



# ITI-LRG Newsletter



Issue 14

[www.iti-lrg.org.uk](http://www.iti-lrg.org.uk)

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## Editorial

This Newsletter should reach you just a few days before our annual Interpreters' event, which was fully booked within three weeks of being announced!

The next event after this will be the LRG Pub Crawl on 5th July – once again at a riverside location – and I hope to see a great turn-out for this, too.

For September, we have now confirmed another CPD event, focusing on the latest developments in IT. Please see below for details on this.

The big feature in this Newsletter is, of course, the report from the ITI Anniversary Conference. As one of the recipients of the LRG grant, I was required to write 1,000 words about the event. I have written 4,000 words, which you can find on pages 5 to 9.

I hope you enjoy the read. See you in July!

*Betti Moser*

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## Forthcoming LRG Events

**Thursday, 5 July, from 7pm:**

### The annual LRG Pub Crawl

**Venue: Hammersmith Lower Mall,  
5 minutes walk from Hammersmith tube station.  
Next to Hammersmith Bridge (north side).**

Don't miss this year's riverside pub crawl by the Thames! Glorious river views guaranteed, ideal for a stroll, lots of space. Meet at 7pm outside the Blue Anchor pub.

The next stop will be the Rutland Arms, which is right next door to the Blue Anchor. From there we will move on to the Dove and finish off at the Old Ship. All of these are fairly close to each other – and all of them serve food.

Contact: Peter Linton at [peter@lintononline.co.uk](mailto:peter@lintononline.co.uk).

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**Wednesday, 26 September  
6.30 for 7pm:**

### Nick Rosenthal's IT Update

**Venue: University of Westminster,  
309 Regent Street (nearest tube: Oxford Circus)**

Changes in technology affect workflows and the way things are done in publishing and other written media. Increasingly, as translators, we are faced with strange and unfamiliar file formats. Our speaker, Nick Rosenthal, will explain some of the



changes that are going on in the world of technical authoring, discussing issues such as content management systems, XML workflows, DITA and DocBook.

Already, we have had to learn to cope with pdf file conversion – though many of us are still struggling even with this. What other new developments are on the horizon? And how can we best prepare for them?

Nick Rosenthal is Managing Director of Salford Translations Ltd, and one of the mentors on the ITI Peer Support Group. Nick will talk us through the latest developments on the IT front, focusing in particular on technical documentation and other fields that are especially relevant to the translation industry.

Nick is a lively and interactive speaker, and there will be time for questions and discussion. You can get a sneak preview of some of the issues at Nick's blog: [www.salftrans.co.uk/blog/oversetter.htm](http://www.salftrans.co.uk/blog/oversetter.htm)

For booking details contact: Betti Moser,  
[betti@apriltext.co.uk](mailto:betti@apriltext.co.uk).

## Review of LRG Events

### Translation Forums on the Web – 24 January 2007

I opened my bedroom curtains on the morning of 24 January to be greeted by a prospect of snow-covered suburban gardens – a rare sight in these days of global warming – and my first thought was whether I would be able to get to London for the evening meeting led by Peter Linton. Fortunately, the snow had disappeared by midday and the main hazard proved to be getting through the rush hour on the tube from Victoria to Oxford Circus. On arrival at Oxford Circus, I faced the unexpected frustration of trying to cross Oxford Street and Regent Street when each of the crossings was blocked in turn by the unwieldy length of a bendy bus.

At last I reached the University of Westminster, which I still think of as the Regent Street Poly, and passed through the security gauntlet (not there in my day) to arrive at Fyvie Hall, which certainly has not changed since its refurbishment in 1911, with the installation of historical frescoes and stained glass windows. Although the meeting was well attended, we were somewhat dwarfed by that large space. However, Peter spoke well and presented slides that were generally clear and legible.

Pamela Mayorcas briefly introduced Peter, whose topical and relevant subject was 'translation forums on the web'. Peter began by showing a list of sites identified by their URLs. For the benefit of those who were unable to be present, this list is available on the LRG website, as indeed is the whole of Peter's presentation in the form of a downloadable pdf file.

