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**CROSSING BORDERS, SHIFTING VOICES—
HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES ON L2 TRANSLATION**

**Proceedings of the international conference
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Preface

This volume gathers contributions originally presented at *Crossing Borders, Shifting Voices—Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on L2 Translation*, a one-day hybrid conference held at Te Herenga Waka–Victoria University of Wellington in November 2024. Conceived as a space for reflection and dialogue, the conference was organised as a collaborative initiative between Te Herenga Waka and the University of Ljubljana, building on shared research interests in translation directionality and multilingual practices. The hybrid event brought together scholars, practitioners and postgraduate students both in person and online. Their discussions examined the shifting roles of translation into a second language as a site of identity construction, an arena for ethical negotiation, and a practice shaped by evolving linguistic dynamics.

The papers collected here speak to the diversity of that conversation. They explore societal bilingualism and translatorial practices in the Slovenia town of Koper, probe the intersections between ethics, directionality and translator identity, and examine historical transformations in translation practice. Together, they reflect the intellectual curiosity and commitment that animated the conference, as well as the evolving realities of a profession increasingly defined by multilingualism, mobility and negotiation.

Some keynote contributions appear here in references form rather than as full articles. Professor Dr Nike K. Pokorn's keynote on literary translation as a diasporic act of self-construction had previously been published elsewhere and is cited in this volume. Dr Lúcia Collischonn, scheduled to speak on exophonic translation, was unable to participate; readers are directed instead to her most recent publication, *Literary Exophonic Translation* (Cambridge University Press, 2025) for a related discussion.

Published one year after the event, this volume is as much a commemoration as a continuation. It captures a moment while also pointing to future work—work that will continue to cross borders, shift voices, and shape translation and multilingual practices in an increasingly postmonolingual world.

Dr Jana Grohnert
Wellington, November 2025



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¹ Professor Pokorn's keynote contribution delivered at *Crossing Borders, Shifting Voices*, examined the role of literary translation into a second language as an act of self-construction for diasporic communities seeking to shape their cultural presence within new linguistic environments. The paper has previously been published under the title "Translation and diaspora: The role of English literary translations in Slovene *émigré* periodicals in the US" (Pokorn, 2023). Readers are encouraged to consult the published version for the full text. (<https://doi.org/10.1075/target.21088.pok>)

² Dr Collischonn was scheduled to deliver a presentation on exophonic translation, i.e. translation out of the mother tongue, focusing on how practitioners reflect on their own practice and on the insights she gained during her doctoral research. While unforeseen circumstances prevented her participation and no paper was submitted for inclusion in this volume, her work remains a significant contribution to the field. Readers interest in exophony and literary translation may wish to consult her latest publication *Literary Exophonic Translation* (Cambridge University Press, 2025) for a related discussion.



Articles

The translatorial practices of a bilingual community: a case study of Koper

Tamara Mikolič Južnič

Abstract

This article explores forms of translatoriality between two ethnic groups in the city of Koper, Slovenia. It presents an overview of the linguistic history of Koper and shows how it has been shaped by political and social changes. Slovenes and Italians have coexisted in the area for centuries, with the Italian population historically living more in the town centre and the Slovene population settled more in the surrounding areas. Several political changes reversed the linguistic balance after the Second World War, with Slovenes becoming the dominant population, and Italians being an officially recognized minority. However, although the rights of the Italian minority are formally codified and consistently enforced, in recent decades Italian language skills have been declining among the Slovene population, which has influenced the translatorial practices in the community. A review of literature from linguistics, sociology, history, and politics is used to shed light on the history of the two communities, and two case studies—one of a multilingual preschool group and one of a public signage controversy—reflect local society's efforts to preserve bilingualism as well as its pride in a shared linguistic history.

1. Introduction

In territories where different ethnicities have been present through lengthy periods of history, language contact is inevitable, and it can be observed both in the interaction between language groups (i.e., in various forms of “translatoriality,” as defined by Koskinen and Kinnunen 2022) and in the form of bilingualism, when speakers are able to interact in more than one language. Bilingual speakers may identify themselves with either of the ethnicities, or both, and may have acquired knowledge of both languages through their own family situation or through society (e.g., in school, with friends, through the media, etc.). They may be part of a linguistic minority among a different language majority (e.g., Italian speakers in Slovenia), or they may have learned the minority language as a language of the environment. The degree to which bilingualism is engrained in a society depends on several factors, among which are the legal status of the languages and the prestige associated with a particular language, both of which may change over time. An example of the influence of social (political) changes on bilingualism and translatorial practices can be observed in Koper, a small town in Slovenia close to the border with Italy.

At the crossroads between two nations, Koper has had a multilingual character virtually since its foundation, but the two languages that have most impacted its population are Italian and Slovene. Although each ethnicity has preserved its own identity and language through the centuries, the need for close interaction required speakers to either be fluent in the other language or to resort to translatorial practices to be able to communicate. This article explores how social changes influenced translatorial practices among the bilingual population in the town through history. It also examines some of the reactions to these changes in two case studies: a multilingual local preschool group and a recent public signage controversy.

I argue that societal bilingualism implies various forms of translatorial action, and that changes in the degree of societal bilingualism are reflected in the translatorial practices that characterize it, as well as in public attitudes toward bilingualism.



2. Bilingualism and translatorial practices

Bilingualism is a concept that has generated extensive discussions through the decades, its definitions being rather different depending on the field or theory they stem from (see, e.g., Aucamp 1926; Bloomfield 1935; Weinreich 1953; Fishman 1965; Mackey 1968; Schelletter 2020). A lengthy discussion on the implications of each definition is beyond the scope of this article; rather than precisely defining the elusive concept, therefore, here I follow Baetens Beardsmore's (1986: 4) preference for "the framework of a typology of bilingualism which allows for a clear delimitation of the particular area of investigation within a larger field." An important distinction is that between individual bilingualism and societal bilingualism. Whereas individual bilingualism can be seen as "the alternative use of two or more languages by the same individual (Mackey 1968: 292), societal bilingualism refers to "any kind of bilingualism or multilingualism at a level of social organization beyond the individual or nuclear family" (Sebba 2011: 445). As Sebba explains, societal bilingualism has two main categories: "state" and "community." Studies at the state level focus on "officially bilingual states and substates (regions, provinces, municipalities, etc.), the precise nature of their bilingualism, and the institutions and legal frameworks which exist to regulate and reproduce it." Studies at the community level, on the other hand, are concerned with "those groups (of whatever size) which practiced bilingualism among themselves, and would concern itself with their bilingual practices, including trends over time such as language shift" (Sebba 2011: 445). This study is situated at the crossroads of these two levels, on the one hand observing the institutional and legal aspects of present-day bilingualism in the area, and on the other following the changing practices of bilingual speakers over time.

