

Legal Interpreting and Translanguaging: Contested Spaces in the Centre-Periphery Dynamic

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Bio:

My principal research interests lie in interpreter training with regard to new post-modern challenges, in particular superdiversity and translanguaging practices. I have also carried out extensive research into the construction of professional identities in higher education, through the lens of narrative and ethnographic inquiry. Among my teaching skills I specialise in intercultural communication, and the phonetics and phonology of global forms of spoken English. Email alanjames.runcieman@uvic.cat

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Abstract

Community or public-service interpreting is often institutionally perceived by service providers as being based on an ideological framing of languages as monolingual bounded resources, and the interpreting act as a bridge between two *centric* and separate linguistic regimes (LB – LA). However, this monolingualism is an ideological construct rather than a linguistic reality, the product of an historic, one nation one language myth, that is increasingly challenged by post-modern, *superdiverse* societies and their consequent multilingual realities on the ground. In particular, in today's world the superdiversity of people within nation states, with multiple linguistic resources, has given rise to the increasingly visible phenomenon of 'translanguaging', a creative, dynamic and fluid sourcing of diverse linguistic repertoires in synchronic discourse. What was once only considered to be at the periphery has begun to challenge monolingual hegemony and establish its own centrality in public and private speech.

Translanguaging is 'multilingualism from below' (Pennycook & Otsuji 2015), coming as it almost inevitably always does from the peripheral end of the spectrum, typically in urban spaces where language practices are part and parcel of getting things done. But when this emerges in a legal context, in a court of law, how should legal interpreters respond? Drawing

on preliminary research involving a cohort of court /legal interpreters in the UK¹, this article explores the problems this presents to monolingual bridging approaches and proposes potential future developments for the interpreting profession.

Keywords: Legal interpreting, monolingual boundaries, superdiversity, translanguaging, centre/periphery dynamics.

1. Introduction

Over a relatively short period of time, urban life in many Western cities (and beyond) has become notably more complex with regard to its mix of ethnicities, cultures and languages. Early political recognition of this diversity came back in the 1970s, in Canada, with the introduction of the conceptual term ‘multiculturalism’ in relation to shaping public policy, which then spread to America and the European Community (albeit in different ways) between the 1980s and 1990s (Modood 2016). More recently, however, this term has ceded to some extent to another, ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec 2007). Superdiversity is:

(a) notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants (1024)

This superdiversity has seen a correlate in multiple language use within nation states and a phenomenon which has come to be known as ‘translanguaging’ (Williams 1994; Baker 2001; Garcia 2009; Garcia and Li Wei 2014), an often creative, melded interchange between varied language repertoires in a mixed hybrid form of discourse. Much research has shown how this practice is already very diffuse in urban settings (Blackledge, Creese and Hu 2016, 2018; Blommaert and Rampton 2011; Blommaert 2015; Pennycook and Otsuji 2015).

¹ A cohort of 6 professional public-service interpreters in the UK. The research drew on questionnaires and personal correspondence over a 6-month period.

Through the lens of translanguaging however, this form of intercommunication is not framed as a criss-crossing between individual, discrete languages, what might be referred to as ‘code-switching’ (c.f. Canagarajah 2013; Hall and Nilep 2015), but rather as emergent urban “multilanguages in themselves, diverse, shifting, and variable according to who is using them with whom, at what point, and to what effect” (Pennycook & Otsuji 2015: 13). Translanguaging therefore, “is not merely a plurality of languages but rather a creative space of language making, where rules and boundaries are crossed and changed” (Ibid: 16), in this sense it is ‘transformative’ (Garcia 2009) as it allows for the creation of “a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment” (Li Wei 2011, 1223).

Translanguaging can be found in every level of education, from primary to tertiary, (Creese and Blackledge 2010, 2019; Garcia 2009; Li Wei 2011, 2018; Garcia and Li Wei 2014) but it is also a deeply radicated practice in daily urban life, wherever everyday tasks and social spaces are intertwined in multilingual settings, as in marketplaces and in different production centres across city spaces (Creese et al 2018; Pennycook and Otsuji 2015).

