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ITI SCOTNET NEWSLETTER



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Editorial



Welcome to the second edition of our new-look Newsletter. It has taken a few months to get it off the ground, but I have a good excuse: I am now the proud Mum of baby Amélie Iona who was born on the 1st December 2006! I am looking forward to what the future holds, and not only at home.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editorial	1
Dates for your diary	1
XML Seminar	2
AGM Talk "Languages for Business"	2/3
Edinburgh Book Festival Reviews	4/5
Self-Marketing and Customer Relations Workshop	6/7
Members News	8

The programme of events organised by the ITI Scotnet in 2007 promises a lot of good things and good times to be had. 2006 was a busy year for us all, with very interesting events and this newsletter contains reports of a few of them, like the XML Seminar in the picture. The Book Festival reports are particularly revealing and signal a new feature of our newsletter for future issues in the form of reviews written by members themselves.

*I hope you enjoy your read!
Arielle*

Dates for your diary:

28 March: Proz.com Stammtisch, at the Cumberland bar in Edinburgh, at 8 pm.

21/22 April: ITI "Coming of Age Conference", at the Rembrandt Hotel, London.

8 to 10 June: ITI Scottish Network Summer Meeting. Theme: Contracts and Pitfalls. Location: Aviemore.

20 October: European Translation Standards Workshop, with a session on note-taking for interpreters, Glasgow (time and venue tba).

1st December: AGM and Christmas Lunch, venue tba.

The "Introduction to XML for translators" seminar, 23 September 2006.

By Nick Rosenthal

On a lovely sunny Saturday in Edinburgh, around twenty Scottish Network members gathered at Heriot Watt University for a seminar on "XML for translators". The presenters were Nick Rosenthal, Managing Director of localisation specialists Salford Translations Ltd, and Iwan Davies, a translator with considerable localisation expertise.

Nick set the scene, explaining why XML is becoming more widespread. We looked at XML subsets such as DocBook and DITA, used for writing technical manuals, and such as XLIFF, which is used for localising software resource files. We discussed the roles played by XML files, DTD files and schemas. We looked at the component parts of an XML file,

"Iwan's use of "Swedish Chef" language as a demonstration tool will remain with us for a long while!"

at elements, and attributes, and entities. Nick explained about metadata, and data tagging and granularity. And we discussed issues such as single-sourcing, publishing from one data source to different target formats.

Iwan then covered XML from the translator's perspective, demonstrating the use of translation memory tools when working on XML files, explaining different approaches and showing which elements and attributes needed translating, and which ones did not. He demystified Trados INI files, and showed us some clever tricks with xslt files. His use of "Swedish chef" language as a demonstration tool will remain with us for a long while, as will the sample file of "Nick's Bacon Butty.XML"

After the two-hour seminar, the Scottish Network invited the presenters to join them for lunch at a local pub, which was a very enjoyable way to round off the day.

(The picture on page 1 of this newsletter shows the audience getting ready for Nick and Iwan's presentation.)

"Languages for Business – The Economic Case",

A Talk by Tim Steward, Head of CILT Scottish Languages Network, at our December 06 AGM.

By Jackie Jones

Tim Steward is a former academic turned businessman who runs 3 companies that all have an international perspective. He spent 10 years as a consultant to Allied Distillers working throughout the Pacific Rim as a brand ambassador, developing specialised whisky products for the Asian and particularly the Japanese market. He is a Japanese speaker and runs businesses, which assist companies trying to penetrate the Japanese market. He runs Language Network Scotland with funding for just one day a week on behalf of CILT, the National Centre for Languages, and works with the business community.

Languages for Business - The Economic case Language Network Scotland was set up to help Scottish Businesses get access to the language skills which so many of them need. Tim Steward, who runs the Network, gave a highly entertaining and passionate talk about the work of the organisation, its role in working with schools to stimulate interest in learning foreign languages, with businesses to meet their needs and with the many other organisations that play a role. He looked at the economics of languages and discussed how we need to make the business case for languages.