Given the extensive amount of literature on the topic and the rather different definitions available for some of the terminology used in this article, some brief definitions of the concepts used here are necessary. In this specific study, I consider bilingual those speakers that can communicate in the two local social languages, Slovene and Italian, which are both recognized as official languages in the area (see Section 5).³ The term *minority* refers to the part of the population that identifies as Italian and speaks Italian; this native minority is a remnant of times past, when the area belonged to the Republic of Venice (and later to Austria-Hungary, France, and Italy) and the official language in the area was mainly Italian. The term *first language* is understood as the language (or languages) usually learned within the primary family unit, and the term *language of the environment* is a social language that is not identified by the speaker as his or her own, but which is spoken by other members of the local community (e.g., Italian is the language of the environment for Slovene speakers in Koper).

3. Methods, materials, and population

To answer the research question, a mixed methods approach was used: a review of literature and official documents, interviews, and an analysis of newspaper and internet news articles, corroborated with visual material.

The history of relations between the two linguistic communities has been explored through a review of the literature in various fields—in particular, history, education, and law. Data on the population of Koper are summarized from official sources (SiStat, SURS) and from data in reports by a number of authors cited below. Contemporary relations between minority and majority populations are summarized from local newspaper sources (e.g., *Regional* and *Primorske novice*) and previously published research.

³ For the purposes of this study, I adopt a simplified view in which I do not consider different types of bilingualism as opposed to diglossia or even "dilalia" (in the sense of Berruto 1999). Instead, I focus on the ability of speakers to communicate with each other in one or both languages on a daily basis. For a discussion of these differences in the area, see Umer Kljun (2024b).



The current situation is exemplified with two case studies of a multilingual preschool classroom and a public signage controversy. The multilingual preschool classroom operated from September 2022 through June 2023, and the study was performed in May 2023. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal and two teachers working with the multilingual group,⁴ one that spoke Slovene with the children and one that spoke Italian. The group consisted of twenty-two children five to seven years old. The interviews were recorded and subsequently analysed and compared. Information on the multilingual preschool group was also available in the local media (Hlaj 2023; Lotrič 2023, Nova 2023; N. J. 2024).

The public signage controversy was documented with photos taken in Koper between 2017 and 2024 and with an analysis of over thirty newspaper articles and politicians' posts that appeared in local and national (social) media from the time the signs were installed until the present; that is, between 2017 and 2024.

4. A historical overview

Today, Koper is a small port town of around 54,000 in Slovenia, on the border between Slovenia and Italy, with a rather diverse linguistic panorama. It is historically the home of two main linguistic groups, Slovenes (around 75%, according to the latest statistical data) and Italians (around 2.2%). Apart from these, presently there is also a strong community of immigrants from the former Yugoslavia (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Montenegro), many of whom have been living in the town for decades and are Slovene citizens (cf. T. K. 2024b). According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS), there are around 8,200 foreign citizens, out of whom around 4,750 are employed with a work permit (the rest mainly being family members): among these, the most numerous are workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, Croatia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Ukraine (several other nationalities appear sporadically).

Although there has always been some presence of other ethnicities (especially from nearby Croatia), most of Koper's inhabitants were Italians up to the 1950s. Table 1 shows the extremely rapid change in population in the first half of the twentieth century.

Table 1: Inhabitants of Koper according to their language/nationality (source: Lavrenčič 2012)

Census year	Total	Slovenes	Italians	Other
1910	8,993	445	7,909	639
1921	8,622	91	8,432	99
1945	6,138	751	5,362	25
1947	6,940	232	6,695	13
1954	5,678	1,426	3,178	1,074
1956	6,066	4,902	506	658

As Darovec (2023) notes, the Koper area (and that of Istria, the surrounding peninsula) has been inhabited since the Palaeolithic. The changing name of the town is a testament to its changing linguistic picture, as the following brief outline shows. A Greek settlement named *Palada* is mentioned in the area between the third and first century BC, and a Roman settlement called *Aegida* was founded here in the second century BC. In the late Roman Republic era, the settlement was known as *Caprae* or *Capris oppidum*. In Byzantine times (after AD 538) the name was changed to *Justinopolis*, although the name *Capris* was still used as well. Koper was Venice's most important Istrian partner in the ninth and tenth centuries, Darovec (2023: 26)

⁴ The results presented here are a small part of a larger study that also involves observation and a questionnaire-based survey; here, however, only the results of the interviews are summarized.



explains, with Venetians owning property and frequently living in Koper, despite the town officially belonging to the Holy Roman Empire. In 1232, the town officially joined the Republic of Venice, and its name was changed to *Caput Histriae*, or *Capodistria*. As mentioned, a version of the name *Caprae* was used along with the other changing names, and so today the town has two official names: *Koper* in Slovene and *Capodistria* in Italian.

A few historical milestones related to languages in education are a testimony to the changing relations between the two communities under study. The first schools in Koper date back to pre-Venetian times, and prominent teachers come to Koper and Istria from the Italian area throughout the twelfth to seventeenth century, when five academies were active (Žitko 1994), although most of them did not have a regular setup and did not last very long. A formal seminary was established by the Venetian Republic in 1612, named *Collegio dei Nobili* (College of the Nobility), which operated continuously (with a few interruptions) until it was permanently closed under Austrian rule in 1817 (Žitko 1994). Around the beginning of the nineteenth century, Koper faced great political changes: it was first assigned to Austria in 1797 after the final collapse of the Venetian Republic, then passed to the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, and later became part of France's Illyrian Provinces from 1810 to 1813, when Napoleon lost the territory to Austria, which held it until 1918.

In Venetian times, schools were reserved for the nobility, and the only local language used in education was Italian. The first to introduce Slovene into formal education were the French, when Marshal Marmont converted the seminary into a lyceum (Kontestabile & Cencič 2018: 114–115). When the Austrians took over again, they slowly developed the same schooling system that was used in the empire, employing local languages, but Italian prevailed as the language of instruction. In 1879, the local male teachers' school had three departments (Slovene, Italian, and Croatian, the latter being the smallest by far), and German was a language of instruction despite the absence of any German-speaking students. Croatian classes were moved to Kastav in 1906, and Slovene classes were moved to Gorizia in 1909 (to the first all-Slovene school), leaving only Italian in Koper (Kontestabile & Cencič 2018: 114–115).

After the First World War, the region was transferred to Italy, and any surviving Slovene schools had difficulties reopening. The rise of fascism brought a ban on using Slovene in schools in 1923, and by 1927 Italian completely replaced Slovene in all schools (Kontestabile & Cencič 2018: 115).

Slovene schools reappeared after the Second World War, but most teachers had degrees from Italian schools, and therefore courses in Slovene had to be offered in order to help them with the transition. The contested border between Italy and the newly annexed Yugoslav territory resulted in the establishment of the Free Territory of Trieste (1947), which was divided into Zone A (centred around Trieste) and Zone B (comprising an area now divided between Slovenia and Croatia). The border between the two countries was finalized only in 1975 with the Treaty of Osimo, in which the minority rights on both sides were defined as well (Darovec 2023; see also Troha 2018).