In this relatively new context then, the monolingual bridging role that community/public-service interpreters often envisaged as performing, by interpreting between a minority and a dominant majority linguistic group, is further complicated. Indeed, it is argued here that the community/public-service interpreter will increasingly need to manage a patchwork of potentially translanguaging clients, culturally and socio-economically diverse, with often very different socio-historical roots in the community (Baynham and Lee 2019).

The following research is based on extensive correspondence between the author and a cohort of 6 professional community/public-service interpreters working principally in court and legal interpreting in the UK. Over a period of six months the author was in regular contact with the cohort, via email, exploring themes about their everyday working practices. The research is therefore framed as broadly following an ethnographic perspective, with multiple group and individual semi-structured interviews through a written textual medium.

The article begins by looking at the centric pull of monolingual ideologies in language practices, and how translanguaging challenges a continual positioning of it on the periphery of such practices. The bi-directional attraction and repulsion of individuals towards monolingual conformity is explored in terms of hegemonic linguistic and socio-political pressures. The

article initially draws on other research in the field (part of Birmingham's TLANG project²) and then the author's, drawing parallels and symmetries between the two. The article concludes with suggestions for future directions for training in legal interpreting with regard to increasingly visible translanguaging practices in courtrooms.

2. The centre/periphery dynamic

The *de facto* positioning of monolingualism as being the norm in 'state-centric' accounts of language use, and any multilingual variations as being exceptional or 'exotic even', is challenged by everyday translanguaging practices, particularly in large urban settings (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015). Positioned as being peripheral in the centre-periphery dynamic, translanguaging is considered, more often than not, as existing in a new social space, but also a 'contested space' (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck 2005). In particular, due to its refusal to conform to more conventional 'code-switching' models (c.f. Canagarajah 2013; Hall and Nilep 2015), where speakers are seen as crossing monolingual boundaries between two or more languages, from a translanguaging perspective these boundaries are framed as being artificial, ideological constructs which are imposed from above, from institutional hegemonic perspectives, and do not reflect the *reality* of 'multilingualism from below' (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), from the grassroots of urban life.

Presupposing that there is always a mono-directional pull to the centre (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck 2005), a central tenet in the often dominant monolingual ideology, which negates its relational dynamic with the periphery (i.e. both are intricately intertwined), and the potential for that periphery *to resist* (Baynham and Hanušová 2017). Indeed:

reactions to various kinds of political, cultural and linguistic hegemony, provoke a strong repulsion towards the center accompanied by counter discourses, themselves potentially forming new resistant centers. (Ibid, 146-147)

An example of this resistance can be found in Baynham and Hanušová's research (2017) into translanguaging practices across urban settings (part of the University of

² <https://tlang.org.uk>

Birmingham's TLANG project³), where the researchers analyzed a Slovakian-born, Czech-speaking construction worker, of Roma ethnicity, as he attempted to send a 'power of attorney letter' to his cousin in the Czech Republic. Using the services of an advocacy drop-in centre, in a northern English city, Mr Tancoš is described as preparing his letter in Czech and presenting it to a Czech interpreter (Klára) for approval. Baynham and Hanušová note how the letter contained Slovak language structures and words that had been created with blended elements of Czech and Slovak. Despite Klára's insistence on reformulating it to suit the bureaucratic demands of the Czech authorities, Mr Tancoš resisted making changes, being reported as saying that it 'won't be a problem'. In what Baynham and Hanušová describe as being a translanguaging moment:

Klára's standard Czech becomes the center, treated interactionally as hierarchically superior to Mr Tancoš's language which contains elements of different languages and non-standard neologisms. (Ibid: 151-152)

Mr Tancoš is evidently used to translanguaging practices as he is described as mixing over four languages in the interview session (namely, Czech, Slovak, Polish and English). His personal history and experience have forged a way of expressing himself that is challenged by the interpreter's attempts to reduce his letter to a monolingual version of the original, changing its register and stylistic form. His comment, "it won't be a problem", shows him resisting this attempt to move his linguistic expression to the centre, to a bureaucratic, monolingual rendering of his words to suit Czech officialdom. Moreover, the phrase shows him creating a new centre from a peripheral place, a centre that is based on his own personal experience of speaking 4 languages where, indeed, it has not evidently been 'a problem' before.

