Béatrice COSTA
Université Mons

Review of:
LEAL, Alice (2021): *English and Translation in the European Union. Unity and Multiplicity in the Wake of Brexit*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis. 228 pp. ISBN: 9780367244910

Cognition and Hermeneutics: Convergences in the Study of Translation

Douglas Robinson
[ed.]

2/2022
Yearbook of Translational Hermeneutics
Jahrbuch für Übersetzungshermeneutik

Journal of the Research Center
Zeitschrift des Forschungszentrums

Hermeneutics and Creativity, University of Leipzig
Hermeneutik und Kreativität, Universität Leipzig

DOI: 10.52116/yth.vi2.53

Cite this article:
Costa, Béatrice (2022): „Review of: LEAL, Alice (2021): *English and Translation in the European Union. Unity and Multiplicity in the Wake of Brexit*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis. 228 pp. ISBN: 9780367244910". In: *Yearbook of Translational Hermeneutics* 2, pp. 390–397. DOI: <10.52116/yth.vi2.53>.

den kann (vgl. S. 174). Untermauert wird diese Perspektive durch Hinweise auf einige sich auf die Kulturvermittlung beziehenden Textstellen offizieller Schriften der katholischen Kirche. In einem kurzen Fazit ab S. 179 nehmen die Autoren zusammenfassend Bezug auf den Titel ihres Buches, mit dem sie (kulturelle) Unterschiede als Bereicherung ausweisen, und geben zugleich eine kurze Zusammenfassung ihrer Positionen.

Wie schon eingangs betont, handelt sich bei diesem Werk um eine äußerst lesenswerte Studie, die ein großes Panorama wissenschaftlicher Ansätze mit neuen Ideen fundiert zusammenführt, auf diese Weise viele Perspektiven eröffnet und die Leserschaft neu über Kommunikation in Kulturen nachdenken lässt.

Béatrice COSTA
Université Mons

Review of: LEAL, Alice (2021): *English and Translation in the European Union. Unity and Multiplicity in the Wake of Brexit*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Taylor & Francis. 228 pp. ISBN: 9780367244910.

The European Union speaks many languages. But sometimes only one: the language of Shakespeare, which is also the idiom of 400 other million people. 70 million of them live in the European Union. That is what makes the whole affair so complicated. The EU is in a quite uncomfortable position when it comes to language policy. If it tries to become more anglicised, it will be accused of disregarding its own founding

myth. If it gives in to the demands for more linguistic diversity, it will be blamed for becoming entangled. In a word: Europe should come to a decision once and for all. Or should it not? Could it be that the current status quo is not so wrong? Perhaps Europe should decide not to decide. For once, not deciding would be the best option. Or maybe not?

Created in the aftermath of the Second World War, the "Union" as it is called stands on the one hand for the principle of "integrated multilingualism", which is to be understood in the sense that linguistic diversity is supposed to have a unifying effect and pave the way for more solidarity and mutual understanding.[1] Simultaneously, however, this same Union is torn between the desire to comply with the principle of multilingualism and the de facto use of English. Alice Leal wanted to get to the bottom of this contradiction at a time in her life when she had also other important issues to deal with. Her book *English and translation in the European Union* was, as she explains in the preface, "gestated and born" (p. IX) with her second child. By German standards, this is remarkable, especially when one considers that in Germany only a quarter of full-time professorial positions are held by women and that only a handful of books are completed by pregnant women. Leal has embarked on this adventure, shuttling back and forth between the standing desk and the pregnancy ball, always with the firm intention of finishing the manuscript before the deadlines set by her publisher or by the sometimes quite arbitrary laws of nature. Anyone who completes a book under these conditions has one thing over others: the knowing that the perfect moment does not exist, or rather that the

1 It is an attitude that finds its echo in two articles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights: Article 21 lists language as one of the prohibited grounds for discrimination and Article 22 states that the EU shall respect linguistic diversity.

perfect moment is the present moment, with all its imponderables and inconsistencies.

