by his rivals.

Aristotle's Poetics

Nevertheless, after more than a thousand years – with all the changes in style and sensibility time brings – the translation is surprisingly easy to understand for modern readers, albeit with some rough edges (including grammatical errors and a lack of knowledge of literary terms). The major problem facing the translator was the genre: Arabs had not had a theatre, they had not heard of actors, plays, a chorus and all the related elements that Aristotle draws on. Matthew's knowledge of Greek and Arabic literature was deficient. He was a logician, not a literary critic.

He translated the pivotal terms 'comedy' and 'tragedy' as 'poetry of praise' and 'poetry of blame' respectively, unleashing a misunderstanding that continued for a millennium. The Arabs were baffled by the treatment of tragedy and the terms associated with it, such as 'theatre' (translated by Matthew as 'tent' or 'house'), 'actors' (which he rendered as 'hypocrites'/'double-faced') and 'chorus' (which became 'a group of singers and dancers'). Perhaps the Arabs came to the conclusion that neither the book nor its subject matter was worth the trouble of another translation.

There were, of course, other factors that contributed to the failure of that translation. It is marred by a literal approach, with Matthew imposing either a Syriac or Greek sentence structure on the Arabic. Its sentences are so disjointed that the greatest Arab philosophers of the era, including al-Kindi (d.873 CE), Al-Farabi (d.950 CE) and Averroes (d.1198 CE), struggled with it. They tried to understand it by commenting on it and making summaries or abridgements, all to no avail.

In 1174, Averroes wrote an abridgement that reduced the 27 chapters to 7. A short story by the 20th-century writer Jorge Luis Borges discusses Averroes' dilemma when translating 'tragedy' and 'comedy' into Arabic due to the legacy of Matthew's confusion around these terms. One of the consequences of his poor translation is that the Arabs did not comprehend the *Poetics* and did not seek to have plays performed or theatres built. Instead of building bridges between two cultures, the translation obscured Aristotle and rendered him incomprehensible.

ARABIC DEPICTION
An Islamic portrayal of Aristotle, c.1220

Defining tragedy

An excerpt from chapter 6 of the *Poetics*, which is known for its definition of tragedy.
Butcher's 1895 translation into English:
Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.

Matthew's translation into Arabic:
فصناعة المديح هي تشبيه ومحاكاة للعمل الإرادي الحريص والكامل، التي لها عظم ومداد، في القول النافع ما خلا كل واحد من الأنواع التي هي فاعلة في الأجزاء لا بالمواعيد وتعدل الانفعالات والتأثيرات بالرحمة والخوف، وتنقي وتنظف الذين ينفعلون.

Word-for-word back translation:
The craft of praise is an imitation and mimicry of voluntary action, which is careful and complete that has magnitude and weight in useful discourse. Except for each of the constituent parts which are effective in the parts, not in narrative. It modifies emotions and effects by compassion and fear. It cleanses and purges those who are affected.

Adnan Abdulla has written in more depth on this subject in his book *Translation in the Arab World: The Abbasid Golden Age.*

Notes
1 Gutas, D (1998) *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbasid Society. (2nd-4th/ 8th-10th centuries)*, London, Routledge, 2
2 Ayyad, S M (1967) *Kitab Aristotales fan al-shi'r*, Cairo, Dar val-Kattib al-Arabi, 180; Kilito, A (2002) *Lan tatakallam lughati*, Beirut, Dar al-Ṭaliah, 110
3 Gabrieli, F (1929) 'Intorno alla versione araba della Poetica di Aristotle'. In *Rendionti della Reale Accad nazim. Dri Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Roma, 6/5, 235
4 Gould, R (2014) 'The *Poetics* from Athens to al-Andalus: Ibn Rushd's Grounds for Comparison'. In *Modern Philology* 112(1), 24

Averroes' purpose in writing his summary was to find common laws that most nations share with regard to their poetry, but westerners in medieval times mistook it for an explanation of the *Poetics*. Because the original Greek manuscript was lost, this led to a series of further misunderstandings. In the Arabic version, Aristotle's *Poetics* becomes a work about poetry rather than drama. This led the Italian Arabist Gabrieli to describe the history of the translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* into Arabic as the "history of an error".[3]

Of its time
Before we criticise Matthew for his pioneering translation we have to remember that it belongs to the 10th century in its vocabulary, language and style. Our linguistic preferences and modes of expression are different from medieval ones. Moreover, the translator dealt with what he thought to be a philosophical treatise, not a literary or critical one.