Peter began by asking whether we had looked at any of the sites, had we registered for any of them and had we found them useful, e.g. had terminology questions been answered, had we bid for a job, found work, put up information about ourselves? A good many people had in fact done so.

The aspects Peter discussed included terminology, marketing oneself and bidding for jobs. The advantage of joining a forum was that members could bid for a job immediately, whereas in some instances non-members had to wait 12 hours, by which time the job had often gone. One fear was that bidding for jobs would depress rates, but this was an area governed by the law of supply and demand, which means that it was impossible to enforce minimum rates, and Peter stressed that one had to negotiate.

Peter referred to the possibility of discussing topics of interest with colleagues on the forums, asking their advice and of finding useful articles. He mentioned the possibility of the constant updating



*Audience at the 'Translation Forums on the Web' talk in January*

of jobs on offer via RSS feeds to one's own computer, of learning about computer tools and of purchasing software at a discount. One could join translator groups or a cooperative, and exchange goods and services with other translators. Joining a forum also gave access to online glossaries, and Peter mentioned, in particular, Wikiwords, which is constantly updated by its users in the same cooperative spirit as Wikipedia. The utopian aim here was to create a dictionary of all terms in all languages.

Peter also mentioned the social aspect of translators' forums, with the possibility of attending meetings and conferences. He gave the Proz.com forum as an example. It arranged conferences in cities around the world, as well as local 'Pow-wows', which were talking shops on a smaller scale.

A final suggestion was that translators should set up their own websites. This was no longer such a difficult task, thanks to advances in software, and a website was an excellent marketing tool.

Peter's presentation was followed by a very lively discussion, with a lot of questions, which reflected the relevance of the topic to the translators present, and we were very grateful to him for his thorough preparation and giving of his time.

*Bob Symonds*

### Cate Avery's CV Clinic – 22 March 2007

Armed with our CVs, about 20 of us gathered in the Edgar Wallace pub on a bitterly cold March night to pick up some gems from Cate Avery, FITI, who used to run a translation company, and has therefore had a lot of experience in being on the receiving end of many CVs.

How do you make your CV stand out from the average 50 which a typical translation agency receives every day?

The main point you must decide on before designing your CV is: what is it that you want to put across and who do you want to reach? A Unique Selling Point (USP) is a must, whether this is your subject matter, specialised software, the fact that you work at weekends or have spent some time living in the country of your source language. But only put on your CV what you want to sell, and if, for example, you specialise in environmental science don't target agencies who only specialise in insurance.

Not only is it important to include in your CV what you do want to advertise, but equally as important is to know what to leave out. Agencies do not particularly want a photo of you holding the baby or cuddling your favourite pet. Indeed, any reference to your age, marital status, your interest in Chinese juggling or Salsa dancing will not necessarily impress a potential client. These days, they are also no longer likely to be interested in the size of your computer screen or how many megabytes you have.

Keep to the point, with an inviting layout and well-presented text. And being in the field that we're in, watch out for spelling errors. Think about the fonts and maybe a line of text in colour, but remember that a fuchsia pink background is more likely to irritate than endear you to the project manager.

Who you are and what you do are the two priorities – language pairs and subject matter should therefore be easily legible in a profile box on the first page.

Finally, CVs should be sent only to translation agencies and departments. Direct clients are best targeted with a flyer or brochure.

Following Cate's very informative and entertaining talk we all laid out our CVs along the bar counter for others to read and Cate to comment on. It was amazing to see how different they all were, even though we are all in the same line of business.

So that's one thing on the top of my 'to do' list ... to give my CV a good overhaul ... and bring in more work!

*Fiona Franks*

After an introduction by Pamela, Betti took us through a potted version of the various presentations given at the Rembrandt a month earlier. Her favourite of the first day was Anne Hulme's "Work/life balance". Anne's tips (and some of Betti's own) started a lively debate as to the merits of the various different ways we have of approaching our daily work. We also heard about "Corpora – a new resource" and wondered to what extent they would be relevant to ITI members, since their greatest perceived benefit is to provide an inventory of validated uses of the language. And anyway, who validates the validators?

