Translation and Interpreting

Convergence, Contact and Interaction

Eugenia Dal Fovo and Paola Gentile (eds)

Peter Lang

New Trends in Translation Studies

'The discipline of Translation Studies welcomes every book that stresses the diversity of its research object, including transfer practices such as interpreting, adapting, rewriting or localizing. This volume is an illustration *par excellence*. It approaches translational practices as profoundly social phenomena and convincingly places the rapid technological changes in the profession at the center of its scholarly attention.'
— Professor Luc van Doorslaer, University of Tartu and KU Leuven

'Never the twain shall meet. Fine, Mr Kipling, but Translation and Interpreting are not East and West, and they do meet in research and in training. And they meet in this excellent volume edited by Eugenia Dal Fovo and Paola Gentile. It is so refreshing to see that all titles in the volume contain references to translation AND interpreting (or translators AND interpreters), and all papers do indeed cover both.'
— Professor Maurizio Viezzi, University of Trieste

A glance at the current state of the profession reveals a varied scenario in which Translation and Interpreting (T&I) constitute two interlingual processes usually performed by the same person in the same communicative situation or in different situations within the same set of relations and contacts. Although both practices call for somewhat different communicative competences, they are often seen as a single entity in the eyes of the public at large. T&I are thus found in relations of overlap, hybridity and contiguity and can be effected variously in professional practices and translation processes and strategies. Yet, when it comes to research, T&I have long been regarded as two separate fields of study. This book aims to address this gap by providing insights into theoretical and methodological approaches that can help integrate both fields into one and the same discipline. Each of the contributions in this volume offers innovative perspectives on T&I by focusing on topics that cover areas as diverse as training methods, identity perception, use of English as lingua franca, T&I strategies, T&I in specific speech communities, and the socio-professional status of translators and interpreters.

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ABSTRACT

The ubiquitous use of English by non-native speakers has become a hallmark of modern communication, even in a multilingual country with several national languages such as Switzerland. This phenomenon has prompted a great deal of research into English as a *lingua franca* (ELF), with most of it devoted to documenting its spread and investigating its communicative effectiveness. What appears at first glance to be a practical solution to facilitate exchanges in business, finance, education and science has a downside, however, because producing and processing a foreign language can add to cognitive load and stress. Since by definition ELF is not the same as standard English, additional effort must also be made on the part of native and non-native speakers alike to understand non-standard utterances. Professional interpreters and translators are especially affected by the increase in the use of ELF, because they have to cope with non-standard spoken or written input, respectively, while at the same time meeting high quality expectations for the target output. In this contribution, we explain where interpreting and translation studies converge with respect to the challenges associated with ELF and how process research techniques from the two disciplines can be merged in a mixed-method approach focused on determining the cognitive impact of processing non-standard language input. We suggest future directions in the under-researched area of interpreting, translation and ELF (i.e. ITELF) and outline what the implications of such research might be for model building, professional practice and training.

1. Introduction

A consequence and driving force of the developments related to today's increasingly interconnected yet greatly diversified world is the now widespread use of English by non-native speakers. Even in multilingual

Switzerland, English is replacing the four Swiss languages (i.e. German, French, Italian and Romansch) not only in international, but also in intra-national communication. This first truly global *lingua franca* is pushing other languages into subsidiary roles in international business, finance, education and science. The spread of English 'across continents, domains, and social strata' (Seidlhofer 2011: 7) is unique in history and one of the most noticeable linguistic features of the twenty-first century. According to Ethnologue estimates (Simons and Fennig 2018), there are now five non-native speakers of English for every native speaker. Spurred by the ubiquity of the internet and the growing necessity for communication across linguistic boundaries, the unparalleled expansion of English as a *lingua franca* (ELF) is likely to continue. The reality of millions of people communicating in a language that is not their first is sure to have enormous repercussions for multilingualism and multilingual societies. This reliance on ELF can come at a cost, however.