The translation of the *Poetics* into Arabic was an unusual event for Abbasid culture because neither the book nor its contents fall within the 'proper' interests of the state or its philosophers. The subject matter is Greek drama, a topic irrelevant to Arabic literature. In fact, the Translation Movement itself showed no interest in the translation of theoretical texts or works related to literary criticism.

The only exceptions were the *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* because, for the Syriacs and the Arab philosophers who followed them, these were among the eight books of Aristotle's *Organon*. Therefore translating them was part of the philosophical endeavors of the Syriacs. This assumption was to have dramatic consequences for the fortunes and misfortunes of the *Poetics* in Arabic.

Matthew's contemporaries generally described his translation of the *Poetics* as unacceptable. To complicate matters, these philosophers were not knowledgeable about Greek or Arabic literature, so the impact of the translator not understanding the subject matter was compounded by the ignorance of the commentators. Coupled with Averroes' misleading summary, this is considered to be "one of the most productive misreadings in world literary history."[4]

Books

Language, Expressivity and Cognition

Mikołaj Deckert, Piotr Pęzik & Raffaele Zago (eds)

Bloomsbury, 2023, 256 pp; ISBN 9781350332867 Hardback £65

In their introductory chapter, the editors observe that in contemporary discourses, especially in western cultures, the expressive function of language predominates over the referential, and the emotional 'temperature' is often high. For example, in TV confrontation between participants is valued, and in social media self-expression and emotive evaluation often take precedence over substantive content.

The next two chapters study the embodiment of conceptual metaphors in the phrasal lexicons of languages. Hungarian is found to exemplify a dualistic cultural model with the head as a metaphor for rational thinking and the heart for irrational faculties. The heart also appears in expressions concerning memory and understanding – for example, reasonable thinking requires a 'calm heart'. In English, Italian and Polish, conceptual metaphors of emotion regulation and cognitive inhibition arise from mapping emotions and thoughts onto physical objects with which we attempt to limit physical contact – e.g. 'chase away thoughts' (Italian), 'reject an idea' (English), 'break through fear' (Polish).

The remaining seven chapters analyse corpora of language from specific contemporary sources. A corpus of Italian

news headlines reveals how terms for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers lose their semantic specificity in press discourse, becoming vehicles for framing such people as non-human, non-adult entities lacking individuation, agentivity and intentionality – e.g. 'New wave of refugees'. Where they are portrayed as active participants, it is typically as criminals or in other negatively evaluated roles. Similarly, the following chapter shows that Donald Trump and Matteo Salvini, in tweets and traditional speeches, foster a lack of empathy with immigrants and refugees by framing them as a threat (for example as potential terrorists), an economic burden to the societies they move into or a dangerous force of nature that must be controlled.

An investigation of online group identity patterns in English and Polish suggests that Poland, supposedly a more 'collectivistic' culture than the UK, is becoming more individualistic, while the UK moves towards collectivism. In both cultures, though especially in Polish, participants strive to establish online visibility and to identify with a group, but the Polish online comments have a higher emotional temperature, with more insult and denigration, while the UK comments have less abuse and more substantial argumentation.

An analysis of reports and commentaries on opinion polls concerning whether vaccination against Covid-19 should be made compulsory in Poland illustrates how lexical choices are used to sway public opinion. An example is the choice between two adjectives (and their related nouns) which both have the broad sense of 'compulsory' – one with the connotation of 'enforced', the other neutral or positively evaluated. The neutral term may, for instance, be used in a poll question but the negatively connotated one in a report on the poll result. The distribution of the unmarked and marked terms correlates with their occurrence in left- and right-leaning sources.

A study of Arabic-English code-switching in Egyptian rap music and associated social networks suggests that multilingual speakers do not necessarily use their L1 as the default for expressing emotion; using another language can reduce inhibitions about expressing strong emotions and addressing taboos. A comparison of American and British TV teen dramas shows evidence of synchronic and diachronic variation, such as in the use of

'totally' as a marker of emotional highlighting. The final chapter investigates the appropriate transfer of emotional and cultural information in visual images in film and theatre to audio description in Turkish.

