

# TRANSLATING CHANGE

In April, Ann Pattison gave a talk on the recently published book *Translating Change: Enhanced Practical Skills for Translators*, written by herself and Stella Cragie. **Abigail Harby** reports

**T**ranslating change' – the concept seems both simple and yet simultaneously intangible. If something has changed, or is different, then surely you just use the new term, phrase, or idea? But how can we communicate something that we don't have a word for?

It is precisely this conundrum that Ann Pattison and Stella Cragie attempt to help all linguists resolve with their new book, *Translating Change: Enhanced Practical Skills for Translators*.

The LRG's April event was hosted by one of the authors herself, Ann Pattison, with her co-author Stella Cragie sitting in on the event. Ann did an amazing job of encouraging us all to consider the changes we, and the world in general, have experienced recently, and the impact of this on language.

Two weeks after the release of their second book, *Translation: A Guide to the Practice of Crafting Target Texts* (2019), the pandemic confined us to the (dis)comfort of our homes for the first time. Upon the realisation that we were

and are living in an ever-changing world, Ann recalls how she and Stella decided to investigate what impact these changes have on language.

### New concepts

Whether it's a brand-new idea, phenomenon, concept, or invention, or one that's been adapted from an existing notion, we still need to be able to talk about it.

With participants joining the event from all over the world, the variety of people from such diverse geographic and professional backgrounds provided insightful realisations.

In their book, Ann and Stella mention attitudinal changes on topics such as gay rights, racial equality, gender awareness, and working from home.

One participant cited the fact that there is a café in Japan (and apparently also one in London!) to help those now working from home (WFH) to continue to be productive. Upon entering the café, you must disclose what work you plan to do, and then

update the café employees on your progress upon leaving. This concept of accountability for the WFH crowd would have been almost unimaginable pre-pandemic.

Next, we discussed changes in the environment and health sectors surrounding global warming, the pandemic, and the growth in vegetarianism and veganism. It seems a more holistic approach to health has grown in popularity recently, with one attendee noting that the pandemic has also made people more in tune with themselves and nature.

### Political changes

We also discussed the impact of political changes on language. It was news to me that the French Revolution led to the months of the year being renamed; similarly, the rise of fascism in Italy resulted in a whole host of new Italian footballing terms being created to avoid using the English equivalents. More recently, we have seen the creation of new terms due to Brexit.

The focus throughout the book is on how change is reflected in

language. Some examples included ways language has adapted to be more inclusive, such as the BBC hosting a webinar for sports commentators on how to avoid racial bias. Gender-neutral language is another example: the use of the singular pronoun 'they' in English; the pronoun 'xier' or gender asterisks in German; the pronoun 'iel' in French; or the new neutral endings '-e' and '-es' (instead of the usual '-o(s)' and '-a(s)') for nouns in Spanish.

### New meanings

Changes may also appear in the form of new words, or in existing words that take on new meanings. The pandemic has inspired many new terms, including 'quarantini', (a lockdown Martini), and 'coronapéro' (socially distanced drinks enjoyed with family and friends). Equally, some vocabulary that has long been in existence has only recently become common coinage, such as 'PPE'.

Stella's focus was the development of various models to help with the process of identifying change. Analyses of six English texts – on the topics of culture, politics and society, the environment, working life, young adult fiction, and technology – are presented alongside comments from professionals.

A 'how-to' chapter offers useful translation strategies. Texts of general commercial/academic interest have been translated by linguists in the following language combinations: English>French; German>English; Italian>English; Spanish>English. These are presented with the translator's comments, explaining how they dealt with new or repurposed language.

While the models and strategies were Stella's brainchild, Ann concentrated on offering a more practical aspect in the form of career-related advice. First, she outlined the transferable skills that language professionals need, categorising these as analytical skills (such as editing, revision, summary-writing, and research), and creative skills (such as copywriting, transcreation, content marketing, and subtitling).

Having discussed some of these skills, Ann then tasked attendees with carrying out a skills audit – a very useful and incredibly important assignment, particularly for those struggling to find work.

### Skills audit

This skills audit should assess existing, potential, and any transferable skills. You should ask yourself about your language skills, specialist areas, layout/formatting skills, writing skills, your ability to work remotely, and the required technology. In doing so, it's important to think outside the box.

For instance, is there a language you learned in childhood that you could brush up on? Do you have a hobby or an interest in an up-and-coming sport for which you could develop a glossary and expand your knowledge? Or perhaps you have a relative or friend with a specialist interest; after all, experts love for people to pick their brains. Find a niche that can be your USP.

Ann also strongly suggested a CPD plan based on what you have identified in your skills audit, as well as focusing on your short-term and long-term professional goals.

Finally, to help readers progress their careers, the book's 'Secrets

of Success' chapter offers advice from experts on how you can move upmarket. Ann interviewed more than 20 language professionals asking for their top tips, which are all collated in the book.

As the event drew to a close, participants were left to reflect on what change means for the work of a professional linguist. As change is all around us and constant, it is vital to keep abreast of developments in our specialist fields, as well as considering strategies for enhancing our comprehension skills to help identify said changes.

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