

## Necessary Borders for Negotiation: The Role of Translation

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Translation is usually deemed to help bridge gaps. The analogy between such gaps and borders, be they those of countries or of other geopolitical entities, immediately springs to mind, albeit implicitly or subconsciously. The analogy with “the borders of languages and cultures” (Pym, “Globalization” 746) is even more self-evident, since translation is considered to occur between languages and cultures rather than between geopolitical entities. In this article, borders will be understood as both a social construct that defines how people identify with different social positions—involving individuals as well as groups—and the political outcome of such a construct, structuring human society into countries, regions and other entities.

Translation is not, however, generally thought of as a means of strengthening or, at least, highlighting such borders. Translation scholars are aware of this role, as Sherry Simon shows: “as a process of hybridization, a bringing together of two previously separated things, translation constantly plays with borders, threatening or confirming them” (139), but translation users are generally oblivious of this dual function.

The aim of the present article is to use the example of translations<sup>2</sup> involving the Breton language in order to show that translation may favour negotiation, then, by both helping negotiators to understand each other and having them recognize the social border that makes them different. I shall first of all explain my understanding of borders and negotiation. Secondly, the case of translation from and into Breton will be examined in detail. And in the third and last section, the discussion will be extended to the European institutions, where European language policy—heavily reliant on translation—also illustrates the dual function of translation in negotiation.

### 1. Borders and Negotiation

‘Borders’ and ‘negotiation’ are words that can be used with very different meanings and the concepts are certainly interrelated. Geopolitical borders, for example, are the focus of many political negotiations and renegotiations that may be more or less peaceful. The news from all over the world is a constant reminder of the relation between both concepts. If one considers the social borders that separate individuals or groups of human societies, negotiation is never very far either, because such borders are always moving. So, before describing the examples of the Breton demand for translation and the role of translation in the European language policy, these core concepts will be defined here in relation to translation.

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<sup>1</sup> I am deeply indebted to Daniel Toudic for his significant contribution to the revision of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this article, the term “translation” will include different tasks such as interpretation, revision, terminography, etc. performed by those who enable interlocution between two parties using different languages, regardless of the type of “texts” they are called upon to deal with (speeches, terms, phrases, etc.) and the form of these “texts” (written, oral, audiovisual, etc.).

### 1.1. *Borders as a Process of Social Division*

In the introduction of his recent *Theory of the Border*, Thomas Nail, after listing numerous types of borders in our world today, accepts the definition of the border as “a process of social division” (2). Such a definition entails four consequences that are of interest to our discussion:

1. The border is in between (2-5).
2. The border is in motion (5-7).
3. The border is a process of circulation (7-8).
4. The border is not reducible to space (9).

The parallel with translation is quite striking:

1. Pym explains at length that translators belong to intercultural communities, that they do not necessarily belong to one side or the other (see *Pour une éthique*, especially 14, 40).
2. By considering intercultural communities, Pym also associates translation with people’s movements (39), which bring about translation needs. Translation itself is sometimes described as a movement *per se* and as a facilitator of people’s motion (Cronin, *Across the Lines* 118).
3. Translation, just like borders, “cannot be properly understood in terms of inclusion and exclusion, but only by circulation” (Nail 7): translations do not simply replace an original text—that they exclude—with a translated one. Most of the time, they do not replace everything foreign in the original text with concepts, notions and words all familiar to the reader of the translated text: they actually ensure that foreign ideas, images and concepts, circulate within other cultures and are made available to other audiences.
4. Translations cannot be reduced to a material dimension any more than borders can be. They are much more easily associated with the “social divisions” that societies and “cultures” stand for, than with countries or any other geopolitical entity. One of the main features of a translation is the language combination: when a translated novel is published, the inside cover usually specifies from which language it was translated, not its country or area of origin.

It is quite clear from Nail’s introduction that borders exist, sometimes in very concrete forms (walls, fences, etc.), but they are above all the result of a mental construct that societies need as they move, trade, think and exchange. They are an abstract elaboration, then, before being materialized in varied forms, on a map, between countries or gardens, etc.

In Mediation theory, the dialectic anthropological model defined at Université de Haute-Bretagne (Rennes 2 University) by Gagnepain and other theoreticians, human society can only exist insofar as the sense of belonging to the human species implies both an analysis of singularity *and* an attempt to communicate. Gagnepain thus stated in his introductory lessons: “we spend

our time trying to breach the ditches that we have dug ourselves. We negotiate only because we have set up borders” (42).<sup>3</sup>

Borders are therefore established by a dual process of singularization and negotiation. They appear to consist first and foremost of social and psychological divisions, which seems to justify Balibar’s assertion, writing about borders as the non-democratic condition of democratic institutions, that borders are “accepted, or even sanctified and internalized” (175).<sup>4</sup> Mediation theory invites us to observe, however, how necessary they are for negotiation to take place at all.

## 1.2. *Negotiation: Overcoming Social Borders*

In Mediation theory, communication is an exchange of diverging abstract analyses. This process has been considered as such in translation studies too, when scholars speak for example of “the negotiation of meaning between producers and receivers of texts” (Hatim & Mason 3). What Gagnepain said is that difference is absolutely essential for communication: if people think and speak in exactly the same terms, they do not have anything to talk about. “Negotiation” then becomes synonymous with “conversation”: what people negotiate every time is their different use of language and their different views on the world and life they share.

But the analysis remains valid for a more traditional understanding of negotiation, as a political action: if diplomats agree from the start, they may as well return home, for there is no need for negotiators. Meaning is not the only thing, then, that needs to be negotiated in social intercourse. More specific definitions of negotiation as a form of communication can thus be found in the literature. Zartman writes: “Negotiation is the process of combining of divergent/conflicting positions through communication into a joint decision” (9). Thuderoz also explained that negotiation is conducted between interdependent subjects who “struggle to impart different orientations to the *vivre ensemble* that both brings them together and divides them” (280).<sup>5</sup> Bellenger expressed the same idea saying that “negotiation may be considered as a practice aiming at reducing a gap or strengthening an agreement, while endeavouring to preserve a mutually accepted *différence*” (9).<sup>6</sup>

In each negotiation, then, existing differences are first assessed, as abstract and immediate as the process may be, so that each negotiator may know where to set the boundary between himself/herself and his or her counterpart. They can thus decide to acknowledge the latter as a valid negotiator and to engage in the resolution of the divergences or disagreements that bring them together. This, by no means, implies that they will try to resolve *all* their differences, if difference is understood as an essential characteristic of social intercourse.