He began by citing a number of case studies in his own experience where not only knowledge of the language, but also of the culture, plays a part. For example, it is a tradition in Japan to bring back expensive gifts from business trips abroad – of necessity when flying, they need to be small and lightweight, but genuine Scottish whisky is a preferred gift, so specifically for the female Japanese market, "Purity", teardrop-shaped bottles of Scotch, are produced, retailing at £750 a bottle! Entry to such a lucrative market was of course only possible with knowledge of the Japanese language and culture. The Nuffield Study in 2000 reported that one out of five companies are losing money due to lack of language skills and cultural awareness.

CILT set up the Regional Languages Network to promote the learning of languages and understand the culture of other nations. Tim pointed out that there are 8 RLNs in England, many with three or more full time staff, while in Scotland there is only one RLN for the whole country, run by him on one day a week!

He urged that one way forward was to lobby the Scottish Executive, the MEPs for Scotland and all the Scottish political parties to increase awareness of the situation. His job involved largely working with business providers and dealing with about 30 different agencies in education and employment, while the Dearing Report had recommended that universities should target secondary schools about the importance of languages.

Scottish companies are not just missing out on possible markets. Local people are missing out on possible jobs. At IBM in Greenock, for example, three out of four staff are non-Scots, as they are able to work in other languages in addition to English. There is even the risk that such companies may relocate to other countries, taking with them the few remaining hopes of local employment.

When it comes to language learning, however, Tim was critical of a purely utilitarian view of languages, instead of a more rounded education, but pointed out at the same time that even from a utilitarian point of view, the concentration in schools on a few key European languages was unrealistic – besides the aforementioned Japanese market, key languages for



Jackie and Renate at the AGM

Scottish whisky marketing alone include all the languages of the Indian subcontinent, Russian and the Scandinavian languages, and with internet marketing the list is even longer – targeting your customers in their own language is a valuable point of leverage for your business – to say nothing of the Scottish GDP!

Tim provided us all with an RLN folder stuffed with leaflets, magazines, language promotion materials and even a CILT DVD on promoting workplace learning. His energetic and enthusiastic presentation pointing out the good things that are being done but indicating a huge shortfall in provision, with many shortcomings, was food for thought for us all. It may be "one man, one day a week" for the RLN in Scotland, but Tim's experience, awareness and ability to motivate are providing the RLN with real value for money! Many thanks to Tim for a gripping, amusing but thought-provoking presentation.

Try visiting:

www.in-scotland.com (Language Network, Scotland)

Edinburgh International Book Festival reviews

Edgardo Cozarinsky and Per Petterson Talk,
By Alison Hughes

Having been spurred on by the link posted on the e-group by Isabel Hurtado de Mendoza, Anne Hoey and I attended the talk by Edgardo Cozarinsky and Per Petterson at the Edinburgh International Book Festival on Friday, 18 August. We were unsure what to expect but were certainly not disappointed. Cozarinsky, an Argentinean of Eastern European origin, was discussing his book "The Maldovian Pimp" which evokes Jewish Immigrants in Buenos Aires in the early years of the last century.

The Norwegian author, Per Petterson, was there to talk about his book "Out Stealing Horses", in which the narrator reminisces back to his life with his father in the forests of Norway when he was 15 years old and their difficult relationship.

The discussion was chaired by Nick Caistor, a member of the British Council for Literary Translation and translator of Cozarinsky's book.

Although from very different backgrounds, the two authors did have several things in common. They had both moved into literature from former lives, Cozarinsky having worked as a film producer and Petterson after a spell of selling books in a bookshop in Oslo. They also both expressed a certain dislike of "plot", preferring to concentrate on characters and description. Here the similarity ends.

Cozarinsky is a great lover of cities, going so far as to say he finds the country "frightening". When it was suggested that

"The Brits don't think about Norway at all!"

the peace and quiet of a country evening was surely very conducive to writing, he replied that it was, but that he liked to know he had the option of popping out for a coffee late at night if he chose to do so. In the countryside you only have darkness.