Several reasons, including fear of the new regime in Yugoslavia and the economic situation, led most Italian families to flee from Zone B, so that by 1956 Koper's population changed from being predominantly Italian to predominantly Slovene (Lavrenčič 2012; see Table 1). The sharp increase in the Slovene population was also caused by Koper's new role as an economic, cultural, developmental, and educational centre of the region. Considerable immigration from other parts of Slovenia and the rest of Yugoslavia resulted not only in a sharp increase in monolingual speakers of Slovene, but also in the settlement of speakers of other languages (Lavrenčič 2012: 510).

Two other major political changes subsequently occurred in the area: the independence of Slovenia in 1991, and the accession of Slovenia to the European Union in 2004. Neither of



them, however, impacted the relations between the two linguistic groups significantly because the linguistic rights remained unchanged.

5. Official bilingualism in Koper today

Today, Slovenia recognizes two native minorities in its territory: Italians in the southwest coastal area and Hungarians in the northeast. As mentioned above, after the Second World War, the contested border between Italy and Yugoslavia was settled in stages with several documents, the most important being the London Memorandum (1954), whereby Zone B (with Koper) was assigned to Yugoslavia, and the Treaty of Osimo mentioned above. Because the area was populated by both Italians and Slovenes, reciprocal minorities were recognized by both states. The Italian minority in Slovenia is protected by several official documents: at a supranational level, Slovenia adheres to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (European Council 1995), and at the national level minorities and their rights are enshrined in Article 5 of the Slovene Constitution (2013). At the local level, a series of decrees and ordinances have been published and implemented by the Municipality of Koper, such as the Decree on the Public Implementation of Bilingualism in Ethnically Mixed Areas (Odlok 1998). In practice, the rights of the Italian minority are defined in Articles 11 and 64 of the Slovene Constitution. The Italian minority is represented by the Self-Governing Community of Italian Nationality (*Comunità autogestita della nazionalità italiana*, or *C.A.N.*), the role of which is to provide for the institutional needs of the Italian community in Slovenia. The Italian community also directly elects three representatives in the municipal council, one of which becomes a vice-mayor, and a representative in the National Assembly. As documented on the Slovene government page *Italijanska in madžarska skupnost* (The Italian and Hungarian Community, 2022), among other important rights, the Italian minority has the right to express its nationality and to use its own language (including, for instance, having personal documents issued in both languages), the right to education in its own language, a radio station and a TV station, and the right to translation (and interpreting) in all formal settings and on public signs (e.g., in courts of law, police proceedings, and other institutions, and on street signs, billboards, and other elements of the linguistic landscape).

Italian is a language of instruction in all local levels of education, from preschool to secondary school. This means that in the Municipality of Koper, apart from regular Slovene preschools and schools, there are Italian preschools and schools, which have the same curriculum as the Slovene ones, but the language of instruction is Italian. Slovene schools have compulsory Italian classes throughout primary and secondary education, and Italian schools have a similar number of compulsory Slovene classes. This is meant to guarantee mutual understanding and a general level of bilingualism in both linguistic communities.

Article 3 of the Act on the Public Usage of Slovenian Language (2004) states that

“In the territory of municipalities where the Italian or the Hungarian national community lives, the public usage of Italian or Hungarian as official languages shall be guaranteed in the manner as regulated by this Act for the public usage of Slovenian and in accordance with the provisions of individual sector-specific acts.”

According to the aforementioned act and municipal decree, all public events in the Koper area are expected to include both linguistic communities. In practice, this means, for instance, that at official celebrations and events the convenors are expected to use both languages in parallel, either offering a full interpretation in the other language or, more frequently, (self-)summarizing in the other language or inserting only certain parts of the discourse in the other language (such as greetings and closing remarks).

In fact, the linguistic practices at official events, as described in the Decree on the Public Implementation of Bilingualism in Ethnically Mixed Areas, are remarkably in line with



Reh's (2004) categorization of multilingual writing strategies in signage. Reh (2004) distinguishes four main ways of presenting multilingual information: a) duplicating, in which the same content is fully presented in both languages; b) fragmentary, in which all content is provided in one language but only parts are available in the other; c) overlapping, in which parts of the content are available in both languages and parts are in either one or the other; and d) complementary, in which the content is delivered in both languages without overlapping (i.e., with codeswitching).⁵ A similar categorization is used by Koskela et al. (2017) in their study of bilingual formal meetings in Finland, as well as in the analysis of public signs in Slovenia (Mikolič Južnič & Pisanski Peterlin 2023), and it is applied in the case studies presented below as well.

6. A changing linguistic reality

For a long time, the two linguistic communities in Koper were able to communicate in either language because the members of both were sufficiently proficient in both languages. This meant that Reh's (2004) duplicating strategy was usually avoided at public events in Koper due to the high proficiency of the majority of the population in both languages: a full translation of a speech, for instance, would result in the audience listening to—and understanding—the same content twice. Using the other language was instead an acknowledgement of the presence of the other community, or an act of inclusion, as well as an implementation of the regulations in force. Up to ten or twenty years ago, high proficiency in Italian among the Slovene population was guaranteed not only by the school system, but also by constant contact with Italian through personal interactions, Italian television, and other media, which the population followed very closely, as Maurizio Tremul, one of the most prominent political representatives of the Italian minority in Slovenia, explained in an interview for *Regional*, a local news outlet (T. K. 2022).⁶

In recent years, however, a remarkable change in the proficiency of Slovene speakers of Italian has been noted. Two survey-based studies (Kompapa 2014; Kompapa Lukančič 2019) report that there are notable differences in younger and older generations, the former having a drastically lower level of proficiency in Italian. Nevertheless, although their knowledge of Italian is rather unsatisfactory, most respondents identify themselves as bilingual and consider the bilingual nature of the area important. The problem with language proficiency is also confirmed by primary and secondary school teachers, who have observed a steady decline in Italian proficiency in their students, which is also reflected in the results of national examinations (Kompapa 2014: 97–99; Kompapa Lukančič 2019: 94–95). Among the reasons for the decline of proficiency in Italian, Kompapa Lukančič (2019) points to the appeal and influence of English, which especially impacts the younger generation through mass media, social media, and the entertainment industry. Another important reason can be found in the slow reaction of the school system to changing linguistic reality: Italian is still taught throughout primary and secondary school (cumulatively thirteen years); the curriculum, however, has failed to reflect the change in a timely manner, which is indicated in the results of the national primary and secondary school exit exams (Kompapa Lukančič 2019). In addition, although the number of members of the Italian community has recently slightly increased (albeit compared to the more distant past it is still quite low), it is not growing at the same pace as the number of Slovene speakers, which results in the proportion of Italian minority members actually decreasing. The

⁵ See Umer Kljun (2024b) for an exhaustive study of codeswitching in Istria.