Both Bellenger and Thuderoz mention psychological components of negotiation that are relevant to the present discussion. According to Thuderoz, “the choice of negotiation entails an assessment of costs”<sup>7</sup> that cannot possibly be comprehensive since negotiation may involve

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<sup>3</sup> The original, a transcription of series of lectures, reads: “nous passons notre temps à sauter par dessus les fossés que nous avons nous-mêmes creusés. Nous ne négocions que parce que nous avons posé des frontières.” (This translation and all those that follow are mine.)

<sup>4</sup> The original is: “acceptées, voire sanctifiées et intériorisées”.

<sup>5</sup> My translation of the French: “luttent pour imprimer des orientations différentes à un vivre-ensemble qui les rassemble et les divise.”

<sup>6</sup> The original reads: “la négociation peut être considérée comme une pratique visant à réduire un écart ou renforcer un accord, tout en travaillant à préserver une *différence* mutuellement acceptée” (the author’s emphasis).

<sup>7</sup> The original is: “le choix de la négociation se traduit par un calcul de coûts”.

“hidden costs or benefits [such as] recognition of self, collective learning, legitimacy enhancement” (118).<sup>8</sup> He also considers “a relatively symmetrical power relationship” as one of the “minimal conditions” of negotiation (117).

As for Bellenger, he asserts that “negotiation inevitably gives rise to some *tension*” and that “everyone is aware of the emotional dimension of negotiation” (28-29; the author’s emphasis).<sup>10</sup> He provides an explanation a few pages later when he gives examples of what may be at stake in a negotiation, such as reputation and individual liberty (both qualified as “essential”), or established advantages, a social distinction (qualified as “secondary”). He also mentions the consideration that negotiators have for each other as one of the parameters that define the type of negotiation that will take place, as well as the quality of their communication, that amounts to: “a way of asserting oneself and defending one’s values, aggressiveness, attentiveness, tolerance, intelligibility of the messages, efforts to make oneself clear and one’s meaning accepted, ability to reason, influence, convince, explain...” (38-39).<sup>11</sup>

The importance of language here is obvious and it can be deduced from this list that the second requirement for effective negotiation, besides the acknowledgment of differences, is that negotiators feel at ease in the language they use. They should be proficient in it in order to achieve the goals that have been set by their side in the negotiation, which will depend, more often than not, on the quality of their communication with their counterparts. However, neither Bellenger nor Thuderoz mentions the case of multilingual negotiations.

Such negotiations are quite frequent, if not omnipresent, in the European Union. In discussing the English language in Europe, Chaudenson wrote that “in the work of European bodies, many non-native English speakers listening to the proceedings without the simultaneous interpreting suddenly pick their headphones up when native English speakers speak out” (145).<sup>12</sup> So, if non-native English speakers do not feel comfortable when *listening* to native speakers, it is obviously all the more difficult for them when they have to negotiate with native speakers in English in situations that may become tense and emotional. Grin expresses this very clearly:

Even if non-English speakers strive to learn English, very few of them reach the level that would guarantee equality compared to native English speakers, whether it be in relation to comprehension, to expression in public debates, or in negotiation and conflict.  
(7)<sup>13</sup>

In the European Union, then, English could be the language of negotiation, as long as it does not include any native speaker of English. It is consistent with the need for a symmetrical

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<sup>8</sup> Originally: “coûts cachés, ou des avantages masqués [tels que] reconnaissance de soi, apprentissage collectif, gain de légitimité”.

<sup>9</sup> In the original French: “une relation de pouvoir relativement symétrique”.

<sup>10</sup> My translation of: “la négociation est toujours l’objet d’une *tension*” and “La dimension émotionnelle de la négociation n’échappe à personne”.

<sup>11</sup> The original reads: “manière de s’affirmer et de défendre son propre système de valeurs, agressivité, niveau d’écoute, tolérance, intelligibilité des messages énoncés, effort pour se faire comprendre et accepter, aptitudes à raisonner, influencer, convaincre, exposer...”.

<sup>12</sup> My translation of: “dans les travaux des instances européennes, bien des participants, non anglophones natifs, qui suivent les débats sans recours à la traduction simultanée, saisissent soudain leurs écouteurs quand un anglophone natif prend la parole”.

<sup>13</sup> The original excerpt is: “Même si les non-anglophones font l’effort d’apprendre la langue anglaise, ils n’arrivent pas, sauf exception, au degré de maîtrise qui garantit l’égalité face aux anglophones de naissance : égalité face à la compréhension, égalité face à la prise de parole dans un débat public, égalité dans la négociation et le conflit”.

power relationship noted by Thuderoz. But even if this was possible, would it be an entirely satisfactory solution? Before answering this question, I will examine the case of a minority language, Breton, and how translation affects both the language and its users.

## 2. Why Translate from or into Breton?

Although it was not true half a century ago, all Breton speakers nowadays also speak French:

It is significant that so little is translated nowadays from Breton into French or from Occitan into French. This is due to the fact that Breton speakers also speak French in France and [...] [are] partially assimilated since they share the same language. (Peeters 195-196)<sup>14</sup>

The risks of misunderstandings between Breton and non-Breton speakers are therefore no greater than with monolingual French speakers. Translation from Breton to French could then be seen to contribute to “[drawing] lines between languages and [maintaining] differences between cultures” (Pym, *Negotiating the Frontier* 211), and it would almost sound absurd, then, to implement translation in this socio-linguistic context.

Yet, although translation involving the Breton language remains marginal in terms of volume—because it is aimed at a relatively small number of people—the demand for such services seems to be on the increase.

### 2.1. Sociolinguistic Data on Breton

Breton is a Celtic language, akin to Welsh and Cornish, that has been historically spoken in the Western part of Brittany (France). According to the 2008 TMO Régions survey, it can be estimated that it is spoken nowadays by fewer than 200,000 speakers (F. Broudic). At the time this survey was conducted, the figures equated to 4.69% of the Breton population and it seemed clear from the speakers’ age data that their number would keep on decreasing. Surprisingly enough, the same polling institute found that the proportion of Breton speakers was around 6% in 2014 (TMO Régions & BCD).

