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CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS

The Linguist

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The Linguist

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S NOTES

Having navigated some difficult times since 2020, I am glad to say that the Chartered Institute of Linguists is in good shape as we enter the new membership year. First and foremost, it is worth celebrating that CIOL has been fortunate to maintain a strong and active membership community across more than 50 countries and speaking over 50 languages. The diversity of our membership underscores our international reach, and the breadth and depth of the linguistic expertise we represent.

We have also expanded our portfolio of highly respected qualifications, introducing the degree-level Certificate in Translation (CertTrans) to complement our established Master's-level Diploma in Translation (DipTrans). We continue to support the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting (DPSI) in the UK and have added Language Level Assessments and Certified English to our international assessments. These qualifications enable language professionals to validate their skills across a wide range of languages and contexts. In the past year, hundreds of candidates took CIOL professional qualifications in more than 30 countries and languages.

In many ways we have re-invented ourselves – not least in offering our qualifications wholly online – but we have also hosted large in-person and international online conferences annually since the pandemic lifted. Our events in London in 2022, 2023 and 2024, each culminating in the CIOL Awards, have brought linguists together to network, share knowledge and celebrate outstanding achievements in the field of languages.

We have also significantly increased our stakeholder engagement, research initiatives and policy impact. By working closely with ITI, ATC, NRPSI, language stakeholders, universities and our governance community of expert linguists, we have expanded the range of knowledge resources and good practice guidance available on our website. Online engagement has been a key focus and we have increased our social media output, put on regular webinars and virtual events, and invested in our mentoring platform and online training.

I am also very proud that *The Linguist*, our flagship publication, continues to provide engaging writing on a wide range of topics, bringing valuable insights and endlessly enjoyable reading to our many readers – including those who increasingly read it online. And this would not be possible without Miranda's editorial flair and the ongoing support of our excellent Editorial Board.

But, for me personally, perhaps the most encouraging thing which has developed in the last year or so is the positive, active and mutually supportive relationship we have with ITI. It's a real pleasure to work with their Chief Executive Sara Robertson; and also with Raisa McNab at the Association of Translation Companies. We've also re-connected with Alison Rodriguez, President at the International Federation of Translators (FIT). Things get better when we work together. So it's great to have such good colleagues and friends in the world of languages and linguists, both in the UK and around the world.

John Worne

EDITOR'S LETTER

At the Paris Olympics, the use of AI was extensive, not only in assisting sporting decisions but also in helping visitors to navigate the city. More than 3,000 metro staff were given devices offering automated interpretation in 16 languages. A poor translation there might, at worst, send sports fans off in the wrong direction, but in other contexts, the use of AI may be more risky.

In medicine, reports of doctors routinely using Google Translate are concerning, and leave room for confusion over accountability for potentially fatal miscommunications (p.33). Issues such as this have led some to call for a temporary halt to AI development while regulations for their safe use can be established. We asked four stakeholders to give their views on the situation (p.8).

Also in this issue we look at the difficulties of interpreting in factory settings (p.22), the workplace challenges faced by neurodivergent language professionals (p.24) and ways of dealing with vicarious trauma (p.18). When I spoke to project manager Ayah Najadat for an article about the work of Gazan translators (p.11), we discussed vicarious trauma extensively. Her team works with people who have experienced horrendous events, including survivors of the Turkey-Syria earthquake and those fleeing war in Sudan, Gaza and Ukraine. So she considers trauma-informed sessions to be essential.

We also shine a light on Urdu with a fascinating piece about its history (p.20), and an insightful conversation between Editorial Board member Anam Zafar and first-time novelist Ayesha Manazir Siddiqi (p.14).

Miranda Moore

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

News The latest from the languages world

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Languages in state

"To be British is to be multilingual" said writer Sophia Smith Galer in a fascinating article for the *i* newspaper on the importance of nations' Indigenous languages. And it is interesting to explore the way the state opening of Parliament reflects the reality of multilingual Britain in its most official state proceedings.

MPs swear an oath of allegiance in order to serve, and the rules state that it must be taken in English first, and can be repeated in Welsh, Scottish Gaelic or Cornish. All six of Cornwall's MPs swore their oaths in Cornish. Equally symbolic were oaths in Welsh from the four Plaid Cymru MPs, and in Gaelic from Torcuil Crichton, the new MP for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Scotland's Western Isles).

In protest at the requirement to pledge loyalty to the king, SDLP MP Claire Hanna from Northern Ireland made an additional statement in Irish and English. The glaring omission in the rules of Irish, and of other recognised regional and minority languages such as Scots, shows how inherently political such ceremonies are. Who can forget that Welsh was only allowed to be spoken in Westminster for the first time in 2018 (and then only in the Welsh Grand Committee)?

Another interesting element is the presence of other languages hidden in plain sight. MPs can choose between a religious text or non-religious affirmation for their swearing-in ceremony. The religious books that can be used include various forms of the Bible (in several languages including Gaelic, Welsh and Hebrew), the Qur'an, the Sundar Gutka, the Torah, the Book of Mormon, the Zohar, the Dhammapada and the Bhagavad Gita. The latter was used by the outgoing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in perhaps the most high-profile use of a non-English text.

Courts face interpreting issues

Among the challenges facing the new UK government is the current state of the courts system, with people routinely waiting two years to be tried. One of the factors creating delays is the difficulty in providing consistently high-quality court interpreters. The issue was compounded this summer by problems with the introduction of a new interpreter booking system by thebigword, who are contracted to provide language services in courtrooms.

CIOL's CEO John Worne co-authored a piece in *The Law Gazette* with Dr Diana Singureanu considering ways to "re-evaluate the impact of more than a decade of outsourcing interpreting services in the legal sector". It was a timely reminder of the key principles necessary for safe and effective language services in the justice system, as the government prepares its tender for a new contract, expected this autumn.

What the papers say…

FT FINANCIAL TIMES

AI Industry Races to Adapt Chatbots to India's Many Languages, 23/6/24

The tools are aimed at fast-growing Indian industries, such as the country's large customer service and call centre sector. India has 22 official languages, with Hindi the most widespread, but researchers estimate the languages and dialects spoken by its 1.4bn people rise into the thousands. Google on Tuesday launched its Gemini AI assistant in nine Indian languages. Microsoft's Copilot AI assistant is available in 12 Indian languages.

theguardian

"I Felt My Tongue Coming Alive": Learning a critically endangered Indigenous language is a small triumph, 14/7/24

The motivation couldn't be any more profound: Kooma, also known as Guwamu, is critically endangered… I travelled to Canberra to engage with some of the very limited resources available… In the days and months that followed, I felt my tongue coming alive. Slow, synaptic connections firing, activating the scores of muscles in my face, neck, lips, jaw and tongue, making the enunciation of Kooma words and phrases possible. I know I don't have it right yet. I know my grammar is rudimentary. But I am speaking, writing and more importantly thinking in Kooma nearly every day.

THE SCOTSMAN

'Glasgow Airport Forced to Change Restaurant Sign after Embarrassing Gaelic Translation Error', 15/5/24

[The sign] translates into English as 'are you hungry?' – but is an Irish Gaelic phrase, not Scottish. Mr MacSween posted on X with an image of the sign: "Good morning @GLA_Airport, maybe don't just google your translations… Hire someone to translate it or even just try @LearnGaelicScot maybe."

News

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Inside Parliament

Philip Harding-Esch considers how language policy might change under the new UK government

Following the general election in the UK, it's all change in Parliament. Over half of the 2024 intake of MPs are brand new to Parliament and the roles of many re-elected MPs have changed. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Modern Languages was dissolved, along with Parliament, when the election was called and will re-form with newly elected officers (both MPs and peers). This is not expected to take place before September.

What does this mean for language issues? At the moment the answers are mainly speculative, but we can identify some areas of interest. For example, in recent months progress has been made towards an update to the Victims' Code to ensure there is access to appropriately qualified language professionals in legal proceedings. A public consultation was announced as part of this process, but the precise plan for ensuring this important update takes place is unclear.

Another key area is healthcare. The Covid-19 Inquiry highlighted the importance of communication with communities without mentioning languages, or translating and interpreting, specifically. How the new government will respond remains to be seen.

In education, the new Secretary of State, Bridget Phillipson – herself a language graduate – has announced a curriculum review for schools, and has paused previously planned reforms to post-16 and vocational education. It is unclear how this will affect languages education. The new GCSE specification for languages will, however, apply in classrooms from September (with first exams in 2026). The National Consortium for Languages Education (NCLE) – comprising the British Council, Goethe-Institut and IOE UCL's Faculty of Education and Society – enters its second year of modelling schools-based leadership in languages. It applies evidence-informed methodologies to teach the new GCSE successfully and help schools tackle inequalities in take-up.

Phillipson made an encouraging speech in July, in which she expressed a desire to see "cross-border collaboration on skills training. School trips and scholarships, exchange programmes and language learning, policy conversations that span the early years to learners with special educational needs. And I want our universities to work with their international partners to deliver courses across borders." This speaks to widespread concerns – from schools to universities – about the post-Brexit/post-pandemic decline in school visits and exchanges, and student mobility.

In the media

PHILIP HARDING-ESCH

The new UK Secretary of State for Education may be a language graduate but she will have her work cut out, as the annual Language Trends survey found there has been no real improvement in languages uptake in schools. Reporting on the survey in July, *The Independent* highlighted that three in five secondary schools now struggle to recruit languages teachers.

One piece of good news, heralded by *Schoolsweek*, was Ofqual's announcement that it had aligned grading standards in GCSE French and German with Spanish, after years of complaints that they were not graded the same. Their commitment to keep making adjustments, as necessary, was widely welcomed.

A series of bad news stories about redundancies and departmental closures and mergers across higher education were largely ignored by the UK press. Languages and associated social sciences were affected in institutions such as Goldsmiths, Lincoln and Queen Mary University of London.

It was interesting to see coverage of innovation in the provision of BSL, with all ambulances in the North East equipped with the SignVideo app. The BBC showed how patients and crews could now interact with a BSL interpreter on screen, quoting Rachel Austin, coordinator at Hartlepool Deaf Centre, that the service "will help save more lives".

Congratulations to the 16 winners of the annual PEN Translates awards, who were celebrated by *The Bookseller*. Covering titles in ten languages, PEN encourages UK publishers to "acquire more books from other languages, helping them to meet the costs associated with translation".

The Guardian ran a great article in its long-running series in which readers answer other readers' questions, in this case: 'Which language is the most beautiful?' It attracted varied responses, from personal anecdotes to more technical linguistic insights, some vigorous debate and left-field comments.

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

Meet our members

Sarah Bowyer

A far-ranging Q&A – from being the first in her family to go to university, to what footballers and translators have in common

You were a lawyer before a translator. Did you always want to work with languages?
When I was four months, my mum noted in a baby book she kept that I'd do "something musical". I wanted to be a pianist, but at 15, I did work experience at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and realised I didn't have the financial safety net to take that path.

I was lucky to have a gift for languages, and have always relished the chance to use those skills in my career, which is why I wanted to work for an international law firm. There were wonderful opportunities, including a six-month secondment to Brussels and a project where I presented research on Argentinian law to a foreign affairs committee at the House of Lords. When ill health forced me to reassess my priorities, I knew I could build a career that blended my interests while harnessing all the valuable experience from legal practice.

What is one of your favourite assignments?
I'm an animal lover so I enjoyed a recent project translating contracts for breeders and trainers in elite equestrian sports. I had to find out a lot about the horses and the way they are handled, trained and cared for. Research is one of my favourite parts of the job, and I went the extra mile (or should that be furlong?), visiting a riding centre to get some tips and terminology. I'm really looking forward to the CIOL's event on equine and canine translation later this year.

What has been your biggest achievement?
Celebrating my graduation with a first-class degree in Modern and Medieval Languages from Cambridge University with my mum and grandparents. I was the first in my family to go to university, having grown up in a single-parent household and attended a state school in a disadvantaged part of the North West.

What are the biggest challenges when translating for international sports bodies?
Some of my translations engage fans through player interviews, match previews, museum catalogues etc, but I'm becoming specialised in sports law. It's hugely varied, but I've developed a niche in translating disciplinary proceedings. I also help clients with contracts to host global competitions such as the FIFA World Cup and Olympics.

The financial and reputational stakes are high, and the subject matter can be challenging. If an athlete risks a fine or ban because of something they've said, it's important to convey that correctly, with an awareness of differing cultural nuances and perceptions. The work comes with a degree of pressure, but my regular clients are as invested as I am in working as a team to get it right.

You're a member of Women in Football. How important is it to you to belong to organisations focused on your specialisms?
It's not just about personal development, networking and keeping up to date; it's also about advocacy and visibility. Women in Football challenges discrimination in a sector where it's a real issue (a potential client once said they would "obviously" send their football translations to a man). Linguists can combat this, most obviously by championing inclusive and respectful language choices.

Are there any transferable skills between football and translation?
I see a parallel in terms of the frustrations and joys of honing one's craft. Top athletes still train hard every day. The most successful freelance translators are self-starters who are motivated to do the "hard yards" behind the scenes and have the humility to accept feedback in their pursuit of perfection.

Is doing voluntary work important to you?
I occasionally do pro bono translations, but I feel strongly that upholding high professional standards is one of the best ways to showcase the value of human translators, so I sit on the ITI's Professional Conduct Committee. I'm also a speaker at university events. It's important to stress that translation is a profession, not a side hustle. This also helps us to differentiate ourselves from machines and address some of our common challenges, such as low pay.

What do you think might change for languages with the new UK government?
I have high hopes for an empathetic and outward-looking government which enables language learning and cross-cultural communication to thrive. Professional linguists will be needed to deliver some of Labour's key ambitions, from closer cooperation with our European neighbours on law enforcement to encouraging foreign investment in the UK.

AI: STOP OR GO?