The ideologically driven concept that all variances from monolingual practices are outliers, at the periphery, to 'normal' *centric* patterns in the linguistic *status quo* of nation state discourses is contentious. Personal histories, life experiences, and multiple language exposure, can create resistance to the hegemonic dictates of a central pull, establishing alternative centres in what were once peripheries, as Mr Tancoš' attempts to do so show.

³ See <https://tlang.org.uk> for an explanation of the overall research objectives.

Translanguaging practices, in particular, challenge the theoretical framing of languages as discreet objects, as exemplified by Saussurean linguistics, by challenging idealistic monolingual models, and by firmly rooting linguistic resources in the real world. In a Saussurean approach, close syntactical and referential analysis of a bounded language aims at arriving at the speaker's meaning without contextualising it with respect to the social activity and personal history of the speaker (Silverstein 1981). However, language that is abstracted from the 'real' world only tells us more about language than about the people who use it, and for what purpose.

3. Research outline

Codeswitching is rarely mentioned in studies of interpreter-mediated interaction ... because scholars generally assume a communication barrier posed by "a perfect and reciprocal absence of knowledge of the other's language by both of the principal interlocutors" (Davidson 2002:1293). Similarly, the legal rationale for court interpreting rests on the assumption that litigants who are assisted by an interpreter cannot speak English at all.

(Angermeyer 2015: 142)

In an increasingly superdiverse society however this is rarely the case, and indeed in much court interpreting the interpreters' interlocutors might frequently mix their own language(s) with English and vice-versa, albeit in translanguaging ways, as this preliminary research suggests.

In order to research this six professional court interpreters were approached through the 'National Register of Public Service Interpreters' (NRPSI⁴). A brief outline of their professional experience is reported in table 1 (see below).

⁴ <https://www.nrpsi.org.uk>.

Table 1: Research participants

<i>Name (Pseudonym) M= Male F= Female</i>	<i>Interpreting languages</i>	<i>Years working as a court interpreter</i>	<i>Relevant fields of expertise (when specified)</i>
<i>Sara (F)</i>	<i>French-English</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Jacub (M)</i>	<i>Polish-English</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>Assignments from the Ministry of Justice and the police service (i.e. custody interviews; witness/victim statements).</i>
<i>Eva (F)</i>	<i>Dutch-French-English</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Working for the European Court of Justice, later assimilated with SCIC⁵.</i>
<i>Henna (F)</i>	<i>English - Portuguese</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Tatania (F)</i>	<i>Russian – English</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>-</i>
<i>Solada (F)</i>	<i>Thai – English</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>-</i>

The data and analysis reported here is based principally on extended exchanges to the following focus question to the cohort:

⁵ The European Commission's interpreting service. The acronym comes from the formerly used French name 'Service Commun Interprétation-Conférences'.

Have you ever been in an interpreting situation where the client(s) were code-switching, that is using more than one language interchangeably as they spoke? This might have been anything from a few words to a long stretch of discourse. If so, can you describe the situation (with example/s) and say how you dealt with it?

Although the research was focused on translanguaging practices, it was thought that by using a potentially more familiar term, *code-switching*, and a further specification that this referred to ‘using more than one language interchangeably’, might limit conceptual confusion, and a prolonged exchange on what that term specifically meant to the participants.

4. Research findings

All the participants raised the problems of interpreting in court cases where their clients transited between languages, highlighting how this hindered the flow of legal proceedings. However, on closer analysis, the cohort’s reporting of the phenomenon appeared to represent a form of ‘translanguaging’, drawing, it seemed, from lexico-grammatical, morphosyntactic and phonetic elements of the speakers’ primary languages. It was ultimately therefore, not seen as representing instances of code-switching (a boundary crossing between discrete, linguistic resources) but a melded multi-language, emerging from the periphery but claiming centric status in the court setting.