In any case, the figures remain very low compared to the estimated million or so speakers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the prospects are dim: according to UNESCO, the language is “severely endangered”.<sup>15</sup> The main explanation is that more than 70% of the speakers are over 60 years-old (F. Broudic). The fact that Breton is now taught in bilingual schools all over Brittany makes little difference to the language’s prospects: very few of these 15,000 children who get some teaching of and in the language actually become Breton speakers in their adult life. Indeed, Baron and Le Ruyet estimate that there may only be 200 teenagers able to use Breton by the time they complete their secondary studies.<sup>16</sup> The increasing number of bilingual children cannot explain the small increase in the 2014 survey mentioned above for the same reason.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The original is: “Il n’est pas anodin que l’on traduise si peu, à l’heure actuelle, du breton en français ou de l’occitan en français. C’est que les bretonnants parlent aussi français sur le territoire français et [...] [sont] partiellement assimilé[s] puisqu’il[s] partagent[nt] aussi notre langue”.

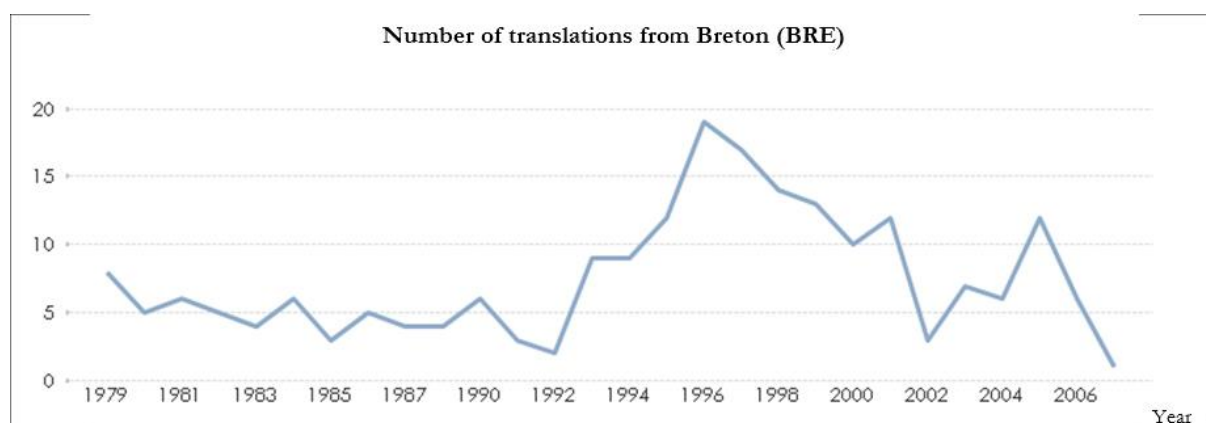
<sup>15</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>, accessed on 26 April 2016.

<sup>16</sup> See the presentation of their book, *Tan ba’n ti 2*, on the abp.bzh website: <https://abp.bzh/la-verite-sur-la-situation-de-la-langue-bretonne-quel-avenir-pour-elle--36331>, accessed on 2 February 2017.

<sup>17</sup> The difference is not statistically significant. These figures are only meant to give readers a general overview of the Breton sociolinguistic situation.

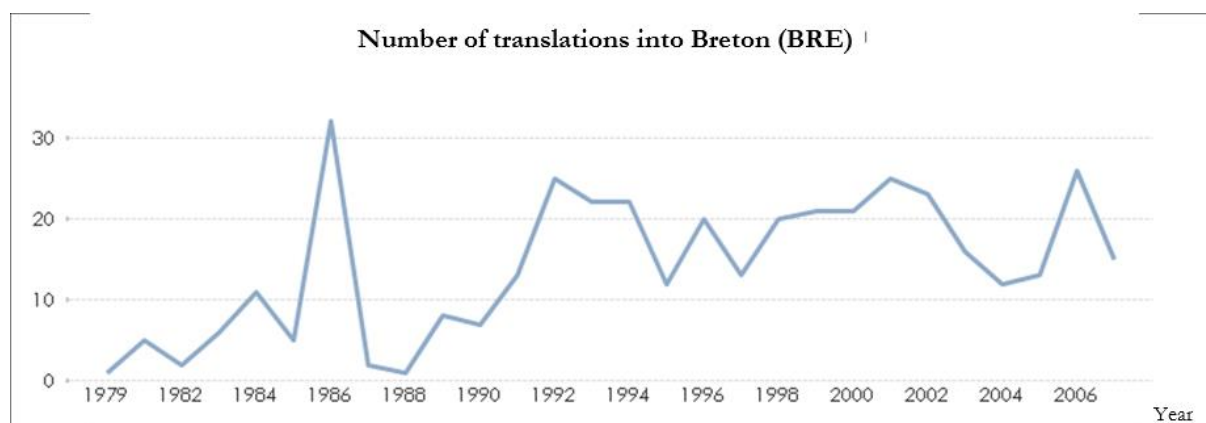
## 2.2. Data on Breton Translation

In spite of the sociolinguistic situation, translations out of and into Breton have continued to be produced in recent years. The statistics maintained by UNESCO for published translations<sup>18</sup> show that the quantities are small and vary greatly from one year to the next:



**Figure 1** – Number of published translations from Breton

Of these translations, 70.28 % are into French, with German (11.32%) and English (6.60%) far behind as target languages.



**Figure 2** – Number of published translations into Breton

Translations into Breton are still predominantly from French (55.53%), but English is the second most important source language with 14.25%, followed by Welsh (9.34%).

Literature is the main subject in the UNESCO database, as the following table for all languages shows:

Subject	Number of translations
Applied Sciences	258,307

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO, *Index Translationum*, [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=7810&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7810&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html), accessed on 2 February 2017.



Arts, Games, Sport	143,344
Generalities, Bibliography...	28,365
History, Geography, Biography	164,002
Law, Social Sciences, Education	212,245
Literature	1,118,694
Natural and Exact Sciences	87,461
Philosophy, Psychology	137,698
Religion, Theology	151,251
Other	261

This is also true for Breton, as the following table highlights for all the translations in the UNESCO database:

Subject	Translations from BR	Translations into BR
Applied Sciences	3	6
Arts, Games, Sport	9	14
Generalities, Bibliography...		1
History, Geography, Biography	12	30
Law, Social Sciences, Education	16	13
Literature	166	206
Natural and Exact Sciences	1	16
Philosophy, Psychology		2
Religion, Theology	7	17

However, it should be noted that translating for publication is—or was, at least, until recently—mainly an amateur activity. Translations ordered by the TES<sup>19</sup> publishing house, which is part of the State school system and works for the region's bilingual classes, are paid, often by paying overtime hours to the occasional translators when they are also teachers employed by the same institution.<sup>20</sup> The data for the most recent years, lacking in the charts above and in the *Index Translationum*, would be likely to show an increase in literary translations since the Public Office for the Breton Language (*Ofis publik ar brezhoneg*, or OPAB) launched a programme aimed at helping publishers have major works of world literature translated into Breton, thanks to subsidies that cover most of the translators' wages.