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As AI innovation snowballs, some developers are calling for a moratorium on new services. We asked stakeholders if the launch of new language-related AI should be put on hold

John Worne, CIOL CEO

As language professionals, we find ourselves at what feels like a crossroads, where artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming our context. The question of whether we should pause language-related AI development is thought-provoking, but a moratorium would likely be neither practical nor achievable. Realistically, we need to focus on how to harness AI's potential while addressing its challenges. Firstly, it's crucial to recognise that 'AI' is not a monolithic entity but a diverse set of technologies with varying applications in the lives and work of linguists. From machine translation to speech recognition, many of these tools are used routinely.

As linguists, we have a unique responsibility to shape the development of language-related AI. Our expertise is invaluable. One key area where we can make a significant impact is in addressing AI bias. Large Language Models (LLMs) can perpetuate and amplify societal biases present in their training data. Furthermore, the data used is dominated by English and, as we are well placed to know, LLMs do a much, much poorer job in other languages. By pointing out tangible, memorable mistakes – e.g. *soy Sauce* (Sp; 'I am Sauce') for 'soy sauce' in food ingredients – we can highlight the risks of unsupervised use of LLMs and generative AI while working to advocate for more inclusive and representative language.

In the realm of interpretation and translation, the growing sense is that AI's best use is not in replacing human linguists but in

augmenting our capabilities. The hope is that by utilising these tools we can focus on higher-order tasks that require real cultural understanding, where humans remain irreplaceable: context, nuance, humour, creativity, sensitivity, artistry.

Rather than a moratorium, what we need is a proactive approach to AI. This could involve:

1 Highlighting the risks with tangible and memorable examples; we can all contribute here via social media. There is great work being done on LinkedIn bringing to life the errors and omissions which AI can generate but skilled linguists can spot and solve.
2 Promoting the ethical use of AI, including care with data and with consequences: in translation, interpreting, language teaching and learning, and linguistic research.
3 Keeping abreast of AI and technological change – updating CPD and maintaining resources for linguists to promote AI literacy, ensuring linguists are better equipped to work with these technologies.

As the Chartered Institute of Linguists, we have a natural role in this debate. By engaging with policymakers, our membership, universities and wider stakeholders we can help to shape a future where AI enhances rather than diminishes the role of human linguists; but we cannot do it alone. Working with other bodies, such as the ITI, NRPSI, ATC and international associations, is vital – as well as excellent university research centres working on AI in languages like those at Surrey and Vienna. This is a real focus for us.

Ultimately, AI is not a battle to win, or a technology to ban; it is a capability we need to shape. And we are well placed to do so as it is built on what we do best: languages.

Christiane Ulmer-Leahey FCIL

With such rapid technological advancements, it is challenging to predict how language-related jobs will evolve. For example, will foreign language skills retain their value when AI can translate texts instantly through voice functions? It is important not to passively endure these changes but to actively shape future work methods and goals of linguistics professionals. This leads to the idea of a moratorium on development to provide breathing space for professionals to develop solutions. Such a pause could foster the establishment of think-tanks and interdisciplinary collaboration, mitigating long-term negative societal impacts.

Historically, technological innovations have presented themselves as a double-edged sword in all sectors, including translation, interpreting and language teaching. These advancements have transformed the workforce but they have not obliterated these professions. Instead, they have adapted and evolved. Progress has initiated the disappearance of certain occupations, but it has also generated new employment opportunities. For example, advanced translation programs, though diminishing the earnings of translators and interpreters, have expanded their roles into new communication contexts that require professional expertise. Similarly, online language learning programs have allowed language teachers to broaden their reach and save time on mundane tasks, enabling them to focus on creative activities.

Historical precedents suggest that development cannot be entirely stopped. Even if national and international bodies agreed to temporarily halt the development of language AI, there would be entities that would not comply. Thus, the focus should be on ensuring development progresses with positive and ethical standards.

Creating the right framework is paramount. Although past efforts have not always succeeded, continuous attempts are necessary due to the potential destructive power of AI if misused. AI's influence on communication – a fundamental human capability – is profound, impacting the organisation of societal affairs. The economic implications are also significant, raising questions about who benefits from AI's wealth creation, especially when jobs are lost due to automation.

The outlook on AI – positive or negative – depends on the broader perspective on life. With the push of a button, it is now possible to destroy the Earth or improve the lives of many people. It is crucial to define the necessary competencies and authority to act in connection with these advancements. Ethical considerations must be addressed through interdisciplinary platforms involving experts from various fields.

This has to take place with some sense of urgency without falling into a rushed panic. A comprehensive pause in development is unrealistic; instead, individual projects and questions should be managed independently, allowing time for thoughtful progression. The competition with potential darker forces in AI development remains uncertain, but the hope is that AI will ultimately enhance communication, provide time for creativity, and foster better intercultural understanding.

Sabine Braun, Surrey University

Despite its increasing role in meeting the demand for multilingual and accessible content, 'language AI' lacks understanding of the world, and the social, economic, cultural, political and other factors shaping human language use. It therefore remains unreliable, posing risks to multilingual and inclusive communication. To achieve human-level quality, intelligibility and accuracy, AI needs to go beyond identifying patterns and correlations; it must integrate human experience and knowledge of communication. This requires transformations in research and development, including a greater contribution from humanities-led language and translation studies.

Humanities-led research is well placed to shape the integration of AI tools into human translation/interpreting practices. More controversially, perhaps, such research should also pioneer human-centric and inclusive approaches to supplant conventional, risky data-driven methods in developing autonomous language systems (machine translation/interpreting) for situations where language professionals are unavailable or constrained by time and budget. In a highly multilingual society seeking equitable access to information for all, human professionals alone cannot meet all of the demand. Efforts should therefore be made to advance high-quality machine translation/interpreting, especially for 'low-resource' languages, to bridge global and intra-societal AI divides responsibly. However, without safeguards,

these solutions risk perpetuating imperfect language AI, deteriorating the human experience and exacerbating inequalities.

Recent debate around rapid advances in generative AI has increased awareness of the risks inherent in the methods currently underpinning its development. But merely pausing AI development may not be sufficient or effective. A fresh approach is needed – one that sees the use of such technologies as part of a comprehensive solution for communication in a multilingual and inclusive society, that embraces the potential benefits of language AI while minimising its risks.

The guiding question must be how language AI can be developed and used safely to create multilingual and multimodal content serving users of language services with diverse linguistic, sensory and cognitive abilities. Ethical principles are key: human-centric development, inclusiveness, fairness, complementarity to the work of language professionals, transparency and accountability.

If such a shift can be achieved, language AI can have positive impacts on society and the economy by enhancing communication and accessibility, and promoting inclusive participation in digital society. A shift in direction and implementation of ethical principles will also foster genuine innovation in language AI, creating new market opportunities for many stakeholders.

Katharine Allen, SAFE-AI

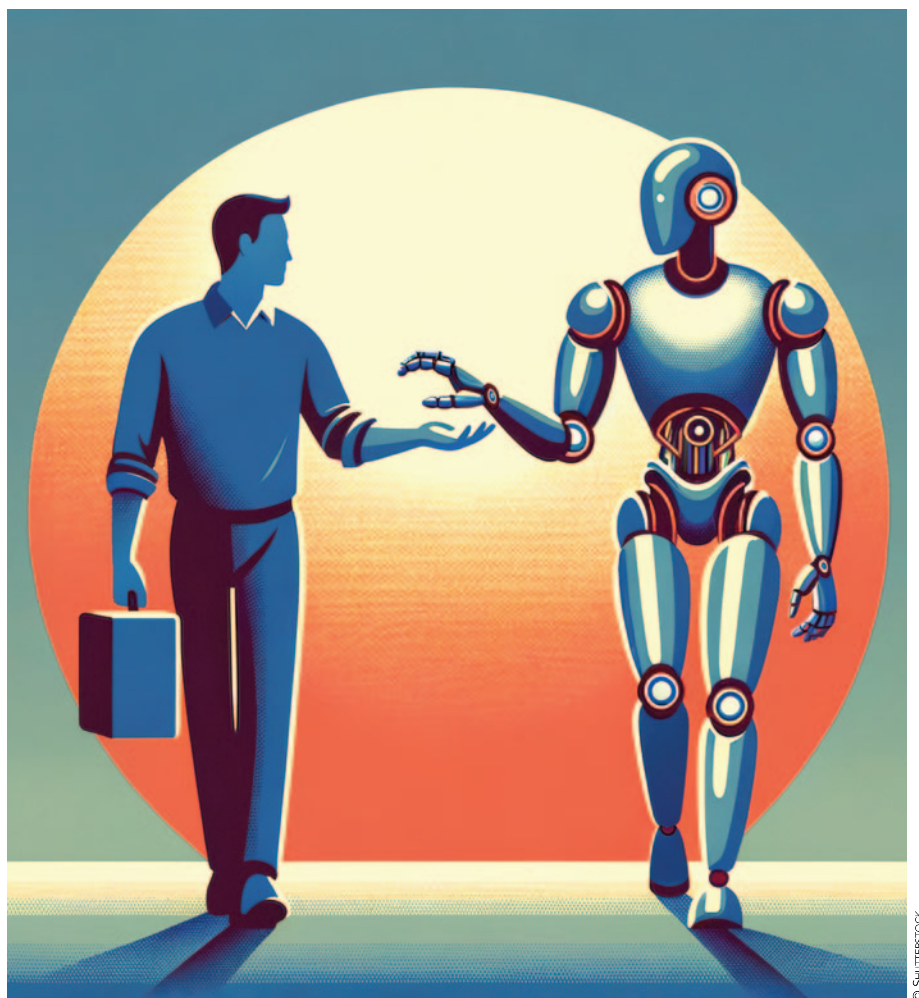
Given the relentless global pace of technological progress, our focus should be on educating ourselves and the industry about these technologies and developing a legal framework that balances innovation with measurable quality improvements that ensure safe, fair, ethical and accountable adoption of this technology.

Along with my colleagues on the Interpreting SAFE-AI Task Force (safeaitf.org), I believe the challenge lies in shaping AI development to align with ethical standards and human values, not halting advancement. Our mission is to establish industry-wide guidance for the accountable adoption of AI in interpreting, facilitating dialogue among developers, vendors, buyers, practitioners and end-users. We track and assess AI capabilities in real-time language interpretation – covering translation captioning, multilingual captioning, speech-to-text, speech-to-speech, speech or text-to-sign and sign-to-speech or text.

LLMs have shown impressive advancements but cannot replace the human interpreter's skillset to manage nuanced, culturally aware and contextually sensitive communication. Human communication encompasses not just language, but also emotions, cultural context, and non-verbal cues – elements AI struggles to replicate. Additionally, there are over 7,000 spoken and 300 sign languages, yet AI technology is only available for a handful, creating a digital divide where many are left behind.

Language barriers cannot be magically overcome by a single technology; the world needs to adopt a more nuanced understanding of human communication. Ongoing and widespread public and client education will be a crucial part of this work. To safeguard human expertise in interpreting, SAFE-AI advocates for robust ethical legislation framing AI development and how it is used for interpreting. This includes identifying where AI can enhance language services and where human intervention is essential. Our 'Perception Survey and Advisory Group Research Report' represents an initial step in building reliable knowledge about AI in interpreting (see https://cutt.ly/CSAinsights and https://cutt.ly/AIxAI).

As the next step, we recently published best practice guidance to determine when AI technologies can safely expand multilingual access and when the risks outweigh the benefits (see https://safeaitf.org/guidance/). Our goal is to provide actionable insights for a broad diversity of stakeholders, including policymakers, developers, educators, practitioners, buyers and vendors, so they can integrate AI interpreting as an effective and ethical option.



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Voices from Gaza

Miranda Moore explores the work of translators, both inside and outside Gaza, and the difficulties they face

On 24 November 2023, 39 Palestinian prisoners and 14 Israeli hostages were freed in an exchange between Israel and Hamas. The BBC broadcast a clip of one of the detainees speaking in Arabic about her alleged mistreatment, yet the English captions mistakenly had her praising Hamas. Respond Crisis Translation (RCT), a non-profit providing humanitarian language services in 180 languages, were quick to issue their own translation, alerting media outlets to the error.

The BBC said the problem had occurred when the video was shortened and the wrong captions were left in. But whatever the cause of the issue, such mistakes foster mistrust in an age where faith in our media is at an all-time low – and this is only increased when audiences rely on translations to stay informed.

"When I watch the news and I see how events are being reported and analysed by people who probably have never met a Gazan in their life, they're making sweeping declarations about a country they've never set foot in," says Basma Ghalayini of Comma Press. The Arabic editor and translator grew up in southern Gaza. Since 7 October, the homes of her mother and father, her primary school and her university have been destroyed, and she has lost several friends and family members. So while politicians and analysts discuss the conflict from a detached position, her thoughts are with her relatives and colleagues who are still trapped there.

Misinformation is a concern during any conflict, but in Gaza there are particular difficulties in getting accurate information out. We are used to seeing international press reporting from war zones, but this has not been possible in Gaza as routes in and out are blocked. And for Gazans reporting on the ground, the threat level is unprecedented. According to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), more journalists were killed in Gaza in the last three months of 2023 than in any single country over an entire year since CPJ records began in 1992. By 26 July, at least 111 media workers had been killed in Gaza.

DANGER ZONE
Palestinians search a house after an air strike on Rafah, southern Gaza, in October

Arranging interviews for this article with journalists and translators inside Gaza proved impossible. As I was attempting to arrange one interview, the reporter was shot and all contact lost. "Since the war in Gaza started, journalists have been paying the highest price – their lives – for their reporting. Without protection, equipment, international presence, communications, or food and water, they are still doing their crucial jobs to tell the world the truth," said CPJ Program Director Carlos Martinez de la Serna. "Every time a journalist is killed, injured, arrested, or forced to go to exile, we lose fragments of the truth."

As politicians argue about the rights and wrongs of war, the human stories of those who are living through it are often overlooked. As if in response to this concern, the Deputy UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Muhannad Hadi, began

his July briefing to the UN Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Gaza by sharing "some voices" from his visit to Deir al Balah earlier that month.

Comma Press and Respond Crisis Translation are among the organisations trying to fill the need for grassroots testimony by translating and publishing diaries from ordinary people. "Giving voice to the voiceless is essential. Many in Gaza lack the means to share their experiences globally. Translating their words ensures their stories are heard and acknowledged," says Gazan translator Athar Abu Samra, who fled to Egypt at the end of October and is now working with RCT. "Providing precise translations contributes to a truthful and balanced representation of events, educating and informing global audiences accurately."