Language, Expressivity and Cognition offers a wealth of specific examples (mostly in their original languages with English translations) and statistical data, and detailed descriptions of corpus construction and analysis. The scope is wide but nevertheless restricted; for example, there is no consideration of the expressive functions of prosody, and the data consists predominantly of written discourse. All the chapters, in their various ways, provide interesting insights into contemporary language and its role in expressing – and provoking – emotional reactions.
Jonathan Marks MCIL

The Long Journey of English

Peter Trudgill
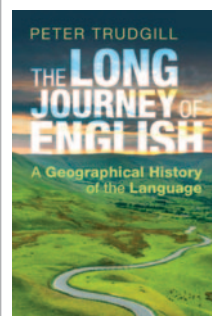
CUP, 2023, 190 pp; ISBN 9781108949576 Paperback £18.99

Where did this journey begin and when? English is descended from Proto-Germanic (PG), spoken 3,000 years ago in an area covering what is now Copenhagen and southern Sweden. It was a branch of Proto-Indo European (PIE), originating in the Urheimat, around Caucasia, perhaps 4,000 years ago. Over time, the PG homeland split, one part migrating south-west to the current Dutch-German border.

The first Germanic people on our shores may have been mercenaries under Roman command fighting the Iceni, Picts and other troublesome, Brittonic-speaking tribes. After the Roman withdrawal in 410 CE, waves of Angles, Frisians, Jutes, Saxons and others landed and settled in East Anglia, Kent, Sussex and Hampshire. Place names are their calling cards – Swaffham, for example, means 'home of the Swabians'.

PG differed from PIE in terms of syllable stress: the latter had randomly placed accents, whereas the former had trochaic stress. This became a characteristic of English pronunciation, e.g. hárvest, séven, wínter.

The new language was spread partly by native Brittonic speakers learning the new tongue through trial and error. Mistakes were made, repeated, and eventually newer forms created and accepted. By the mid-9th century, Old English (OE) was spoken throughout the land. Cornish, Cumbric, Manx and Gaelic clung on in the peripheries, as did Early Scots and Welsh. Overlapping with this, Vikings introduced Norse to the north and east, from which a thousand or so words are still current (e.g. 'get', 'skin', 'weak').

The Norman Conquest had little long-term effect on the evolution of English. In contacts between competing languages, demography eventually supersedes prestige. By 1400 Norman French had had its day in England and Ireland. Only a few fossilised forms survive (one being 'court martial'). This same phenomenon had led to the Norse invaders abandoning Danish by the 10th century in favour of French.

Modern English is approached through the prism of the colonial era. Settlers in the New World needed new words, anglicised versions of native flora and fauna: 'racoon', 'terrapin', 'persimmon' (all from Virginia Algonquian). Pidgin languages took root to facilitate trade. The author refers to how dispossessed North American cultures were killed off "sometimes deliberately, sometimes through carelessness and indifference".

Although not as appetisingly conjectural as neurolinguistics, nor as eye-bogglingly *de pointe* as machine translation and deep learning, historical linguistics, in the right writer's hands, can narrate something of great importance. That is, how men and women take their language abroad, and how it can lead them to travel, settle, inter-marry and set off again. In *The Long Journey of English: A geographical history of the language*, Professor Peter Trudgill has crafted a well-grounded exposition of language development, with insights from archaeology and anthropology. The epochs and strands and threads of language evolution, as well as its geography, are navigated with a deft hand.
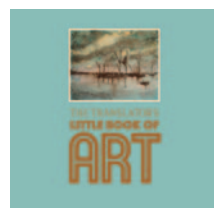**Graham Elliott MCIL**

The Translator's Little Book of Art/ Poetry

Elizabeth De Zoysa, Caroline Durant, Felicity Pearce et al

The Translator's Little Book of Poetry, BLT Creations, 2020, 58 pp; ISBN 9781715896799 Paperback
£8.95 + p&p

The Translator's Little Book of Art, BLT Creations, 2023, 50 pp; ISBN 9780957393158 Paperback
£15.95 + p&p

True to its title, *The Translator's Little Book of Poetry* is a brief compendium of poems devised with translators in mind. It comprises 16 carefully selected works in varying styles, ranging from Shakespeare to the present day, each of which serves as a doorway into a topic of particular significance in the translator's daily work.