Despite the obvious importance, there has been very little research into the cost-related impact on and consequences for non-native speakers who have to work in English. The academic study of ELF has tended to focus on communicative success between non-native speakers and the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of the phenomenon (Seidlhofer 2011; Mauranen 2012). Far less attention has been paid to the more negative aspects of processing non-standard language input. In addition, research into the implications of ELF for the traditional management of multilingualism, namely translation and interpreting (T&I), has been exceptionally rare. Preliminary research suggests that the increasing number of ELF speakers at international gatherings impacts professional interpreters' capacity management (Albl-Mikasa 2010, 2013) and that the growing number of source texts written by non-native speakers of English is forcing transla-tors to spend more time and effort on processing these texts written in ELF (Albl-Mikasa et al. 2017). Cognitive load seems to be the overriding issue for both groups of language experts, so the question logically arises as to whether cognitively oriented T&I researchers can profit from each other's methods and insights to contribute to an emerging area that has been termed ITELF (i.e. interpreting, translation and English as a *lingua franca*) (Albl-Mikasa 2017).

After reviewing the relevant literature, we explain where interpreting and translation converge with respect to challenges associated with ELF. We explore how process techniques from Interpreting Studies and Translation Studies can be merged in a mixed-method multi-disciplinary approach. Moreover, we expand on how this type of research could contribute to methodology and model-building in all of the disciplines concerned (i.e. ELF, Translation Studies and Interpreting Studies).

2. English as an Effective Communication Tool?

In the popular view, English seems to be well-established as a global language and functions as an effective tool for international communication. However, what at first appears simply to be a very practical solution to a communication problem is in fact much more complicated. The convention of using English can carry a cost in monetary, temporal, and emotional terms and can impair communication (Gentile and Albl-Mikasa 2017). Several important questions arise in this context. What does it mean, in biological terms, when a large proportion of a thinking and speaking species, for whom language is inherently central and relevant, has to communicate and bond through the medium of a language that is not their own? How can corporations function effectively when English is enforced as the working language irrespective of managers' and their employees' proficiency levels? Evidence from neuroscience suggests that cognitive load, negative emotions and stress – which have all been associated with the use of foreign languages – trigger an inhibitory mechanism that encourages avoidance. This can result, in turn, in exclusion from participation and decision-making.

There is evidence that an increasing number of corporations are beginning to question the use of English because it can be detrimental to productivity, perhaps less so at the management level, but clearly at the operations level, for example when engine parts need to be discussed in detail, and can even introduce an additional source of risk. At Porsche, the

corporate language was switched back from English to German because of a detrimental effect of the use of L2 English on creativity and productive motivation amongst staff members, which led to unsuccessful discussions of technical details and breakdown of simple work processes, when for instance German engineers only knew the word 'error' to refer to concepts as different as 'quality defect', 'oversight', 'incorrect planning', 'mismanagement' and 'deficiencies' (Gentner 2010). In the scientific context, it has been observed that '[w]ithin the European context […], a colleague who speaks three languages fluently, has basic knowledge of a fourth and some passive knowledge of English, is virtually excluded from the discussion' (Snell-Hornby 2010: 18). It is no coincidence that Carli and Ammon (2007) chose *Linguistic Inequality in Scientific Communication Today* as the title of their edited volume, since scholars who are proficient in the conventions of (Anglo-American) native-speaker rhetoric and narratives tend to have more successful track records. Especially in disciplines in the humanities and social sciences that rely heavily on argumentation and language to disseminate research results, academics with lower levels of competence in English can struggle to achieve the recognition that their work deserves because they publish in other languages or have trouble having their work accepted by mainstream English-language journals (Bennett 2014).

Despite the above-mentioned examples, the assumption of the effectiveness of ELF is generally insisted upon by scholars who have been instrumental in establishing it as a research field (Jenkins et al. 2011; Mauranen 2012; Seidlhofer 2011). The consensus seems to be that 'ELF is not a defective, but a fully functional means of communication' (House 2013: 286). Most of the supporting research to date has been based primarily on analyses of conversation protocols from small-scale face-to-face discussions, negotiations and meetings. The optimistic results of such ELF research do not reflect terminological and subject complexity typical of higher-level settings such as technical conferences or:

> intellectual, legal and political […] exchange of knowledge and information and […] negotiation of power' in the context of a 'wide range of encounters – bilateral meetings between politicians, business seminars, press conferences, scientific or academic symposia, general meetings of shareholders. (Donovan 2009: 53–54)

In such common contexts, ELF speeches and texts may evince deviations from Standard English (SE) norms that then increase the effort required for comprehension and meaning construction, not only for the target audience but also for any interpreters and translators involved.