An interesting-sounding innovation at this year's conference was the session in which 2006 translation graduates presented their work.

We had great fun discussing the subjects Betti and Peter described from the second day. The joys of editing non-native English, for instance, is a growth area, and Betti reinforced Dr Burrough's message that this is a new skill we might acquire. Peter was able to flesh out the report on Andy Chan's talk on information economics by explaining the 'Lemon Theory' of economics and its relevance to the translation industry. He then took us through Sue Young and Karin Band's presentation on punctuation and led an enthusiastic discussion on the Oxford comma, which divided the assembled company.

Other presentations on the Sunday afternoon, such as those by Amanda Conrad and Helen Robertson, and the summing up by Bill Maslen were praised by our reporters for their insights.

Whereas I regretted not having been able to hear these presentations, I was grateful to the others for pre-digesting on my behalf Francisco Aviñó's intriguingly entitled talk "Invasion of the memory snatchers", which apparently failed to match up to expectations.

Those of you who have now missed both Conference and Conference Lite, can surf to [www.iti-conference.org.uk](http://www.iti-conference.org.uk) (then click on 'Programme') where you can download the presentations for yourselves.

*Gerald Dennett*

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## **"Conference Lite": report from the ITI Conference – 15 May 2007**

Those of us who were unable to attend the ITI Conference in April were given the opportunity to catch up in May. Pamela Mayorcas, Betti Moser and Peter Linton treated the LRG to "Conference Lite" at a new venue for the group, the Cock & Lion pub in Wigmore Street, a convenient pub in the heart of the West End, selling a fine pint of Spitfire.

## LRG News

### **Wanted: new LRG Committee members!**

#### **Cultural Events Organiser is looking for a successor...**

Unfortunately, we have had to put our planned cultural events programme on hold, as Lucy Eratt, the originator and, until now, holder of this worthwhile office, has been unable to make the necessary arrangements due to pressures of work.

She now wishes to resign from the post and we are hoping that someone might come forward to pick up the baton.

#### **... as is the Dining Club...**

Equally, Sarah Venkata is about to complete her medical studies and has indicated that she would like to step down as the organiser of Dining-out events.

Both posts could easily be combined and taken on by the same person; or they could be done by a team of two, liaising with each other so as to arrange cultural events in combination with a restaurant visit, for instance.

Either way, we would like to hear from you if you think this could be for you!

#### **... and the LRG eGroup Moderator**

Finally, Kim Sanderson will be leaving us by the end of the year, as she is moving to Scotland, where her partner is due to start a post-graduate course in Renewable Energy.

We will therefore also be looking for a new committee member to run the LRG eGroup.

In fact, even if you do not wish to take on any one of these posts specifically, but you would like to put something back into the group, the Committee is always looking for active and dedicated members to help us with some of the tasks involved in running the LRG.

*Please contact Betti ([betty@apriltext.co.uk](mailto:betty@apriltext.co.uk)) or Pamela ([pamelamayorcas@compuserve.com](mailto:pamelamayorcas@compuserve.com)) if you are interested in joining the LRG Committee.*

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### **LRG Contacts List requested by Poland-based translation company**

The LRG contacts list has recently been requested by Anna Zagrajek, Training & Senior Resource Specialist at Argos Company Ltd – one of the leading Central and Eastern European translation and localisation agencies.

The Poland-based company was looking in particular for into-English translators. A list of MITI and FITI LRG members has since been forwarded to them.

Argos is a privately held American-British company that has been in operation since 1996. For more information see [www.argostranslations.com](http://www.argostranslations.com).

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## New LRG members

### **New LRG members introduce themselves: Dianna Fry**

My name is Dianna Fry and I've been a translator for, dare I admit it, 27 years. It was while working in Algeria as a bilingual secretary, typing up endless handwritten draft translations (often 2-3 times!) that it dawned on me that a translator's job would be a lot more interesting and rewarding.

After qualifying at the University of Kent in 1980, I raced over to my first position in an agency in deepest Franconia, Germany, where you were regarded as a woman of little virtue if you wore jeans on Sunday and had no net curtains in your windows. I quickly moved on, finding a position in Würzburg with a company specialising in medical

electronics and data processing – and breathing a sigh of relief to be in such a broadminded metropolis!

