Language in the news

Radio and video, interviews with interpreters, translation in the media, and a featured author are all just a click away.

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Listen to it on Radio France Internationale

Globalization, multinational corporations, international trade, mutually-lucrative deals, etc. What role does a professional interpreter play in this world? « Les grands groupes attendent de leurs cadres qu'ils maîtrisent l'anglais, mais qu'en est-il dans les petites et moyennes entreprises qui se développent à l'export ? Des relations sociales dans les multinationales aux conclusions de contrats avec des entreprises étrangères : le rôle des interprètes un reportage de Francine Quentin » with the participation of AIIC members Martine Bonadona, Philip Minns, Angela Yin-Goniak and Edgar Weiser.

Watch it on TV5MONDE

If you are a student of French, these short videos on TV5 are just the thing for you. "Bernard Cerquiglini, éminent linguiste et spécialiste reconnu de la langue française, révèle et explique chaque jour une curiosité verbale : que la lumière soit faite sur l'origine opaque des mots et expressions de la langue de Racine ! Quant aux accords pièges et aux orthographes étranges, le Professeur leur trouve une excuse et nous réconcilie avec le verbe et la règle de grammaire, à coups d'histoires souvent croustillantes. Merci professeur !"

How interpreters do it

The BBC's Breaking the Language Barrier has some good shows touching on interpreting. Translation trouble at top-level talks delves into the world of those conference interpreters also known as diplomatic interpreters and asks: "What does it take to translate for a president or a prime minister? Can an interpreter's slip change the course of history?" You'll find some engaging stories here, although the author deserves to be outed for one bit of triteness - yes, he uses the cliché "lost in translation." He does have the good sense to follow it with a pertinent question: "...how do interpreters do it anyway, for heaven's sake, when most of us have trouble communicating in our own language half the time?"

A cup of coffee for mutual understanding
If you monitor news about languages, the EU is sure to pop up often. You've probably already heard that it has the largest language service in the world, and you might even know that one of three university graduates employed by the EU is either a translator or an interpreter. But the truly noteworthy piece of information in this article from lasprovincias.es is that this costs each European citizen but the price of a single cup of coffee!

A Journalist on interpreting

Shoichi Nasu once thought about studying to be an interpreter, but went into journalism instead. In this Daily Yomiuri commentary he shows that he has reflected on how a message must be understood in context and then communicated to a target audience taking into account cultural differences. He also gives us some insight into the role that translation plays in news organisations. I hazard to guess that the unfortunate blurb attached to the title - Looking for the perfect word in interpreting (emphasis added) - was added by a subeditor less sensitive to language than he.

When was that translated and by whom?

"At such an occasion, standing next to Kim, one could also see a female translator, looking to be in her early 30s. By all accounts she was a very good interpreter... But the interpreter doesn't always follow Kim or any of the other North Korean negotiators when they encounter the international press crew. Who then translates for the North Koreans? Often it is the media." This Ohmy News article, unfortunately under that usual hackneyed headline, offers further insight into some of the matters brought up in the previous link.

An interpreter in Malaysia

This interview from The Star with a Japanese interpreter living in Kuala Lumpur will give you some information on the profession in Malaysia, but the author and copyeditor won't be getting our Cliché Busters Award for the title: Not Lost in Translation.

Is something else being lost?

Dateline: UK, early 21st century. Headlines proclaim: "We have reached a point of no return." "This is a national catastrophe." "We are very seriously concerned." "An urgent review is needed before it is too late." "The government must act at once." "What a terrible disaster." Has London Bridge fallen down? No. According to Guardian Unlimited, "It's Britain's dirty little secret, a question touched on every year and then swiftly brushed under the carpet: our disappearing language skills."

New Year's resolutions

One of mine was not to use a certain threadbare phrase about translation. At least Michele Berdy doesn't use it in outlining her language-related resolutions for 2007 in this St. Petersburg Times piece.

Featured Author: David Crystal
"Professor David Crystal is one of the world's foremost experts on the subject of language. In 1995, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire for services to the English language. Aside from his interest in language, he is chairman and co-founder of Crystal Reference Systems, with its two divisions of Crystal Reference and Crystal Semantics. He is also a director of the Ucheldre Centre in his home town of Holyhead on the Isle of Anglesey, North Wales."

His DCBLOG offers frequent, well-formulated examinations of English usage.

And check out his choice of the top five books on the history and use of English in this Wall Street Journal Editorial Page "5 Best" article.

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