Since the 1980s, ELF has developed into a full-blown discipline with annual conferences reporting research into the phonology of ELF, attitudes and ideologies, general processes, world Englishes, and the implications of ELF for teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (Jenkins et al. 2017). One of the main themes of ELF literature has been the emancipatory liberation of the majority of the world's non-native English speakers from the unattainable target model of the native speaker gold standard upheld by vested English language teaching and publishers' interests. The focus has shifted from (grammatical) correctness to (pragmatic) appropriateness, with the recognition of ELF as a legitimate and 'functionally appropriate and effective' (Seidlhofer 2011: 120) use of English as an asset for successful communication across linguistic and cultural borders. Nevertheless, many of the findings from ELF research are based on situations of ELF speakers communicating directly with each other with access to co-constructive strategies, so it is unclear how applicable they are to the non-interactive reality of most translators and (conference) interpreters or Translation and Interpreting Studies as a discipline.

3. Interpreting, Translation and English as a *Lingua Franca* (ITELF)

As outlined above, the potential difficulties for interpreters and translators in processing ELF input have not been addressed by mainstream ELF research. The emerging field of ITELF has been exploring the limits of ELF communication and the implications of its use in professional settings. Interpreters and translators are language professionals who form a particularly interesting case because they have the expertise and strategies to deal with unexpectedly difficult input and thus to optimise communication

(Reithofer 2010, 2013) that non-professionals might not have at their disposal. Moreover, they represent the spoken and written dimensions of ELF processing.

The overly optimistic view of ELF presented in the previous section is inconsistent with the reality and problems reported by professional interpreters and translators. Consequently, ITELF-related research has begun to question the effectiveness of ELF as a communication tool. Reithofer (2010, 2013), for example, tested comprehension to determine communicative effectiveness of input and provided evidence that the understanding of source speeches in conference settings can be significantly higher among conference participants listening to professional interpretation into their first language (L1) than those listening to the ELF original, even when they share the same technical background as the speaker. Similarly, a statistical analysis of EU data led Gazzola and Grin (2013: 104) to conclude that the EU's 'multilingual, translation-based language regime is both more effective and more fair than a unilingual regime based on [...] "ELF"' and the latter 'would also probably be much more expensive'.

Conference interpreters, in particular, have criticised ELF on the basis of additional cognitive load and stress when they have to interpret speeches by non-native speakers as well as miscommunication that they have observed when conference participants use ELF among themselves (Albl-Mikasa 2010, 2014a). In fact, according to a 2014 study by AIIC, the International Association of Conference Interpreters, the 'increasing use of international English ("globish")' (Jones 2014), that is, ELF, is one of the major challenges interpreters face today. Not surprisingly, scholars in interpreting studies (Donovan 2009; Reithofer 2010, 2013) have taken a much more critical stance towards ELF phenomena than its proponents do.

Translators, just like interpreters, are now being confronted with an enormous number of English source texts produced by non-native speakers. Although there has been less discussion in the literature about ELF in relation to written translation, some scholars have expressed a similarly cautious view of ELF source input (Hewson 2009, 2013; Snell-Hornby 2010). ELF speeches and ELF texts can in fact be expected to share similar features. In terms of phraseological deviations from Standard English between spoken and written ELF, Carey (2013) finds no statistically significant

difference in the initial analyses of the WrELFA corpus.[7] Moreover, as in interpreting, translation also involves a monologic situation, usually with little or no recourse to the source text producer to clarify intended meaning. According to Hewson (2009, 2013), the potential loss of control for the translator also affects equivalence relations and translational quality. Consequently, he emphasises the need for the translator to enter into a 'normalization process' (Hewson 2009: 119).