Nuances lost

Ghalayini has been working with writers in Gaza since 2022, and in October three of them started to write rolling diaries for Comma. She translates one from Arabic while the other two are delivered in English through voice notes and require careful editing to ensure the nuances aren't lost due to the writers' limited skills in the language.

One of the reasons misunderstandings happen, she suggests, is that such nuances can be missed by Arabic translators who are not from Gaza. "When someone is speaking to a news channel about a Palestinian context, you can't just use any translator/interpreter – it needs to be someone who knows what they're translating, because otherwise it just perpetuates misinformation," she says.

There are cases where the emotional weight or severity of the original can be diminished in translation, explains Abu Samra, offering the example الدماء تملأ الشوارع ('the streets are filled with blood'). Conflict-specific terminology can also prove difficult, she says, and a phrase such as القصف العشوائي ('indiscriminate shelling') may need an explanation to convey the specific implications to English speakers.

"Certain words have lost their context, have lost their meaning," adds Ghalayini. 'Jihad' (جِهَاد), for instance, has become synonymous with terrorism and suicide bombers, but it actually means 'struggle'. "It's any kind of struggle – against yourself, against the world. So I think a translator's job is extremely important in this context, because we need to focus on staying alive; we can't be going into 'he said, she said' because someone didn't translate the words right."

Both Comma and RCT are doing educational work in this area, but the question is whether individual translators have a responsibility to raise awareness and correct misinterpretations. Ghalayini is unequivocal here: "100% it's my responsibility. If it's not then I don't know what translators should be doing."

So when faced with the word 'jihad', used in the sense of everyday struggles, for example, would it be best to use the word 'struggle' or add a gloss? "It depends on the context," she says. "Sometimes there isn't time to explain, but in the bigger context, I think we need to own those words, use them and reuse them in a way that makes people realise what they mean. It's my job as a Palestinian translator to make it clear what those words mean historically and contextually."

Translators might 'disappear' for days or weeks on end because they have no internet or are relocating

A heavy workload

In the three months from March to May 2024, RCT's Arabic team received six times as many cases related to Gaza as their entire caseload for 2023. There is a huge need for translations from NGOs, law firms, non-profits and individuals applying for humanitarian parole. The work includes legal documents, medical materials and personal documents needed for the asylum process.

Before 7 October, the team were already under pressure from crises in Libya, Sudan, Turkey, Morocco and Syria, and they expanded rapidly at the end of 2023 to meet the increased need from Gaza. There was a particular focus on hiring Gazan translators, not only for their knowledge of Gazan Arabic and culture, but also to provide them with the economic means to survive. The income Abu Samra receives from translation work enables her to support herself and her family, who she had to leave in Gaza. "This financial stability is crucial given the challenging circumstances," she says.

In terms of the language, RCT project manager Ayah Najadat aims for "the perfect dialectal match". However, the Levantine dialect, spoken across the region, is widely understood by other Arabic speakers, particularly those from North Africa. "And when they are not able to understand something we work collaboratively," she says.

Idioms can be a little trickier for Arabic speakers who are not from the area. "For every breath we take, there's a Palestinian idiom," Ghalayini laughs. "Yesterday we were dealing with the expression 'every time the cup clinks with the pot' [كل ما يحك الكوز في الجرة], which means something that is happening often. We struggled to translate that one! Idioms are always very complicated when I'm doing translations from Gaza, but equally fun to work on."

Under attack

For translators in Gaza, the lack of electricity and internet makes it difficult to charge devices and send translations once they're completed. RCT sends them non-urgent cases where possible and provides e-Sims so they can connect to the internet. Nevertheless, getting a signal can involve moving to a more dangerous location. "They don't want to be in the middle of the crowd to get connected to the internet," explains Najadat, who leads the organisation's Arabic team.

Translators and writers might 'disappear' for days or weeks on end because they have no internet or are relocating. The week before we spoke, one of the writers Najadat is working with filed a diary entry late. "She emailed to say 'I couldn't get back to you on time because I was relocating from Gaza City to Deir al Balah.' We're always dealing with these situations and from our place there's nothing we can do to make sure these people are safe – just wait."

After the war began, translator Mona Ameen Mohammed Nofal found that she couldn't work at all. She had previously been working with the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, but with no internet or electricity she couldn't use her laptop, and used her phone sparingly to avoid draining the battery.

Within the first three days, she received an evacuation order from the IDF to leave her

Photo by Emad El Byed on Unsplash

STRIVING FOR SURVIVAL
Children at a bombed tower block in Rafah that had been housing displaced families

home in Beit Hanoun. "We had only five minutes to evacuate, not only the house but the entire neighbourhood," she tells me. Her family fled first to Sheikh Radwan in Gaza City, but it was also under attack. "We moved from one place to another, but we found that danger was present everywhere we went." They eventually made it to Egypt in April.

Managing trauma

For those, like Najadat, who are working from a place of safety, this takes its toll. As we speak, we talk in euphemisms, avoiding certain words as if they are too painful to say. "I was afraid the person who was working on this piece had been… I don't want to say something bad, but I was just afraid for that person," she tells me.

When we speak, Ghalayini believes most of the translators and writers she has worked with closely are still alive, but with some notable exceptions, like Dr Refaat Alareer, who she got to know during her last trip home. It's clearly painful to talk about. "I can't think," she says, distressed. "I can't remember… the list is just so long." Hearing someone mentally go through the list of the dead to make sure they haven't forgotten anyone is heartbreaking.

"The real opportunity in this work is that you will not have free time to think about what happened to you"

Vicarious trauma is a real concern, and something RCT takes seriously. A trauma-informed session is mandatory for all their translators, though there is an understanding that those in Gaza may not be able to attend the full session. To support translators' mental health, Najadat is careful not to give them work that might be triggering. "I try to select the right documents for the person. When I sense that they might have trauma, I try to give them something more like legal documents," she explains.

At the same time, the work can be helpful. "Emotionally, translation has been my passion from the very beginning. Today, when I receive assignments via email, I feel happy because I know that I have also found what I love and what I belong to, especially after I lost everything in Gaza," says Nofal. "The real opportunity in this work is that you will not have free time to think about what happened to you and your family in Gaza. Instead, you push this negative energy away."

Najadat has heard similar sentiments from translators living in Gaza. "One emailed saying 'I'm not feeling good – can you send me more cases? When I busy myself with work I don't focus on hearing the bombing and that's what's happening around me.' I think it's like a coping mechanism," she says. For Abu Samra, the situation was complicated while she was still inside Gaza: "On one hand, my work kept me connected with the outside world and contributed to aid efforts for those in need. On the other hand, the threat of violence and the logistical difficulties added to the risk and stress. Balancing these aspects was demanding but necessary."

Ghalayini, too, has found that assignments bring comfort to some of her colleagues in Gaza. "It's heavily dependent on the person – we've approached some writers to write diaries and for some it helps them. People want to be heard and it gives them purpose. And I think it gives them a sense of survival and humanity – they will do anything to show the world, look, we're human, we're here, this is us." And this is where the work of translators is so important, revealing the human stories behind the political discourse and devastation.

ANAM ZAFAR MEETS

AYESHA MANAZIR SIDDIQI

With her debut novel investigating the darker side of translation, the author discusses everything from positive changes in publishing to complicated relationships with language in diaspora communities

Could you tell us where you grew up and how your interest in languages began?
I was born in Oman and have vague memories of learning Arabic as a toddler. At around 7, I moved to Pakistan, and aged 18, I came to England. Growing up in a multilingual context may have inspired my interest in languages. But it's also something else – something akin to the fascination the protagonist of my first book feels. There is the excitement of it; the feeling that learning a new language can feel like solving a puzzle, and the act of translation can be engrossing, simultaneously mathematical and intuitive and creative. I speak Urdu/Hindi, English and some French, but I've also studied Arabic, German and briefly Farsi, and loved each one.

What about your journey to becoming a writer and translator?
After university, I worked for Saqi Books via a wonderful Arts Council scheme around diversity in publishing. Then I worked for literature festivals and wrote poetry, essays, short stories and plays. During lockdown, I had the time for a larger project, and wrote my first novel, *The Centre*. I was also working for the *Trojan Horse Affair* podcast, and watching those masterful storytellers construct each episode was beneficial to my own writing.

I don't consider myself a translator, but I enjoy it. It started with wanting to hold on to and improve my Urdu, and I did this by reading novels and poetry. My first translations were of stories written by family members, and then I did a couple of works for publication.

What is The Centre *about?*
The book is about a Pakistani translator in London, Anisa, who comes across a mysterious language school called the Centre, which promises fluency in any language in just 10 days, but at a secret and sinister cost. It explores sexuality, appropriation, race, class and the politics of language learning. I tried to write in an intimate style, as if I were in conversation with, say, my best friend, or my sister, or my mother, and people seem to pick up on this. One reader said it was, at its heart, a story about racial capitalism, which I liked. It's both funny and dark, and also, on a another level, a straightforward thriller.

Why did you decide to intersperse Urdu words and phrases through the novel?
I didn't really decide in that way; it just felt like the right voice. This is, after all, how I operate in my own life, and Anisa, who has a similar trajectory, would also be interacting with her intimate ones in a mix of English and Urdu. I was able to maintain this style because the publishing industry has, I think, made some progress – for instance, we no longer have to italicise words that are not in English, nor must we have glossaries. Not having to translate everything meant a lot to me and spoke to the themes of the book. I think this helps in not pandering to a white gaze, and therefore allowed me to speak from a deeper place.

So how has publishing changed?
I don't know if this is naive or overly optimistic, but I feel like things have improved, and that there is more space now to tell stories from non-dominant perspectives. But also, the pandering to the white gaze comes from both within and without, so it's something I try to consciously dismantle within myself. And the book also examines this. For example, it interrogates Anisa's desire to translate 'great works of literature'. What is 'great literature'? Who decides? More and more, we are asking these questions.

The characters have different attitudes towards language. For example, Anisa translates Bollywood films into English but feels like she's not a real translator. What causes her sense of inferiority?
One of the things the book examines is linguistic hierarchies; how some languages are considered superior to others. When Anisa first goes to the Centre, she learns German, feeling that it is a 'real translator's' language. We also see this societal value judgement when Adam goes to Pakistan and speaks Urdu fluently. Suddenly, red carpets are rolled out for him, as if it's such an honour that this white man would lower himself to learn this language of ours. It's an internally absorbed notion which we ourselves may carry; ideas of shame or inferiority around the languages spoken in our homes that are not English.

In Pakistan, the relationship between language and class is stark, English being the language of the elites, and English with an English accent being especially valued. Perhaps these are the things informing some of Anisa's discontent, her idea that books are

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superior to films and that 'great literature' is what she should be aiming for. When she learns Russian, she looks forward to reading Tolstoy and Chekhov – the people they call 'the greats'. What is it that makes them so great, she wonders. Could it be something in the language itself? These are some of the ideas we internalise around language and literature that felt exciting to interrogate.

When Adam reveals his Urdu abilities, Anisa is annoyed and frustrated that he's almost better than her, but when she learns German, she doesn't apply that critique to herself. Why?
I suppose it is different for a white guy to learn Urdu than for a Pakistani woman to learn, say, English. It's a different context and has to do with prevalent power structures. At the same time, Anisa is frequently oblivious to her own contradictions, and this especially comes out with Adam. For instance, she often appears unaware of her class privilege.

I can't be the only reader who came to the realisation, through reading The Centre*, that I have internalised other languages' superiority to my own. But which is my language? English? Urdu? Is it about the level of fluency or one's family connection to a language?*
Some readers miss that subtext and see the book purely as a thriller. I don't mind this as it hopefully means it's not pretentious or didactic, but it's lovely when questions like this come up. And for multilingual or diasporic people, they often do. How can they not? We have complex relationships to what we may call our mother tongues, which may even be languages our parents are fluent in that we barely speak.

With these languages, we may have relationships of longing and nostalgia, but also shame and sadness. As you said, languages can connect us to our past. The severing of South Asian people from their languages has often been intentional and connected to a brutal colonial project. But I believe in healing and transformation, and in the idea that things long lost can be recovered and repaired.

Your work has been translated into Spanish and Russian. How do you feel about these translations?
The Spanish translation of *The Centre* was interesting because they did in fact use footnotes. In the first scene, when Anisa is cooking karela stir fry, a note says something like "karela is a type of bitter South Asian vegetable". I felt this was unnecessary, but I also gained an understanding that the politics of publishing is different in different spaces. I tried to tell them but they kept the footnotes, and that's ok. There's only so much you can control, and I love my Spanish publishers.

Could you tell us about your essay 'Preserving the Tender Things' in Violent Phenomena: 21 essays on translation*?*
I wrote that piece immediately after writing *The Centre*, and it felt wonderful to be able to explore some of the ideas around language and translation in a more theoretical, somewhat academic way. The anthology is about translation and decolonisation, and the essay explores some of the things we've been talking about: the erasure and suppression of marginalised languages; the importance of considering wider issues around linguistic power structures; the translations that those of marginalised backgrounds are sometimes required to do even when they don't want to, and how, in that context, not translating can be an act of resistance. And it is also a personal essay, about my own life, my journey around languages, literature and translation.

What's next for you?
I've just finished an early draft of my new book, *Good Benny*. On the surface, it appears to not be about translation but in some senses it is – for one thing, it's about the languages spoken by animals and by human beings, and communication across these lines. I also recently lost my father to cancer, and the book is about cancer too – and that world, the world of illness, is a strange and disconcerting one, with a language of its own.