Petterson, on the other hand, positively enjoys this experience. Having moved to the forest from Oslo, "the world's largest village", some years ago, he is quite at peace with the silent, dark Norwegian nights.

The discussion ended with a question and answer session. The most interesting question posed was "You have both been translated into various languages. Are your books received differently in the various countries?"

Petterson explained that his book has sold extremely well in Germany, which he joked was due to him not being too harsh in his depiction of the German soldiers (knowing he had to find a reason behind the conflict between father and son, he opted for the war and occupation). They do less well in Britain because the Brits, in his words, "don't think about Norway at all".

Cozarinsky told us his books receive "interesting reviews" in Germany and on the whole are well received in Britain. Interestingly enough, although he spends six months of the year in Paris, he does not get any reviews or invitations onto arts programmes in France. He doesn't know why but is quite happy for it to remain that way. Following the talk, both authors headed to the bookshop for a book signing. In an attempt to introduce my 14-year old son, Iain, to foreign literature and to a world far removed from mobile phones and MSN, I had Per Petterson sign a copy for him. So far his response has been: "Who is Per Petterson?" "Cool, Matthew got a "Horrible History of Edinburgh. Can I read it after him?" I live in hope that the next time he is frantically looking for something to read, he will actually find out for himself who Per Petterson is! In the meantime, I think I'll give the book a go.

Interpreting at the Book Festival,

By Renate FitzRoy

The Edinburgh Book Festival is small compared to the big fairs in London or Frankfurt, and the atmosphere is much friendlier. Whereas the big book fairs are about buying and selling licenses and printed "products", the Book Festival is there for the authors and their audience. No hectic running from Hall A to Hall G or whatever, just a leisurely stroll around Charlotte square, to the theatres, to a café or the bookshop. Couples snog on the lawn in the middle - everybody seems to be enjoying themselves.

Africa seemed to be one of the main featured subjects, and the authors Norma and I had been asked to interpret for both had an African background. "My" author, however, happened to be white, in fact she was "The White Masai". Eighteen years ago, on a holiday in Kenya, she saw a beautiful young Masai warrior on a ferry - and decided he was the man for her, never mind the boyfriend with whom she was travelling. With extraordinary single-mindedness, she sold her business in Switzerland to move in with her Masai and his mother in a mud hut. She soon bought a Landrover and opened a village shop. The new life meant not only the daily struggle for food, malaria attacks and car breakdowns, it also meant the clash of very different ideas of marriage - a romantic idea of love on the one hand, and the idea of a wife as a kind of child-producing cattle on the other. After the birth of their daughter, life became more and more difficult, the relationship deteriorated and in the end, she fled to Switzerland with her daughter.

This is the content of her first book, which became an international bestseller. Corinne Hofmann, the author, wrote two sequels - one about life after the return to Switzerland (not translated into English), and the other one - the English translation was only available as a manuscript for the festival - about her reunion with her African family 14 years on. A DVD was made during the visit, so the programme at the festival included some reading from "The White Masai" and, once the audience was familiar with the dramatic story, we were to see the "real people" on the DVD. 14 years can be a long time. The beautiful, delicate blonde Corinne had become a still beautiful, strong and self-assertive middle-aged lady with mahogany hair. We had been in touch before we met, so I knew which passages of the translation I was to read out. So I could rehearse - after all, the text was full of drama, and you don't want to stumble over words. When we met in Corinne's hotel, I saw that with her strong, lively personality, she would probably dominate the session - after all, people came to see her and hear her story. She was not confident about what she called her "Busch-Englisch" (I am sticking to the German spelling, to avoid confusion), but in the end, I hardly had to do any interpreting - just help out with the odd word. She had to answer many detailed questions about life with the Masai, how she managed to survive several severe bouts of malaria, and people wanted to know why she did not take her daughter with her on her second trip. Well, who would have run the risk of not getting her out of the country - after all, they had fled and the father might have reclaimed his daughter, with Kenyan law on his side. Female circumcision has still not been rooted out. There were also some less friendly questions, asking what she had to give back to the Masai people who had welcomed her and enabled her to write a bestseller. Some of her income goes back to some Masai communities. See more on her website <http://www.massai.ch/en/Spendenempfe.asp>

This interpreting assignment - where my main job was to read out a dramatic passage about the birth of a baby on the back of the Landrover, stuck in the middle of nowhere - and otherwise just to sit back and listen and throw in the odd word - was one of my most fascinating jobs.