In the EU, the challenges inherent in translating ELF texts have been recognised and led to the establishment of so-called editing units by the Directorates General for Translation of the European Parliament as well as of the Commission. The function of the units is to revise ELF texts to meet native English standards before they are passed on to serve as source texts for translation into the various EU languages (European Commission 2012: 7). According to Murphy (2013), the aim is to resolve vague, unclear, or ambiguous wordings and structures so as to avoid different versions in the target languages and thus different readings of legally binding texts.

Most ELF research has been socio-linguistically motivated and has involved introspection or corpus-based analyses (e.g. of the ELFA, VOICE, and ACE corpora).[8] ITELF research, which calls into question the tenet of successful ELF communication, is still quite limited in scope and has so far been based on self-report (introspection, interviews, questionnaires) or target text productions (interpretations and translations). A bibliometric analysis of recent literature dealing with the impact of ELF on T&I (Albl-Mikasa 2017) shows that most of the publications are of a descriptive or conceptual nature: only 37% are based on empirical investigations of the phenomenon and most of those concentrate on a single aspect (e.g. foreign accent) or use introspective methods (see the next section). There is clearly a dearth of empirical data to support the claims about the cognitive load and stress associated with ELF input that have emerged from the limited number of studies and have been reported anecdotally.

7   <http://www.helsinki.fi/englanti/elfa/wrelfa.html>.
8   Refer to <http://www.helsinki.fi/elfa>, <http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/index.php>, <http://corpus.ied.edu.hk/ace/About.html>.

4. Challenges of Non-standard Input

Until very recently, cognitive load and stress were much more prominent issues in interpreting studies than in translation studies. The constant information load, the time factor, the tremendous amount of concentration required, the simultaneous processing of different languages as well as speaker-dependent variables (such as fast speech, difficult accents, highly technical content matters, reading out of manuscripts, etc.) make cognitive load a number one issue in simultaneous interpreting. Additional factors such as fatigue, the confined environment of the conference interpreting booth, poor working conditions, competitive personal relationships, emotional or conflict-prone topics under negotiation, fear of public speaking and other anxieties can all lead to stress. Models such as Gile's (2009) Effort Models or Moser-Mercer's (2008) Adaptive Expertise Approach have enabled a better understanding of interpreters' capacity management and expertise building for coping with 'one of the most complex language tasks imaginable' (Christoffels and de Groot 2005: 454) requiring the simultaneous deployment of sensory, motor, and cognitive skills under tight temporal constraints. However, hardly any of the work reported in the literature relates specifically to additional cognitive load and stress attributable to ELF input.

Strong accents and mispronunciations, which can be produced by both native and non-native speakers, have been identified as having an impact on the delicate distribution of limited resources to the listening, analysis, production, memorisation, and co-ordination effort involved in interpreting. Stress studies among interpreters have shown that a high percentage of conference interpreters consider an unfamiliar foreign accent of a speaker to be a stress factor (Cooper et al. 1982; AIIC 2002). In the AIIC Workload Study (2002), a representative sample of professional conference interpreters rated unfamiliar accent as the fourth most stressful factor (62%), and 71% of the respondents confirmed that difficult accent was a type of stress 'very frequently' encountered in professional assignments. Gile (2009: 173, our emphasis) claims that bad pronunciation 'by the *non-native* speaker forces the interpreter to devote much processing

capacity to the Listening and Analysis Effort, and therefore slows down production [which] in turn overloads the Memory Effort and results in loss of information from memory'. A handful of earlier studies relevant to ELF concentrate on the effect of non-native accents on the interpreting task (McAllister 2000; Kurz 2008) or the advantages of having the non-native speaker's first language as one of the interpreter's working languages (Basel 2002; Kurz and Basel 2009). The results of these studies suggest that non-native accents cause performance problems especially among student interpreters, but that they also affect professionals and that the 'shared languages benefit' (Albl-Mikasa 2014: 298) is a compensatory factor when interpreting ELF speakers.