These topics are discussed in insightful commentaries by translation professionals, which accompany the poetic texts. Lewis Carroll's mostly incomprehensible poem *Jabberwocky* introduces us, quite aptly, to the issue of understanding your subject matter. Many translators will recall that feeling of being faced by a text that looks grammatically correct but is completely impenetrable. The advice offered in this case is that to be successful in their profession, translators have to specialise and learn how to deal with highly technical material.

Similarly, Christina Rossetti's poem *In the Bleak Midwinter* serves to focus the reader's mind on the subject of how best we should (or should not) translate taboo words, while Edgar Allan Poe's *Annabel Lee* brings up the matter of poetic musicality and how it can be conveyed between languages. As well as reflecting on the challenges and choices commonly faced by translators, this approach allows readers to enjoy verses they might not otherwise have delved into, and encourages close reading of the texts in order to identify the translation issues concerned.

The new companion volume, *The Translator's Little Book of Art,* takes a similar approach using pictorial art rather than poetry as a starting point for illustrating some of the complexities typically encountered by translators. The inspired selection of works spans the ages from ancient Egypt to modern Pop Art, addressing such matters as the formal restrictions and boundaries (grammatical, cultural, etc) imposed on the translation process, instances in which these boundaries become hazy, and whether it might be licit to transgress them sometimes. It is worth noting that both of the books reviewed here have a short bibliography and glossary at the end.

These brief volumes are a delight to read, or just to browse. Moreover, in a world currently obsessed by the linguistic achievements of artificial intelligence tools, they are a timely reminder of the very human intelligence, sensitivity and discernment needed to produce a successful translation.
Ross Smith MCIL CL
Available from bltcreations2020@gmail.com. CIOL member discount for both books (while stocks last): £19.95 + p&p. Quote CIOL2.

Chinglish evolution

Lamese: the new language that is taking China by storm

BILIN LIU

In early 2021, a new language took the internet by storm. Immensely popular among young Chinese netizens, Lamese was invented by the content creator 五十岚上夏 (pinyin: *wǔ-shí-lán-shàng-xià*) and is also known as Lanyu (岚语, literally 'Lan-language'). In his videos on the video-sharing platforms Douyin and Bilibili, 五十岚上夏 expertly speaks Chinese (Mandarin) in an English-like manner, captivating audiences of all kinds. Even celebrities are learning the language.

Lamese can be considered an English transliteration of Mandarin – a translation method typically adopted by translators when they fail to locate an English equivalent for a Chinese expression. A notable example is *baozi*, once transcribed as *bāozi* (the pinyin of 包子), a filled bun. So what sets Lamese apart as a cyber-linguistic sensation? Its origin may be traced back to the way English is used in contemporary China.

Translation into English or Chinglish?

In 2008, Beijing played host to the Olympic Games, an opportunity for the country to showcase its rich history and diverse culture on the world stage. Since then, tourists have flocked to China to explore its sights, sounds and flavours. Chinese people, particularly those in the service industry, have gone the extra mile to make foreign guests feel at home.

This includes translating their 'working texts' – things like tourist brochures, restaurant menus and warning signs – into English, the current global lingua franca. While this gesture is commendable, some of the translations by those with limited English proficiency or automated online translators did not achieve the intended effect, leading to confusion, ridicule and even fear.

In one case, a warning sign (小心地滑; 'Caution the floor is wet') became 'Slide carefully'. How could the translation deviate so much from the source text? The automatic translator misread 地 (*dì*; 'floor') as the pinyin *de*, which is an adverbial phrase indicator much like the '-ly' suffix in English.

Another classic example is the translation of the Sichuan appetizer 夫妻肺片 (*fū-qī-fèi-piàn*) made with thinly sliced beef, beef offal and spices. While it was officially standardised as 'Sliced beef and ox tongue in chili sauce' in a menu produced by the Beijing government for the Olympics, it has been translated more frequently as 'Husband and Wife Lung Slice'.[1] Creepy, isn't it? This would undoubtedly put off foreign diners.