ITI ScotNet Workshop Self-Marketing and Customer Relations Report by Alastair Naughton (1st part) and Hugh Fraser (2nd part)

Introduction

Susie Kershaw told us in no uncertain terms: "we're worth it!" We should remember that when marketing ourselves as a "product." But getting there takes a lot of research: research of ourselves (what we can offer), then of the market (what the market wants), then of ourselves again (how we can adapt to the market), and so on. This is an on-going process - it keeps us fresh as a "product." Even starting this process is time-consuming, but it is essential, a precondition of success.

Examination of ourselves

We as translators are a highly marketable individual package of experience, passion, knowledge and place. Arguably, passion is the most important factor in the mix, as this is the motivator. A good exercise in self-research is the "7 'Feel-Good Stories' Exercise", whereby an individual analyses 7 episodes or events where he/she felt really good. The individual should take each of these and:

1. Identify key actions and qualities associated with the story
2. Identify the most frequent occurrences
3. Priorities three key features

Patterns will emerge after Stage 3 of this process.

Research of the Market

The market changes constantly, and so needs constant research. Good researchers will know today's market thoroughly; the really smart ones however will read signs of the times for the next big developments and adapt what they have to offer to suit (see above process.) Susie identified the environment as a subject area (witness Gordon Brown and David Cameron falling over themselves trying to "out-Green" each other) and the "BRICs" as major languages of the future. (1)

After the first research of self and market, you are better equipped to go and get the work. Have a "lift" speech ready (approx. 30 seconds, that's all you get!) This is a summary of your Unique Selling Point (USP), i.e. what makes your service unique. Practice it! Most importantly, get into the buyer's world. What are the buyer's needs? They will probably be numerous, with conflicting priorities to be juggled. You need to assure the buyer that your service will address his needs. Get access to the person who makes the buying decisions. After all, most of use relate to an individual.

Network, network, network! Write letters, emails, invest in a website. Go to conferences in your subject areas and ask questions "from a linguist's perspective."

Negotiating the work

Once you get to the stage of negotiating for work, all expectations should be made clear from the start. Ask for glossaries of definitions if required, and for a contact person. Always have a contract and code of practice. Clients need to be educated in what translation is about, and need to know what you expect from them in order for a successful business transaction to take place.

Summary

From a personal perspective, this was an invaluable talk for anyone starting out. From commentary I heard, more experienced hands also hugely benefited, as many translators don't actually market themselves. This might be fine if you have all the regular clients you want, but if that source suddenly dried up, what then?

(1) Note from the Editor: BRICs = Languages of Brazil, India and China.

Customer Relations with Hugh Keith and Kay McBurney

In their workshop, Hugh Keith and Kay McBurney looked at a number of tricky client scenarios from the world of translation. Hugh Keith took centre stage, putting an entertaining twist on proceedings at every opportunity, while Kay, Carol Vorderman-like, wrote things on the whiteboard and added her discerning take on the situation every now and then. Susie Kershaw from the last session, as our "language consultant" for the day, was frequently consulted for advice throughout the workshop, and enhanced the event with some juicy gems of advice. Participants were divided into 5 groups, with each group being allotted a scenario to discuss. First, each issue was discussed within the respective groups, and later the debate was opened up to everyone present, often revealing some quite radical and thought-provoking approaches.