More recent ITELF-specific research has shown that ELF speech diverges from standard English with respect not only to the degree of familiarity of accents (or lack thereof) but also to the combination of unconventional sentence structures and unusual lexical choice as well as various other types of negative transfer from speakers' L1, especially for low-proficiency users (Albl-Mikasa 2017). Reconstructing the meaning of a non-native English speaker's utterance, for example when a German speaker talks about 'the possibility of deselecting of achievements' instead of 'the provider's option to give up certain services' (Albl-Mikasa 2014: 304), may be possible if the interpreter happens to be competent in the speaker's L1, but ELF is used by speakers of a huge variety of languages that no interpreter can be expected to anticipate. Problems with cohesive ties that are typical of ELF input on the textual level (e.g. misuse of words such as 'thus' or 'despite') can detrimentally affect coherence, comprehension, bilingual processing, and consequently interpreting and translation performance. Difficulties in bottom-up processing of ELF input might impede inferencing and anticipation as well as the retrieval of translation equivalents and the application of transfer routines (Albl-Mikasa 2013) and consequently force a greater reliance on top-down processing and higher-order inferencing, which are assumed to be more resource-intensive.

Following this logic, the implications of ELF input for translation must be similar. This is supported by a recent study of the effect of ELF texts on translators, which was based on source texts made available by the European Parliament's Editing Unit (Albl-Mikasa et al. 2017). The

edited and non-edited versions of those source texts were translated by six professional translators. An in-depth analysis of the translation processes revealed that the segments selected for modification by the Editing Unit gave rise to translation problems in more than twice as many of the cases with the non-edited versions (26%) than with the edited versions (12%). Screen-recording measures support the claim that ELF input is associated with additional effort, since the translation of the non-edited versions required more time than the edited versions. Temporal effort is one indication of cognitive load, but additional investigations are needed to determine whether and how ELF places higher demands on available cognitive capacity and what the effects on comprehension and expression processes might be. Recent developments in process research related to the situated activity of T&I have provided additional techniques to measure cognitive load, as described in the next section.

5. The ELF Factor in the Situated Activities of Translation and Interpreting

Translation and interpreting are multi-activity tasks which can easily cause cognitive overload and stress even when conditions are good. These activities involve translators and interpreters processing input in one language and formulating output in the target language while thinking, retrieving, and evaluating information from internal and external resources under tight temporal constraints. Physical constraints, tools and other technological aids, together with organisational requirements, exert an influence as translators and interpreters juggle demands on their concentration, working memory, and bilingual lexical retrieval processes while trying to meet their client's expectations and target audience's needs (Risku 2010; Ehrensberger-Dow 2017; Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2017). Just as models have been proposed to explain the effort or cognitive load involved in simultaneous interpreting (Gile 2009; Seeber 2013), the theoretical construct of mental load has been used to explain how various factors such as

time pressure, information content or input quality can affect translation performance (Muñoz 2012, 2014).

The relatively young field of cognitive T&I process research uses a variety of methods in its attempt to gain information about the internal processes and decision-making involved in professional translation and interpreting work. Process techniques include video recording, computer logging, reconstructing the process to understand individual steps and decisions, and asking translators and interpreters to reflect on what they do and why. As computer and eye-tracking technology has driven methodological developments, process research has expanded to encompass the translator and interpreter as an agent situated in a social and environmental context (Muñoz 2016). The implications of this broader view are reflected in the diversity of phenomena that are being studied within the framework of recent cognitive research, such as affect and agency (Risku 2014; Hokkanen and Koskinen 2016).

Working conditions, time constraints, and stress have all been associated with disturbances to the translation process (Hansen 2006), which can be revealed through the use of process research methods. For example, typing mistakes that translators make when they encounter certain translation challenges might be indicators of stress and cognitive effort (Muñoz 2009). Such mistakes can also present an additional cognitive load, since the translator has to correct them to maintain the expected level of quality, which in turn interrupts the flow of target text production. Similar phenomena have been noted in interpreting tasks, as indicated by hesitations or 'brain stoppers' (Albl-Mikasa 2014b: 23). The concept of 'flow' refers to a state of being fully immersed in a task such that this immersion is energising (Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi 2002). If translators and interpreters encounter resistance in their tasks, for example by difficulties in extracting meaning from ELF input as reported in the studies reviewed in the previous section, then flow is interrupted (Ehrensberger-Dow and O'Brien 2015). The choice of 'letting it pass' or selective processing that is available to other recipients of ELF input is not an option for these professionals, who have to convey the whole meaning of the source input in an appropriate form for the target audience.