Leal's work, which has a very topical subtitle (*Unity and multiplicity in the European Union*), deals with language policy in the EU, whose originality lies, as just pointed out, in the principle of "integrated multilingualism" and hence in the confluence between "integral" and "institutional" multilingualism, a position which symbolically expresses respect for the multilingualism of the European populations. However, this principle quickly reaches its limits in practice, and there is often a contradiction between the idea of diversity and pragmatic everyday considerations. Leal notes on this: "As a unique and multifaceted community of communication emerges in the EU, the spillover effects particularly of the EU's language regime—itself a spillover of market forces—become evident" (p. 4–5). Considering these effects, Leal advocates that after the British vote to leave the EU, the English language should be elevated as the so-called "lingua franca". It is a demand that is not without explosive force, as voices have recently been raised in favour of more linguistic diversity. The book *Europa denkt mehrsprachig* (2015) edited by Fritz Nies for example resolutely called for a new language policy in the EU that would break away from the dominance of the English language. It is these voices that are working to ensure that German and French are no longer discriminated against as working languages.[2] With the UK's withdrawal, so the argument, a clear signal has been sent that prohibits English from being established as a single official language.

2 In fact, the German language occupies a comparatively subordinate position in the European institutions. This is the result of a whole bundle of reasons, most of which have to do with the history of the German-speaking countries in the first half of the 20th century and the policies of the Federal Republic of Germany since 1949.

As unlikely as this may seem at first glance, English could lose its status as an official language, and this although the idiom of the author born in the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon has been the most used for institutional communication and is the one that most of the European citizens speak as a second language. Leal grew up in Brazil and learned English not as a mother, but as a second language, a situation familiar to many EU citizens. Anyone who acquires a second language besides the mother tongue, develops a specific relationship to the "overlapping" language which is shaped and influenced by numerous different aspects, conditions, and expectations. The question that Leals wishes to raise is to know whether this relationship is describable, and how the difference to the mother tongue can be grasped conceptually. Let us take a closer look at how she formulates her intention:

> Although I started learning English as a child growing up in Brazil, I have never lived in an English-speaking country or been socialised in it by inner-circle speakers. What is my English then? Should it be associated with standard British English because of my choice of spelling? Should it rather be classified as international English? Or global English? Or English as a lingua franca? (P. 2)

The questions asked here are important hermeneutic questions, precisely because the focus of attention is not the mother tongue but the second language. If one takes seriously the assumption that human beings produce language and are shaped by language, it is of course fascinating to find out to what extent living-bodily beings are shaped by a *second* language. Research literature on the subject is flourishing, although it is noticeable that even recent publications have not arrived at a new definition of the notion "second language". As far as the "mother tongue" is concerned, there seems to be a consensus, at least since the publication of Claus Ahlzweig (2013: 15), that the word is not only an expression of

colloquial language, but equally an expression of language consciousness, a designation of a property of language, of reflection on language. Even though Leal does not refer directly to Ahlzweig's definition, it is interesting to note that her concept of second language hardly differs from his notion of "mother tongue"; she too is convinced that the second language implies "language consciousness", a historically not necessarily fixed property of language.

Leal's view even goes a bit further when she says that English as a second language benefits from the multiple interferences to which it is exposed due to the constant influences of other languages. Whereas the comparative stylistics has so far endeavoured to regard interference as an evil to be eradicated in order to achieve a language free of linguistic impurities, Leals concludes that language contact phenomena represent an immeasurable opportunity for English in particular. The term "interference" comes from physics, or more precisely from wave theory, and refers to phenomena of wave trains that meet and overlap at a common location. In the relevant secondary literature, the concept is defined via different ways of approaches. The classic view is that of Brigitte Lüllwitz (1972), according to which "interference" is the result of a mixture of languages, because it is the product of the mutual influence of two languages. Leal is in the tradition of Behaviourisms, which states that the acquisition of the second language is primarily conceived as a *projection* of the patterns of the first language.[3] Identity or similarity between patterns would thus lead to positive transfer in second language acquisition, as opposed to negative transfer or interference.

3 Leal's style, by the way, is the best proof that the English language actually benefits from the projections of other languages. Despite the complexity of the content, she takes the reader by the hand and gently introduces him or her to her trains of thought.