Jacob (a Polish-English interpreter) describes his clients’ language in the following manner:

I have also had Polish people trying to give full answers in English during their custody interview but they would swap between giving a full answer in Polish and a full answer in English so I never knew if they were going to stick to one language or not. When they gave a full answer in English but the officer didn’t understand it because it was broken English and it wasn’t grammatically correct, the officer would say then “Please if you could use

the interpreter”, which I would proceed to interpret in Polish. Sometimes after the suspect again tried to answer in English, which would quite likely not get his message across to the officer, I would also just point my finger at myself to indicate the suspect should speak to me directly in Polish. I realise it was kind of breaking the being-unobtrusive-rule, but I only did so to aid the flow of communication.

Here we can observe how Jacob describes his client as making multiple attempts to use his own form of speech in the court, what Jacob describes as his ‘broken english’. However, on closer examination, what Jacob describes as ‘broken english’ appears to be a form of translanguaging, as his subsequent exchange with the researcher suggests.

I have had quite a few situations during custody interviews where Polish speakers were throwing in English phrases or words, albeit in broken English sometimes, whilst giving their version of events. Usually these are the people who had picked up some language and they’d been using their mother tongue and English interchangeably at work (...) Most common examples I come across involve using English work-related lingo whilst giving the rest of the evidence in Polish. The words uttered in English would, for example, be: ... *boksy* (a Polish-formed declension in a plural form of the English *boxes*).

Rather than ‘broken english’ it is argued here that the word ‘boksy’ is actually an example of translanguaging, where the English word ‘box’ has undergone a morphosyntactic modification to indicate plurality in Polish, represented by an –ie termination in Polish, but transcribed here by the interpreter by a similar ‘y’ orthographic representation in English, both of which are pronounced as a long open-front vowel /i:/.

When I requested more examples of this from Jacob, he gave the following:

- '*Skinowalem chickeny*' [I was skinning chickens]

- 'Rozmawiałem z *supervisorem*' [I was talking with the supervisor]
- 'Byłem na *kitchenie*' [I was working the kitchens]

In the first example, the suffix for the Polish past imperfect aspect ‘-owalem’ is added to the English verb ‘to skin’ forming a translanguaging form, ‘I was skinning’, followed again by the plural suffix with chicken, *chickeny*, meaning chickens. Supervisor, in the second example takes the *-em* suffix to signal an instrumental noun in Polish, *supervisorem*, and kitchens in the third example again takes a Polish plural ending, *kitchenie*. These are all examples of how English nouns and verbs appear to have been translanguaged by the speaker. What is of particular interest here though is how the person evidently believes they have linguistic capital in the very formal setting of a court hearing. The ‘English work-related lingo’ that Jacob describes is a language that comes from the world of ‘getting things done’, the everyday world of a *working-class man* who does not see it as being out of place in other more formal situations, as an English court undoubtedly is. This can be framed then as a potentially unconscious attempt to create a new centre from the periphery of linguistic expression, away from the centralized monolingual language of the court.

Jacob highlights other problems for interpreters which are tied to specific ways not only of morphologically adapting words to Polish grammar but also of pronouncing them in phonetically Polish ways, which again appear to have become normalized by some Polish speakers:

Sometimes, however, people pick up a particular English word but don’t get its pronunciation right and then I have no idea what they’re talking about. One example has stuck with me. A suspect suddenly said ‘Pracowałem na *pisorku*. (literally: I was working on *pisorku*.) Because I had no idea what that word meant I asked during the interview ‘May the interpreter ask the suspect to clarify a word he’s used?’ and after some explanation I realised that he was trying to say *piecework* but was completely mispronouncing it and so my interpretation back to the officer was ‘I was doing piecework.

Here the individual is talking in Polish to the interpreter but introduces an English loan word which, due to its morphological and phonetic adaption to Polish, makes it incomprehensible to the interpreter. The pronunciation of ‘piece’ appears unaffected, Jacob represents it orthographically as ‘*pis*’, perhaps drawing on his knowledge of how Polish speakers might represent the spelling, but presumably reflecting the same long open front vowel. However, the dropping of the ‘w’ (which is not a Polish phoneme) and the suffix addition of ‘-u-’, signaling a masculine noun in Polish, indicates how the interpreter might have been unable to initially decipher its meaning.

These examples show how translanguaging causes problems of comprehension for both the native speaking Polish interpreter and the English-speaking court officials. And although there are repeated attempts on both sides to make the individual conform to standardized forms in either language this is continually resisted.