I loved my work in this company, but soon babies started appearing on the scene so I switched to freelancing, which I have been doing ever since. It combines perfectly with acting as a taxi service to three kids and being around when anyone is sick. I moved back to the UK in 1997 after 17 years in Germany and continued freelancing.

In 2004, my youngest child started secondary school and, prompted by a desire to get out of the house and use my 'people skills', I completed a PGCE in modern languages, qualifying just at the time when the government decided to do away with compulsory language teaching after the age of 14.

After two years of combining supply teaching with translating, I gratefully took up translating full-time again. Need I say more?

I still realised that something wasn't quite right, however. I was working long hours – I know I am a thorough translator and a fast typist, yet I still wasn't convinced that I was earning what I should be. More importantly, I was dissatisfied that, after so long as a translator, I still felt so lacking in confidence. As I had never attended any ITI events or networked, it had also somehow escaped me that most translators were by now specialising.

By a stroke of fate, in February 2007 I happened to meet a friend who had taken part in last year's Peer Support Group and she urged me to apply. I was lucky enough to be accepted and am currently completing my fifth task out of nine. I have learned more about translating in the past few months than in the past 27 years. I cannot speak highly enough of the mentors and their team and how generous they

have been with their time and advice. They have also gently been nudging me to specialise and making me realise that it can actually be quite enjoyable to network. To this end, I have now just attended my first ITI conference and have joined LRG and MedNet.

I look forward to meeting you all at the many events you have planned. It has taken me this long to bite the bullet and now I am kicking myself that I didn't do it before.

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***We also welcome the following new members who have joined the LRG since January:***

Daniela Babuscio, Stephanie Ballot, Neil Barnes, Jean Bridget, Jennifer Guinot, Giovanna Hamilton, Esme Knights, Mikcaela Leonhardt, Ulrike Nichols, Zdenka Pozarova, Laura Rodriguez, Sue Sullivan, Jolanta Anna Szeja, Maureen Thomas, Lin Wanhuan.

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## Report from the ITI Conference

*The ITI's 21st Anniversary Conference took place on 21 and 22 April 2007 at the Rembrandt Hotel in London. The LRG had provided a grant of £75 for two of its members to attend the Conference. In return, the two grant recipients were asked to give a presentation about the conference at an LRG event (see review on page 3) and write a summary for the Newsletter. **Betti Moser** was one of them – this is her report.*

Unfortunately, one of the grant recipients fell ill just at the weekend of the conference and was unable to attend. So, where the conference proceedings split into two parallel sessions, the write-up can cover only one stream of talks. However, most of the talks can be downloaded from the ITI Conference website: [www.iti-conference.org.uk](http://www.iti-conference.org.uk) (then click on 'Programme'). This also includes details of the speakers and some photographs.

After a few introductory words by ITI Chairman Catherine Greensmith who read out 'birthday' messages to ITI from other translators' associations, including the German BDÜ and the Russian Translators' Association, the conference kicked off with a talk by **Mme Juana Lahousse-Juárez**, Director-General for Translation and Publishing at the European Parliament and keynote speaker.

Her talk focused on the multilingual environment of the 'corridors of power' in Brussels and Luxembourg. Within the EU, multilingualism is a fact of life, laid down in its earliest statutes, EU Regulation No.1, from 1957, which defines the organisation's languages of operation. All of the EU's parliamentary documents have to be translated into all member state languages – at present this makes for 506 language combinations!

As the language combinations increase with EU expansion, English, French and German are now

being used as 'relay' languages for translation into and from other, less common languages (rather than trying to find a translator who works, say, from Icelandic into Maltese).

A few figures:

- The European Parliament employs around 800 staff translators, supported by 300 secretaries.
- It spends €13 million on external translation.
- 20% of texts have to be translated within less than 24 hours and 50% in less than 72 hours.
- In 2006 the EU translated over a million pages (1,144,534).

