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English for a Global Readership:
Implications for the L2 Translation Classroom

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Abstract

When English is the target language and the intended readership is international, the question of what is appropriate or inappropriate as a translation solution can be complex. Usage which has traditionally been considered unacceptable may come to be regarded in a different light owing to the fact that on a global level English is a moving and constantly evolving target. This state of flux represents a conundrum for translation trainers and trainees alike, whose task is however facilitated by careful use of dictionaries and language corpora. With the help of corpus data, this paper examines and discusses examples of solutions – some contentious, some more straightforward – drawn from the Italian-to-English translation classroom.

1. Background

In Stewart (2013, 225-229) I considered whether the following translation into English of a sentence in an Italian tourist brochure could be considered admissible in an L2 translation classroom if the envisaged readership is international:

[…] *a panoramic road which allows to enjoy fantastic sceneries*

This is a close and rather wooden rendering of the Italian […] *una strada panoramica che consente di godere di fantastici scenari* (literally 'a road panoramic which allows to enjoy of fantastic sceneries'). At first glance the translation might seem innocuous enough, but in reality it contains at least three potential flashpoints for classroom discussion:

-firstly, *scenery* has traditionally been regarded as an uncountable noun, whatever the meaning. It is still listed as uncountable in British-based learner's dictionaries, and there is only one occurrence of the plural in the *British National Corpus*, whereas there are 755 occurrences of the singular, almost all uncountable (see section 3.1.3 for further details)

-secondly, *panoramic road* is an unusual combination, barely attested in the *British National Corpus* and in dictionaries

-thirdly, '*ALLOW to enjoy*' does not respect the local grammar associated with the active use of *allow* as outlined in teaching materials, which advocate '*ALLOW* NOUN/PRONOUN to VERB' when the verb is active, e.g., *which allows you to enjoy, which allows visitors to enjoy*.

One wonders, however, how fruitful such classroom discussions really are. The text in question was intended for an international readership, and consequently for both native and non-native speakers of English. The great majority of international readers of texts for tourism are non-native speakers of English, and one imagines that a very modest percentage of them would notice anything unidiomatic about the above sentence. Further, the translation has the virtue of being accurate and unequivocal, i.e., it captures the message of the Italian source text and the meaning is clear. In addition, the tone and register of the fragment are unobjectionable. In short, the translated fragment is serviceable and presumably useful to the reader, whether a native or non-native speaker of English. So why address these 'flashpoints' in the classroom at all? The translated text would appear to carry out its purpose, therefore why not just accept it and carry on? In any case, the large uk-domain corpus *British Web 2007* contains over 60 relevant occurrences of *sceneries*, 6 relevant occurrences of *panoramic road*, and both the *British National Corpus and British Web 2007* contain an abundance of examples of active '*ALLOW* to VERB', though the majority of them are imperative uses in recipes or instruction manuals, e.g., *bring to the boil and allow to simmer until cooked*.

2. English as a Lingua Franca

The questions raised here relate to issues concerning English as a lingua franca (ELF), a vehicular language whose main focus is the clarity and coherence of the message for people of different languages and cultures. Ife (2005, 286) summarises ELF as "a language used as a common language by speakers whose mother tongue it is not", while Jenkins' (2007, 1) definition is: "a contact language used among people who do not share a first language, and is commonly understood to mean a second (or subsequent) language of its speakers". The

description offered by Taviano (2010, ix) gives greater prominence to the involvement of both native and non-native speakers: "a contact language used mainly, though not exclusively, by non-native speakers".

Despite a plethora of publications on ELF, whether in professional or pedagogical settings (see for example Crystal (2007), Gagliardi and Maley (2010), Seidlhofer (2011), Bowles and Cogo (2015), Jenkins et al. (2018), and the *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca* founded in 2012), comparatively little attention has been devoted to ELF in the translation classroom, the main contributions being Taviano (2010, 65-87) and a special issue of the journal *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* in 2013 (issue 7 (2)). Problematic in this field of research is that ELF has misty borders, with the result that it is often hard to establish which usage lies within the purview of ELF and which usage does not, and this is perhaps why its place in trainee translation programmes is potentially contentious. According to Taviano (2013, 162-163):

> students should also be trained to translate into ELF, that is to say to produce texts tailored to an international readership, since professional translators can be and often are commissioned to do so. The heterogeneity of international audiences, which inevitably include both native and non-native speakers – just as authors of academic papers may or may not be non-native speakers of English – makes the role of those writing or translating for such audiences particularly challenging.