In her opinion, a purely correct language does not exist; rather, following Jacques Derrida, she assumes a decentration, a discontinuous restructuring of language in the infinite game of signifying. In the horizon of the famous "différance" concept Leal undertakes an attempt to redefine the relationship between linguistic diversity and linguistic unity. Based on the conviction of the French philosopher, she concludes that the struggle against extremism leads again to new extremism; therefore, new patterns of thinking are required, which will be moving from destruction to deconstruction. Only in this way the logic of pure negation comes to a standstill and the old dualism between unity and diversity merges into a higher unity, into an intermediate realm where the old opposites are not felt as opposites. It is no longer a question of asking oneself whether one or the other should be striven for, it is rather a question of realising both at the same time: Unity *and* diversity, diversity *and* unity as two mutually dependent entities. The search for the higher compromise results in Lead's case to a "transcultural turn"; by this notion she understands an EU "more capable of intercomprehension", a body of states that allows us to "keep our individuality while taking a step towards others, who, in turn, get to keep their otherness" (p. 128).

A further justification for Leal's view is given in the founding treaties of the EU, and it is indeed true that from the very beginning, with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, both principles, unity and diversity, were present. Since the European Union began to exist, the balance between these two principles has had to be constantly redefined, and those who attempted to move the pendulum one-sidedly in one direction endangered the state of agreement that has been reached. For only in this balancing lies the prospect of deriving benefit and advantages from the com-

munity for each member state. If the pendulum swings too far in one direction or the other, then all countries are thrown back on their national interests, and the community falls apart again into a disjointed entity of nations. This would set Europe back decades and endanger its political future. The dilemma between unity and diversity can therefore—as Leal rightly points out—only be resolved by strengthening both principles. Unity must be strengthened through targeted reinforcement of the English language, and the principle of diversity must be supported through concrete actions. These concrete actions would include the creation of an EU Agency for Linguistic Diversity.

Leal's book has given me, who grew up with two languages (German and French), surprising insights into my own bilingualism. Bilingualism needs to be cultivated, otherwise there is a danger that one language will dominate the other. I have always seen English as a foreign language, as a tool to get in touch with others who do not speak French or German, and as a language of science, as many articles in the linguistic field are nowadays written in English. Nevertheless, it has often frustrated me not to have in English the same possibilities of expression as in German or French. I learned through Leal that there is a different perspective to be taken: in fact, using English is not about the one language spoken and reinvented by Shakespeare, but about a fascinating projection surface into which certain patterns of the mother tongues can be extrapolated. In this respect, even languages that are perceived as foreign languages contribute to identity formation. The so-called second language, which in my case is the third language, is more than a communication tool; as projection surface of the mother tongue(s) it has a subject-creating function. If I had not read Leal's book, I would never have had the idea of writing a journal contribution in English.

On the bottom line, it looks like I owe quite a lot not only to Shakespeare but also and above all to Leal.

References

AHLZWEIG, Claus (2013): *Muttersprache – Vaterland: Die deutsche Nation und ihre Sprache*. Berlin: Julius Springer.

LÜLLWITZ, Brigitte (1972): *Interferenz und Transferenz. Aspekte einer Theorie lingualen Kontaktes*. Hildesheim: Olms.

NIES, Fritz [ed.] (2015): *Europa denkt mehrsprachig*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.

Adriana ŞERBAN
Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3

Review of: MALMKJÆR, Kirsten (2019): *Translation and Creativity*. London / New York: Routledge. 130 pp. ISBN: 9781138123274.

A book authored by Kirsten Malmkjær is a reason to celebrate. That this should be so is obvious to anyone who has familiarised himself or herself with Malmkjær's work in translation over the last three decades or more, and is aware of her contribution to the discipline—a contribution which has often involved showcasing other scholars' work and limiting writing and public speaking to those instances where she felt there was something she absolutely had to say. And this strikes me as the ethical thing to do. Clearly, for Malmkjær, writing is never a contrived exercise signalling conformity to external demands and temptations, but the natural outcome of a process of inquiry which started, in each case, because