Consistency of terminology is a key issue when coping with such a vast volume of translation. Terminology management is therefore at the heart of technological advances in EU translation.

Translator's Workbench is widely used, and a translation memory software system called EURAMIS has been developed specifically by and for the European Commission. In addition, there is the long-awaited IATE, which is currently available in its test version but due to be finalised and on-line for everyone to use later this summer.

In conclusion, Mme Lahousse-Juárez emphasised that, whatever the technological advances may be, translation could never be a completely automated process – the translator still is, and always will be, at the heart of the process.

The next speaker, *Jane Collins*, from the Regional Language Network London, focused on the London Olympics in 2012, and the opportunities the Games present for linguists. These include the pre-Games phase, for instance in the preparation of official documentation and for communication with international bodies, including the IOC, Sporting Federations, teams and potential visitors.

During the Olympic and Paralympic Games themselves, translation and interpreting will be critical for press conferences, live updates, ceremonies, accreditation, medical, doping control, security, transport, sports, the Olympic family and information services.

In addition, an upsurge in international business and partnerships is predicted as a result of the increased investment and focus on London, leading in turn to increased demand for language skills and services – not just in the capital but across the UK.

*Gill Musk* from CILT then talked about the National Occupational Standards in Interpreting and Translation, which are due to be launched this summer. A draft version is available on the CILT website: [www.cilt.org.uk/standards](http://www.cilt.org.uk/standards).

The aim of these standards is to:

- inform those considering a career in languages
- assist employers and clients of language services (with job descriptions, to identify training needs)
- assist universities in adapting course content to match the needs of the 'real world'
- help practising professionals, e.g. in identifying strengths and weaknesses, prioritising CPD, being aware of current best practice, reflecting and developing self-assessment skills.

Next came *Jean-Pierre Mailhac* from the University of Salford with a talk entitled "Who needs a theory?"

He spoke about the "yawning gap" between theory and practice in the translation profession and quoted the standard criticisms practising translators tend to raise about translation theory:

- Translation is a practical skill, which is honed by doing it, not by theorising about it.
- Translation theory concepts are too abstract and don't really have any practical use.

He then went on to outline the translation theorists' perspective and advocated "applied translation theory" as a middle way that takes into account the reality of translation. I am afraid though, from this point on the talk went way over my head and, despite the hand-out provided, I no longer had any idea what the speaker was talking about....

Those of you who can cope with abstract concepts and translation theory can contact Jean-Pierre at [j.p.mailhac@salford.ac.uk](mailto:j.p.mailhac@salford.ac.uk) to request an outline of his talk. In conclusion, he said that:

- more "applied translation theory" is needed,
- translators should accept this and be more open to the concept, and
- theorists should be more aware of the requirements of professional translators.

Following this intellectually taxing talk came *Anne Hulme's* presentation on "Work/life balance", which was much more easy to follow, and – in my book – ultimately more useful!

A lot of it was, of course, common sense; but sometimes it helps to have the obvious pointed out to you. I do hope that Anne will give this presentation again at some other opportunity and/or that a summary of her talk will be made available on the ITI Conference website.

For now, I will try to summarise (interspersed with some of my own thoughts) the key points Anne suggested to help the stressed-out freelance translator achieve a healthy balance between work life and personal life:

- Be aware of the two aspects of your life and make a conscious effort to keep them apart (if this is not possible to do in space – i.e. a separate office – then at least in time).
- Plan and prioritise. Then, focus on one job at a time!
- Make lists – it really helps to clear your head and regain your focus (I couldn't agree more with this, being an obsessive list maker myself!).
- Once you've planned and prioritised your time schedule, stick with it. If possible, finish one job before you start the next one (break long-term projects down into smaller chunks and treat these as individual jobs).
- Know your limits in terms of time and energy – learn to say 'no' (in a nice way)! Turn down work if necessary.
- Allow some slack in your schedule. Don't plan to work continuously. This applies in particular to larger projects: don't assume you can achieve your maximum daily output throughout, for a period of six weeks or longer!
- Plus, especially in larger projects, you must allow a time contingency for unforeseen problems or delays.
- Take short breaks (these can range from microbreaks – my computer now prompts me to take a 5-second break every 6 minutes or so – to making sure you take the weekend off, at least occasionally, to going away on holiday...).
- Establish routine breaks to recharge your energy – for instance, go for a lunchtime walk. You will be able to work far more effectively afterwards.
- Appreciate "doodling time" – Anne's example was looking up words in old-fashioned paper dictionaries. I very much agree with Anne there