Despite a presumed conscious understanding that the Polish people described here were aware to some extent of their limited potential to fully communicate in English (evidenced by their request for an interpreter in the first place), there is evidently a tendency to want to represent themselves in their own way. They appear to be unable to surrender their own means of communication, even if lexically or grammatically inhibited, to conform to the interpreting regime of the court system. In some way, their ‘voice’ needs to be heard and understood despite how this might impact the overall effectiveness of their case. Moreover, they represent translanguaging practices that come from their everyday experiences and personal histories, which have impacted their repertoires outside the legal proceedings of the court, and yet claim validation there regardless.

Solada (a Thai-English interpreter) illustrates how phonetically challenging phonemes can lead to very different versions of English words, but that due to their use in popular culture have become normalised in Thai loan word speech:

Thai people have a problem with their r and l. They can’t pronounce the word “problem” and they replace it with “pompan” when they try to use an English word mixing in a Thai sentence. Pompan is taken from a popular Thai song. It’s widely used in Thailand, so when my client use “pompan”, I know they try to use an English word “problem”.

Although this might not be strictly classified as an example of translanguaging, it shows how popular usage and cultural referencing have normalised a way of speaking a loan word which has entered general usage. Presumably, there might have been other alternative phonemes that Thai speakers might have substituted in the word but the ‘popular Thai song’ has made this form the generally accepted one. One that the interpreter is familiar with, unlike Jacob, and which presents no confusion for her when uttered.

It might be assumed that in their everyday talk Thais who say ‘pompam’, or polish who say ‘pisorku’, experience no communicative problems, perhaps expecting them to have the same communicative ability regardless of their interlocutor. The interpreters’ clients appear then to be claiming a centric position for what both the court and the interpreter might consider to be part of the periphery, and therefore devoid of linguistic capital.

The interruptions that these translanguaging practices cause to court proceedings (highlighted by Jacob) are reinforced by the legal regulations and ethical codes imposed on interpreters. Sarah, Elsa and Soldada, all describe how they react professionally to any blended forms of language usage in court:

I interpret French and often work with Congolese nationals who sometimes flip between French and Lingala (and even English depending on how long they have been in the UK). When this happens I alert the professional i.e. lawyer etc. that I don't speak/ understand much Lingala and in any case am not qualified and / or NRPSI⁶ registered to interpret it. (Sarah)

I would say, depends on whether the speaker is recorded and whether the switch occurs after a prompt. If he is recorded and still speaking in full flow, I would probably first interpret into English and then add "part of this was in another language", knowing that if it matters to know exactly when the switch took place, we can play back the record. This would enable me to render the evidence without imposing my own person on that evidence. If

⁶ The National Register for Public-Service Interpreters.

not recorded, I would announce the switch at precisely the point it happened.

(Elsa)

I have a lot of clients from North Eastern of Thailand. They speak Isaan which is a dialect for the North Eastern of Thailand. Some speak Laotian as they live near the border of Thailand and Laos. I do not speak Isaan nor Laotian and have many times faced a scenario where my clients mixed Isaan and Laotian words into their Thai sentences. When this occurred, I didn't ask them to clarify nor repeat, I instead told the judge/barrister/police officer/or doctor that the client had just used Isaan or Laotian words that I didn't understand. Then I interpreted what I had just said to the service provider into Thai for the service user too. After that I asked the service provider to repeat the English question again, by this time the service user should answer properly in Thai. (Solada)

In all these situations, where some form of language interchange occurs, the interpreters describe the need to immediately communicate this to the court. In Soldada's case she flags the change to the individual in Thai as well, expecting them consequently to eliminate any future language switching and 'answer properly in Thai'. Elsa too describes how she would 'announce the switch at precisely the point it happened'. These interpreters appear to see their role as being to insist that their clients respect the centric, monolingual norms of the court, but evidently, they are continually frustrated by an underlying resistance from the clients themselves. Furthermore, this might also be due to a far more complex issue in legal interpreting, in particular, where the interpreter can be liable for prosecution if changes or modifications are made in any significant way from the litigant's speech.