When research fails

If medical research isn't inclusive, the outcomes can be fatal. Brenda Narice assesses the issues in maternity care

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Language barriers significantly limit access to health research.[1] This seems to be particularly relevant in the field of women's health, at least in the UK, where most participation information leaflets are issued only in English. As such, they are not fit for purpose for those with limited English proficiency, and eligible people are excluded because they do not speak the language.[2] As a result, ethnic minorities are often underrepresented and/or missing from research that is likely to inform clinical decision making. A clinical practice that only benefits a few – those on whom the best available evidence is based – perpetuates unequal access to research and healthcare for the most vulnerable, which goes against the bioethical principle of social justice.[3]

In a clinical context still dominated by the paradigm of evidence-based medicine, equitable recruitment of research participants is, at its core, an ethical issue.[4] The past and, much to our chagrin, the present are notoriously populated with clinical examples in which a lack of diversity in the research population has led to adverse health outcomes. There is, for example, the androcentric bias in the management of a heart attack. Here, the diagnostic guidelines were designed with evidence arising mainly from men to the detriment of women, whose own distinct disease presentation is often not recognised and managed in a timely manner.

There is also the ethnic bias in the calculation of kidney function in Black people – only recently challenged – based on a never validated assumption correlating ethnicity and muscle mass. This overestimated renal performance in Black people thereby delaying the diagnosis of chronic kidney failure.

While it might be unquestionable that inclusive research is paramount to ensure equity and effectiveness in clinical practice, a multiplicity of complex and intertwined barriers stand in the way. These include lack of access, financial burden, investigator bias, mistrust and cultural/language differences.

Learning from experience

Over the last decade, as a researcher in women's health and a medical translator and interpreter, I have championed more representative research participation through improved recruitment strategies. Last summer, my research team delivered a workshop with the aim of developing strategies to overcome cultural and language barriers within women's health research. It was sponsored by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee and open to the public.

We used Sheffield as our case study, but many of the points raised are likely to resonate with maternity research units across the UK. Although we lack specific numbers, we know that less than 15% of the multicentre studies our maternity unit has taken part in since 2018 have provided documents in languages other than English or expressed an interest in widening recruitment. Some charities, such as the Twin Trust and the British Maternal and Fetal Medicine Society, have been clear exceptions, encouraging researchers to ensure sample representativeness by relocating funds.

Upon discussion with sponsors, the most cited barriers to translation have been cost implications and difficulties in finding the right people to perform the job. Even though hundreds of participants were recruited into our local women's research portfolio between

2021 and 2023, only 40 were provided with professional interpretation services. This confirms that employing telephone interpreters is not a widely used practice for recruitment despite its availability and accessibility in our centre.

Women's health research is far from being the only medical field affected by these challenges; no discipline has proved to be immune. As a result, there has been a growing interest within the NHS, research agencies and higher education institutions to address these barriers and ensure diverse communities are more engaged with research.[5]

Key recommendations

As part of these ongoing initiatives, a comprehensive guidance document, 'NHS Increasing Diversity in Research Participation: A good practice guide for engaging with underrepresented communities (2023)', was created to provide practical suggestions to improve the situation. This work offers a theoretical framework for barriers to and enablers of research recruitment in underrepresented groups in the UK, further supported by outreach work within six vulnerable communities across the country.

Limited English proficiency with poor and/or no access to good translation services, as well as the use of jargon, excessive acronyms and culturally inappropriate explanations, have been highlighted as leading reasons behind the low participation in research. The authors recommend using participants' "language of trust" via professional interpreters, and tailoring information to look and feel like it is from the community to minimise distrust.

Key take-home messages include the importance of planning to be inclusive *before* the outset of the study by researching the target population and their needs, and engaging with community organisations, link workers and trusted advocates to support engagement and build on their expertise. The need to make research accessible at convenient times and locations, and conveyed in appropriate language with 'easy read', straightforward information, is also noted.

There are clear examples in which such strategies have been implemented successfully. The local Book Before Ten campaign, led by Dr Rosselyn Ngadze, for instance, encourages women from all ethnic backgrounds to access antenatal care before 10 weeks of pregnancy through succinct and powerful infographics opportunistically placed near pregnancy tests at supermarkets and chemists. The multidisciplinary effort the Deep End Research Alliance addresses health inequalities within minorities, for example in the provision and uptake of contraception, facilitated by language and cultural link workers.

We have seen that improving research participation is key to ensure equity and reduce the burden of disease, which disproportionately affects ethnic minorities. Multiple barriers to research recruitment have been identified, with cultural and language challenges often topping the list.

While there is a clear need to increase the use of professional translators and interpreters in the context of research recruitment, we have noticed that this alone is unlikely to resolve the issue. For it to be effective, language must be clear, culturally acceptable and succinct; and those with bilingual knowledge (whether link workers, interpreters or translators) must operate in partnership with local communities to build and maintain an effective two-way channel of communication.

Notes

1 Ransing, R et al (2021) 'Language as Multi-Level Barrier in Health Research and the Way Forward'. In *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 45,1, 65-68

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4 Sackett, DL et al (1996) 'Evidence Based Medicine: What it is and what it isn't'. In *British Medical Journal*, 312,7023, 71

5 DHSC (2022) 'The Future of UK Clinical Research Delivery: 2022 to 2025 implementation plan'; https://cutt.ly/pezcGJYd

6 MBRRACE-UK: Mothers and Babies: Reducing risk through audits and confidential enquiries across the UK; www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrrace-uk

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Frontline care

In 2021, 29% of births in the largest maternity unit in South Yorkshire were to people from Black, Asian or ethnic minority backgrounds. In keeping with national statistics,[6] these women had higher than average adverse perinatal outcomes, such as preterm babies, stillbirths, neonatal death, maternal death and poor mental health. They were also more likely to reside in the most deprived areas, have lower income and have poorer healthcare access, partly due to language barriers.

For those with limited English proficiency, the most required interpreters were for Arabic, Slovakian, Urdu, Kurdish Sorani and Tigrinya. In our unit, 24/7 telephone interpretation is provided through DA Languages and face-to-face link workers for Urdu, Punjabi and Arabic. Despite this, Black, Asian and ethnic minorities service users were less likely to report that they were offered choice and information, and enough support in decision making, compared to their self-reported British counterparts, as revealed by the National Maternity Survey (2022).

A local audit in 2022 assessing compliance with interpreting policy in maternity services highlighted potential reasons why people with limited English might struggle to navigate pregnancy-related care. A professional interpreter was offered in only 46% of the situations in which the need for such a service was identified. Even when it was offered, in a quarter of cases it was declined by the woman in favour of a relative and/or friend.

Working with trauma

How can interpreters with vicarious trauma support their mental health and professionalism, asks Artemis Sakorafa

In today's multilingual and interconnected world, the ability of interpreters to bridge language gaps and convey the deeper meaning of words across languages is nothing short of remarkable, but with this skill comes an often overlooked challenge. Vicarious trauma (VT), also known as secondary traumatisation,[1] is a process of absorbing and internalising the trauma of others. Described by Charles Figley as the "cost of caring",[2] it can take a toll on the mental health and emotional well-being of many interpreters working in public service settings.

In the field of trauma research, evidence has shown that psychological distress affects not only those who have been personally traumatised but also healthcare professionals who work with such people.[3] The American Counseling Association (ACA) describes vicarious trauma as the "emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they hear their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured".[4]

As interpreters navigate stories of trauma, suffering and adversity, in settings as diverse as courts, police stations and conflict zones, they can find themselves absorbing the emotional burden of these narratives. Those who work in healthcare settings, for example, may interpret for terminally ill people, patients experiencing severe pain and children struggling with serious diseases.

Symptoms and triggers

There are a few warning signs of vicarious trauma that may manifest physically or behaviourally, such as burnout, compassion fatigue, increased stress, helplessness, fear, irritability, impatience, loss of interest, withdrawal, anxiety, detachment and survivor guilt.[5] Interpreters use the first-person singular pronoun (e.g. "I am in pain" instead of "the patient is in pain") to interpret the statements of interlocutors, amplifying the embodiment of emotions and increasing the chance of potential traumatic impacts.[6]

A PROBLEM SHARED

Sharing our experiences with colleagues who understand the nature of the job can reduce the stigma associated with negative feelings after a difficult interpreting project

Empathy with the client, combined with the emotionally charged content of the material to be interpreted, may cause the interpreter to suffer secondary trauma. It can also trigger some of the interpreter's past personal experiences and emotions, which may have a long-lasting effect on the interpreter's mental health and professional performance. Interpreting for a terminally ill patient after losing a family member to cancer, or during an abortion appointment after experiencing a miscarriage, are two examples of assignments that may emotionally affect an interpreter and trigger a traumatic response.

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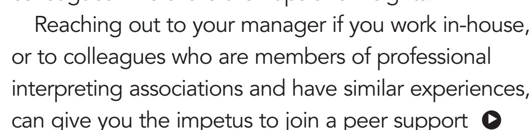
What can we do about it?

While it is not always possible to prevent VT, it is essential to understand and accept that it is part of our job as interpreters. The key is to find ways to recognise its early signs and cope with it in the most constructive way possible. As the response to trauma varies from person to person, crafting a personalised self-care plan is vital.

Recognising the symptoms of trauma, staying in tune with your body and mind, and scheduling time for regular self-care, in the same way you would schedule any other activity in your daily life, is essential. Some people decompress by going out with friends and family, while others prefer to stay at home and relax with music or in complete silence to allow their mind to unwind. For many, walks, regular exercise, sufficient sleep and a balanced diet make a huge difference, while spending time outdoors, meditating, travelling and walking in nature may also do wonders.

However, there is only so much you can do without the help of others. Humans are social beings and connecting with others, even through pain, is a great way to navigate and manage trauma. Connecting with other people may take different forms. Speaking to a specialised mental health professional is a good first step. Just as therapists have supervisors to discuss work-related thoughts and concerns, interpreters may find it beneficial to speak to a mental health professional and open up about our thoughts and feelings after a challenging session. Not only can this get a load off our chests, but it can also help us learn how to analyse our thoughts and emotions, and feel more grounded. It also teaches us how to cope with intrusive thoughts after an interpreting session – a great skill that can be useful in multiple aspects of our personal and professional life.

Connecting with others can also take the form of supervision and peer support. Luckily, we live in a time when people are more open about their struggles and emotions. Sharing our work experiences and work-related thoughts with a supervisor or with colleagues who understand the nature of the job can reduce the stigma associated with negative feelings after an interpreting project. It can also be a great way to debrief, process and exchange experiences with more seasoned colleagues who share their tips and insights.



Reaching out to your manager if you work in-house, or to colleagues who are members of professional interpreting associations and have similar experiences, can give you the impetus to join a peer support

AN EMPATHETIC RESPONSE

Assignments can trigger interpreters' past experiences, and this could have a lasting effect on their mental health and professional performance

network, or even be the first step to creating your own.

This exchange creates a sense of community and may be an excellent chance to reflect on your performance. Analysing and talking about these experiences is not a sign of weakness but a way to gain another perspective, acknowledge your strengths, and take note of anything that could have gone better. This is not a way to 'punish' ourselves or self-scrutinise, but an opportunity for professional growth.

It is important to stress that managing negative emotions usually becomes easier over time as interpreters gain more experience and get to know ourselves and our (emotional) responses better. Professional development and exposure are key. The more competent and comfortable we become in our work, the more equipped we feel to handle the emotional challenges we may face during a project.

Vicarious trauma is a dark corner in the world of interpreting, but rather than brushing it aside, it is crucial to acknowledge it and find ways to cope with its symptoms. It offers an opportunity to build emotional resilience and prioritise self-care in order to keep providing high-quality interpreting services and ensure people's voices are heard.

Notes

1 Birck, A (2002) 'Secondary Traumatization and Burnout in Professionals Working with Torture Survivors. In *Traumatology*, 7,2, 85-90

2 Figley, CR (1999) 'Compassion Fatigue: Toward a new understanding of the cost of caring'. In Stamm, BH, *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Self-care issues for clinicians, researchers and educators*, Lutherville, MD, Sidran Press

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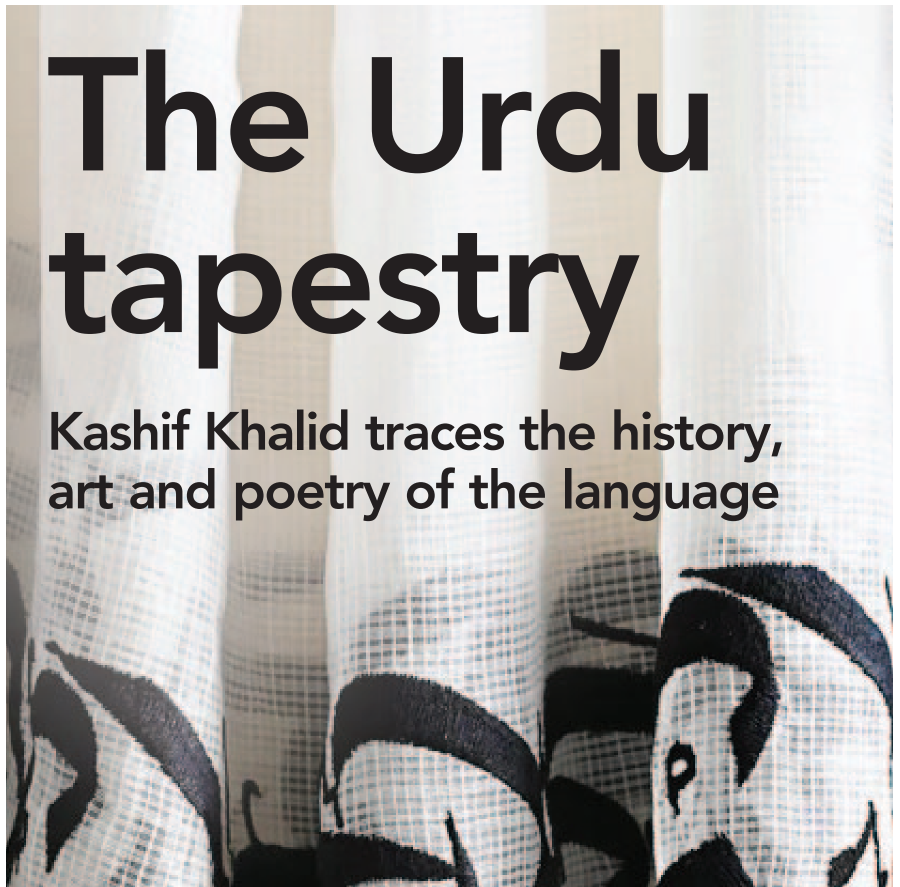


The Urdu tapestry

Kashif Khalid traces the history, art and poetry of the language

According to 2022 estimates, Urdu is the tenth most widely spoken language in the world, with 230 million speakers, including those who speak it as a second language. The national language of Pakistan, it is widely spoken in India, as well as in various countries worldwide, including Afghanistan, Bahrain, Botswana, Fiji, Mauritius, Nepal, Norway, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand and the UK. Yet it receives considerably less attention globally than many other major world languages.