This scenario is indeed 'particularly challenging', in part because translating into ELF and producing texts tailored to an international readership do not necessarily dovetail (trainees may produce a good translation into English for an international readership without ever having heard of ELF), but above all because even if trainees do aspire to adopt ELF as their target, is it indicated anywhere in dictionaries, grammars, textbooks etc. that active '*ALLOW to* VERB' is likely to be an appropriate or inappropriate sequence in ELF? As stressed by Maley (2010, 36), teachers of English as a second language tend to refer to established varieties of English because

> there are no substantive models or materials available to them, were they to wish to change in the direction of ELF. Even were they broadly supportive of the ELF con-cept, what precisely would the practical implications be for their teaching, other than a vaguely-formulated, more tolerant attitude towards learner 'errors'?

For further comments see Anderman and Rogers (2005) and Buckledee (2010). It is in-disputable that however willing trainers and trainees may be to embrace the requirements of a global readership, both trainer and trainee require reasonably well-marked borders within which to operate, and it might as a result seem simpler in the translation classroom to adopt as the target language a native variety of English which is internationally recognized and, more important, well-documented (Stewart 2013). This position, too, however, is problematic. As a

teacher of Italian-to-English translation to Humanities students in Italy, over the years I have broadly adopted British English in the classroom when the target is international, but within this framework I feel more uneasy than ever about penalising usage which, though readable and unambiguous, is unidiomatic to native-English ears. A further complication is that even the borders of British English are misty, in part – ironically enough – because the variety in question is so well-documented, with a whole host of grammars, dictionaries corpora, text-books etc., which of course may furnish conflicting information. The following section will provide examples of the scenarios considered here. The usage discussed will again consist of renderings by translation trainees of fragments of texts in the tourism sector destined for international readers, subdivided into issues of grammar, phraseology and colligation, with summaries at the end of each section. Reference will be made to both the *British National Corpus* and the *British Web 2007* [1].

3. Examples of trainees' translations

3.1 Grammar

3.1.1 *only if/by* + no inversion of subject and verb in the following main clause

Student translations:

- *only if you go on foot you will be able to appreciate the view*

- *only by leaving the valley floor you can reach Badia di San Bartolomeo*

Grammars of English inform us that sentences introduced by *Only if* require subject-verb inversion in the following main clause, some with auxiliary verbs, and this is certainly backed up by the *British National Corpus* phrase query 'Only if you' (with initial upper case):

*Only if you want to go the whole way and produce typeset quality data **will you ever need** to consider anything better than VGA*

*Only if you do that **will you be** able to say with confidence that I am wrong*

*Only if you have done a very elaborate and expensive piece of research **will you have gone** beyond this to the sort of detailed description outlined above*

*Only if we teach our children anxiety **do they begin** to move fearfully through life*

The query 'Only by' + verb at R1 or R2, again in sentence-initial position, retrieves 75

occurrences in the *British National Corpus*, all of which are followed by SV inversion in the following main clause, for example:

> *Only by improving social and economic conditions* **can good health be achieved**

> *Only by steadily improving efficiency* **would Britain win** *and keep its share of the world's markets.*

> *Only by so doing* **can their business activity generate** *an adequate return*

The same two searches produce similar outcomes in the *British Web 2007*, albeit with much greater frequencies. Naturally the above queries capture only sentence-initial instances (and do not include other analogous usage such as *Only then* and *Only now*), but samples in both corpora suggest that SV inversion is used with barely any exceptions when these structures are clause-initial.

3.1.2 *whole* (adj) + uncountable noun

Student translation:

> *this attracted a lot of attention in the whole Europe*

In grammars we read that *whole* as an adjective with the sense of *entire* cannot qualify uncountable nouns (*whole traffic, *whole music, *whole Ireland), and this too is corroborated by *British National Corpus* samples, once one has excluded irrelevant occurrences such as *the whole Scotland team*, where *whole* qualifies the countable noun *team*. The *British National Corpus* has no relevant instances of, for example, *whole Europe, whole England, whole furniture, whole information, whole equipment, whole scenery*. Although there are certainly occurrences of *whole* qualifying uncountable nouns in the corpus, in these cases the adjective usually has a different meaning (*whole wheat, whole milk*).