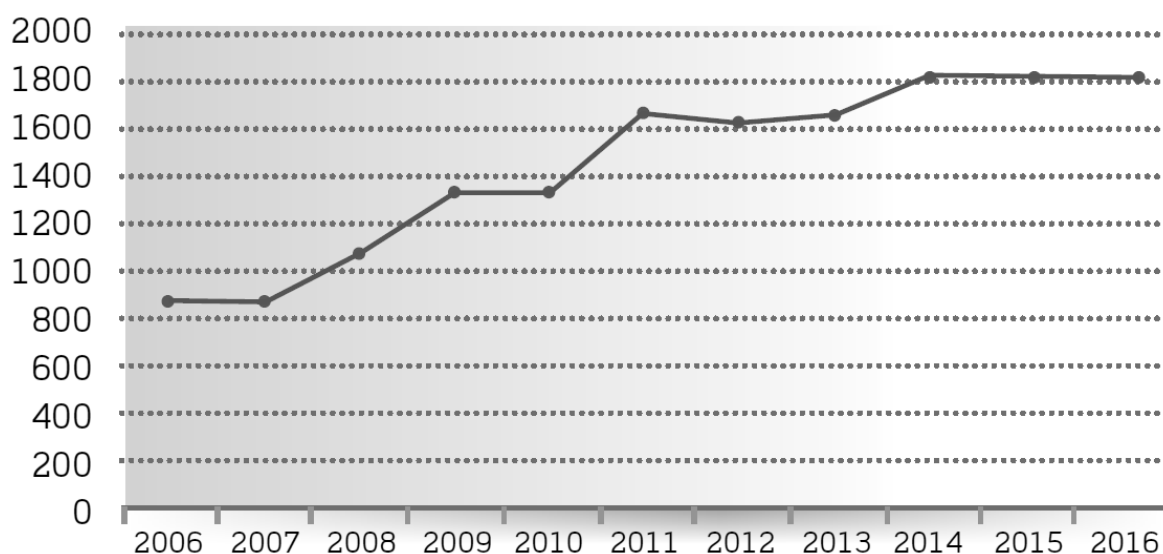
This programme is only a small part of the work that the OPAB carries out. The Office for the Breton Language was created in 1999 and has been offering linguistic services ever since to all kinds of entities as well as to individuals. It is organized into five services: a development agency that tries to develop the use of the Breton language in every field of public life (first with

<sup>19</sup> Ti-Embann ar Skolioù (Breton educational publisher).

<sup>20</sup> Phone interview with Kristof Nikolaz, director of TES, on 15 March 2017.

private companies and associations, now mainly with municipalities to open new schools); an observatory that carries out regular studies and surveys on the language; a “heritage” service that works mainly on toponyms and anthroponyms; a terminology service; and the translation service. In 2010, the association became a public entity co-financed by the French State, the Regional Council of Brittany and the five *départements* of the historical Brittany province, including the Loire-Atlantique *département* (although the latter is no longer in Brittany administratively speaking).

Thanks to the work of this organization, it can be said with absolute certainty that more and more technical translations are being carried out professionally into Breton. The best evidence of this trend is the number of translation projects ordered to the OPAB:



**Figure 3** – Number of translation orders sent to the Public Office for the Breton Language (Source: Ofis publik ar brezhoneg 14).

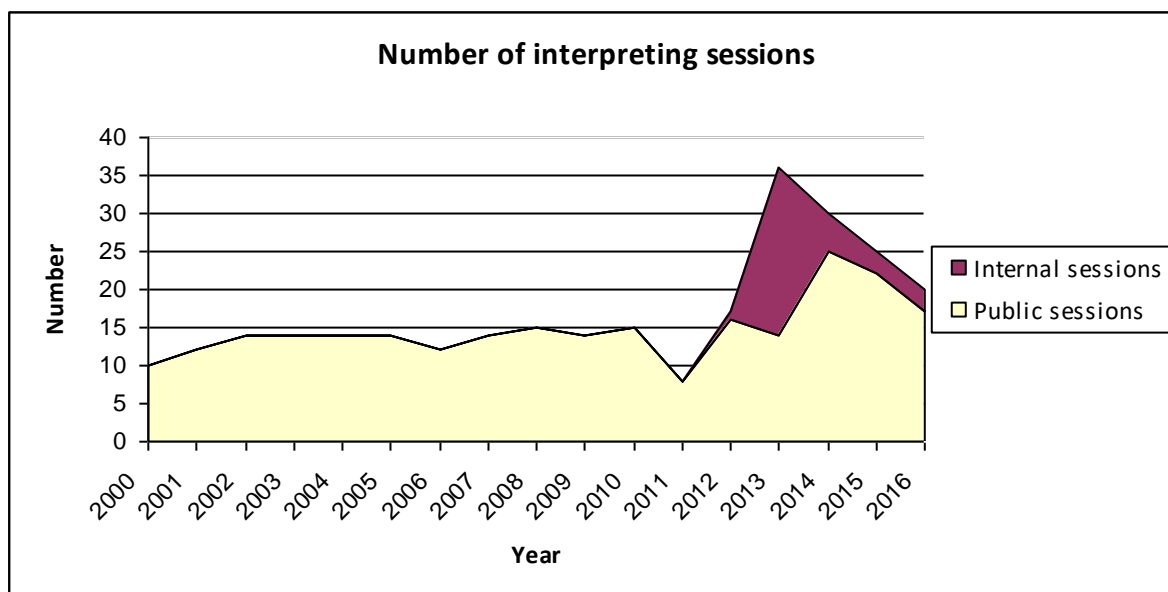
These professional translations are carried out by a team of at least six full-time agents in the translation and terminology services: four full-time translators, a full-time reviewer, a full-time terminologist and the head of the “language” department who also translates, reviews and works on the terminology. There are other professional translators too, besides those already mentioned, some working in audiovisual companies, others working freelance for the same sector or others.