An Indo-Aryan language, it shares close ties with Hindi, and speakers of the two languages can understand each other. Both stem from the Khari Boli language and are known collectively as Hindustani – the lingua franca of Northern India. Though Standard Urdu and Standard Hindi exhibit few significant differences, linguists recognise them as distinct formal registers primarily due to their widespread usage across different regions (dialects are usually confined to smaller areas) and the fact that their written forms are not mutually intelligible. While Urdu is written in the Nastaliq script and draws vocabulary from Persian and Arabic, Hindi is written in the Devanagari script and incorporates more Sanskrit words.

Emergence from Old Hindi

Urdu underwent significant transformations during the Islamic conquests of the Indian subcontinent from the 12th to the 16th centuries. Its early form, known as Hindavi or Old Hindi, was spoken in Delhi and its surrounding regions, and was written in the Perso-Arabic script, typically in the Nastaliq style. As settlers integrated and mingled with the local population, the modern language began to emerge.

Persian became the official language of the Mughal Empire (1526-1857), leading to the integration of Persian vocabulary into Urdu, alongside loanwords from Arabic and Turkish. This era witnessed the emergence of several monikers for the Urdu language, including Rekhta and Hindavi. The term Urdu is derived from the Turkish word *Ordu*, which originally signified 'horde' or 'army', denoting the language spoken by soldiers and traders in the region.

POETIC TEACHINGS
A shawl bearing the phrase zindagi gulzar hai *('life is a rose garden'), often used in Urdu poetry*

From the 13th century, authors started using Urdu in literature and poetry. Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), a distinguished scholar living under the Delhi Sultanate, played a pivotal role in its development. Earning the title the Father of Urdu Literature, he wrote in Persian and Urdu, and contributed significantly to the flourishing of Urdu in courtly and aristocratic contexts. As a result, the learning of Urdu became more widespread.

Today, Urdu encompasses four mutually intelligible dialects: Dakhini, Dhakaiya, Rekhta and Modern Vernacular Urdu. Dakhini is spoken in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh; Dhakaiya in Bangladesh, although its usage is diminishing; and Modern Vernacular Urdu in cities such as Delhi. Rekhta serves as the language for composing poetry.

Golden literary age

The golden age of Urdu literature, spurred by the reign of Emperor Akbar in the 16th century, continued to flourish into the 18th and 19th centuries. Renowned poets like Mir Taqi Mir (1723-1810), hailed as the God of Urdu Poetry, emerged. His ghazals (a form of poetry unique to the Indian subcontinent) continue to be celebrated for their timeless beauty. Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869) left an indelible mark on Urdu poetry. His verses, a captivating blend of classical Persian and Indian styles, explore themes of love, loss and the complexities of human existence.

The arrival of the British Raj in the 18th century marked a new chapter in Urdu's evolution. While English gained prominence in official spheres, Urdu became a powerful tool for dissent and a symbol of cultural identity. Poets and intellectuals like Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) wielded the pen as a tool of resistance, using Urdu to express their yearning for freedom and social justice. Iqbal's poetry continues to inspire generations with its call for self-discovery and national awakening, while Faiz gave voice to the marginalised through his revolutionary verses, challenging societal inequalities and advocating for a just world.

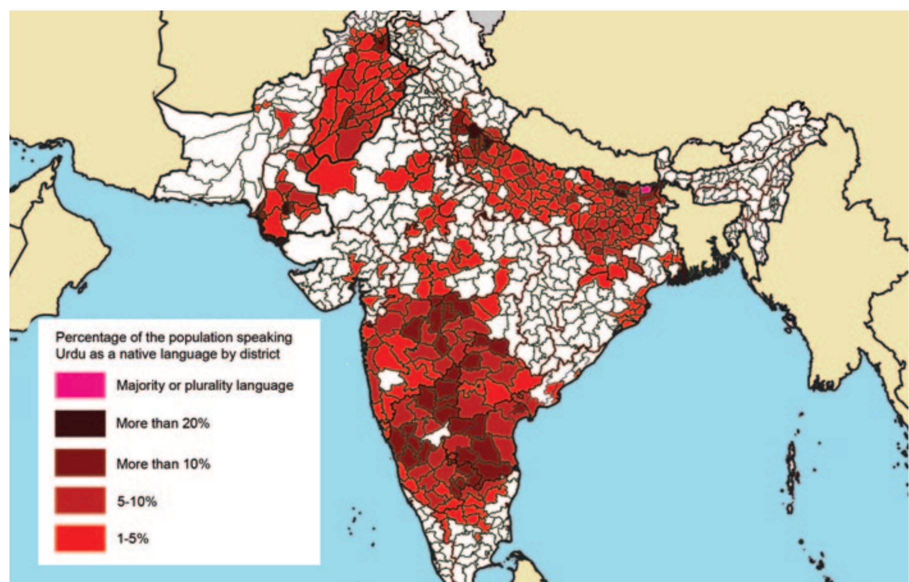
A script from ا to ی

Beyond its historical significance, Urdu is appreciated for its inherent musicality and nuanced expressions. The Nastaliq script, with its flowing lines and artistic flourishes, adds a visual beauty. Nastaliq is an extended version of the Perso-Arabic script with additional characters to accommodate sounds specific to Urdu. Its 37 letters include:

ا (Alif/A) The first letter of the Nastaliq alphabet, pronounced like the 'a' in 'father'
ت (Te/T) Pronounced with a gentle 't' sound
ث (Se/S) Mirrors the English 's' with a slight hiss in its pronunciation
ج (Je/J) Pronounced similar to an English 'j'
ح (He/H) Resembles the English 'h' with a breathy quality
خ (Khe/Kh) A sound not present in English, resembling the German 'ch' in 'Bach'
د (Dal/D) Corresponds to 'd' in English, providing a crisp, clear sound
ذ (Zal/Z) A buzzing sound similar to English 'z'
ر (Re/R) Mirrors the English 'r' sound with a slight roll of the tongue.

In today's interconnected world, Urdu extends its reach beyond the Indian subcontinent and Pakistan. Its influence is evident in global art, literature and cinema, from the soulful renditions of ghazals to the captivating dialogues of Pakistani films.

LANGUAGE DEMOGRAPHIC
Map showing the proportion of the population speaking Urdu in areas of India and Pakistan



NikosLikomitros 2023

Hard hats and steel caps

From safety concerns and excessive noise to getting lost, interpreting at a factory isn't easy, reports Sue Leschen

Interpreting at factory visits requires hard and soft skills, several different dress codes, health and safety considerations, insurance issues and the ability to interpret on the go. Yet there seems to be a dearth of courses, qualifications and even guidelines for interpreters working in this area. So I hope my tips and experiences from several recent factory visits will be helpful.

Dress code(s)

This is a difficult one! Unlike most other interpreting assignments, factory visits may require several costume changes. You may start off in business dress at a briefing in the boardroom with similarly suited and booted company directors and their assorted visitors, and then have to don steel-capped boots, a hard hat and maybe a high-vis jacket (all provided by the factory) to accompany them on a tour of the factory floor.

Later in the day you may be back to your original business dress to interpret PowerPoint presentations for the visitors before changing yet again into evening attire for a formal dinner. You will only get the dress codes right if you ask the client in advance for a programme of the day's activities. A trouser suit is probably the best option for warmth on the factory floor, and adaptability when morphing into 'meeting mode' later on.

Health and safety

Issues of health and safety can be numerous and varied, with noise being the most difficult problem for interpreters as the machinery can be absolutely deafening. It is unlikely that production will be halted for the visit – or at least not throughout the factory. It is also not uncommon for piped music to be blasted around the factory floor. Add to this frequent and (necessarily) very loud announcements on the tannoy, and it means that factories are definitely not interpreter-friendly!

It might be difficult or even impossible for us to hear and be heard above the din. This may be the case even where a tour guide system is used (whereby interpreter and visitors are linked by handheld microphones and headsets as they walk around). It is worth advising clients of these issues in advance and suggesting that their visitors note down any questions/comments for discussion when everybody is back in the office.

Factories are potentially dangerous places due to the machinery and tools, some of which will probably be demonstrated during visits. While interpreters need to get reasonably close in order to see, and to try to hear what is being said by the factory official, being too close could result in an accident. We need to have eyes in the back of our heads when navigating the factory floor – not least because there may be potential trip hazards from trailing wires and cables.

Interpreting on the go

Unlike most interpreting assignments, which tend to be mainly sedentary, factory visits involve 'mobile interpreting' as we walk and talk our way around the building. Depending on the size of the group, this needs careful planning by interpreters and factory officials, including instructions about staying together at all times during the tour. It is common for visiting delegates to try to detach themselves from the main group if they want to spend more time looking at a particular product or piece of machinery. Others may hold side conversations with each other as the interpreter is speaking.

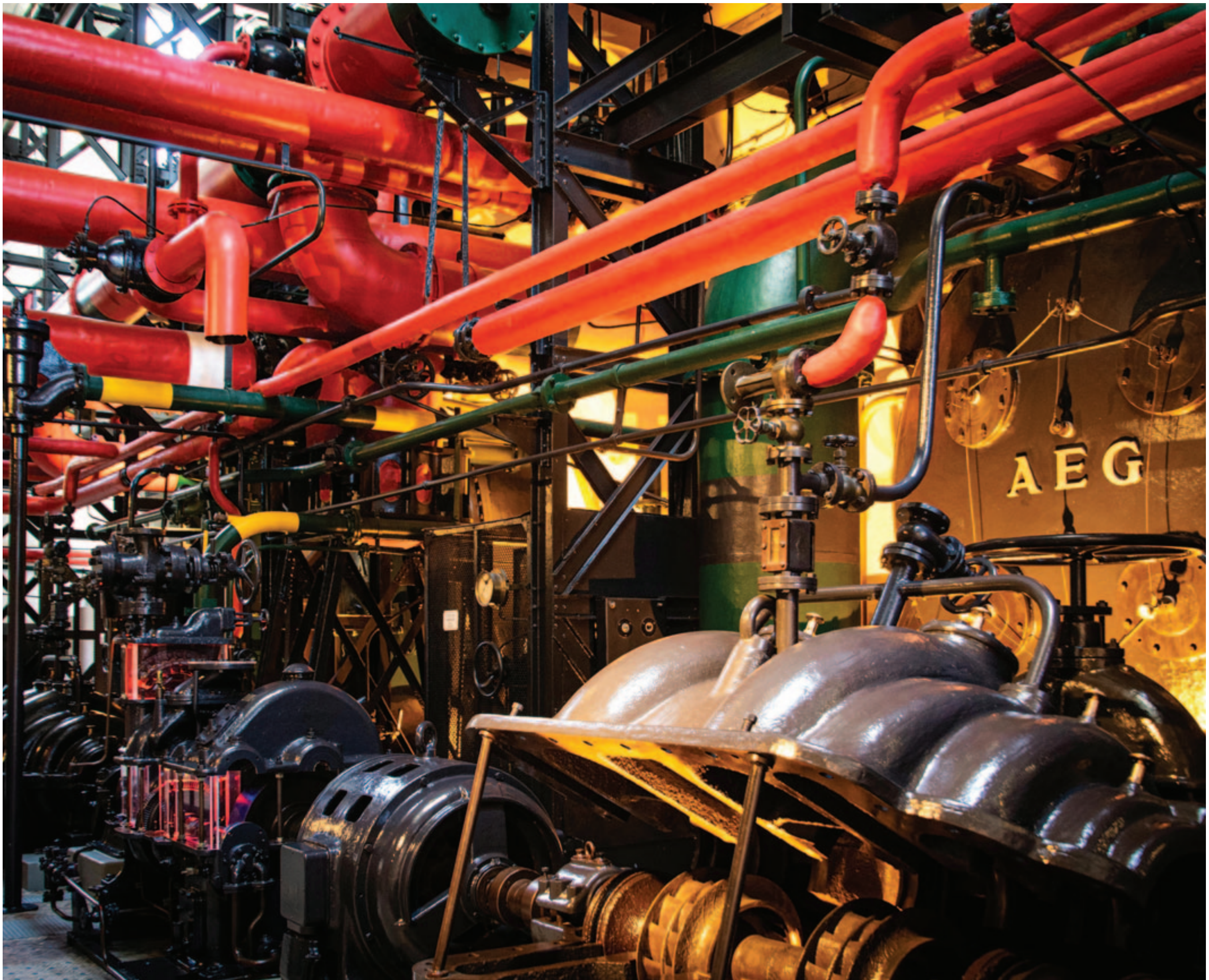
The visit may involve going out of the main factory building in order to view warehouses or external equipment on the site. The group may even drive across town from one venue to another. If the clients aren't returning to the first venue, the interpreter will need to take their own car and follow the clients' vehicle. While this gives us a rest from interpreting, it can lead to trouble. On one recent job, my clients' minibus sped ahead and disappeared from sight, leaving me to cope with fast-moving rush-hour traffic in an unfamiliar town.

Factories tend to be located in industrial zones on the outskirts of town centres. While they are reasonably well sign-posted from town, they aren't always well sign-posted within the site itself – and some sites are tantamount to small cities! To make matters worse, one warehouse often looks very much like another, so it's easy to go to the wrong one. Sat navs aren't infallible and are rarely as helpful as stopping and asking passing operatives for directions.

Where possible, a trial visit the day before is probably the most useful thing interpreters can do by way of preparation. At the same time, we should be wary of agreeing to use our own transport on site due to lorries and trucks hurtling around every corner.