⁶ Tremul was interviewed in response to a controversy regarding the positioning of the Slovene and Italian names of the bus station in Koper, each visible from a different angle. The controversy was started by another local news outlet, *Primorske novice* (Hlaj 2022), with an article reporting on the positioning of the Slovene and Italian names of the bus station.



increase in the Slovene-speaking population is partly the result of internal migration, with several thousand people moving to the Koper region each year from other parts of Slovenia (SiStat). Furthermore, as mentioned in Section 2, there are a rather large number of immigrants in Koper, who usually tend to learn the social language of the majority, and not Italian.

This has resulted, as Kompara Lukančič (2019) noted, in a lack of linguistic competence that hampers mutual understanding and results in a shift in the types of translatorial action needed to overcome the language barrier that has appeared. Although fragmentary, overlapping, and even complementary translatorial action were typical when proficiency in both languages was high for both ethnic communities, duplicating translatorial action (i.e., full translation/interpretation) is becoming increasingly frequent for the Slovene community when full mutual understanding is crucial.

The Italian community, as a minority in Slovenia, feels a more pressing need to be competent speakers of Slovene because it is vital for effective communication with the surrounding Slovene-speaking majority. As a result, members of the Italian community usually have a sufficient command of Slovene and are still bilingual, which is indirectly confirmed in Umer Kljun's (2024a, 2024b) research on their linguistic and translatorial practices in Slovene Istria. Umer Kljun (2024a), in particular, explores the intersection between code-switching and self-translatoriality among bilingual speakers of the Italian community in Slovenia, and discovers that—apart from summarizing and expanding (which are two versions of fragmentary translatorial action), and complementary language practices—speakers rely strongly on intercomprehension, whereas duplicating is used in very limited settings. Such translatorial choices are effective when the entire audience is bilingual, but it proves ineffective when not all speakers are bilingual because it leads to “fragmentation of the message” (Umer Kljun 2024a: 115) and compromises comprehension.

The picture resulting from this brief overview seems to show that what was once a community with a fluid form of bilingualism, in which everybody spoke both languages well enough to be able to communicate in either of them, is changing into two separate communities. Consequently, it is apparent that some forms of translatoriality may no longer be viable.

7. Good practices and controversies

Two emblematic cases have occurred in Koper in recent times, which are linked to acts of translatoriality, and both are still ongoing at the time of writing. One is the introduction of a local multilingual preschool class, and the other is a controversy related to the display of old names of streets and squares in the historic centre of Koper. Both reflect the current attitudes of the local majority toward its Italian minority and its bilingual heritage. The studies are works in progress and, due to space constraints, they are only briefly summarized below.

7.1 A multilingual preschool class

As mentioned in Section 3, the data presented in the following paragraphs have been collected through extensive semi-structured interviews with the principal and the two teachers.

In 2023, an experimental preschool class was set up as a cooperative project of the University of Primorska and the Koper preschool. Twenty-two children age five to seven were enrolled; they were all from families that identify as Slovene, with one exception.⁷ The group was

⁷ The exception is a girl that had moved to Koper recently from Serbia and therefore did not speak Slovene or Italian, but she had some prior knowledge of English. She caught up with Slovene and Italian quickly enough, but the teacher that spoke Slovene also approached her using the child's native language (Serbian). Interestingly, the girl and three of her Slovene-speaking peers started speaking English among themselves, but they spoke Slovene and/or Italian with other children and teachers.



set up with two permanent teachers, one of whom spoke Slovene with the children, whereas the other spoke Italian. The curriculum used, called My Language Train (Slovene: *Moj jezikovni vlak*), has been developed by Bratož and Sila (2022) and it contains immersive activities for children in two main languages, as well as a third one (English), which is regularly used in the classroom twice a week by student teachers from the local university as part of their own education curriculum. Furthermore, other languages are also occasionally used in the classroom because the “language train” travels to other countries, such as Austria, Spain, and so on. The curriculum includes several activities carried out in the language of the teacher in charge of the group at the time. Consequently, for instance, the same activity might be carried out using Slovene in one half of the group and Italian in the other half. The curriculum also assumes substantial involvement by the parents, who are informed regularly with posters and updates, and who are expected to help the children with homework. Figures 1 and 2 show the group’s bulletin board at a time when the children were exploring the UK; the aim of the bulletin board is to inform the parents about progress in Slovene, Italian, and English.



Figure 1. Bulletin board of the multilingual group with content in Slovene and English.

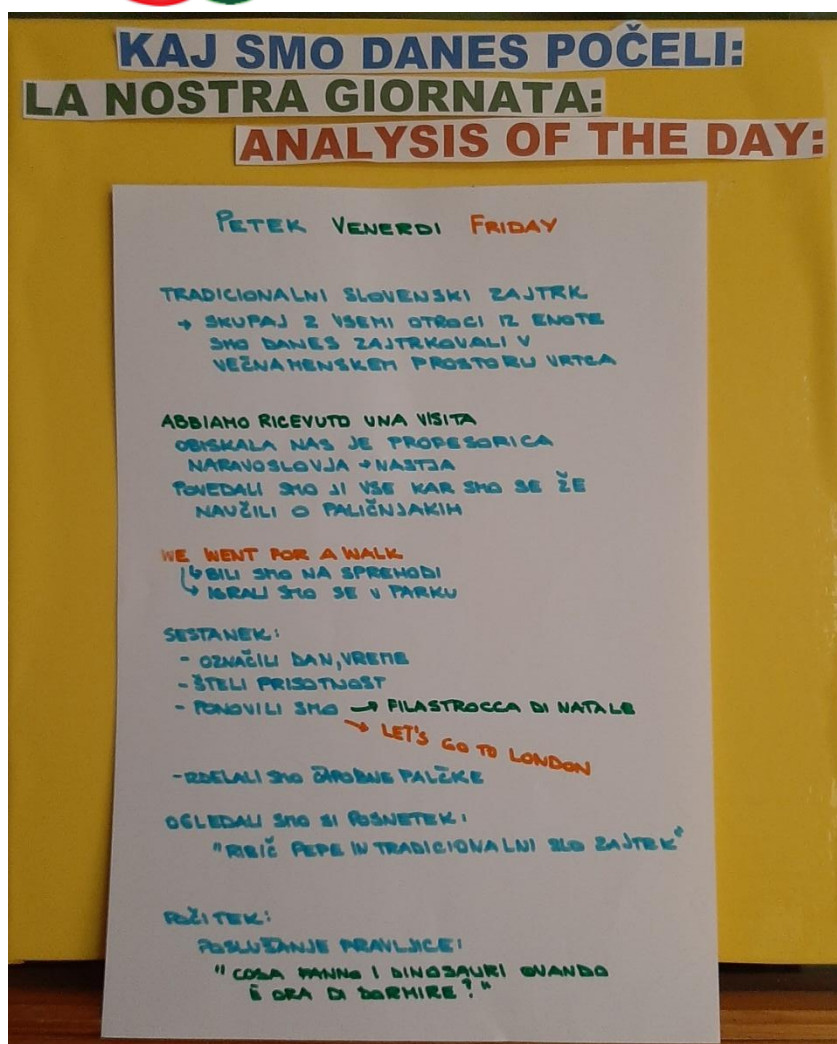


Figure 2. Bulletin board of the multilingual group with content in Slovene, Italian, and English