Another noticeable increase in translation services can be observed in the demand for interpretation. In the regional institutions, for example, there was one meeting per year where speakers could choose to express themselves in Breton between 2001 and 2009, while interpreters have been called upon for four meetings a year since 2009.<sup>21</sup> Simultaneous interpretation is systematically provided at the meetings of the “Cultural Council,” a former association that was converted into a consultative body of the Brittany Regional Council. It may also be provided in other meetings of the Regional Council itself or of other consultative bodies.

<sup>21</sup> Personal phone interview with Sten Charbonneau, freelance interpreter for the regional institutions, on 2 November 2015.



Despite this increase, very few professional interpreters work from and into Breton. Two of them work regularly for the regional institutions; another has not practiced for some years. Two other interpreters launched the service in 2012 mainly in the Morbihan area, especially around Auray. The following chart shows the evolution of the number of interpreting sessions conducted by four interpreters from 2000 to 2016, including some sessions involving interpreters working for regional institutions. It distinguishes “public sessions”—that is, simultaneous interpretation offered for activities (conferences, guided tours or walks, etc.) open to anyone—from “internal sessions”, when it is offered for meetings that only include invited persons, some of whom may not speak Breton.



**Figure 4** – Number of interpreting sessions from 2012 to 2016

The decrease in internal sessions is due to one of the interpreters moving from the Morbihan to Brittany’s capital city (Rennes), and the other, having become president of the association, is no longer available to provide interpretation during the meetings. Public sessions have also decreased compared to 2014. This can be explained by the fact that most of these public interpreted activities are organized by associations and their voluntary contributors. Their number therefore depends on the programme they themselves define, which may involve a varying number of sessions and include activities that may be organized only in Breton. The recent fall-off in interpreted sessions shows, in any case, that demand remains inconsistent. Although, for some of the recent activities where interpretation was offered, especially those devoted to nature and gardening, it was very clear that the service enabled the associations to attract twice as many participants.

### 2.3. *Tentative Explanations*

In the quotation at the beginning of section 2, Peeters stated that Breton interlocutors were “partially assimilated” because they also speak French. But how do they feel about this assimilation? We could say that Breton speakers *decided* to stop passing on their own language to the next generation, but it would be fair to say that this decision was forced upon them, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. According to Abalain: “For many Breton speakers, during the war

years, their mother tongue was felt to be a handicap and they were careful not to pass that on to their children” (213).<sup>22</sup>

Many factors concurred, indeed, in encouraging them to make this choice not so much for themselves as for their children: hostile official government policy, which was implemented in particular through the state school system; the First World War, which killed so many men and left hundreds of thousands of others deeply traumatized, and unable to express their own feelings (J.-Y. Broudic); and finally, poverty, which appeared to be more easily avoidable with a good command of the dominant language.

But there has been a reverse move since the 1970s, when Celtic music came to be fashionable. The Breton language and culture have become an urban phenomenon and are now claimed as part of the Bretons’ personality, history, and heritage. This move to reclaim an original identity can now also be observed at the political level. Although the “Red Caps” protest movement in 2013-2014 was largely circumstantial and covered a very wide range of different expectations, regional autonomy and singularity were central to it. The movement was ignited by the decision of the French government to impose a new tax on road transport. Many transport companies settled in Brittany decades ago because four-lane roads were free, contrary to highways everywhere else in France, and it was therefore especially important that they would remain so to keep such companies and their related jobs in the region. The claims of the movement were soon extended to other subjects and it was nicknamed the “Red Caps” movement from a rebellion that took place in Brittany in 1675 because of new taxes too.

Bretons therefore seem determined to resist assimilation and this can be seen in both political and cultural domains. The issue of language and the increasing demand for translation can be seen as a manifestation of this resistance. Although (or perhaps because) the number of Breton speakers is falling, resistance to assimilation proves stronger or seems to adopt different forms.

The question that springs to mind, therefore, is: how do Bretons cope with this “unassimilated” part of their identity? In social intercourse, any resistance to assimilation would have no value whatsoever if it were not perceptible by their interlocutors. Hence, there exists a need to have it acknowledged: to experience and cultivate the differences; to draw the linguistic and cultural border. In the case examined here, the difference is essentially sociolinguistic and Breton speakers can highlight their difference by using their language in any situation.

Translation answers these two needs:

- by making non-speakers of Breton aware of the language difference;
- by enabling Breton speakers to experience all sorts of activities in their “home language”<sup>23</sup> without necessarily leaving non-Breton speakers to one side.

This is exactly what happens when interpretation is provided for debates that are organized during public events such as the Lorient Interceltic Festival: Breton speakers can debate all kinds of subjects in their own language, for both a Breton-speaking and a non-Breton-

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<sup>22</sup> The original reads: “Pour de nombreux bretonnants, leur langue maternelle a été, pendant ces années de guerre, un handicap qu’ils se garderont bien de transmettre à leurs enfants.”

<sup>23</sup> I suggest the phrase “home language” to describe the language that people choose and feel “at home” with, although it may not be their mother tongue.

speaking audience. The latter can then acknowledge the linguistic difference and still take part in the events. Outsiders can also be made aware of this difference. When such debates are organized at the Lorient Interceltic Festival, casual listeners may even be more numerous than the actual audience: the debates take place under an open tent, where the audience sit in deckchairs, while many people pass by in the alleyway behind to attend the “solidarity village”, where they find games and commercial stands. These passers-by do not come to listen to or take part in the debates in Breton (they do not ask for headphones to hear the simultaneous interpretation), but they usually identify the Breton language or, at least, that this language is neither French nor English.

In “internal” meetings as defined in the previous section, interpretation enables Breton speakers to use their chosen language, even though some of the other participants do not speak the language. Thus, they contribute to its development by speaking, where appropriate, of accounts, legal matters, or any other subject that may be relevant to the meeting in question (ar Rouz, “Troomp” 34-35). The situation is very interesting for translation theory because, given that French is the dominant language that Breton speakers also master (and their level of French is likely to be higher), they may be looking for or forging translations from French for the terms they need to use. This kind of auto-translation (Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 154) produces utterances which might seem quite strange to non-Breton speakers, if the Breton speakers include borrowings from French or interrupt to ask other Breton speakers for terminology; but it reinforces the language that makes them distinct from non-Breton speakers and highlights the differences.

Diglossia is in fact very strong in Brittany. To my knowledge, there are no longer any monolingual speakers of Breton, and most native speakers are old, have not spoken the language for decades or use it only on rare occasions. In any case, these native speakers have not been educated in their mother tongue. Younger speakers are generally literate, but this does not mean that they will be more aware of the Breton vocabulary or terminology than the French one, for any given field.

