Language in the news

Around and around it goes - taking you to language resources that too few know.

Luigi LUCCARELLI.
Published: June 28, 2006 Last updated: December 2, 2015

Language sites

You've come across a language you can't recognise and your curiosity is challenged? Fret no more - just go to the Language Identifier and try your luck. At least its claims are imbued with modesty: "Currently guessing among the following 47 languages."

Check out language evolution or the words and phrases that reflect the times. "The Global Language Monitor (GLM) documents, analyzes and tracks trends in language the world over, with a particular emphasis upon Global English."

Curious about Thai tones, Italian palatals, Swedish sibilants, Sudanese nasal spreading, or creaky voice? You can listen to them all and more at the UCLA Phonetics Lab.

The Indigenous Language Institute publishes an online newsletter that "Chronicles the efforts of those working in the field of community-based indigenous language revitalization."

Dictionaries

Do today's linguists still pile their shelves high and heavy with reference works? Or do they travel with a notebook and rely on the net? If you're one of the latter, here are some online resources I've found lately.

Lexicool.com allows you to search among "4000 bilingual and multilingual dictionaries and glossaries freely available on the Internet." My search for general Thai-English dictionaries came up with six links.

If you want to sling some slang in English go to the Urban Dictionary, "a slang dictionary with your definitions." Sound and images are also available.

After last month's Letter on things Singaporean, some of you must be curious about Singlish. The Oxford Singlish Dictionary will help you out with over 800 terms and excellent examples of how they are used. The host site, TalkingCock, claims to be "Singapore's most powderful satirical humour website."

Other news sources
"The OneWorld network and portal brings you the latest news, action, campaigns and organisations in human rights and global issues across five continents and in 11 different languages, published across its international site, regional editions, and thematic channels." The site also offers daily headlines by email, job announcements and topic and country guides.

There is an eclectic brew at Counterpunch, a "bi-weekly muckraking newsletter" that offers "readers the stories that the corporate press never prints." While there you might want to check the editors' "Favorite 100 Nonfiction Books in Translation, Published in English Since 1900."

**Language and politics**

I've come to hate the expression "Lost in Translation," used far too often as an easy title to head articles on communications across cultures and languages. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists offers yet another article with that title that may prove of interest to readers who like to delve into political discourse, who know Chinese and English or who simply wonder how portraits of countries are painted in the studios of power.

Another take on the problem can be found in "You Say Okjeryok, I Say Deterrent; No Wonder We Don't Agree." The author is Korean/English interpreter Tong Kim: "For 27 years, I served as the State Department's senior Korean language interpreter, and I sat in on almost every high-level U.S.-North Korea meeting for more than a decade. In 17 visits to Pyongyang and many other meetings in the United States and other nations, I listened as these two countries' officials talked past each other, attaching different meanings and significance to the same words."

**A writer on language and translation**

The Australian offers an engaging article by Nobel laureate J.M. Coetzee that begins: "Books of mine have been translated from the English in which they are written into some 25 other languages, the majority of them European. Of the 25 I can read two or three moderately well. Of many of the rest I know not a word; I have to trust my translators to render fairly what I have written."

**More world literature**

"Along with the myriad ancient virtues of storytelling--giving pleasure, passing time, stimulating thought, connecting strangers--literature is a passport to places both real and imagined. In an increasingly interdependent world, rife with ignorance and incomprehension of other cultures, literature in translation has an especially important role." See Words Without Borders, the Online Magazine for International Literature.

**Communicate! cited in resource book**

The Interpreter's Resource by Mary Phelan (page visible on Google) not only mentions the AIIC website but notes the contribution being made by this webzine. Our vanity welcomes such recognition, but we do feel compelled to point out that Communicate! is not composed exclusively of articles by AIIC members; from the very start we have welcomed articles by all, including writers who are not interpreters. And some of the information about AIIC is out of date, such as the membership requirements mentioned, which were changed to 150 days and 3 sponsors many years ago.

**Recommended citation format:**

<https://aiic.net/p/2405>.