The principal explained the background of the experimental preschool group. Together with the researchers from the University of Primorska's Faculty of Education, the preschool set out to test a curriculum for a multilingual preschool class in which the children would be exposed to several languages without explicit language instruction. The main idea was that the children would learn the languages spontaneously, without direct teaching. The presence of additional teachers in the classroom required additional funding, and the Municipality of Koper, which cofinances the preschool, was interested in the project particularly because of the strong role of Italian as the second language of the community. The curriculum was expected to promote not only language skills, but also understanding of different cultures, interest in foreign cultures and languages, and general skills such as problem solving, concentration, curiosity, social skills, linguistic awareness, and so on. A benefit of the curriculum was also raising awareness about bilingualism in the area and helping the children overcome potential negative feelings toward foreign languages.

According to the curriculum, the teachers, who underwent special training prior to the start of the group, were not supposed to translate for the children—and, indeed, in the interviews the teachers stated that they did not use translation in the sense of a duplicating translatorial activity. However, the teachers indirectly admitted that, if they wanted to communicate with the children, they could not avoid using translatorial practices. Usually, the teacher that spoke Slovene would intervene using overlapping and fragmentary practices



(summarizing or expanding the Italian content in Slovene). The teacher that spoke Italian resorted to complementary practices as well, allowing the children to interact in Slovene while she continued to use Italian. Most commonly, though, at least at the beginning, she would use intersemiotic translatorial action (in the sense of Jakobson 1959), in the form of gestures and actions that helped the children understand the meaning she was trying to convey (e.g., raising her hands while saying “Raise your hands” or pointing to objects that she talked about). According to her report, such translatorial activities happened frequently at the beginning because the children did not have prior knowledge of Italian, but they became rarer as the children grew more familiar with the language and she could interact with them using Italian only.

Both teachers reported translatoriality among the children as well: they would ask each other questions in Italian and English, help each other out when they did not understand, and ask questions, finding creative ways of interacting with the teacher that only spoke Italian. Children would also use complementary practices with ease, switching from one language to the other, self-translating and summarizing or expanding to the teachers or to their peers.

The teachers noticed various degrees of progress regarding the languages used by the children. English was only used intensively when the student teachers were present (i.e., two hours per week), whereas the regular teachers used it only to repeat and reinforce songs and certain phrases as they reviewed content with the children. Therefore the expectations regarding the language skills acquired were not very high. However, very substantial progress was noticed in most children. In the interviews, they reported that English was used unprompted—even in conversation among the children themselves, as mentioned above. Italian was more constant in the classroom due to the continuous presence of the teacher that spoke Italian, but the teachers said the progress was slow. On the other hand, the teachers mentioned that many parents reported that Italian was also used at home.

Among the reasons for the difference in the use of the two foreign languages, the teachers and the principal mentioned exposure to English at home through various media, as well as the attitudes toward the two languages in the children’s families (some parents did not speak Italian, but all of them know English to a certain degree).

Among the positive outcomes of the experimental class, the teachers mentioned the overwhelmingly positive attitude of the children (and parents) toward multilingualism, the increased sense of inclusion, and a general openness to diversity and cultural specificity in the children.

The research is ongoing, as mentioned, and two new groups have been set up for the 2024/25 school year. More interviews and observations need to be carried out for more in-depth results, but some conclusions can be drawn based on the experiences of the principal and teachers in 2022/23. First, the early inclusion of multilingual situations in the preschool seems to help the children develop a more open attitude toward different languages and cultures, and, second, learning Italian in a positive environment may not only have an impact on their future language skills, but can also help avoid the negative attitudes toward the language noticed in the youth population surveyed by Kompara Lukančič (2014, 2019).

7.2 A public signage controversy

Although public controversies regarding the use of language are not new in the Koper area (see the aforementioned article about the sign at the bus station in *Primorske novice*; Hlaj 2022), the controversy that emerged in 2023 regarding signs on historical buildings was somewhat different, especially regarding the reaction of the general public.

In 2018, the Municipality of Koper started a project with the aim of adding historical information about street names in the old part of Koper. A special committee with five members was named (Odlok 2018) to study the history of local toponyms. The oldest official report found



on the names of streets and buildings in Koper was from 1884, when the area was under the rule of Austria-Hungary. Considering the town's historical ties with Venice and the Italian-speaking community that was prevalent for centuries, it is not surprising that the names are either in Italian or in the local Istro-Venetian dialect. The special committee appointed by the municipality decided to prepare informative signage for the streets using the names in the 1884 document. However, when the first sign was installed, the format was apparently too similar to that for the official street names, and it created confusion among the public (T. R. 2017). Some thought that the name of the main square of the town, Tito Square (*Titov trg*)⁸ was being changed, which sparked discontent and resulted in this first sign being stolen. A short while later, in 2018, the municipality approached the matter in a more systematic way, informing the public about the project and taking care to use a design for the signs that would not create confusion. In fact, the initiative was well received, as reported by local and national media outlets. The signs were installed gradually, with several reports about the addition of new signs in the media between 2018 and 2023, which were not accompanied by any negative attitudes or acts of vandalism.

The current controversy arose in 2022, when a sign with a historical street name was to be installed on the wall surrounding the Franciscan monastery and Saint Anne's Church. The Culture and Media Inspectorate became involved after the Slovenian Language Service of the Ministry of Culture, contacted by a Franciscan monk, reported the case. After a rather lengthy procedure, in 2024, thirty-three of the signs were deemed problematic and the inspectorate ordered the municipality to remove them because they did not comply with the Slovenian Public Use Act, which requires that signs be in Slovenian, not just Italian (Čepar 2024).

For a clearer presentation, Figure 3 shows one such sign, in which the structure of the inscription is visible: the municipal coat of arms on the top left, then the inscription in Slovene, Italian, and English (*nekdanji/già/formerly*), and then the old name of the square (*Campo dei Cappuccini* 'Capuchin Square'). The official street sign above contains both the name of the square in Slovene (*Giordanov trg* 'Giordano Square') and in Italian (*Piazza Giordano Bruno* 'Giordano Bruno Square'). Technically, in fact, both signs display translatoriality.

⁸ The square is one of the few in Slovenia still named after former Yugoslav President Tito, who is still viewed rather favourably by the majority of the local population.