The first scenario involved a translator being approached by a completely new client with a 50,000 word job. The question was: what factors should be considered? Initially, participants said they would focus on finding out just who this client was, and discussed a number of ways of discovering whether they were likely to get paid (the Proz.com Blue Board, the Zahlungspraxis group, for example). They also put a good deal of emphasis on finding out what was expected of them: would they be required to offer a discount price? To deliver the text in chunks?

The discussion soon metamorphosed into a debate about price, and Hugh Keith's attitudes here set the tone for the workshop as a whole. No, he said quite clearly, we are not selling apples, and thus bulk discounts should certainly not apply. But what if it was on a subject you really loved? Would it be OK to charge a bit less then? No, said Hugh Keith - if you're passionate, you will do a better job and thus, if anything, you should be charging more.

Susie Kershaw, however, could not ignore her fellow participants' enthusiasm for lowering their prices, and suggested that, if they really could not suppress their cost-cutting ways, then they might at least consider phrasing it as "this time, I can offer you the job for last year's price," a solution that seemed to keep participants reasonably happy.

In short, the message appeared to be: rather than let the customer tell you what to do, set the terms yourself. This idea came through strongly in the next scenario, too.

It was called "Waiting for Godot" – a client has promised to send you a 12,000 word job on Monday morning. By Tuesday lunchtime it has still not arrived, by which time an old favourite customer is on the phone asking if you can do a job that starts straight away. What do you do?

The answer here seemed to be: be firm. And proactive. Rather than sit and wait for the job to appear, set out your terms right from the start: if the text arrives late, the deadline will have to be extended by an appropriate amount. And if it hasn't arrived by Tuesday morning, I won't be doing it at all (for example). It was at this point that Norma Tait revealed her no-nonsense approach: she never accepts any deadline first time around, because seeming always to be available makes it look like you're not busy, which is of course... a bad thing.

Scenario 3 was called "Garbage in, garbage out". The question was twofold: what should you do if a client issues you with substandard reference materials, and what should you do if a client asks you to translate a substandard source text.

The answer here, it emerged, is that a little diplomacy can go a long way.

In both of these situations, it was thought, treading carefully was vital. Clients can get rather touchy about the quality of the materials that they produce. Anne Withers related how she had once been presented with a poor source text, but rather than complain, she gently asked for clarification of a number of points. In this way she sensitively alerted the client to the poor quality of the text, which the client then decided to revise before giving it to Anne to translate again. Thus Anne shone as a language specialist willing to take initiative, but also benefited from having a reasonably high-quality text to translate.

Proactivity. That's what it's about.

At this point Fiona Paterson spoke up, bemoaning the fact that she seemed to have drawn the short straw with her clients, as she was frequently sent quite dismal source texts. Only recently, she told participants, she had been given a text to translate where the doctor who had written it had confused a patient's groin with his buttocks.

In the fourth scenario, some time after delivering a text, you are contacted by your client, who says that your translation contains mistakes and that you have failed to use the correct terminology. What do you do?

What you do not do, apparently, is complain that you were never given the correct terminology. Susie Kershaw insisted that asking for reference materials should be on every translator's basic checklist when taking on a job. It is up to the translator to ask for it: not having it because the client didn't offer it is no excuse. Goodness.

What you do do in this situation, of course (ahem), is find out the facts. Becky Hendry said it was essential to ask for examples. Hugh Keith said it was important to be diplomatic, and admit if the client had a point. On the other hand, he said, such complaints are very often a ruse to avoid having to pay. Don't be too sorry, he said. Be professional.

The final scenario followed on neatly from this, as it was about clients not paying. Graeme High summed up his approach to this situation in three easy steps: 1. Diplomacy, 2. Clarification, and 3. Remedy with assertiveness. The clarification stage was discussed in some detail, as translation agencies seem to have a habit of passing vague criticisms on from their customers to the translator, without seeming to recognise that they are in any way responsible for the quality of the work. Hugh Keith reminded participants that the translator's contract is with the agency, not the end client, and thus the agency must be able to substantiate any complaints. He also pointed out a handy fact: that until the translator receives full payment for a job, she retains the copyright for the work in question. This can be useful when a customer is refusing to pay.