In Solada's case there is a presumption that any variation from Thai is easily rectifiable, although one might imagine that if this linguistic mix is part of how the individual speaks normally, in their everyday life, such a request might actually cause some anxiety or distress. Interestingly, Solada raised this potential problem in further correspondence on the issue:

I'm not being judgemental but ex-bar girls who are married to English men in the UK are not highly educated. They know how to speak Thai but they sometimes mix different dialects together. They also don't understand high standard Thai in medical or legal terms as their highest education is year 6 in primary school.

It could be presumed that uneducated Thai girls who 'sometimes mix different dialects together' are expressing themselves in the only way they know how. Translanguaging is part and parcel of who they are and how they communicate in daily life so requiring them to speak 'properly in Thai' might well be a herculean task for them. In this case the court and the interpreter are potentially asking them to conform to standardised monolingual models that are beyond their abilities.

Both Solada and Elsa's approach would also appear to interrupt the speaker's flow in mid speech and affect their overall performances (and potential final outcome) in the court case, particularly if this was a regular occurrence, which is suggested here.

The court response to interpreters who raise the issue of language switching can also vary considerably, as Sarah later clarified:

It really depends on the lawyer or other professional who is present as responses vary from no interest at all to detailed questions as to which language, whether it is their first or second etc language, do you the interpreter also speak it and so on.

Interchanging between languages can go unhindered it would seem, but it can also be a source of interruption to the court proceedings generally, in what seems to be a rather arbitrary set of responses ranging from 'no interest at all' to situations where the individual and the interpreter can be subject to interrogation as to the exact detail of what languages were used and how information might have been missed or miss-interpreted by the interpreters.

Translanguaging in asylum seeker interviews can have serious repercussions as another participant in the research explained. Here though, the participant was not describing a direct

experience but rather one that a colleague had related whilst working for the Home Office, and one she had adapted for the public-service training programme she was running at the time:

An Arabic interpreter is called in for a Syrian refugee who is claiming asylum. Here and there the asylum seeker uses Turkish words (or Kurdish). They are telling the immigration officer they are from a conflict zone in Syria but the interpreter hearing the accent and the mix of words will start to realise that the person is not really Syrian. If the interpreter intervenes to say that the asylum seeker is speaking Turkish or Kurdish, the interpreter is putting that person in a position to defend their language usage, and the officer may start to (think) that the asylum seeker is lying. As simple an intervention as this may seem it may have repercussions for the asylum seeker. (Hillary)

Of course, in this case we do not know the personal history of the asylum seeker. Perhaps he married a Syrian and/or lived in the country for a period of time and is hiding this fact to improve his chances of being accepted into the asylum programme. Alternatively, he might have been brought up or worked with Turks and Kurds in Syria and has developed a means of personal expression that reflects his everyday translanguaging reality. In these circumstances however, his translanguaging is making the interpreter suspicious and raises an ethical dilemma of whether or not they should stop the interview at the relevant translanguaging parts to signal this to the interviewer, in the same way as the other interpreters (Elsa, Sarah and Solada) said they would in the court proceedings. Flagging translanguaging practices however might mean a failed asylum application and, in a worse-case scenario, a possible life or death situation for the individual.

Another more important point emerges here, and that is that people do not always have the choice of whether to translanguage or not. If we suppose that it is a linguistic product of personal histories and experiences then conforming to monolingual dictates in certain circumstances, such as legal proceedings, becomes an almost impossible task. The *Syrian* in the example supposedly could have only spoken in Arabic if he had the choice, but perhaps this was not a choice he could actually make.

Up until now we have argued that individuals appear to shift their peripheral translanguaging to the centre in their discourse, making a counter discourse to monological hegemony by claiming translanguaging (albeit implicitly perhaps) as being a central part of who they are. This may not always be an agentive decision however, as it might be consciously or unconsciously done. Again, when language is approached from a Saussurean position, as a separate and bounded set of fixed resources with no consideration of the social activity and personal history of the speaker that shaped it, it reveals little or nothing about that person. Their lives are written in the language(s) they use to express themselves and can no further be separated from them than the bodies they inhabit.