Figure 3. An official street sign above and one of the controversial signs below.

The mayor of Koper, Aleš Bržan, along with the local news outlets did not agree with the inspectorate's decision, as reported, for instance, in *RTV SLO* (M. Z. 2024). He appealed the decision, ordering that the signs be turned around in protest instead of removed (Figure 4).

Several reasons to maintain the signs as they were were cited by the mayor, the special committee that studied the historical names, and other experts. The historical names were not translated into Slovene because their Slovene counterparts never existed: both the Italian and Slovene local population only used the Italian (and Istro-Venetian) names. Furthermore, some of the historical names are considered simply untranslatable by the committee: the differences between expressions such as *piazza*, *piazzetta*, and *piazzale* refer to types of squares and can only be translated into Slovene as *trg* (T. K. 2024a). In other instances, the representatives of the committee commented, they would sound silly: *Campo della Madonnetta* could be superficially translated into English as *Field of Little Mary*, which sounds as inappropriate in Slovene as it does in English (Hlaj 2024).



Figure 4. A sign facing the wall in protest.

During the entire controversy, the majority of the local public has expressed a positive attitude toward the historical signage, according to the testimonies collected by various media outlets. Local Slovene-speaking residents expressed their support for the use of the historical street and square names and their pride in their multicultural history, as well as their acceptance of the use of Italian on the signs. The Italian-speaking residents agreed with the sentiment and expressed frustration at the lack of understanding of the special cultural status of Italian and bilingualism in the town by the state authorities.

At the time of writing, the controversy has not been completely resolved yet because the controversial signs are still turned over with the blank side exposed. After a meeting with the Minister of Culture, the mayor stated that an agreement had been reached, according to which the signs' content would be kept unchanged, but the design would be changed.

8. Concluding remarks

In this article, the town of Koper has served as an example of how political and other social changes influence linguistic and translatorial practices. Two communities that have lived in the same area for centuries have experienced changing attitudes toward their languages through history. In a very short period of time, the community (and language) that had been a majority has become a minority, albeit officially recognized and protected. Official bilingualism (reflected in education, media, public use, etc.) has helped the two communities maintain their second-language skills and ability to communicate in both languages. Various translatorial practices were not used out of a need to bridge communication barriers, but instead partly in accordance with bilingual regulations and partly as a sign of inclusion and respect. Although in recent years a decline in bilingual skills has been witnessed, especially in the population with Slovene as its first language, the attitude of the majority of the residents still reflects pride in the bilingual heritage. In her discussion of code-switching and intercomprehension as translatorial practices, Umer Kljun (2024a: 115–116) states that her case study



“unveiled the value of translatoriality as a symbolic gesture within the multilingual community of Slovene Istria, in which intercomprehension is perceived as a desirable practice that acknowledges the importance and value of both official languages as well as a discursive strategy that reveals a respectful attitude toward the culture of the Other and promotes plurilingualism and the coexistence of multiple local cultural identities.”

This attitude is reflected in both case studies presented here. The experimental preschool group with a multilingual curriculum is in fact an attempt to improve knowledge of both local languages, while also showing a full range of translatoriality. The public signage controversy mirrors social changes, whereby part of the population no longer identifies as bilingual, but it also underlines the desire of the majority to preserve the memory of the multicultural and multilingual history of the town. Although younger generations often do not seem to see the value of being able to interact in both Slovene and Italian, steps are being taken to change such attitudes from an early age. Unlike Mackey (1968: 555), who stated that a “self-sufficient bilingual community has no reason to remain bilingual, since a closed community in which everyone is fluent in two languages could get along just as well with one language,” I argue that a possible ideal scenario could be one in which each community can use both languages but still preserves its chosen linguistic and cultural identity.

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Perspectives on the intersection between L1/L2, ethics, and directionality

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Abstract

In recent years, scholars of Translation Studies have increasingly turned their attention to ethics—a perennial question of translation and a space of responsibility in which practitioners are unavoidably and actively involved (Koskinen & Pokorn, 2020; Inghilleri, 2019). A return to ethics, Pym (2001) notes, if it is to have any substance, must be a return to thought of a very applied nature. Various aspects of ethics have been under scrutiny, including politics of translating, ethics and justice, ethics of the translator, ethics and social responsibility, and ethics in translator training. Within this space of responsibility, scrutiny and applied nature of ethics, I focus on the ways translation practitioners understand and approach L1/L2 and directionality. To do so, I am guided by questions on the perceptions, attitudes and practices related to ethical issues when working with L1/L2. I draw on data collected from interviews with 44 participants—translation scholars, practitioners, policymakers and industry stakeholders, many of whom operate across various countries and regions—to explore the intersection between L1/L2, ethics, and directionality; and to consider some of the possible implications for the translation profession. Ethical considerations and positioning may be different depending on two factors – the direction in which practitioners work; and the need to negotiate their status as professional translators with the policies and frameworks developed and implemented by professional organisations. I conclude with some reflections on my own perceptions and practice of L1/L2 working languages, in light of Van Wyke's (2010) observation that with debate around ethics we can question our own ethical positions.

1. Research Findings

My research findings are based on data collected from interviews with 44 participants, 14 in person and 30 online, distributed across four groups:

- Translation scholars with expertise in the management of post-graduate programmes, including Master of translation and interpreting, both at national and supra-national level such as the European Union
- Practitioners who fall in two categories (1) in-house practitioners specialising in fields such as engineering, innovation, construction industry, mining and energy; and (2) freelance practitioners specialising in a wide range of topics that include journalism, law, economics, banking, business and commerce, medical and clinical trials; international relations, warfare and geopolitics; and science and technology
- Policymakers with background expertise and leadership roles in professional translators' associations, serving in decision-making roles in community translation and government settings
- Industry stakeholders, mainly language service providers that operate at local, national and global levels

Findings from interviews indicate that four terms are widely used in the translation profession - first language, mother tongue, native language and native speaker. Their understanding and use remain inconsistent; and shape practitioners' attitudes toward working languages and directionality. In recent years there has been a significant shift away from



language transfer as the only competency and toward a growing number of competences that are shaping the profession. Findings from interviews were many, with a 'sense of language' as a key element associated with language proficiency at the core of them. Difficult to define, a sense of language is mainly linked to identity and to the way translators position themselves with respect to L1 and L2. Other findings include an ability to possess and display a natural disposition to find words effortlessly, chiefly through the written medium; and the translator's capacity to smoothly communicate within and across languages, and to confidently make use of linguistic capabilities to solve difficult problems in translation.