Terminology and other prep

It goes without saying that preparation is important, depending on the extent of our previous knowledge of the factory. Interpreters should negotiate reasonable deadlines for the provision of any relevant materials, such



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as PowerPoints, maps of the site, information about the products being manufactured, and relevant machinery and tools. Also essential are details about who will be present at the visit (both visitors and factory representatives), especially each person's role and status in their respective companies. Good places to start are the company's website and the LinkedIn profiles of anyone likely to attend (if available).

Regarding any machinery and products which may be seen on the visit, interpreters can do a lot worse than looking at diagrams and videos to familiarise ourselves with their external appearance and gain some knowledge of how they work. It is almost guaranteed that at least one of the visitors will ask technical questions. If the interpreter hasn't got a clue about what a particular tool is used for, or which materials have been used to produce the end product, it will be very hard to give a professional rendition on the fly.

The terminology in this area is highly technical and these aren't the sorts of assignment that can be done on a wing and a prayer. What needs to be borne in mind is that the purpose of the visit may be (and probably is) a sales pitch, and no interpreter wants to be blamed by their client for less than impressive marketing which results in few or zero sales!

Insurance concerns

Most professional interpreters will have professional indemnity insurance to cover them in the event of potential disputes with clients about the quality of their work, as well as for any equipment that they take to jobs, such as phones and laptops. Unlike most on-site interpreting venues, factories are potentially dangerous places and interpreters working in them should check that their clients have adequate public liability cover in the event of a trip, slip or similar on the factory floor.

Interpreters should also be wary of attempts by officials to delegate their responsibilities. It is not uncommon to be asked by officials to 'represent' them on tours of the factory floor when they are too busy to attend themselves. From the outset, we need to be very clear with clients about our role and any potential difficulties which could arise if we are left alone with visitors. This might include negative comments about the factory or the personnel working there, or worse still, requests for inside information about the production process or the company directors. Likewise, we should be firm with visitors who see us as some sort of tour guide and ask us for recommendations for restaurants and tourist attractions.

Factory visits demand a challenging and fascinating mix of the interpreter's business, linguistic and social skills. We are literally thinking on our feet as we move around factory premises with a group of visitors who may or may not be able to hang on to our every word, depending on noise levels.

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Towards neuroinclusivity

Rosa-Maria Cives-Enriquez considers the challenges for neurodivergent professionals in the workplace

Have you ever found it hard to work with a colleague or client because their responses seem blunt or rude, they avoid eye contact or stare blankly at you? Have you refused to work with someone who is repeatedly late, appears unable to prioritise tasks or takes more breaks than others during assignments? Have you worked with someone who appears over-sensitive or dysregulated in their response to seemingly reasonable requests or tasks?

Now consider this: these responses may be due to neurodivergent (ND) traits. The term neurodiversity was coined by the Australian sociologist Judy Singer to reflect the diversity of thinking in the entire human species. It refers to the different ways the brain works and interprets information, and highlights that many people naturally think about things differently from the accepted 'norm'. Neurodivergence often runs in families, and occurs in all races, cultures, intelligence scales, genders and socio-economic groups.

The terminology is currently in flux as the way we think about neurodiversity changes. New language is emerging in this area, led by people wishing to own/reclaim terminology, with some preferring terms such as 'neurodivergent', 'neuro minority' and 'neurodifferent'. I will use these terms interchangeably. As linguists, we are all too aware of the impact of the language we use and the need to keep abreast of linguistic changes. If in doubt, the best approach may be to ask how a person prefers to speak about their neurotype.

What is neurodiversity?

A 2020 study estimates that 15-20% of the global population is neurodivergent.[1] This represents a significant number of employees, freelancers, clients and service users. However, it is difficult to gather accurate data for various reasons, including a historical lack of consistent assessment methods and criteria, poor access to diagnostic assessments, a historical lack of research, stigma, a lack of globally recognised definitions, and an assumption, in many cases, that boys and children are most affected.

The list of conditions that come under neurodiversity varies, but the ones most commonly asked about in the workplace are ADHD, autism,[2] dyscalculia, dyslexia and dyspraxia (DCD).[3] The cognitive hallmark of a neurodifference is often an inconsistency in performance, known as a 'spiky profile'. This is when, for example, someone excels at some aspects of their work but struggles in others, or can work brilliantly for a time but has persistent periods of productivity loss. There are other hidden disabilities that may cause this, such as multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue (CFS), Long Covid and mental ill health.

Many of the barriers ND people experience are related to executive function (the mental processes we need to be able to carry out key skills). Cognitive processing delays are common – i.e. difficulties in turning incoming information, such as words, sounds and feelings, into outgoing reactions, e.g. holding attention, answering questions and problem-solving. When this leads to sensory overload, the brain can enter fight/flight/freeze mode, leading to feelings of distress, agitation, anxiety, avoidance, irritability, withdrawal and physical discomfort. More specifically, the following areas of professional/workplace difficulty are typical for ND people:

- Memory/concentration (more than 90% of ND employees experience this).
- Organisation and time management (>75%).
- Managing stress (>65%).
- Communicating (>65%), which can include written communication accuracy, written communication speed and verbal communication difficulties.
- Managing intense emotions.

It is easy to see how these are mistaken for incompetence or a negative attitude, but it is

important to give people the benefit of the doubt. The UK Equality Act cites chronic difficulties in memory, communicating and learning as part of the definition of disability.[4]

It is important to note that neurominorities have strengths too, and that supporting neuroinclusivity can be professionally beneficial for everyone. That is why there's an increasing focus on diversity rather than impairment, and why the language around neurodiversity has evolved to be neutral.

Reasonable adjustments

Each ND person is best placed to advise on what accommodations they may need, but best practice would be for companies to share commonly requested adjustments with a new employee or freelancer. The Equality Act stipulates that employers have to make "reasonable adjustments" if the following things apply:

- The person is disadvantaged by something because of their disability.
- It is reasonable to make the changes in order to avoid the disadvantage.
- The employer knows, or should reasonably be expected to know, about the disability and the disadvantage suffered because of it.

For instance, an ND interpreter, translator or client may request a private/confidential room with a window, free from interruptions, if they are claustrophobic or experience high anxiety. Other reasonable adjustments may include a second screen to facilitate information sharing; voice recognition software to support note taking; or regular movement breaks to re-focus and re-balance. The legal requirements partly depend on an organisation's ability to provide the accommodations, so if in doubt it is best to seek professional advice/guidance.

A supportive environment

Hiring processes and work environments in which individuals feel comfortable disclosing their disability are valuable. However, it is good practice to consider making reasonable adjustments for any applicant or employee. Even small changes to the work or working arrangements can make a big difference. For example, removing environmental stressors may help a translator or interpreter prepare themselves physically and mentally for an assignment.

Reasonable adjustments can refer to any aspect of an individual's role or working arrangements. Examples could include:

- Having extra time in an application assessment.
- Being allowed to bring a supporter to an interview (for example, for a non-speaking autistic person); this supporter can assist with communication as well as being a familiar source of comfort.
- Being sent interview questions in advance to have the opportunity to read and absorb them in a stress-free way.
- Environmental flexibility, e.g. a dedicated desk in a quiet space; ability to book a meeting room for focused tasks, such as translating work; or sending directions, along with photos of the building entrance, meeting room and contact person, in advance of an interpreting assignment.
- Being provided with assistive tech, e.g. a handheld organiser to help with time management; voice/text software; or dual monitors (with training on usage).
- Role adjustments where non-core aspects of an employee's tasks are reassigned.
- Flexible hours and remote working options (to reduce the sensory overwhelm of commuting or shared office spaces).

If the help an individual needs isn't covered by the employer it may be possible to get support from Access to Work, such as for special equipment, adaptations, a support worker or a job coach.[5]

It is important to hold in mind that ND individuals are often specialist thinkers with an ability to problem solve, make connections, think creatively and see things differently. They are likely to add an additional competitive edge and dimension to a team's overall performance and the wider organisational talent pool.[6] Neurodiversity is vital for the future of work. By committing to provide a neuroinclusive workplace, and equality of opportunity and outcomes for all types of thinkers, organisations can ensure they don't get left behind.

This article is intended for educational and informational purposes. If unsure, please seek professional/legal guidance.

Notes

1 Doyle, N (2020) 'Neurodiversity at Work: A biopsychosocial model and the impact on working adults'. In *British Medical Bulletin*, OUP, 1-18, 135

2 Often referred to officially as Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).

3 'Neuroinclusion at Work' (2018) CIPD, London

4 https://cutt.ly/Uel8gyW4

5 https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

6 See 'Neuroinclusion at Work Report 2024', CIPD; https://cutt.ly/Rel8g5jl; and 'Neurodiversity Toolkit' (2020) BDF, London, UK; https://cutt.ly/BDFtools

7 *Ibid.*

A workplace for all

For any organisation striving to create a neuroinclusive workplace, an important first step is to understand where they are now, create a plan of action, and then act on it, most importantly demonstrating their lasting commitment to progress. Key principles include:[7]

- Creating an open and supportive culture where people feel comfortable talking about neurodiversity. Raising awareness among all staff of neurodiversity and the importance of an inclusive workplace can build understanding of other working styles and preferences.
- Proactively considering neurodiversity in all 'people management' policies and interactions, as this is likely to benefit the whole team/workforce.
- Inviting requests for workplace adjustments from everyone to 'normalise' the conversation. People can benefit from workplace adjustments for many reasons, and some won't know they're neurodivergent or may not want to share this information at work.
- Flexible working to enable everybody to thrive. Wherever possible, focusing on outcomes more than 'how and where' people work.
- Empowering ND voices and inviting participation; 'experts by experience' are often best placed to inform others.

SYSTEM SUPPORT

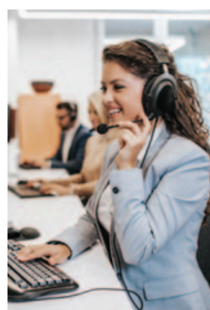
WHY SPEAKING SEVERAL LANGUAGES IS ESSENTIAL TO EMILY BOALER'S ROLE AS A TECHNICAL SUPPORT ENGINEER

Images © Shutterstock

With more and more tech companies expanding their client base abroad, they are increasingly finding that customers don't speak the organisation's main language, or at least not enough to discuss complex computing problems. When clients seek support with technical queries, they tend to feel a sense of relief when they can communicate with somebody in their own language. That's where I step in.

I work as a Multilingual Technical Support Engineer for Oracle, a major provider of cloud storage. As I support clients from the UK, Europe, Asia, the Middle East, the US, Canada and Latin America, I am required to use French, Spanish and Italian daily. Clients call me when they want to know how to use a certain area of Oracle's Aconex system, or when they are facing an issue with it. This is a cloud-based project management system that enables construction operations to run smoothly by allowing users to access information easily, connect with other users, streamline time-consuming tasks and manage documents.

Projects vary from rail infrastructure to sports stadiums to wind farms, so the client base is broad. To support them, I remote into their computers and directly resolve the issues or offer advice. If I am unable to find a fix, I raise the problem with our internal support teams, flagging any issues that I believe to be of high priority so they can be resolved as quickly as possible.



TECH TERMS
It is vital that support staff know the relevant technical terms in all of their languages so they can support international clients

MEETING MULTINATIONAL CLIENT NEEDS

I find that many clients, especially those from Latin America, do not speak English. Even when they do, it is vital to speak to them in their own language as people set their system to their preferred language, so I need to know the technical terms in English, French, Spanish and Italian. Some clients contact us by email, so it's important to have a high level of written language too.

Typical terms include 'single sign on' (*inicio de sesión único*) and '2-step verification' (*verificación en 2 pasos*). In tech, if you don't know a word you can't really find an alternative, so knowing the equivalent terms in all my languages is key. In some cases, it may be possible to explain the process – for example, if I didn't know the Spanish term for '2-step verification', I could ask the client to generate the code from the app (*generar el*

código en la aplicación). However, when you use technical terms every day you quickly pick them up.

Most of the time I am talking to clients from Latin America, so I adapt the Spanish I learnt, which is spoken in Spain, by using different words, pronunciation and phonetic alphabet. The same can be said when I speak to French-speaking Canadian clients compared to those located in France.

I sometimes have to translate too, and occasionally interpret for other internal teams who are investigating issues we haven't been able to resolve straightaway. In such cases, we organise a call with the client and I join to facilitate communication. I also contact overseas colleagues in their languages if I require assistance, or they may contact me when a client is chasing a ticket. As I work frequently with consultants abroad, we form strong relationships. They trust me to contact clients and find prompt solutions.

Resolving issues in different languages is rewarding. Some of our clients have never spoken to a British person before and really appreciate the effort made to speak their language. It's a gentle reminder of how far I've come with my languages, and that the hours of study have all been worth it.

Fortunately, my languages cover a fair number of countries across the world, but there are occasions where I don't speak a client's language. In these scenarios, the conversation is usually held in simplified English and I speak as clearly as possible. I find that linguists can speak a simplified version of their own language more easily than non-linguists as we are used to speaking to people from all over the world and have first-hand experience of the difficulties faced by non-native speakers. I use synonyms if the client can't understand a particular word and avoid using colloquial phrases.

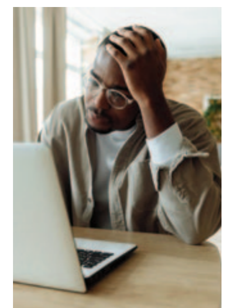
Even so, I'm not always understood. This can result in clients feeling frustrated, hanging up calls or refraining from calling back; wasted time for clients, as calls take up to four times longer; poor relationships; and a complete misunderstanding of a technical issue. Language barriers are also cultural barriers: something which may be polite in one culture may come across as very harsh in another, so you may end up accidentally upsetting a client or colleague without even knowing. Every company I've worked for has hired linguists, but it is next to impossible to cover every language spoken across the globe.

GOOD FOR BUSINESS

It's clear that 'everyone speaks English' is a complete myth, and even more so in sectors such as IT. Most clients will opt to speak in their own language and that has been the case since I started my career ten years ago. This applies to all nationalities, all ages and all industries. The small percentage of people who speak a high level of English still opt to speak in their language, as they are unaware of the technical terminology in English.