In other contexts, the quality of source texts has been explicitly identified as an issue in surveys of professional translators (Lafeber 2012) and interpreters (Kalina 2005), and in recent workplace studies (Ehrensberger-Dow and Massey 2017). The potentially compromising effect of ELF input can be addressed in cognitive translation research with a variety of observational methods to gain information about the internal processes and decision-making involved. For example, the cognitive effort associated with processing other types of input has been evaluated by examining time lags, pauses, and eye-tracking measures such as average fixation duration, fixation count and/or pupil dilation (O'Brien 2006; Timarová et al. 2011; Seeber 2013; Vieira 2014). In view of the central role of cognitive load in ELF processing, these behavioural methods would lend themselves to complementing the ITELF-related research reviewed above. Neuroanatomical and psychophysiological techniques could provide more direct measures of cognitive load and stress (Hervais-Adelman et al. 2011), and could be triangulated with results obtained under more naturalistic conditions. Researchers are beginning to take some of these techniques on board to supplement more tested methods of cognitive translation process research (García et al. 2016; Hansen-Schirra 2017).

6. Future Directions

Other than a few pioneering studies, the area of ITELF is seriously under-researched despite an identified need from the translation and interpreting industry. Most work in the field has been more of a conceptual and theorising nature until now, perhaps because of a relative lack of cross-over between T&I and ELF research. Given the global implications of ELF and ITELF, however, empirical research is urgently required to provide robust evidence and objective measurements of the cognitive load as well as possible negative impacts involved in processing ELF speeches and texts. Questions of interest include: what problems does ELF input (either spoken or written) cause compared to Standard English input? Which measures of cognitive

load and stress are related to ELF input? What other challenges does ELF present to the communities of interpreting and translation practice?

A mixed-method approach to ITELF can bring together perspectives from applied linguistics, interpreting studies, translation studies, cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Such interdisciplinary research has been very productive in demonstrating that translation and interpreting processes are both a social (external) and a cognitive (internal) activity. That is, on one hand, they involve (automatic and controlled) cognitive processes which rely on finite attentional resources, working memory and executive control and which determine performance. Preliminary ITELF-related research suggests that ELF requires additional effort to understand and interpret/translate because the input deviates from (learned, acquired and rehearsed) lexico- and morpho-syntactic discourse structures. Following this line of argumentation, it can be assumed that the processing of ELF is generally associated with a stronger engagement of cognitive resources, as reflected by a modulation of brain activity (Abutalebi and Green 2007).

We intend to build on findings from our previous research in ELF, interpreting/translation processes and cognitive ergonomics in order to understand how interpreters and translators cope with non-standard linguistic input. We hypothesise that ELF imposes additional cognitive load that can impede the efficiency of comprehension, slow down decision-making and other cognitive processes, and thereby affect the quality of interpreting and translation performance. In upcoming research, we plan to track cognitive load and stress with neurophysiological and psychophysiological techniques, which can provide evidence-based insights into the mechanisms operative during various translation and interpreting activities.

Direct implications for interpreting and translation studies are expected from ITELF research in methodological advancements, since interdisciplinary multi-method research in these disciplines is still relatively rare, as well as in theoretical model-building, especially with regard to (ELF-related) interpreter/translator competence, T&I quality and T&I process research. In the professional world of T&I, robust scientific evidence of the additional load associated with ELF processing and the related effect on the efficiency of such processes, the quality of the products, the interpreters'/translators' job satisfaction and their health would justify concerns

about working conditions and ultimately help reshape the latter in order to meet the demands created by the continued global spread of ELF. In addition, insights into successful coping strategies targeted at reducing cognitive load could be incorporated into language teaching and T&I training programmes.

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