The intersection between a sense of language and the use of languages in personal and professional settings essentially shapes the direction in which participants prefer to work; and allows for more flexible definitions of L1/L2 to emerge. These reflections differentiate between L1 and L2 in terms of 'language of highest proficiency', 'closeness to language', 'ability to express freely', and 'regarding language proficiency as a continuum'. Voices in the profession acknowledge that theory and practice have not evolved at the same pace and remain, to some extent, disconnected from each other. New entrants to the field, such as English as a Lingua Franca and World Englishes, have pushed for recognition of L2 as central to the profession, thus lifting the debate on directionality. The realities of the labour market in a globalised world challenge most of the traditional assumptions that professional translators work only into their L1 and have passive competence in their L2. Instead, an active recognition of directionality and an increase in the importance of training future practitioners out of the L1 would address the needs of the market.

Definitions, perceptions and practices of L1/L2 and directionality remain inconsistent at the level of certification institutions and professional associations, with some being prescriptive on translating into the mother tongue or native language; while others allowing for more flexibility, prompted by an increasing market demand for translators' readiness to work in both directions. Such inconsistencies remain despite efforts to recognise the realities on the ground; however, in recognition of the fact that the work of a professional translator is far more complex than the language transfer, key competencies now encompass translation competence; linguistic and textual competence in both source and target languages; competence in research, information acquisition, and processing; cultural competence; technical competence; and domain competence. And I'm certain we haven't seen the end of this list. These are all competencies that point toward a holistic understanding and way of practising the profession - this is because participants interviewed tend to regard translator competencies as the sum of many parts, where no one competency dominates the skillset.

The L1/L2 conundrum poses certain dilemmas for some professional translators who identify as growing up and/or living their lives in multilingual contexts. Of the participants interviewed, many have several first languages (or in one case no first language), or their languages change throughout their lives. The sense of language mentioned above feeds into ethics because it allows the translator to take ownership of the language and of directionality. This is particularly pertinent where translators move between languages and cultures. Where such a transition occurs, L1 and L2 may be swapped, especially if the translator lives and works in the new culture for a lengthy period of time. As a result of this shift, the translator may in fact lose the connection with the old language and culture, or, at a minimum, experience an erosion in the confidence to operate professionally into that language and culture. This would certainly lead to a renegotiation of translator practice; and would determine how translators see directionality in practice.

Professional translators interviewed agreed that it's not about definitions found in books or encyclopedias or translation courses. The general sentiment is what they consider to be their L1/L2 and the direction(s) in which they choose to work. A close look at codes of ethics published in 15 countries that are members of the International Federation of Translators



revealed that there exists agreement across several common values such as professionalism and confidentiality. The examination also identified gaps, and even conflicting instances with respect to the ethical principles and behaviours that translators should adopt and display in their working languages. Inconsistencies are present at the level of terminology, with terms such as mother tongue, native speaker, language of habitual use being used either interchangeably or concomitantly, but with no definitions made available to users (practitioners or clients).

Original findings in my research paint a complex picture, with participants expressing strong views on ethics and directionality. When asked about ethical issues for translators working into L2, interestingly most responses were placed in the context of the codes of ethics and professional conduct operating in the country where the translator lived and worked. Those working in countries where there is a code in place, drew on key principles found in such codes and commented, where appropriate, on the content pertaining to first language and directionality, from an ethical standpoint. Conversely, participants in countries where codes of ethics are absent or in development, recognised the urgency for such codes to be developed and implemented, and highlighted key areas where they would be most relevant.

The four ethical principles on which all participants agree—professionalism, competence, confidentiality and trust—sit at the core of the translation profession; and within that ecosystem, participants identified a lack of appropriate alignment across theory, policy and practice; in particular, challenges around articulating how directionality responds to specific needs that fall outside prescribed norms or standards in the codes of ethics and professional conduct.



Translation into English as L2 as a Revitalising Force for Contemporary English?

John Jamieson, NZSTI

My research question for this article is as follows: why do speakers of English as L2 so often seem to be much more articulate and eloquent than L1 speakers, and what might this suggest for translation into English as L2?

We might begin by reflecting that human language is ultimately a process of individuation and differentiation, whereby from an undifferentiated emotional core we extract articulated and differentiated content, essentially a transition from unarticulated core to articulated and differentiated content. This appears to be reflected in the manner in which languages themselves evolve over time. Winfred Lehmann (Lehmann 1974, p. 30) argues that proto-Indo-European was an OV language, with noun complements as **topic** rather than **subject**. The entity of the grammatical subject then progressively emerged, he believes, with the transition from OV to SVO. For our purposes the clearest illustration may be the transition from *mich dünkt* to *ich denke* in German, and from *methinks* to *I think* in English.

Presumably the process runs something like this: every utterance represents a miniature victory of the articulated over the unarticulated, so the language itself becomes more “articulated” over time. And as noted by the Polish linguist Włodzimierz Rybarkiewicz (Rybarkiewicz 1982, pp. 111-118), this shift from “topic prominence” to “subject prominence” has proceeded further and faster in English than in Slavonic languages. These syntactical differences are reflected at the cognitive level, in changes in the reception and understanding of nouns in English in particular, with a shift from essence to existence. A book published in New Zealand in the 1950s entitled *English in the primary school*, would now probably have to change that to *English in (our) primary schools*, to avoid giving the impression of reference to one particular primary school.

We might also consider the first line of the Hungarian national anthem, *Isten, áldd meg a magyart!*. The word-for-word translation is “God, bless the Hungarian”, but for most English speakers today this would convey the image of a specific male Hungarian (probably wearing a hat!). The intended meaning would now have to be conveyed as “God bless our Hungarian nation” or some such.

So what is happening here? It would seem that behind all its actual utterances, every language also has an internal utterance, a background or baseline narrative statement, and there too, the tendency is for that statement to become more clearly defined and individuated, with an increasingly clearly defined subject. The narrative statement in Continental European languages today is perhaps something like *man kann sagen, dass ...*, (“one can say that ...”) whereas in English the statement has moved along the articulation spectrum to “I (do) say that...”. Crucially, the Continental European implicit narrative sentence has the entity corresponding to German *man* as its subject, which can refer to 1st, 2nd or 3rd person, as compared with an obdurate and clearly defined “I” in the English statement. This leads to many and varied difficulties of translation—and communication—into and out of English.

In the early days of the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (Inc), there came a time when the members decided they needed a code of ethics. The task of drafting a code was assigned to two senior members—one French, the other German, but both with an excellent knowledge of English. They eventually came up with a text that began, “All translators must follow the guidelines set out below”, or words to that effect. From many native English



speakers among the membership, this immediately drew the response, “*** Continentals telling us what to do”!

What was the reason for this rather extreme reaction? Presumably we were led astray by the underlying narrative of English as compared with Continental European languages. We native speakers instinctively construed the sentence as “I (do) say that all translators...”, i.e. the writers were personally arrogating themselves authority to tell me what to do, whereas as good Continental Europeans they were merely saying something like *man kann sagen, dass ...*, i.e. “here are some guidelines that apply to all translators”. This explains why “should” and “must” instructions are often better not translated word-for-word from and into English. The statement “passengers should report to the check-in desk ...” generally has to be translated into other languages as “must”. German *sollten* and French *devraient*, for example, would be far too hypothetical and tentative to generate any real sense of obligation. So a strongly individuated background narrative needs a commensurately fuzzy surface expression (the situation in English), whereas the fuzzier *man*-based narrative in Continental European languages allows and requires a more strongly stated obligation on the surface level. This difference in perspective can be rather important for a translator working into English.