By speaking foreign languages, you can save time and money by gathering the correct information the first time. This can vary from understanding an issue a client may be facing to noting down phone numbers, addresses to send hardware parts to or serial numbers. Speaking the language avoids mistakes and reassures clients that we have the correct details. When companies don't hire linguists it can cost time and money, weaken client relationships and give the company a bad reputation.

Speaking the language of the client automatically increases client satisfaction. I have seen this result in extended contracts, and even in new contracts, as word gets around. A company may use a tech service provider at their HQ and want to roll it out to their branches around the world. Having the language capacity to do that can allow a business to grow. There is no better feeling than seeing the positive impact your language skills can have on others and on the company you are working for.



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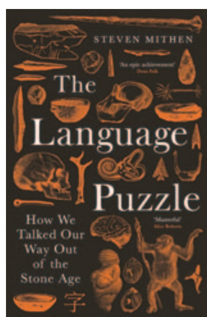
POOR RELATIONS
Clients can get frustrated when IT support workers don't speak their language or can't fully understand their problem

Books

The Language Puzzle

Steven Mithen



Profile Books, 2024
544 pp; ISBN: 9781800811584
Hardback
£25

The underlying premise of *The Language Puzzle: How we talked our way out of the Stone Age* is that the origin of human speech is a complex puzzle comprising numerous different pieces. Thanks to recent advances in the social sciences, many of these pieces are much better understood than they were a few decades ago. Some significant gaps remain, however, and in this book Steven Mithen sets out to fill them and complete the picture.

His approach is to provide us with detailed chapters on each of the disciplines involved in our understanding of language and then bring them together in an overarching evolutionary narrative. This stretches from the earliest hominins' prehistoric hoots and screeches to the complex, finely honed instrument you are reading at this moment.

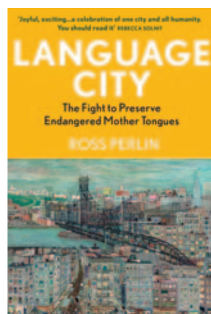
These disciplines include archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, genetics, ethology and neuroscience. Mithen makes an admirable effort to bring the lay reader up to speed in each of these complex subjects, a task he deems necessary to be able to grasp the bigger picture. This proves to be both a help and a hindrance. The level of detail can be overwhelming: a seven-page description of the functioning of the human heart, for instance, or a crash course on the intricacies of DNA, might seem excessive to some readers. The author's background is in archaeology, not linguistics, and at times this is noticeable. His rash dismissal of Noam Chomsky's crucially important ideas on language origin and acquisition is scantily argued and unconvincing, while the other great theorist of language evolution in this century, Daniel Everett, does not even get a mention.

A work on this scale will inevitably contain some imprecisions, however, and overall *The Language Puzzle* provides a well-written overview of the state of the art in this field, including numerous case studies and cross-references among the subjects involved. The paucity of hard data forces Mithen to rely on speculation as much as all the other writers who have tackled this subject. He may, therefore, fall short of his avowed goal of solving the language puzzle and proving how language drove humanity's development towards civilisation, but that does not make his multidisciplinary endeavour any less worth reading.

Ross Smith MCIL CL

Language City

Ross Perlin



Grove Press, 2024
415 pp; ISBN 9781804710715
Paperback
£12.99

A pastoral, nomadic tribe in Siberia has a word (*dongur*) that means 'a domestic, male reindeer in its third year and first mating season, but not ready to mate'. This Turkic language, Tofa, is spoken by fewer than 100 people and moribund. When its remaining, elderly speakers die, so will the language. The spoken repository of knowledge yoked to the herders' way of life, their culture and nomenclature will be lost.

Seke is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nepal where the glaciers are melting, landslides are frequent and farmers are looking to new horizons. The Seke people are leaving their high-altitude villages for high-rise flats in New York City. Of its total 700 speakers, 50 now live in a single housing block in Brooklyn. Before migration, the nearest village took two days to reach by horse; now it is two stops on the subway. Still come the tired, poor and huddled masses to this "archipelago of last resort".

Jobs are in nail bars, nannying, cooking, construction. The Himalayan diaspora watches Bollywood films and ends up speaking a Tibetan-Nepali-Hindi-English pidgin, nicknamed Ramaluk ('half goat, half sheep'). *Language City* author Ross Perlin, of the Endangered Language Alliance, works with immigrant Rasmina to compile dictionaries, analyse grammar and transcribe recorded conversations. Will Seke survive as a living language, he asks. If its young speakers remain in Nepal, perhaps. Those with a toehold in New York may disperse, and without a diasporic critical mass it will perish within a lifetime.

Yiddish is bullish by comparison. At its peak in 1920s America a million-plus immigrants spoke the fusion of Hebrew, German and Slavic languages. Their descendants are acculturated, and in Europe numbers plummeted following the Holocaust and pogroms. Perlin tells the story of Boris, who came to Manhattan via Bessarabia, Moscow and Israel. He revived *Forverts*, a newspaper akin to a fanzine in which Yiddish is the subject of adoration. Supporters it has, but native speakers are really what it needs.

In Language City: The fight to preserve endangered mother tongues, I happened upon 'shlepped', 'hustler' and 'badasses', and thought I'd been force-migrated into an episode of *Seinfeld*. The author does the native New Yorker routine as well as the serious, academic research. I learnt much and only occasionally did it feel like a lecture (e.g. English is a 'killer' language). Strangely, there is not a single Jewish joke. That warm, wise humour would have been a shot of arak to this reader.

Graham Elliott MCIL

Podcasts Events

Bafflegab

Susie Dent and Gyles Brandreth

Something Rhymes with Purple; *Somethin' Else with Sony Music Entertainment; Apple Podcasts/ Spotify*
Free; Purple Plus £2.99 pcm

Something Rhymes with Purple is a podcast exploring the origins of words. In the 46-minute episode 'Bafflegab', Susie Dent and Gyles Brandreth discuss all things nonsense. They begin with a foray into the vocabulary we use to describe nonsense itself, including 'gobbledegook', 'balderdash' and the less common 'bafflegab'. Did you know that 'gobbledegook' comes from the sound a turkey makes?

After this etymological exploration, the hosts celebrate nonsense prose and poetry, including Edward Lear and Dr Seuss. Susie reads Spike Milligan's poem 'On the Ning Nang Nong' and discusses why it is such a popular teaching resource in schools. The hosts' enthusiasm for this genre of writing is a good reminder for us linguists – professionally obliged to take language seriously – to find opportunities to play with words and language. I'd argue that this is an important way to stay tapped into the passion that inspired our careers in the first place.

The episode rounds off as they usually do, first with correspondence from listeners (who ask about the origins of specific words or answer questions posed in previous episodes). Susie then presents her 'trio for the week' – three unusual words and their meanings – before Gyles wraps things up by reading a poem that ties in with the theme of the episode. This time, he reads Lear's beloved poem 'The Owl and the Pussy-Cat'.

For those wanting a deeper dive into the topics, subscription to the Purple Plus Club is available for a small monthly fee.

Anam Zafar MCIL

Patois

Jeanefer Jean-Charles

© Claire Leach

Brighton Festival, 18-19 May; Greenwich+ Docklands International Festival, Aug-Sept For dates see https://www.jeanefer.com/patois/
Free

Each year in May, the Brighton Festival showcases the best of new British and overseas art and performance. On guest director Frank Cotterell-Boyce's programme for 2024, one show stood out: *Patois*, the newest piece by Jeanefer Jean-Charles. While the contemporary dance choreographer's career so far has seen her devise movement for some of the biggest performance events of the last 20 years, I am able to anticipate little more than that *Patois* will forefront the linguistic, sharing as it does the name of the group of language varieties formed through ethnic mixing on slave plantations in the Caribbean.[1]

The stage on the seafront is adorned only with a pair of flags and several stacks of tartan suitcases, all in vivid blue, yellow and black: a sense of removal to an exotic destination is present even before the five-strong dance troupe emerge through the crowd announcing "we're off to Saint Lucia". The dancers' cheery, childlike tone, exaggerated movement and breaking of the fourth wall contrast with the serious, academic tenor that the piece's title and description suggest (and delight the numerous families in the audience).

As they take to the stage, the dancers' blue trousers sway like the sea and their colourful sleeves shimmer, as if lit up by an Antillean sun. The image of an all-Black troupe celebrating their cultural heritage to a lively Calypso backing is a joyous one. Before long, however, one dancer removes her shirt to reveal a white tank top. As she is carried and her body manipulated by the others, a sense of displacement and difference emerges.

A further costume change ensues as the two male dancers open their suitcases to find suit jackets, waistcoats and trilby hats, while the women dress in tartan skirts. No sooner are these normative gender roles established, though, than they dissolve, the men replacing their dresswear with skirts in an act of cultural blending and innovation akin to the creolisation process that gave rise to the group of languages known as patois.

Throughout the piece, the Kwéyòl[2] vocals of the soundtrack are foregrounded, instating the linguistic as a primary means by which mixed identities may be established and defined. The dancers' movements – the qualities of which range from the dynamism of afrobeat to the lyricism of ballet – play a similar role, blending generic styles and defying any expectations the audience may have.

Patois leaves its best act till last. It feels like a spell has been broken when the dancers assemble at the front of the stage and one takes a microphone. But when he asks the audience to name the languages they speak (these include German, Greek, Brazilian Portuguese and Urdu) it is clear that a new collaborative, discursive space is being established. The cast teach us a song in Kwéyòl: *en tibo, deux tibo, trois tibo, ca bon ca bon* ('one kiss, two kisses, three kisses, it's good it's good'; French speakers will recognise their grammar superimposed with novel lexis – as is the pattern of most creoles).

As we chant with increasing confidence, the dancers jump down into the crowd to lead us in a joyous final conga. For all participants, young and old, of all nationalities and origins, this is a moment of pure inhibition that modern-day British life rarely allows us to experience. As we dance by the English Channel, perhaps we ought to be reminded that the many cultural contributions brought to us from overseas are easily as valuable as the few traditional practices that originated on this island. At the end, Jean-Charles takes the stage; she should be firmly aware of just how important a journey she has taken us on.

Fred Waine

Notes

1 I would recommend reading Jean-Charles's own description of her piece in order to better understand its content: www.jeanefer.com/patois.

2 The local name for the patois of Saint Lucia.

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Covert communication

What the clandestine M language of Malaysia can tell us about secret languages around the world

NORHANIZA NURUDDIN

The phenomenon of hidden languages is truly intriguing. These confidential communication methods often develop within groups, serving purposes ranging from playful encoding to secretive exchanges. Some studies suggest that the use of a secret language is quite prevalent among twins.[1] Why twins? It is thought they use communication to isolate themselves from others. This same idea applies to all secret languages; we use them within our own circle, keeping them exclusive and unintelligible to outsiders.

The secret 'M' language (Bahasa M) transforms Malay phrases through the addition of 'shadow syllables'. Exemplifying how linguistic creativity can be employed to create a secretive linguistic code, the M language alters familiar phrases by inserting syllables, thus obscuring the meaning to those unfamiliar with it. The transformation of *Saya lapar* ('I am hungry') into *Samayama lamaparmar* showcases how the systematic addition of syllables creates a new linguistic form that retains a semblance of the original.

Less prevalent than the M language, the 'F' language is a further example of this covert communication method. In the F language, *Saya lapar* would be rendered as *Safayafa lafaparfar*. Different communities may tailor their own versions to suit their needs.

One of the fascinating aspects of secret languages is their oral nature, as they rely heavily on pronunciation and rhythm for comprehension. When spoken rapidly, the encoded phrases take on a distinct sound, almost resembling a foreign language. One example, *Jamadimi, samayama nakmak tamannyama jimikama amadama yangmang imingatmat bamahamasama M iminimi?* ('So, I want to ask if anyone remembers this M language?'), reveals the rapid and fluid nature of communication within the secret language.

CHILD'S PLAY: *Covert languages often start with children, as with the M language in Malaysia*

Although it originated among the Malay-speaking community of Malaysia, the M language was taken up and adapted by some English-speaking citizens. An English phrase like 'Do you want to go to the concert?' may be transformed into 'Domu youmu wantman tomu gomo tomu theme conmonsertmert'. Decoding this version in writing is more complex as the shadow syllables are intricately tied to the pronunciation of the words.

Coded languages worldwide

The concept of secret languages is not unique to Malay speakers. Throughout history, various communities have developed their own clandestine communication methods, often as a means of maintaining privacy or exclusivity. These languages can be found across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, each reflecting the unique characteristics and

needs of the community that created them.

In some cases, they emerge as a kind of defiance against oppressive forces. During periods of cultural suppression or political turmoil, marginalised communities may invent ways of evading censorship or surveillance. These secret languages serve not only as a means of preserving cultural identity but also as a form of resistance against attempts to silence or control linguistic expression.

In addition to their practical applications, such cants play a role in fostering a sense of belonging within the community. The shared knowledge of the code creates a bond among its speakers, fostering a sense of solidarity and mutual trust. In this way, they serve not only as a tool for communication but also as a marker of group identity. As for M language, it is intended as a secret means of talking to close friends or siblings.

Despite their inward nature, such languages often attract curiosity and intrigue from outsiders. Linguists and researchers may study them to gain insights into the underlying mechanisms of language and communication. Additionally, popular culture often romanticises the concept of secret languages, portraying them as mysterious and exotic.

According to Listverse,[2] the Top 10 secret languages worldwide include Swardspeak, Pig Latin, Thieves' Cant, Carnie and Polari. Among these, Pig Latin, which is based on the English language, shares similarities with the M language. First employed around 1869 by children, Pig Latin involves converting English words based on their initial letters or groups of letters. If a word begins with a vowel, 'way' is appended to the end, so 'awesome' becomes 'awesomeway'. If it starts with a consonant followed by a vowel, the initial consonant is relocated to the end with 'ay', so 'happy' becomes 'appyhay'. In cases where the word starts with two consonants, both are shifted to the end, as when 'child' becomes 'ildchay'.