Of course, when Breton speakers already know the vocabulary they need to discuss specific subjects in the meetings they take part in, they do not need to mentally translate anything from French. However, by choosing to speak in Breton, they contribute to the development of the language by using the terms they deem appropriate in context and disseminating them to Breton speakers who may not yet be familiar with them. They therefore find themselves in the previously described situation of dual translation, i.e. (silent) auto-translation from French by and for themselves, and overt translation (or rather, interpretation) into French for non-Breton speakers. This is quite emblematic, therefore, of translation both as a confirmation of linguistic borders and as a means of overcoming them.

Translation from and into Breton can therefore be seen as a means of resisting assimilation—when self-translation to French, i.e. “translation-as-assimilation” (Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* 142), “threatens” the border between Breton and non-Breton speakers, to use Simon’s word. It does so by enabling Breton speakers to use, develop and live in their “home language”, as distinct from their mother tongue, which is mainly French. This corresponds to several of the fundamental needs specified by authors writing on non-violent communication, especially those related to autonomy, integrity (including authenticity and self-

worth; see Rosenberg 210), and self-expression (Ansembourg 237). In short, choosing to express oneself in a language like Breton could be assimilated to rooting oneself in the corresponding culture.

### 3. The Dual Role of Translation in Negotiation

Cronin gives a historical example of the role language can play in political encounters:

the use of an interpreter by the Irish Gaelic leader Hugh O'Neill in his dealings with Elizabeth I (even though he himself spoke English) was a way of initiating dialogue that nonetheless marked the cultural and political distance and difference between the two parties, thereby constructing interpreting as an activity of both interaction and resistance. (*Translation and Identity* 87)

Although Irish and Breton are both Celtic languages, this is not why this example is particularly relevant. Rather, its relevance lies in the way it leads us to the issue of European politics, where negotiations now regularly involve 28 States or more, according to the framework considered (the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Schengen area, etc.). The example of translation out of or into Breton shows that consolidating the linguistic border may be as important as overcoming it; Cronin's historical example demonstrates further the dual role of translation.

Both Irish and Breton could be dismissed as special cases because they involve lesser-used languages and dominated peoples. The aim of the present section will be to show that this characterization of translation is still valid at the contemporary European level.

#### 3.1 *From Linguistic to Political Distinction*

Irish Gaelic may again be the best example to begin with. It is remarkable, indeed, that it should be official in the European Union, even though any Irish Member of the European Parliament (MEP) or civil servant would (also) speak English. Recently, the issue of Brexit has raised the possibility that English might be removed from the EU's list of official languages since it would no longer be the official language of any member State, as Ireland chose Irish and Malta Maltese (Quatremer).

In fact, Irish was a treaty language but it only acquired official language status in 2007, and with a waiver that allowed EU institutions not to translate and publish every act in Irish for a renewable period of five years, with the exception of the acts drafted jointly by the Parliament and the Council (Council of the European Union L 156/3). The waiver was extended in 2010 for a period of five additional years from 1 January 2012 (Council of the European Union L 343/5), and further extended in 2015 until 2022 (Council of the European Union L 322/1).

It is sometimes considered in the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) that this petition of change on the part of the Irish government was aimed above all at using the benefits of European funding and infrastructure to develop the moribund national language. If, as argued in the previous section, making the effort to express oneself in Breton in the meeting of an association, for example, contributes to develop the language, there is no doubt that the translation of European texts is a very powerful tool to do the same on a much larger scale.

But, as argued with the Breton example too, the very existence of a translation service and the development of the Irish language strengthen what makes Ireland a distinctive partner in the European Union, which also applies to Maltese and Malta. If both countries had been content to have English as their official language, their national identification would have been less obvious. This may be true now when people meet Irishmen or Maltese people speaking English in Brussels, but it is no longer true when citizens of these countries address the European Union in their respective national languages.

Are Irish and Maltese special cases in the European Union? Yes and no. They can be deemed special because 1) they are the languages with the smallest numbers of speakers in the EU: 859,000 for Irish and 390,000 for Maltese;<sup>24</sup> and 2) they are spoken in countries where English is also an official language. They are not so special, however, for two main reasons. Firstly, the number of speakers could hardly be a criterion to determine the status of a language in the organization: Estonian has only between 930,000 and one million speakers,<sup>25</sup> hardly any more than Irish, while Latvian and Slovenian have fewer than two million speakers each. Secondly, Irish and Maltese are fully official languages in one of the member States, as other official languages are required to be.

If their official status is more difficult to accept by speakers of other languages, it is probably because speakers of Irish and Maltese also speak English, often as their mother tongue, and if they choose to express themselves in these languages, it implies an additional effort for their interlocutors, namely a financial effort to support translation, as well as an organizational one (the need for interpreters or translators, deadlines, interpretation equipment, etc.). But if, as the example of Breton translation suggests, their language difference is understood as a fundamental element of their political distinction as members of an international organization such as the European Union, would it not become more acceptable that they would highlight their own language?

All the more so, perhaps, as the perspective can be extended even further: had the political distinction been only a trivial consequence of the expression in one language or another, the fact that Jean-Claude Trichet, as the new president of the European Central Bank, delivered a speech in English in 2004 would have passed unnoticed in France. In fact, it caused a furore in the media and he was ironically awarded a prize for his achievement.<sup>26</sup> This is because it is usually assumed that the French elite should maintain the language distinction at the supranational level in order to emphasize France's political identity.

Language may be a particularly sensitive issue in France but similar concerns can be found elsewhere in the EU, as the interview of Margareta Hauschild, manager of the Goethe Institut Belgien by EurActiv.de, shows (EurActiv.de). An online press article by Velloso explains that the Greek European Ombudsman's attention was drawn to the language policy of the EU by a Spanish lawyer who wanted to answer a consultation on tax systems; Galarraga (2013) also

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<sup>24</sup> Linguamón (2006) for the Republic of Ireland, and ethnologue.com (2004) for Northern Ireland. Linguamón (2005) for Maltese. The years refer to the source mentioned in the pages for each language on the Linguamón (<http://www.linguamon.cat/>, but the page appears to be down) or Ethnologue websites.

<sup>25</sup> Based on estimates mentioned in Euromosaic (2000), ethnologue.com for Finland (1993) and Linguamón (for Latvia and the upper number).