– I generally try to include tasks in my working day that take me away from the computer and give my body a break from keyboard and mouse work (e.g. by checking through work on paper, using dictionaries or other reference books in book form). This is particularly important if you are prone to RSI or other physical symptoms!

- Finally, always bear in mind that you are the one and most important factor on which your professional success depends. Look after yourself!

After lunch, the conference split into two parallel sessions. I attended the “*Corpora*” option – for information about the “Training” option please see the ITI Conference website.

The word *corpora* has been bandied about quite a lot lately but, so far, I had been unable to establish what it actually meant or what its relevance was for us as translators. So, I was looking forward to being enlightened and find out what this was all about. I was not disappointed – in fact, by the end of the afternoon my head hurt with all the new information it had had to absorb within such a short space of time.

While many of you may already have a pretty good idea what corpora are and how to use them, others may still be just as puzzled as I was. So, for those in particular, I will try to summarise what I have learned.

Corpora (from Latin *corpus* = body), in the context of translation, means “a collection of text in electronic format that can be used as a source of information”, especially on terminology and use of language.

There are a variety of “corpus management” tools: bits of software that look for phrases and expressions or individual words within a large collection of texts (for example, Wordsmith, which is available for free – just Google for “Wordsmith” and “corpora”).

Over the course of the first talk, it dawned on me that this is really very much like using Google to give you an idea whether an expression is commonplace or a bit odd, or which preposition might be better in combination with a particular verb or adjective. The only difference is that you are not relying on the random vastness of the whole internet, which of course includes lots of “bad” websites, written by people who often don’t know the language they’re writing in. Instead, you restrict your search to a pre-selected and vetted body of texts. For example, for English, there is the British National Corpus ([www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk](http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk)). This is available for free online and instructions on how to search it are given on the website.

So, what do you use it for? One example given in the presentations was for finding common collocations. This can be very useful when looking

for the right word in a particular context (again, I have been doing this using Google, entering an expression in quotation marks with the missing word replaced by the \* symbol).

My impression was that corpora are particularly useful for translators working into a language that is not their mother tongue or language of habitual use – which, of course, is very much frowned upon here, but far more commonplace in other parts of the world. Using vetted corpora would help them find the right register and use expressions that don’t strike a native speaker as odd or alien.

Listening to the three speakers during the Saturday afternoon sessions, it seemed to me that the other use of corpora is mainly for research purposes and to assist in the development of translation software and other translators’ tools. For instance, corpora consisting entirely of translated text can be used to analyse particular features that are specific to a translation. There are so-called “monitor corpora”, which pick up on changes in language over time. Corpora are used to help with the compilation of dictionaries and for “cross-linguistic contrastive analysis”, which analyses how particular terms are used in different languages.

If this was all too basic for you, again, you can get more detail on these presentations from the Conference website.

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Bill Chilcott and Amanda Conrad at the Reception on the terrace of the House of Commons.

The next day started with ITI President **Diana Wallis**’ presentation, which had been moved forward in the programme to accommodate travel complications. Her talk was entitled “The language of politics” and centered around the language of politics in general, and EU politics in particular.

Diana, who is an MEP, talked about the “balancing act between respecting cultural differences and harmonisation” and the fact that the term “harmonisation” itself has now become a taboo word in EU politics and must be avoided at all cost.

Words and terms are also very important in the big debate about the European Constitution: as Diana put it, most people agree with the overall sentiments contained in the document, but the word “constitution” itself scares people off. If they try adopting it again at a later stage they would be well advised to give the document a different name!

Now the conference again split into two parallel streams, one on translation and one on interpreting. For the interpreting talks and details of the speakers, I refer you once again to the ITI Conference website.