The *British Web 2007*, however, tells a different story: the sequence *whole Europe* is attested 14 times with 12 of them relevant, *whole equipment* shows 8 relevant cases out of 10, *whole scenery* has 4 out of 4, and *whole furniture* 7 out of 7. Less prolific are *whole information* with 5 out of 21, while *whole England* has zero relevant cases out of a total of 14. This data suggests that *whole* + uncountable noun is more widespread in the *British Web 2007* than in the *British National Corpus*, from which we can perhaps conclude that this grammatical feature is more tolerated in modern web and/or non-native English.

Worth noting is that the noun *attention*, despite being listed as uncountable in dictionaries and grammars, is qualified by *whole* 16 times in the *British National Corpus* and 60 times in

the *British Web 2007*, almost always preceded by a possessive. It would therefore appear to be an exceptional case. Here are some random occurrences in the *British National Corpus*:

> *For the first time she sat down and gave him **her whole attention**.*

> *You dealt with one thing at a time, gave it **your whole attention**, decided it, then put it aside.*

> *Harriet Tremayne became more and more of a recluse, **her whole attention** concentrated on her granddaughter.*

3.1.3 Traditionally uncountable nouns used as countable nouns

Student translations:

- *in 2005, however, a lightning destroyed the bell tower*

- *evidences suggest that the cave was used by humans*

- *the church's strategic position on a rocky slope offers a stunning scenery of the surrounding mountains*

Once again, the question regards the countable / uncountable usage of nouns: *lightning, evidence* and again *scenery* in the examples above. These are listed as uncountable by dictionaries, some of which include assistance on how to indicate countability when adopting nouns such as these, for example *a lightning bolt, flashes of lightning; pieces of evidence, a shred of evidence*.

- *lightning*

The *British National Corpus* contains very few examples of countable *lightning* in the meteorological sense, though we find a handful of plural occurrences with figurative meanings in literary texts:

> *no matter how, no matter what the **lightnings** that assailed him*

> ***lightnings** of pain sheathed every nerve in her body*

> ***an invisible lightning** leaped between them*

A similar scenario is identifiable in the *British Web 2007*: countable occurrences of *lightning* refer either – with initial upper case – to a type of aeroplane or have a metaphorical, rhetorical quality:

*there is an excellent chapter on his time trials flying **Lightnings** with the Air Fight-*
ing Development Squadron and as a Flight Commander on 111 Squadron

*the jungle was a vivid green blanket in which rivers made silvery forked **lightnings***

*yea he sent out his arrows & scattered them, & he shot out **lightnings** and discom-*
fitted them

*and there sprang in the gloom of his soul **a sudden lightning** of joy*

There are, however, exceptional cases where the countable use does refer literally to a flash of lightning:

*whilst high-power surges such as **a lightning** can cause immediate damage by*
'frying' circuits and melting plastic and metal…).

- evidence

The case of *evidence* is rather different. Despite being classified as uncountable in the major dictionaries of English (though the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* concedes that "in academic English the plural *evidences* is sometimes used"), it is attested fairly frequently as a countable noun in both the corpora adopted here, above all in the plural: *evidences* has 29 relevant occurrences in the *British National Corpus*, and well over 1,000 in the *British Web 2007*. The sequence *an evidence of* is also recurrent: 5 in the *British National Corpus* and 114 in the *British Web 2007*.

- scenery

The *British National Corpus* contains no instances of the exact sequence *a scenery*, but countable uses do turn up:

*First, spilitic lavas were extruded, layer upon layer, and weathered to produce **a***
***staircase-like scenery** (or "trap topography")*

The Sierra mountain range which runs the length of the north west coast of Ma-
*jorca, gives the island **a dramatic scenery** in contrast to the soft beaches below*

As mentioned in section 1, over 60 instances of *sceneries* are retrieved in the *British Web 2007*, while *scenery* occurs as a singular countable noun between 70 and 80 times, for example:

*this is the most wonderful course with **a scenery** you only can expect in heaven*

*the first series of the heart-warming Monarch of the Glen, set amongst **a glorious Highland scenery** and an all-star cast*

*the name of Gstaad has become synonymous with the idea of sophisticated holidays in **an unspoiled scenery**, spectacular in winter and summer.*