There is also plenty of legal help available: ITI arbitration, ITI's legal helpline, small claims courts. But prevention is better than cure: Susie recommended calling the client the day after delivering a job to check that they have received it and are happy with it. Once again, being proactive seems to be the key.

Translators have a habit of selling themselves short, and of seeing themselves as the wider world sees them: as little people working away in the background, who should ideally do what they are told, require minimal remuneration, and take as little initiative as possible. Hugh and Kay's workshop was about the opposite of this: standing up for yourself, taking a proactive approach, and seeing yourself as a language specialist who has a lot more to offer than the client assumes. For those who had been starting to believe that maybe they should just knuckle down and keep quiet, it was a very refreshing experience.



Members News



A few more new members of the ITI Scotnet introduce themselves to you all:

- Eileen Laurie: I am a freelance translator, based in Northern Ireland, translating from German and French to English. I graduated in 1991 from Glasgow University (French/German) and then spent 10 years in Berlin translating, working in an educational publishers and as a project manager in a translation agency. When my husband Max was offered a position at the University of Ulster, we moved to Derry/Londonderry in 2001. I passed the Institute of Linguists Diploma in Translation in 2002, and have been translating full-time since then, specialised in the areas of art, especially contemporary art, and social sciences. I also translate advertising/marketing texts, websites and press articles. I am in the process of becoming a member of the Irish Translators and Interpreters Association. Since Northern Ireland lies between ITI Scotland and ITIA, that should increase my contacts with living, breathing translators significantly. I enjoyed the events in St Andrews very much, and look forward to attending many workshops and ceilidhs in the future.
- Helen McKinnon: I've been working as a freelance translator since I graduated from Heriot-Watt in 2003. I work from German and French into English, mainly on catalogues and brochures for children's toys, craft materials and hotels. I'm planning to specialise in the same types of texts, but about equestrianism and other outdoor activities. I'm based in Perth, where I've lived for three years, but I come from Wales. When I'm not working (which sometimes doesn't seem like very often!), I like horse riding, running and climbing. I look forward to meeting you at the next event!
- Lucinda Byatt: I've enjoyed the various ScotNet events I've been to over the past year or so - starting with a very friendly AGM lunch in Glasgow in December 2005. I've been working as a translator for more years than I care to mention - I first joined ITI in 1989 but then let my membership lapse while I lived in Italy for the next ten years. Since then, email and the Internet have totally revolutionised the whole way of networking - for the better. However, I feel that personal contact is really important and that's what prompted me to become an associate of ITI again. There are also excellent opportunities for CPD and I found the professional development modules I attended last year here in Edinburgh very informative and useful.
- Herbert Eppel: I'm a freelance technical translator, originally from Heidelberg, working from English into German and vice versa. The fact that I translate in both directions is perhaps somewhat unusual and probably even frowned upon in some quarters, but the bulk of my work is actually from German into English these days. Having acquired a taste for the British way of life during a six-month placement in 1984/85 at Arup in London, I have lived and worked in Britain since 1988, initially as an engineer, researcher and lecturer at De Montfort University before diversifying into translation in 1995. I greatly enjoy being my own boss and not having to commute, and (most of the time) I even enjoy the inevitable challenges of being my own IT system administrator. My office is virtually paperless, and I make extensive use of Translation Memory tools, in particular Déjà Vu. I'm currently still mainly based in Leicester, although my wife and I (together with a growing assortment of animals) spend as much time as we can in our cottage near Huntly, with a view of eventually living there on a more permanent basis. More details about my background etc. can be found on my website at www.HETranslation.co.uk

The following people have also joined the ITI Scotnet quite recently, and you will read about them in our next newsletter:

Alastair Naughton, Arantza Elosua, Jeannette Rissmann, Cynthia Stephens, Karen Elwis, Marion Manayani, Eric Berg, Marion Lurf, June Woodward, Amela Camdzic and Pernille Chapman.