Such attempts to translate Chinese into idiomatic English have often resulted in Chinglish – a word-for-word, mechanical translation. Although this has led to some humorous mistakes, Chinglish has become a unique form of English, analogous to Kongish and Singlish (variants spoken in Hong Kong and Singapore). It is not meant to be used for communicating with native English speakers, but rather to indicate how

English has integrated into Chinese society and can be properly understood and spoken by Chinese people. In short, Chinglish is a reflection of China's linguistic and cultural landscape, and a testament to the country's ever-evolving identity.

The rise of meme culture

Despite advancements in automatic Chinese-English translators, Chinglish translations persist and have become a source of entertainment for Chinese speakers. A popular trend among younger generations is using memes in text messages which add Chinglish punchlines to funny pictures.

When saying 'I'm gonna teach you a lesson' or 'I'm gonna give you a piece of my mind', for example, a meme with the phrase 'Give you some color (to) see see!' (给你点颜色瞧瞧) might be sent. In this context, 'color' is a metaphor for an angry expression and a Chinglish speaker would instantly understand the connotation. Such memes exemplify the development of English in China as it adapts to and blends with local culture.

The rise of meme culture in China has led to an evolution of Chinglish with a shift toward incorporating more Chinese elements and fewer English ones. For instance, 你开心就可以 ('You are happy and then it is ok') is translated as *You happy jiu okay*. In this case, the adverb 就 ('then') is not translated into English but transliterated as *jiu*. The Chinglish version follows a paratactic structure similar to Chinese, omitting the 'are' between 'you' and 'happy' and the 'it' and 'is' from 'it is ok'.

© Unsplash

This trend of transliteration and parataxis marks a departure from the English nature of Chinglish. Only the English form and sound remain while the words, grammar and meaning are uniquely Chinese. This change provides a foundation for the development of Lamese, a new language that blends elements of both Chinese and English.

Lamese: Chinese soul in English skin

Before we delve into Lamese it is worth mentioning the earlier internet language Guoese (郭语), which gained popularity on Douyin. Its creator 迷人的郭老师 (Charming Teacher Guo) became a hit in late 2019 due to her exaggerated Chinese pronunciation of words such as 'kiwi fruit' (猕猴桃, *mí-hóu-táo*). Influenced by young Douyin users, nowadays it is broadly pronounced as *mí-hó-tēl*.

Other creators soon jumped on the bandwagon, mimicking her unique language to gain exposure. One of them, 五十岚上夏, was inspired by Guoese and Chinglish to invent Lamese, which is essentially Chinese with an English skin. In his most liked video on Douyin, he raps 'Wobzy huay ABC, wolha huyshore Lamese, woljus ranren gorpanbuchy', which is transliterated from 我不止会ABC, 我还会说岚语, 我就是让人高攀不起 (*wǒ-bù-zhǐ-huì ABC, wǒ-hái-huì-shuō-lán-yǔ, wǒ-jiù-shì-ràng-rén-gāo-pān-bù-qǐ*; literally 'I can not only say ABC, but can speak Lamese, I just want to be out of your league').

From this example, we can see that Lamese has three distinct features:
1 It is semantically Chinese but phonetically English. For example, *gorpanbuchy* [ˈɡɔːpænbətʃi] sounds like English but means 高攀不起 ('be out of your league').
2 It is a mutable language because each morpheme may have different variants but they still carry the same meaning. For example, *wo* and *wol* both refer to 我 ('I').
3 It has no fixed vocabulary as each word is constructed from neighbouring thought groups. For instance, *huay* (会 *huì*, 'can') can be a single word but can also join *huyshore* (会说 *huì-shuō*, 'can speak').

So, why has Lamese become such a popular internet language? The answer is clear. As a simplified and sinicised Chinglish, it is easy for Chinese people to learn and speak, making it attractive to a large audience. In fact, any Chinese speaker could acquire it by watching a video for just one minute.

As a cyber-language, Lamese is odd enough to pique people's curiosity, leading to a shared interest in cryptolalia among internet users. That being said, Lamese is unlikely to last forever, whereas Chinglish is expected to continue to evolve and thrive as a crucial component of China's multilingualism.