*over a high route that offers **an ever-changing fantastic scenery** and which spares the finale – the sight of the Matterhorn towering above Zermatt – right to the last day*

The countable/uncountable issue is a stumbling block for both translation trainers and trainees. Perhaps owing to the influence and pressure of other languages, English now appears to show greater flexibility with regard to countability, the most obvious example perhaps being the noun *research*, traditionally uncountable but now tolerated in certain contexts by dictionaries such as the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. While corpus data suggests that nouns such as *traffic* (with reference to transport), *fun* and *furniture* cling on to their uncountable status, there are currently a number of borderline cases during what appears to be a period of transition. This situation clearly engenders uncertainty, and one imagines varying degrees of tolerance on the part of translation trainers during the evaluation process.

3.1.4 Summing up

Grammatical features such as those examined above can be problematic for trainers and trainees alike, in part because conflicting information is present in language resources. In the *British National Corpus*, the adjective *whole* almost always qualifies countable nouns – notwithstanding exceptions such as *attention* – and this ties in with indications supplied in dictionaries, but in the *British Web 2007* there is a significant number of instances where *whole* qualifies uncountable nouns. The situation is even more nebulous regarding the host of nouns considered uncountable in dictionaries being used countably: there is significant evidence of this phenomenon in both corpora, but of course there are hugely different scenarios from one noun to the next. However, even dictionaries supply contrasting indications: as mentioned above, *evidences* is sanctioned by the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* in academic contexts, but in the *Macmillan Dictionary* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* the user is explicitly instructed never to use *evidence* countably. The situation regarding clause-initial *only if/by* is considerably clearer in language resources, which show barely any exceptions to the SV inversion rule. Having said that, the normal SV word order does not sound particularly bad and its meaning remains perfectly comprehensible. Indeed by an irony, the avoidance of the inversion in the main clause may well make the text more intelligible to the non-native English reader, who might otherwise construe the inversion as an interrogative.

See Mossop (2006, 792) and Stewart (2013, 229-232) for discussion of scenarios such as this. Let us now move on to phraseology.

3.2 Phraseology

3.2.1 *at the feet of*

Student translation:

at the feet of the mountain lies the town of Rivoli

In the *British National Corpus* and *British Web 2007* the sequence *at the feet of* is generally followed by people in power and/or religious figures (*at the feet of many masters, at the feet of Jesus*), but not by *mountains, hills, stairs, page* etc., which lie within the compass of *at the foot of* rather than *at the feet of*. Sequences of the type *at the feet of the mountain* are common in student translations from Italian to English because the Italian equivalent has a plural noun (*ai piedi della montagna*), but the information present in English dictionaries and the two corpora does not suggest any exceptions to the rule.

3.2.2 Sequences of the type *20 kilometres far, 10 miles far*

Student translations:

- *the island is five kilometres far from Grado*
- *six km far from Portoferraio, the villa lies at the foot of Mount San Martino*

English-language teaching materials inform us that whereas it is normal to state that a road is 10 yards wide, that a swimming-pool is 50 metres long, and that a river is 5 metres deep, it sounds unidiomatic to state that a town is x km far, or x km far from somewhere. Data from the *British National Corpus* and *British Web 2007* appear to consolidate this recommendation: the *British National Corpus* has no trace of the combinations *metres far, meters far, kilometres far, kilometers far, km far, miles far* etc. except within a name (Miles Far East Company), while the *British Web 2007* shows 3 occurrences of *miles far* (though two of these are part of *far away* and *far and wide* respectively), 9 occurrences of *kilometres far / kilometers far*, and 19 of *km far / kms far*. Therefore, once again the *British National Corpus* occurrences are in line with indications offered in teaching materials, whereas the *British Web 2007* contains some exceptions.