I remember the task of producing a German into English translation of a newspaper article on a company that had been less than transparent in its business dealings. At one point there was a paragraph subhead that read *Sie sind ehrlich*. This had duly been translated as “They are honest”—but this clearly conveyed the wrong narrative. In English that would suggest that “I, the writer/reporter, am vouching for their honesty”. But on this occasion the *man* narrative entity was wearing third-person clothes – so the meaning was “someone has said that someone is honest”, and in this context “the directors have claimed to be honest men”. It can just as easily appear in first-person plural garb. In a bilingual Slovene-English brochure in my possession I see the adjectives *nacionalnopolitičen*, *narodnosten*, and *domač* translated as “national” and “domestic”. This is perhaps quite correct in a literal sense, but given the English “I about it” narrative stance, there is an awkward implication of someone else’s “national”, someone else’s “domestic”. This time the narrative standing behind the Slovene text is “someone is talking about something” construed as “**we** are talking about **us**”. It might therefore be preferable to make this “us” focus explicit with phrases such as “Slovenian nationalist”, “Slovenian nationhood agendas”, etc.

But now for a rather more interesting instance of this problem, drawing—rather appropriately in the context of the conference—on an example in Māori, and a similar case from Slovene. A Polish colleague, a teacher of translation theory and practice, once told me that one of the main problems she and her students keep encountering is how to translate the word *człowiek* – cognate with German *der Mensch* – into English. And this is indeed a real problem.

Let us begin with the well-known Māori saying, *He aha te mea nui? Te tangata, te tangata, te tangata*. This translates readily into German as *Was ist denn die Hauptsache? Der Mensch, der Mensch, der Mensch*. And a possible Slovene equivalent is perhaps *Kaj je najbolj pomembno? Človek je, človek je, človek je*. In any event, there would be no problem with translating *te tangata* here into Slovene.

But what are we going to say is the most important thing in English? The usual translation is “it is people, it is people, it is people”, but this tends to suggest having lots of helpers to run around and do things for you—existing people rather than the essential person.

Along the lines of the translation “God bless our Hungarian nation” suggested earlier, one approach might be to introduce some explicit pronouns, as in “you, me and all of us”. To understand why this is a better translation than “God, bless the Hungarian”, we might look again at the implied narrative behind that sentiment. As well as implying reference to a specific flesh-and-blood Hungarian, there was also an implied clearly defined “I” entity behind the statement



– who is not Hungarian. So there is an alienation between the philosophical subject—“I”—and the philosophical object—“the Hungarian”. It was to disable that alienation that it was necessary to resort to the version “God bless our Hungarian nation”. And here, translating *te tangata* into English as “man” or “humans” would carry an awkward implication of the implicit narrator perhaps being an alien or an animal, i.e. not a *tangata*.

But there may be another, more radical, option. I remember watching some television footage of the radical cleric Charles Waldegrave making a submission to a Parliamentary select committee. He quoted this Māori saying, and as he said the words *te tangata, te tangata, te tangata*, he held up a baby in his arms. This might suggest the possibility of translating the phrase as “a baby in its mother’s arms”.

My conclusion from all this is that utterances in Māori, German, and indeed Slovene, originate from somewhere deeper within the speaker than is the case in English – from a place where there is as yet no individuation or differentiation between philosophical subject and philosophical object, between “me” and “the world I perceive and talk about”. This is because of the more fluid *man* entity forming the subject of the implicit narrative sentence.

By the time an actual utterance emerges, there is differentiation between philosophical subject and philosophical object, but only to some extent. Hence the speaker can still be included within what is being spoken about. And therefore the concept of *Mensch*, *človek* and *te tangata* are not problematic in those languages. But English literally “can’t go there”. The baseline narrative in English precludes subject-object identification. So rather than generalising directly, in English we have to follow a strategy of synecdoche, *pars pro toto* (part for all). The phrase “a baby in its mother’s arms” conjures up the concept of humanity as a whole. Whether or not that translation is found convincing, this would appear to be the logic involved in the process here.

For a Slovene example of the same phenomenon, I turn to the book I have been studying to improve my reading knowledge of Slovene. Its title is *Človek – navodila za uporabo*, which readily translates into German as *Der Mensch – eine Betriebsanleitung*. The author, Nara Petrovič, argues that we have lost our way as a species, and need to acknowledge and rediscover our animal nature. His book sets out to provide “user instructions” or an “operating manual” to that end. The work has appeared in English under the title “*Human: Instructions for Use*”—but that seems less than convincing. How might a synecdoche approach work in this case?

Two possible solutions come to mind: “*John (or Mary) Smith: An Operating Manual*”, and “*Homo sapiens 1.0: An Operating Manual*”. I am not necessarily arguing the case for either of these solutions – it’s more the problem that I am interested in.

So what are we left with, and why is it relevant to our discussions today? The argument advanced here might be summarised as follows: in any given human language, there is

- a) a more or less fixed internal or implicit narrative baseline from which utterances originate;
- b) an explicit actual utterance that can be located anywhere downstream from there on the articulation continuum; and
- c) a process of linguistic communication, generated as a transition from a) to b).

This process of linguistic communication can be seen as a human endeavour that entails a degree of effort – but in my view, the narrative baseline in modern English has shifted too far towards the “articulated” end of the spectrum. And that means that English speakers are increasingly unable to generate or deploy the quantum of energy and effort required for vital and effective communication (hence, perhaps, our hesitations and use of fillers such as “you know”,



“sort of” and “like”). We are like high jumpers forced to compete off a shortened run-up. In other words, perhaps English is “running out of steam”.

In contrast, according to this view, a Continental European using English as L2 feels amply energised by the longer distance or trajectory between their baseline point of utterance – which lies much further back – and the overt point of narrative articulation that modern English offers. Hence the greater communicative momentum they are able to generate, and their vital, lively and effective mode of communication.

In 2007, in Ljubljana, there was a remarkable exhibition mounted at the Slovenian National and University Library entitled *Vta slouenski lesig preobernen*, curated by one of our keynote speakers—Nike K. Pokorn. For a beginner learning to read Slovene, this was a truly exciting experience, because right there, in those exhibition cases, were the originals of translations that had played a vital part in stimulating the emergence and ongoing development of Slovene as a literary language.

I believe that L2 utterances—and in particular translations into English as L2—could play a similar role for modern English, as a force for stimulation and revitalisation (particularly given the threat from L0 utterances, in the form of AI-speak and much of the corporate and political jargon we hear all around us).

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