Notes
1 www.yingyushijie.com/information/detail/id/3989.html

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Letters

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Top spot: palindromes

I was having a chat online with my brother-in-law in Venezuela the other day and the subject of datelines that read in both directions (*capicúa*), like 22.1.22, came up. This led on to palindromes: words, phrases or sequences that can be read backwards or forwards with the same meaning. English readers will be familiar with items such as 'able was I ere I saw Elba', 'a man, a plan, a canal, Panama', 'Madam I'm Adam', or even 'evil rats on no star live'. There are also individual words such as 'racecar', 'civic' and 'kayak'. In Spanish, we can find *Anita lava la tina*, *ojo rojo* and *Yo hago yoga hoy*.

Palindromes, of course, should not be confused with semordnilaps, which are words that can be read both ways, but with different meanings, such as 'star'/'rats' and 'drawer'/'reward'.

Few people have taken the subject to such extremes as John Pool, whose *Lid Off a Daffodil* of 1982 is a whole volume of unlikely palindromes, complete with colourful and original illustrations which can be viewed both upside and downside.

So I wonder whether palindromes exist in a wider range of languages? Do share your examples.

Tim Connell Hon FCIL

Star Letter prize

Next issue's Star Letter writer will receive a copy of the League of the Lexicon board game, which we review at cutt.ly/TLWinter. For an interview with its creator, see page 12. If you love languages and games or puzzles, write to us at linguist.editor@ciol.org.uk for your chance to win.

At home in Mongolian

How the Mongolian language belies the myth that the nation's nomads are rootless drifters. By Enkhee Namsrai

Over 30 years have passed since Mongolia opened up to the free world, but its culture and language remain comparatively unknown. Many people still picture Mongolia as a vast expanse of grassy steppe across which nomadic herders wander at will in search of better grazing. This romantic notion poses challenges to linguists and others keen to correct embedded cultural misconceptions.

Mongolia is the 19th largest country in the world. About 40% of its 3.4 million citizens are herders. Many of the others live in the capital. To provide insights into the culture, I would like to take you on a journey through the key cultural concepts 'dwelling place' and 'home', starting with my favourite poem, *Bi Mongol Hun* ('I am a Mongol') by Ch. Chimed. The first verse, in my translation, reads:

I, born in a herdsman's *ger* [yurt]
From which dried-dung smoke ascends –
My *nutag* [dwelling-place] in the wilds –
I think of it as my cradle.

Here the poet's home is the family *ger* (a wood-lattice, felt and canvas yurt) where he was born. His *nutag*, rendered as 'dwelling place', is the area where that *ger* has been pitched. Mongolian herders move their homes with the seasons, four or five times a year, usually returning to the same places. Winter and spring are passed in sheltered places, ideally with good access to fuel and water; summer grazing is not over-used; and the autumn wild hay harvest is scythed ahead of ice and snow.

Thus there is no random nomadic drifting at all, but a stable and sustainable pastoral cycle (barring natural disasters). If conditions allow, the distance from place to place may be only a few kilometres. The area containing all of a family's annual *ger* sites comprises their *nutag*. Where one was born is also one's *nutag*.

As a member of the Altaic language group, Mongolian is an agglutinative language. Illustrating this using the word-stems *ger* and *nutag* gives a good sense of how fundamental these concepts are. The agglutinations of *nutag* are particularly revealing: *nutagshih* (to get used to a new dwelling place); *nutgiinhan* (those from a particular *nutag*); *nutaglah* (to pitch one's *ger*, to settle, make a habitation); *nutgarhag* (favouring people from one's own *nutag*); and, perhaps most meaningful of all, *nutagluulah* (to lay a deceased person to rest).

In this way, *nutag* embodies the journey of life, from one's birthplace to one's final resting place. The *nutag* where the *ger* is pitched creates the locus for human existence in harmony with nature, especially with the livestock on which herders' lives depend.

The Mongol *ger* is largely unaltered in its design for centuries. Its furnishings are arranged according to ancient custom. It can be packed up or erected in a couple of hours, and can be simply adapted for comfort in torrid heat or the bitterest cold. The door always faces into the morning sun. A source of water should be nearby, and will be kept pure. Firewood may be used but dried cow dung, as in the poem, also makes an excellent peat-like fuel, whose smoke is scented with wild herbs. Here are some agglutinations of *ger*: *ger bul* (family); *geriinhenteigee* (with one's own family); *gerleh* (to get married); *gergii* (a wife); and *gergiitei* (a married man).