**Shao Yi**, a PhD student at the Hong Kong Baptist University, spoke about the use of poetry in advertising and its translation. This seems to be a particular feature in China, although Shao also gave a few examples from other languages.

This presentation was a true feast for the eye and the soul, full of floral images and Chinese poetry (not that I understand a word of Chinese – but it still sounded pretty). Only, I was so enthralled by it all that I forgot to take any notes to share with you...

In her talk entitled “English native speaker? Prepare for challenges!”, the next presenter, **Joy Burroughs-Boehnisch**, focused on the increasing use of ‘international English’ by non-native speakers. Rather than lamenting the fact that non-native speakers are asserting their “right to the English language”, we should seize the opportunities offered by this trend, as it also leads to an increased demand for editing of English texts written by non-native speakers. As translators, we are especially well placed for this task, as we will be able to unpick typical mother tongue and cultural interferences when editing English written by natives of a language with which we ourselves are familiar.

In addition, there is also a need for training, both in English writing for non-native authors and for translators to edit non-native English. Joy has written a book specifically aimed at Dutch people who write in English, and emphasised the need for similar books written for other languages. There are also books on editing and revising non-native English, such as *Revising & Editing for Translators*.

**Andy Chan**, also from Hong Kong (City University) then spoke about “Information economics: the translation profession and translator certification”.

As part of a research project he had surveyed the international translation market and analysed responses from 55 freelance translators working in a variety of different countries. Of those,

- 15% felt that translators were “extremely” underpaid,
- 26.4% felt translators were reasonably well paid,
- and 11.3% thought they were very well paid.

His conclusion from this was that translators’ rates of pay vary enormously, with hourly rates ranging from £4 to £54.



*Audience at the ITI Anniversary Conference*

He went on to explain some principles of “information economics”, such as “information asymmetry”, which means that sometimes lack of knowledge or information can lead to a dominance of poor products in a particular market. This is because buyers make their choices based on price comparison alone since they are unable to perceive the variations in quality. As a result, the overall quality of the total volume of goods exchanged in this market declines. (A much better explanation of this theory can be found on Wikipedia, under “The market for lemons” – or look up “information asymmetry”).

Apparently, this theory can be applied to the translation industry, where the ‘bucket shop’ market pushes rates down and affects the overall quality of translations, as good translators leave the market in frustration. This, in turn leads to further deterioration of the overall quality of translations – a vicious circle.

The way out, according to Andy Chan, is better information – or what he called “signalling”, i.e. certification and accreditation, which creates a hallmark and indicates professional standards, counteracting the ‘bucket shop’ trend. Obviously, members of professional associations can command higher fees than someone practising translation without any credentials. (A survey published in a Shanghai newspaper showed that there are 60,000 professional translators in China – but 500,000 people who work as translators).

The speaker mentioned the lack of any mutual recognition of certification systems within the different national organisations as an obstacle on the way to raising the profile of the profession. Nevertheless, he concluded that the signal effect of professional associations was an important factor in counteracting the global trend. Effective certification systems can improve pay and working conditions of translators.

*Sue Young* and *Karin Band* followed with a presentation on punctuation rules.

By coincidence I had attended a copy-editing course run by the Society for Editors & Proofreaders, just three days earlier, so all this was still very fresh in my mind. Still, it was good to see it confirmed and consolidated from a translation perspective. We received a useful hand-out, and a very comprehensive literature review rounded up the talk.

The next presenter was *Ruslan Mikov*, of the University of Wolverhampton, who was talking about “When computers should be used in translation (and when not)”.

He gave examples of applications for translation software, e.g. for gisting, casual use (such as chatrooms) or text written in controlled language or sub-language. An example of this is METEO, an online weather forecast: because the language used to describe the weather is limited, it translates perfectly well using translation software, without any need for human input. Controlled language, however, requires human input at the creation or editing stage to ensure that the text is suitable for machine translation.

The speaker then gave a brief overview of recent developments in the translation memory market, such as “second-generation” TM, which offers matches for chunks of text, not just whole sentences, and systems that match semantic as well as syntactic equivalents. He also mentioned a project called “Translution” and another, international project called “METIS”, which uses translation memory in combination with corpus-search.