<sup>26</sup> See the website of the association Avenir de la langue française, <http://www.avenir-langue-francaise.fr/articles.php?lng=fr&pg=281>, accessed on 31 January 2017.

testifies that some people are concerned by the fact that the Spanish language is not much used in diplomacy. Other traces of such debates could certainly be found elsewhere, for “language is an important part of both national and personal identity” (Pariente 52). It therefore also plays an important role in what I described previously as the first requirement of negotiation, which implies the acknowledgement of interlocutors as valid negotiators and the divergence between them (see section 1.3).

### **3.2. *Optimal Communication***

Following the discussion of the previous section on Breton translation, another hypothesis should be brought forward: a Breton MEP, regardless of his mother tongue being Breton or French, could wish to deliver speeches in Breton in the European institutions. The use of “regional” languages such as Catalan, Basque or Galician is already accepted, because these languages enjoy a special status within the EU and interpretation services can now be offered out of these languages, especially in the Council of the EU but also, on some occasions, in the European Parliament and other institutions (Branchadell 1-2).

The choice of Breton in similar circumstances, including by an MEP with French as his/her mother tongue, would be the *ideal* communication situation: it would enable the MEP to assert himself/herself in relation to their own history, heritage, territory, voters, and everyone in the audience would immediately be aware of many aspects of his/her identity; the speaker would feel emotionally at ease in the chosen language; interpretation would enable the other MEPs to understand the message. Without the Breton-language option, the MEP would choose French and this would be the *optimal* communication situation, that is, the best possible balance between the speaker’s wish and language skills, on one hand, and the logistical and financial constraints of the institution that offers the translation service, on the other hand.

It cannot be ruled out that a given language may sometimes be chosen in order to express contempt, to exclude others, to make them feel unqualified, uncomfortable and so on. In such cases, one could hardly speak of “optimal” communication. But, if the translation service is available, the use of a given language for negative purposes becomes far less effective. The consequence would therefore be a better connection to others, because several of the speaker’s fundamental needs would be satisfied by the choice of language. Conflict, which is often a way to have such needs satisfied by others, is no longer necessary for these needs to be fulfilled and negotiation can be easier.

In other words, when there is a language difference, translation makes it possible for each negotiator to speak his/her preferred language among those that are provided, if not his/her mother tongue. This is a guarantee that he/she will feel as comfortable as possible in the negotiation situation, as far as language is concerned. According to the language skills of both parties, it may be more effective to acknowledge the language divergence this way, rather than to try to erase it by pretending that one negotiator can just as effectively lead the negotiation in his counterpart’s language as in his own, or that both can do it in a language that they have learnt without experiences that would have made it part of their deeper self.

I do not claim that translation is the only way to overcome language difference. Pym thus explains that “translation implies an economic model that is generally quite the opposite of the



costs implied by language learning” (*Pour une éthique* 128),<sup>27</sup> because costs are relatively steady with translators, once they are accustomed to their customer, to the type of texts, etc., while they would decrease gradually with people learning the relevant languages. Yet, Grin estimates that 12,000 teaching hours would be required for non-native speakers to reach equality with native ones (7), which amounts to 75 years of 4-hour weekly lessons! This also explains why cases of self-translation into Breton, to the point that the language may be chosen and practised in any situation as easily as the mother tongue, remain infrequent.

Esperanto may be easier (and therefore cheaper) to learn than other languages. It is still very likely, however, that it would remain a problem for many throughout Europe, as it would not be practised on a regular basis in their job or in daily life, for example. As a consequence, the legitimacy of institutions publishing binding legislation would be jeopardized, as well as democracy, because democracy is intrinsically a system in which any citizen should be able to be elected and sit in parliament. So, if translation is not the only solution to solve language difference, it is still certainly a valuable one in many situations from the point of view of costs, besides the border-strengthening virtue that is discussed here, based on the Breton example.

### **3.3. *Europe: Found in Translation***

The current language policy of the European Union, with translation as the main solution to language barriers, is already applied in the European institutions with a fair amount of pragmatism. Were it to be replaced by another language policy, it would then produce more fragile negotiators, in addition to the danger it could represent for democracy. If the history of these institutions is seen as an attempt to favour negotiation over war, it is doubtful that making negotiators weaker through a change of language policy would seem a desirable outcome of a cost-cutting process. To put this into context, the cost of translation in the European Union is said to amount to 2€/year/citizen (Pariente 56) which is 1% of the annual budget, compared to 55 times more for the Common Agricultural Policy in 2011.<sup>28</sup>

I would suggest distinguishing two kinds of negotiators working in or with the EU institutions: first of all, professional negotiators, a category that can be subdivided into European civil servants and diplomats on the one hand, and State-independent negotiators (lobbyists or any other kind of professionals that have to deal with the institutions as part of their job), on the other hand; and secondly, members of the European parliament and politicians of the member States. The former are recruited by the EU institutions and private bodies taking into account their language skills according to the tasks they are supposed to carry out. The latter are not: they are appointed according to national political contexts or elected on the basis of ideas and programmes that do not mention such skills.

The first type of negotiators are used to working in other languages than their own, are trained to do so and, if the language policy was to change and significantly reduce the role of translation, they would carry on as they did, be trained efficiently to speak and write the relevant language(s) or be replaced by people who would be able to do so. Without translation as it is now organized, the second category of negotiators, on the contrary, would be considerably weakened.

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<sup>27</sup> The original sentence is: “la traduction implique une économie qui est généralement à l’opposé de celle de l’apprentissage des langues”.

<sup>28</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/budget/data/LBI.2011/FR/SEC03.pdf>. Accessed 30 April 2012, p. 76.

They could work with assistants who would belong to the first category but they would still be responsible for making decisions, voting, etc., sometimes with tight deadlines that would not necessarily allow exchanges with their support team (including personal interpreters).

Finally, without translation, not only would the legitimacy of institutions, democracy and negotiation face a possible deterioration, but all European languages other than the one chosen would be potentially in danger, at least in theory. Because European citizens could well come to see their language just as Breton speakers did at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: if another language than their own promised a better future for their children, they could choose to encourage them to use this “superior” language. The process is a possibility that cannot be discarded so easily because some countries are comparatively very small, like Slovenia, and, depending on economic trends, social mobility may not be possible in all European member States.