5. Conclusions

The problems that community/public-service interpreters experience today is due in part to attempts to impose a standardised monolingual bridging model on their clients means of communication. However, such models are increasingly frustrated by increasing superdiversity and the consequent translanguaging practices that are emerging in our post-modern society. In this society, the level of linguistic complexity is beginning to surpass anything that nation states have experienced before.

Translanguaging is a product of this complexity and represents a form of ‘multilingualism from below’ (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), a creative, dynamic and fluid sourcing of diverse linguistic repertoires emerging from the periphery and claiming more centric relevancy in both private and public discourse. It is representative of the multilinguistic, multicultural world people need to navigate today in urban settings in order ‘to get things done’.

Many of the examples in the research reported here are representations of people transposing the language of the street, the language of their daily lives, into the context of a court of law, where the legal rationale for court interpreting rests on the assumption that litigants who are assisted by an interpreter cannot speak other languages at all (Angermeyer 2015). However, these people translanguage by drawing on their experience of living in another culture and linguistic landscape. It is part of their ‘metrolinguism’ (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), a melded set of linguistic resources which do not conform to hegemonic monolingual dictates, the dictates of institutional service providers, and one that claims the centre rather than the periphery in their lives.

Language, it is argued, is not a choice but rather a product of lived experience, the voice that emerges from accumulated socio-cultural interaction and personal history. In the interpreters' representations of their clients' speech we can see these voices as being part of a counter discourse, challenging and resisting the centric pull of monolingual standardized expression. Jacob and Solada cannot shut their clients up, to stop them returning to their own 'broken English' or bad Thai, and the court officials (lawyers, etc.) can only continue to direct litigants back to their interpreters when they attempt to speak for themselves repeatedly in translanguaging ways. Even asylum seekers whose interests are potentially damaged by not conforming to monolingual forms of expression are unable to silence the personal history and experience contained in their unique linguistic means of communication.

What also emerged in the research is the way in which translanguaging takes other languages and makes them familiar to the individual. The Polish workers take English nouns and verbs and apply Polish morphosyntactic and grammatical rules from their own native language, and Thais draw on their popular culture (i.e. songs) to make English loan words sound everyday to them (yet strangely alien to English speakers). This is part of the creative space that translanguaging inhabits, albeit a contested space, one that is in continual tension with the centre.

But what of the future of community/public-service interpreting, and legal interpreting specifically? The monolingual model is already straining at the seams and it is difficult to imagine a way out of an apparent impasse where clients are continually translanguaging in courts where conservative values are often resistant to change. Interpreter training would seem to be an initial stage where prospective professionals in the field are made more aware of the phenomenon and develop strategies to cope with it. As with developments in 'English as a Lingua Franca' (Jenkins 2007; Seidlhofer & Jenkins 2003) a shared databank of international translanguaging variations from standard monolingual 'native speaker' forms might be introduced into interpreter training. This would not give us a standardised translanguaging dictionary or textbook, as translanguaging is by its very nature is a continually evolving and diversified practice, based on personal histories and experiences which are unlikely to be easily codified. However, such an approach might be useful for sensitising interpreters to potential forms of translanguaging in their working lives. Another alternative might be the introduction of role-plays which draw on translanguaging texts in course curricula, something that has already been piloted in translation studies and advocated in interpreting studies (see Runcieman, in print), as well as class discussions on the ethical dimensions of interpreting in translanguaging situations (Ibid).

The other side of the coin is the service provider itself and the need to make them more awareness of the potential for translanguaging in their professional fields. As service providers have learnt the practices of interpreters in consecutive interpreting, limiting the amount of information they communicate in terms of density and time, and pausing accordingly in order for the interpreter to do their job more effectively, so they could become familiar with the potential for translanguaging. Ultimately, this might help remove the stigmatism that individuals are merely speaking ‘broken’ forms of language and being obstinately obstructive to legal proceedings, expressing themselves rather in the only way they know how in the important events that shape their lives.

As translanguaging is increasingly shifting the centre to what was once the periphery, by claiming a new space for linguistic expression in superdiverse societies, so to must community/public-service interpreting, and the service providers that use their services, adapt to serve the new social world that their citizens are shaping.

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