Again, further details of this presentation are available on the Conference website.

His conclusions were:

- Human translators are not an endangered species.
- Computers are not intended to, and will never, replace humans – they are our assistants and as such they can do a great job.
- Do not use machine translation to translate a novel!

*Francisco Aviño*’s talk “Invasion of the memory snatchers” was possibly meant as a counterpoint to the previous talk. However, after a short time a very large question mark started to form above my head and, I think, above the heads of a few of those around me.

I really have no idea what point he was trying to make... It was all very intriguing, but, ultimately, just left us all rather puzzled and bewildered.

The penultimate presentation was given jointly by *Amanda Conrad* and *Helen Robertson*, who were sharing their experience of going from freelance translator to running a translation company with

several full-time staff. Their talk was so full of useful advice and valuable information – and not just for people who may be planning to follow in their footsteps – that I couldn’t possibly summarise it all here. Instead I hope that the presentation will be made available on the Conference website.

The summing-up talk was given by *Bill Maslen* of Word Gym, a company specialising in translation – or transcreation – of advertising and marketing copy.

Bill’s inspired and inspiring talk used the food chain as an analogy for the “translation value chain”. The cheap “bucket shop” translation agencies are the “bottom feeders”; driven by cutting costs (and corners), they feed on the “decaying debris of past work” (i.e. corpora and translation memory).

Clients are led to believe that the translation process is a very simple one and can be determined by speed, consistency and price alone. However, this is a “dead route”. Rather, clients need to appreciate the complexity of the translation process and accept that creative translation – especially of advertising and marketing texts – is very labour-intensive. This is true not just for the translator, but often for the client organisation also.

According to Bill, translators and translation companies do three fatal things in their rush to grab a larger share of the market:

- they cut prices,
- cut down on training time, and
- neglect client education.

He also emphasised the importance of marketing – which is especially relevant for small businesses! And it is not just about keeping the work coming in: marketing also helps you to keep thinking about what you are doing and where you want to go.

Finally, he appealed to us all to become “smart translators” – as smart translators we keep thinking about how we can add more value to our work, both in terms of the texts we produce as well as the services we provide, in addition to translation per se.

Talking from his own experience as a work provider, Bill said he was often shocked to see how many translators do not think about what they do – merely translate, machine-like, without considering cultural context, appropriateness, rendering and so on.

The value of the human translator is the ability to think and use their judgement and cultural knowledge, and also to liaise with and advise – even educate – the client.

Only non-thinking translators are easily replaced by machines.

*Betti Moser, May 2007*

## LRG Events for 2007

<b>Wednesday, 6 June</b> 6.30 for 7pm	<b>Interpreters' event – fully booked!</b> <i>Contact: Yilmaz Duzen at mail@yilmazduzen.com</i>
<b>Thursday, 5 July</b> from 7pm	<b>The annual LRG Pub Crawl</b> Meet outside the Blue Anchor pub, Hammersmith Lower Mall (5 min walk from Hammersmith tube, right by Hammersmith Bridge, north side). <i>Contact: Peter Linton at Peter@lintononline.co.uk</i>
<b>Wednesday, 26 September</b> 6.30 for 7pm	<b>Nick Rosenthal's IT Update</b> Nick Rosenthal will talk about how changes in technology affect us as translators, new file formats we should be aware of and how to keep up with things generally. At Westminster University, 309 Regent Street, W1 <i>Contact: Betti Moser at betti@apriltext.co.uk</i>
<b>Friday to Sunday,</b> <b>2 to 4 November</b>	<b>The London Language Show</b> Once again, ITI will have a stand at the show and will be looking for volunteers from the London area to help man the stand. <i>Further details will be in the next Newsletter. If you are interested in helping out on any of the three days, please contact Betti Moser at betti@apriltext.co.uk</i>
<b>Thursday, 6 December</b>	<b>LRG AGM and Christmas Party</b> Details to be announced.

See [www.iti-lrg.org.uk](http://www.iti-lrg.org.uk) for the latest updates on forthcoming events.

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