Furthermore, what institutional translation at the European level brings to the development of each language is far from being insignificant:

- they contribute to making languages exist in relation to other languages (ar Rouz, *Les enjeux* 387-388);
- they promote languages, even in the eye of the speakers themselves (391-392);
- they are a means to produce contents, terminology as well as full texts, that contribute to develop the language; all the more so as language users can now get access to some of the corpora thus produced by institutions (400);
- as they foster multilingualism, they also boost creativity, as was shown by Marsh and Hill in a study ordered by the European Commission, or by Euréval (6, for example) in another study ordered by the same Commission, focused on the contribution of translation to multilingualism. Many other authors have expressed their concern about the lack of creativity that the decrease of linguistic diversity entails, for instance Lafforgue, Nowicki and Oustinoff, Ost, or Crystal.

The member States of the European Union have been living in peace for more than 70 years now. If distinction and negotiation are both inherent to society, as Mediation theory suggests, language differences are a necessary part of the way we can build and negotiate our relationships to others. Acknowledging both necessities, as the EU has been doing with its language policy from the start—in spite of many enlargements—, is a means to satisfy the fundamental needs of the negotiators and citizens who may no longer find that conflict is a better solution.

#### 4. Conclusion

Human beings, in order to build societies, both set up borders and try to overcome them. Hence translation appears as a key process in the negotiation of social belonging because it makes borders obvious, just as it allows people on each side of these borders to speak to each other. This is what the initial issue regarding translation from and, especially, into Breton, with steadily increasing demands for pragmatic translation, has shown: it seems to be a good means for Breton speakers to resist total assimilation by the French-speaking community, because it enables them to stick to their “home language” even when they are working with non-Breton speakers. They contribute to the development of the terminological and phraseological resources of their

language, and also to its prestige and visibility. Such a visibility fosters a substantial acknowledgement of the linguistic difference by non-Breton speakers.

Social borders are therefore the first requirement for negotiation, but not the only one. The second one is that negotiators feel comfortable with the language they use. Translation is normally meant to enable them to speak their own language. At the European level, it could be that the translation services do not include their mother tongue, but they may at least choose their country's dominant language. Translation seems to be the most efficient way to overcome language differences, compared to language learning.

The example of Breton evidenced the multiple roles that translation plays in fostering social distinction, language development and cooperation. The example of the European Union illustrates further roles. Translation in the EU contributes first to the legitimacy of the institutions by delivering binding laws that every European citizen is supposed to be able to read and understand. Citizens can, moreover, submit questions to the institutions and be informed about them in their own national language and, in some cases, other languages, like the co-official ones in the Spanish "autonomous communities". They can also take part in elections and negotiations at the European level and it is certainly an important democratic condition that they should be able to do so in their own language. Last but not least, if one applies the arguments of language development and prestige that were developed about Breton to the European level, it seems that translation also plays this role there and some of the national languages might be in danger if only one language was chosen as the official one.

Breton, with fewer than 200,000 speakers, may seem trivial to many: why should we bother if such a "small" language is on the verge of disappearing? Firstly, because quantity is not what matters. Cronin speaks of "fractal differentialism": "the same degree of diversity is to be found at the level of entities judged to be small or insignificant as at the level of large entities" (*Translation and Identity* 15). Secondly, because, if the death of a "useless" language like Breton was accepted at the national level, there would be no reason why the death of French, for example, should be treated any differently at the international level. Thirdly, and perhaps more importantly, what the Breton example shows is a degree of resistance to assimilation. If translation plays a role in this case, with other means of action, there are many cases where people resisting assimilation are not in a position to negotiate through language.

That migrants, for example, need to learn and master the language of the country where they settle to help their integration in society, seems obvious. In France, however, it is often considered that, to be fully integrated, they should abandon the language(s) they spoke before they arrived. It is not explicit in the report to Parliament on the use of the French language by the Délégation générale à la langue française et aux langues de France (29-30), but it is striking all the same that there should be no mention of teaching migrants their own language as well. The following sentence: "When prefectures notify migrants that their demand is temporarily rejected because of a lack of **linguistic assimilation**, they could also offer language training" (30, my emphasis),<sup>29</sup> may indicate that assimilation is indeed the official French policy. A report by the Inter-ministerial Committee of Immigration Control (Comité interministériel de contrôle de

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<sup>29</sup> The original reads: "La notification par la préfecture d'une décision d'ajournement pour défaut d'assimilation linguistique pourrait s'accompagner d'une offre de formation linguistique."

l'immigration) appears to confirm the hypothesis, since it contains no mention whatsoever of any form of teaching of migrants' languages of origin.

These languages are taught, however, to alloglot children and such courses were organized by the French government as early as 1975, but they are optional and offered in addition to other classes on days and at times when other children do not have lessons (Tran Minh 96-97). Furthermore, their main objective was that migrants may go back and integrate into their country of origin more easily (Tran Minh 96-97; Castellotti 86). The way this kind of language training is carried out now therefore in no way contradicts the view of integration which has prevailed in France since the French Revolution, as defined by Vaillant, who explains that it may make access to the French nationality easier for migrants than with other approaches, but their identity and culture of origin, in return, are "if not erased, at least confined to private life" (48).<sup>30</sup>

On the contrary, Leonard Orban, former Commissioner for Multilingualism, repeatedly asserted that helping migrants maintain their "language of origin" was as necessary as the language of the welcoming country to acknowledge and value their difference (Orban 6; Violette). Although Castellotti calls the value of "language of origin" into question, she also advocates an adjustable multilingual education that would take into account the children's varied experiences and belongings and make alloglots visible and legitimate at school (92-93).

With many more migrants currently trying to come to Europe in search of peace, it may be relevant to ask whether translation, both as a teaching tool and as a self-translation methodology, would not be valuable to help children and migrants avoid a dangerous kind of assimilation by knowing who they are, with equally precious cultures as their own rich roots. Translation's role, as I have tried to analyze it here, could help forge language policies that would favour dispassionate multilingualism and multiple attachments. Cronin considers the use of translation in this context an important part of a child's identity development:

the desire to "look for roots" involves the foregrounding of the translational nature of the experience of the immigrant child moving from the source language of home to the target language of school and back again. What this new cultural self-consciousness or awareness implies is the wish not to make translation invisible but rather to make it more visible, to acknowledge that there are two languages, two cultures (each with its own internal complexity), which come to determine or influence the dialogical self of the immigrant subject and his or her dependants. (*Translation and Identity* 62)

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<sup>30</sup> The original phrase is: "sinon effacées, en tous les cas, confinées à la vie privée".

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