Lunfardo is used by prisoners in Argentina and started among the poorer people in Buenos Aires. Mixing Spanish and Italian, it has more than 5,000 words and is known for switching syllables, e.g. *feca* for *cafe*. It was used in tango music until 1943, when it was banned from tango because of its association with violence and sex. In the 1960s it made a comeback, and you can now find Spanish-Lunfardo dictionaries.

Wrestlers, meanwhile, have Carnie, which began with carnival workers who wanted to communicate during fake wrestling matches without the audience catching on. In Carnie, English words are changed by adding 'eaz' before each vowel sound. So, 'is' becomes 'eazis' and 'Kelley' becomes 'Keazelleazey'. There are also special words such as 'Andre shot' (making a wrestler's muscles look bigger in photos); 'Batman match' (a boring match); 'beat down' (when a wrestler gets attacked by a group); and 'canned heat' (fake crowd noise, e.g. cheering, played through speakers).

Secret languages exemplify the rich diversity of human linguistic creativity. They serve various functions within their respective communities. While specific to their cultural contexts, these cants reflect universal human tendencies towards linguistic innovation and social unity. As researchers continue to explore the fascinating world of secret languages, they uncover the complexities of language mechanisms and the enduring human desire to connect and communicate in meaningful ways.

Notes

1 Thorpe, K et al (2001) 'Prevalence and Developmental Course of Secret Language'. In *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*, 36,1, 43-62

2 Taylor, O (2017) 'Top 10 Secret Languages'. In Listverse, 1/4/17; https://cutt.ly/DezZ6Ccv

TROUPER: *Carnie speaker Albert Harris at his coconut shy at Cambridge Midsummer Fair*

Andrew Dunn via Wikipedia (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Norhaniza Nuruddin ACIL is a certified translator from Malaysia with over 11 years' linguistic experience.

A competition for word lovers

Inspired by CIOL Vice President Jean Coussins (for reasons which will become apparent), the Chartered Institute of Linguists is launching a light-hearted competition for our members and readers of *The Linguist* – to propose a new collective noun for linguists! This contest aims to find the most original, witty or apt term to describe a group of linguists or language professionals.

Entries will be judged by a panel including Baroness Coussins (*pictured*), with the winner receiving a prize. Piqued by the delightful collective noun 'a parliament of owls', she proposed the idea as a way to celebrate the wonderful skills and creativity of the linguistic community.

Members, readers and all lovers of languages are encouraged to let their imaginations run wild. Early suggestions have included 'a syntax' and 'a mouthful', as well as the existing 'a babel', which has some historical currency. This is all about fun, but with a serious message too. Creativity, wit and wordplay are skills that linguists have in superabundance thanks to our exposure to other languages and cultures.

The winning entry can hope to join the pantheon of memorable collective nouns in the English language, cementing linguists' place alongside the shrewdness of apes and the charm of finches, but well away from the prattle of parrots! Watch this space.

Please send entries to comms@ciol.org.uk.

How to build a website

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The Linguist

CHAN WING LAU

As a linguistic entrepreneur, I hope my story might help others who want to launch a linguistics website. I have created two websites with domain names in Mandarin Chinese and English, which serve as infrastructural support for my linguistics research and consultancy business. The idea is to start with a website that is operational but still in development and to make it 'optimal' over time.

When planning a website, my philosophy is that *what* to market (i.e. content) should be prioritised over *how* to market it (i.e. which channel). Branding is also key. To uplift potential visitors' confidence in me, I am applying for associate membership of CIOL through its recently launched fast-track route.

Beyond that, how should we, as language professionals, think of the domain names of our websites in a way that makes them meaningful, pronounceable and memorable? How can we make our websites 'discoverable' without paying huge advertising fees? These were my concerns when considering domain names. I first came up with 語言學創建.香港 and its English translation linguisticscreation.hk. One connotation of 創建 ('creation') is entrepreneurship. But this English domain name is too long. Thus, I thought of 語言學網絡.香港 and linguisticsnet.hk, and created the bilingual brand 語言學網絡香港 / Linguistics Networking Hong Kong (LNHK).

How to protect yourself and your clients legally will depend on your jurisdiction, but in Hong Kong, where I am based, all firms must be registered with the government. It is also important to register domain names. By registering with the Hong Kong Domain Name Registration Company Limited I can access their free web2social service, providing plug-and-play templates to build basic websites efficiently.

SEO (search engine optimisation) enables both human users and search engines to find and explore relevant websites. It is a relatively technical process but Google Search provides helpful guides (see https://developers.google.com/search/docs).

Social media networking is also useful. As a professional platform, LinkedIn can strengthen your online presence. To drive traffic to a website, it recommends following its user guide (https://cutt.ly/vezySimZ). Inserting a url into your LinkedIn profile is another effective strategy.

Starting a business with two websites is a 'bottom-up' strategy that is contrary to a conventional approach, which starts with mission statements, budgets and business models. My aim is to build an online presence first. By sharing linguistic know-how with fellow linguists, my websites will evolve organically and sustainably.

Letters

Is revitalisation the way to go?

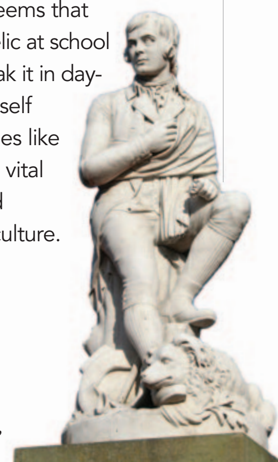
Languages such as Scots and Gaelic are in the process of making strong revivals in Scotland. With 1,541,693 people in Scotland speaking Scots in 2011, campaigns such as Oor Vyce are pressing to have Scots legally recognised as an official language. It makes me ask, why? What are the repercussions of this? Why are these languages being revitalised? Who speaks them any more? These are questions that I fear will remain unanswered with new revitalisation policies.

As an English speaker, Scots is somewhat easier to comprehend than Gaelic. Its roots stem from English and Scottish vernacular, and both languages are Germanic. According to Oor Vyce's campaign page, Scottish identity and culture play a part in revitalising the language. Contemporary Scottish writers are using Scots, with Irvine Welsh including moments of Scots dialect in his novel *Trainspotting* (1993).

For Scots to be utilised in Scotland, it would undeniably have to undergo language planning, but such efforts are not without difficulties. When Gaelic was officially introduced into Scottish schools in 1985 the intention was clear: to uphold Scottish heritage and oblige younger generations to learn it.

So where are we now with Gaelic? Well, in large cities like Glasgow or Edinburgh, it is almost never spoken. With a 41% increase in Scottish students going to Scottish universities in the past year, you would expect Gaelic speakers to be increasing at Scottish universities. Not so. It seems that students who learnt Gaelic at school are not going on to speak it in day-to-day life. So, I find myself asking whether languages like Scots or Gaelic are truly vital to my generation's lived experience of Scottish culture.

May Anderson,
CIOL Student affiliate



SCOTS HERO: *Statue of poet Rabbie Burns (1759-1796) in Dumfries, where he is buried*

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A medical emergency

From fatal miscommunications to a lack of accountability, Eleanor Taylor-Stilgoe, Félix do Carmo and Sabine Braun look at the risks of using automated translation in healthcare

Would you feel comfortable going into hospital knowing that the person providing treatment doesn't speak your language and may use a free, unregulated translation app to communicate with you? Would you feel confident that you had received the right medication and were on the road to recovery? Situations like this arise more often in the UK than you might think, afflicting patients and health professionals alike.

Reports emerged in 2018 of doctors in the NHS turning to online machine translation (MT) tools to communicate with Romanian and Polish people when delivering vaccines, rather than using remote or face-to-face interpreting services.[1] The reasons given included the perceived cost and appointment time pressures, as well as difficulties in finding professional interpreters for the required languages. One of the doctors claimed to use Google Translate very often, commenting "It's better than me struggling… and the person not having a clue what I'm talking about." A 2020 study found that public health providers in England were using Google Translate for consultations with Romanian and Roma communities, raising concerns that "messages would be lost in translation".[2] The Royal College of Midwives has identified language as both a risk factor and a barrier to effectively delivering care to people with little to no English.[3] While remote interpreting services can be procured from LanguageLine, one midwife reported: "we are discouraged from using LanguageLine for things that aren't urgent due to cost implications."

NHS England cautions staff against using online translation services on the grounds that "there is no assurance of the quality of the translations".[4] The same guidance states: "Patients should be able to access primary care services in a way that ensures their language and communication requirements do not prevent them receiving the same quality of healthcare as others." In practice, however, health professionals are turning to these tools as a 'better than nothing' solution to provide this care.

A lack of accountability

Where does legal liability lie when turning to such apps? The licence agreements we accept when installing them transfer all responsibility for the consequences of their use to the user, fully protecting the tech company against any liabilities. Where does this leave well-meaning healthcare staff in the event of errors in communicating important, even vital, information to patients?

A notable case is that of two-year-old Awaab Ishak, who died in 2020 as a result of prolonged exposure to mould in his flat. During a hospital visit in the days prior to his death, he was accompanied only by his mother, whose English was very limited. Google Translate was used to communicate important yet insufficiently precise discharge instructions. By contrast, an Arabic-speaking GP was asked to explain the medical team's decision to the family when nothing further could be done to save Awaab.

The coroner's verdict stated that "an appropriate translator should have been

provided", indicating that "the ability of the family to explain any worries or concerns they had and to understand advice" may have been compromised. While the use of MT was not determined to have caused the child's death, it does raise questions about why a professional interpreter wasn't used.

A similar case came to light in the BBC's *File on 4: Lost in Translation* radio series. In 2022, Syrian refugee Rula (a pseudonym) suffered a life-threatening bleed following the birth of her child in the UK. When she woke from an emergency caesarean performed under general anaesthetic, hospital staff used Google Translate to advise her that she would need to go back to theatre with the possibility of a hysterectomy, a treatment to which she did not consent.

A telephone interpreter was subsequently found "for a couple of minutes only", though this interaction was beset by communication difficulties: "I was extremely unhappy and I told the interpreter, I don't want them to do this." Still under the effects of the anaesthetic, she "begged them, please don't remove my uterus". Despite this, the hysterectomy went ahead and only afterwards was a face-to-face interpreter used to deliver the news. Given that consent was not granted, this raises the question, if staff had relied solely on Google Translate where would liability have ultimately rested?

Whether or not cases of miscommunication *should* occur, the reality is that they *do* occur. The reasons why free machine translation is used in such high-risk contexts, and what can be done to mitigate the risks involved, merit further investigation.[5] When it comes to safe and effective care delivery, health professionals and patients deserve more than 'better than nothing' solutions.

Notes

1 Moberly, T (2018) 'Doctors Choose Google Translate to Communicate with Patients Because of Easy Access'. In *BMJ*, 362
2 Bell, S et al (2020) 'Responding to Measles Outbreaks in Underserved Roma and Romanian Populations in England: The critical role of community understanding and engagement'. In *Epidemiology & Infection*, 148, CUP
3 Gomez, E and Chilvers, R (2017) 'Stepping up to Public Health: A new maternity model for women and families, midwives and maternity support workers', RCM; https://cutt.ly/setXQz3N
4 'Guidance for Commissioners: Interpreting and translation services in primary care', NHS England; https://cutt.ly/VetXQNuD
5 Taylor-Stilgoe, E, do Carmo, F and Orasan, C (2023) 'An Exploration of Risk in the Use of MT in Healthcare Settings with Abbreviations as a Use Case'. Conference paper at HiT-IT; https://cutt.ly/betXWgU6

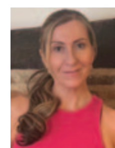
TL **Eleanor Taylor-Stilgoe is a postgraduate research student, Dr Félix do Carmo is a Senior Lecture in Translation and Dr Sabine Braun is a Professor of Translation Studies, all at the University of Surrey.**

CONTRIBUTORS

Emily Boaler

Emily Boaler is a passionate linguist who is fluent in English, Spanish, Italian and French, and has studied and worked in four countries. Since graduating in 2013, she has always ensured that she uses her languages skills in her work, including in roles at Disneyland Paris and Oracle. *See p.26*

Rosa-Maria Cives-Enriquez



Rosa-Maria Cives-Enriquez FCIL is a Senior Mental Health Practitioner/Therapist (NHS) and has a passion for supporting and amplifying the voices of neurodivergent people. Having received a late diagnosis (ADHD), she is not only a health coach but an 'expert by experience', delivering consultancy and presentations. *See p.24*

Kashif Khalid

Kashif Khalid MCIL is a seasoned linguist with over five years of experience in the localisation industry. Specialising in English to Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi, he is passionate about languages and AI technologies, and continuously explores innovative solutions in the translation industry. He is committed to bringing texts to life for diverse clients. *See p.20*

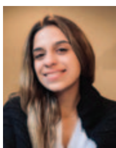
Sue Leschen

Lawyer-linguist Sue Leschen FCIL CL is the Director of Avocate, a legal and commercial French interpreting and translation company (www.avocate.co.uk). She is also a business mentor and trainer, and a member of the CIOL Interpreting Division Steering Group. *See p.22*

Brenda Narice

Dr Brenda Narice MCIL is an NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology with an interest in maternal-fetal medicine at the University of Sheffield. A translator and interpreter specialising in medicine, she is also the patient information Spanish lead for the International Society of Ultrasound in Obstetrics and Gynecology. She previously translated for Translators Without Borders and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. *See p.16*

Artemis Sakorafa



Artemis Sakorafa MCIL is a translator and conference interpreter working in English, Greek and German. Based in Boston, USA, she is an in-house interpreter in healthcare settings across the United States and is registered as a certified translator with the Greek Consulate in Boston. She is a member of several professional organisations, including the American Translators Association and the Panhellenic Association of Translators. *See p.18*

Anam Zafar

Anam Zafar MCIL is an award-winning translator from Arabic and French to English. Her work includes *Yoghurt and Jam (Or How My Mother Became Lebanese)*, a graphic memoir by Lena Merhej, co-translated with Nadiyah Abdullatif, and Josephine Baker's memoir *Fearless and Free*, co-translated with Sophie Lewis (out in 2025). Apart from literature, her other translation specialisms are environment, international development and tourism. She is a member of *The Linguist* Editorial Board. *See p.14*

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