The physical and conceptual *ger* constitutes the shared core of Mongol social experience; it is a circle of life where young and old each have their place. Etymology and tradition ensure Mongol speakers absorb a particular sense of 'home' and 'dwelling-place', even if they were not born in a *ger* scented with dried-dung smoke, pitched in the wilderness.

Today many Mongols live in blocks of flats or wooden houses, but they still use *ger* to mean home. For townsfolk, *nutag* comes to mean their own rural birthplace or the place their family originally came from. Thus, they are not foot-loose nomads. A sense of belonging to a particular place is still hard-wired into the personal identity of most Mongols, even in this rapidly evolving culture.

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The secret juror

What happens when a juror doesn't speak English? A peek at a flawed system and what it means for justice in the UK

What happens when a person with limited abilities in English is called for jury duty? It is a question I have pondered since my partner became a British citizen and I realised that she could be summoned to serve at any point. Although she can communicate well enough in conversational English – and was able to pass the language requirements for citizenship – she certainly wouldn't be able to follow all of the proceedings in a UK court setting. Were she to sit on a jury, this could potentially render the verdict unsound.

I hoped that anyone without sufficient knowledge of English would automatically be exempt, but I knew very little about the process, never having stepped foot inside a court building. That changed earlier this year when my summons arrived in the post. An explanatory leaflet listed the 'exceptional circumstances' that may excuse an individual

from jury service, including serious illness and being a full-time carer or new parent. None of them related to the ability to understand the language of the court.

Indeed, the only mention of language support was for speakers of British Sign Language, who are entitled to an interpreter, and speakers of Welsh, who can access the documentation in Welsh. Nevertheless, the list is not exhaustive and I imagined that if a person were to raise concerns about their level of English they would be let off. What was less clear was whether an individual would consider their lack of fluency to be a legitimate reason since it wasn't given as an example. My experience at the court suggests not.

Going to court
Situated in a diverse area of east London, Snaresbrook Crown Court is the biggest crown

court in the UK. As I arrived at the main building another first-time juror approached me to ask how long she would have to stay, as she was anxious to get back to work. She was Polish and it quickly became clear that her English was not fluent enough to follow a complex trial. I suggested that she tell the court officers about her language abilities and that she would probably be excused.

Inside, the waiting rooms bustled with nearly 200 jurors, an overhead announcement reminding us to sign in if we had not already done so. The Polish woman I had spoken to earlier joined the queue, but when she reached the desk it turned out she had already registered. Although she had misunderstood this simple instruction, the clerks raised no concerns. I approached her again to recommend that she flag her comprehension difficulties, but then my case was called ▶

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▶ and our paths didn't cross again until the following week. She was still at court.

At the start of the trial, I was ushered into a small courtroom with 14 other potential jurors. Before the jury was sworn, the judge asked if anyone felt unable to serve, focusing on whether we knew any of the people involved in the case. Even though the court is in a diverse part of London, and at least four of us did not speak English as a first language, she did not highlight potential language issues.

As the trial began and we got to know each other a little, I felt relieved that we all seemed to speak English fluently. Juror 11 was friendly but kept himself to himself, so it was only when we came to deliberate, after six days of evidence, that we realised he had not followed the proceedings fully. His contributions indicated that he had not understood the basic chronology of the case, and his abilities in English appeared to be a factor in this.

It was concerning that we were, effectively, a person down. Was it our place as jurors to raise this? How could we when everything said in the deliberation room is confidential? There was nothing in our weighty folder of guidance to indicate the right course of action. In the end, we did nothing beyond trying to fill the juror in on any details he had missed.

If my experience is in any way indicative of the wider situation in UK courts, there may be implications for the right to a fair trial and the soundness of convictions. Simple measures could be put in place to ensure that people with limited proficiency in English can easily be excused from serving. In my case, I do not believe that replacing Juror 11 would have made a difference to the outcome. We took time to consider all of the evidence in detail and the verdict was unanimous.

Do you have experiences in your line of work or area of expertise or study that you would like to publish anonymously? To share your story confidentially, email linguist.editor@ciol.org.uk with the subject heading 'The Secret…'.

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