3.2.3 *in the last years*

Student translation:

-in the last years there have been many local initiatives

The phrase *in the last years* occurs 73 times in the *British National Corpus*: 61 of these are followed by *of*, indicating the closing years of a specific period (*in the last years of Victoria's reign, in the last years of his life*), while 4 are followed by *before* (all 4 describe the period preceding a war, e.g., *in the last years before the war*). Of the remaining 8 occurrences, only two appear to mean *in recent years*, which is the sense required in the example above:

*They're ringing in the changes at British Telecom's new residential training centre in Milton Keynes. Wimpey Construction UK, Eastern has just completed the £25 million centre, the largest building project to be completed in Milton Keynes **in the last years.***

*This is a truth that Dick Lucas and the Proclamation Trust in London have effectively and consistently brought to the church **in the last years.***

On the other hand, the longer sequence *in the last few years* occurs 199 times in the *British National Corpus*, and of these 194 seemingly correspond to *in recent years*, while only 5 correspond to *in the final years* (e.g., *but neither programme was redirected successfully towards the cities in the last few years of the 1974-9 Labour administration*). Therefore, in the *British National Corpus* there is evidence of a reasonably neat distinction: *in the last years* almost always has the meaning *in the final/closing years*, while *in the last few years* almost always means *in recent years*. The figures in the *British Web 2007*, however, are very different. Of the 399 hits of *in the last years* in this corpus, as many as a third of these can be construed with the meaning of *in recent years*. This striking discrepancy between the two corpora would suggest either a diachronic development (the *British Web 2007* is more recent) or a more widespread use of the *in recent years* interpretation in web contexts and/or among non-native speakers. Interestingly, the avoidance of *in the last years* in the sense of *in recent years* suggested by data in the *British National Corpus* is not generally reported or even hinted at in most grammars and dictionaries. Once again, trainers and trainees need to act as information managers in order to make sense of the diverging data available to them.

3.2.4 *the world war I*

Student translations:

during the World War I; at the end of the world war II

First of all, let us consider the frequencies of the following clusters in the *British National Corpus*, with no distinction of upper/lower case. By way of example I focus on sequences

denoting the first of the two world wars:

the first world war	975
world war I (Roman numeral)	255
world war one	79
the 1st world war	15
world war 1 (Arabic numeral)	11
the world war I (Roman numeral)	5 (1 relevant)
the world war one	4 (0 relevant)
the world war 1 (Arabic numeral)	0

It is noticeable that in the *British National Corpus*, out of the total number of 345 occurrences of the sequences *world war I / world war one / world war* 1 (255+79+11) only one of these features a relevant colligation with the definite article:

> But the greatest blow to the dictates of fashion on women's dress came with **the World War I**. Although Laura Ashley had

In the remaining cases the article colligates with a following noun, for instance:

> The traditional British verve for raiding had been restored after too many years under the shadow of the **World War I failures** at Gallipoli.

> We started at the **World War I Memorial**, clearly the object of great respect and attention.

> This is a play for two characters, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, the **World War One poets**, and it would obviously be a good thing to read some of their poetry

> provides a 'period' look at early fighting aircraft which will be useful for the **World War One aircraft buff.**

In short, and simplifying somewhat, information from the *British National Corpus* points to the fact that *first/1st world war* requires a preceding definite article, whereas *world war one/I/1* does not. *British Web 2007* searches, on the other hand, generate the following outcomes:

the first world war	10,332
world war I (Roman numeral)	3,019
world war one	1,696
the 1st world war	151
world war 1 (Arabic numeral)	775
the world war I (Roman numeral)	106 (35 relevant)
the world war one	63 (10 relevant)
the world war 1 (Arabic numeral)	29 (7 relevant)

In the top group, the main divergence from the *British National Corpus* data is that *world war 1* (775) is a lot more frequent than *the 1st world war* (151), but my interest again focuses on the bottom group. Here we discover that out of the total number of 5490 occurrences of the sequences *world war I / world war one / world war 1* (3019+1696+775), 52 of these feature a relevant colligation with the definite article, for example:

> *This story, set in* **the World War I***, captures the memories of a young soldier as he looks back over his life whilst at the front*

> *from suicide and homosexuality to Miss Lizzy's flirtation with the suffragette movement and the horrors of* **the World War I.**

> *Considered by many to be not only the best combatant story of* **the World War I** *but the best American war book since The Red Badge of Courage.*

> *Dick won the Military Medal in France as a stretcher bearer in* **the World War One***.*

> *the Headlam-Morley library of books, pamphlets and manuscripts relating to* **the World War 1** *and the Peace Treaty, the Henry Morris collection of Irish material*

Therefore, whereas in the *British National Corpus* relevant occurrences of the definite article with *world war I / world war one / world war 1* are very close to zero, in the *British Web 2007* they amount to almost 10%.

3.2.5 Summing up

Like *only if/by* in section 3.1.1, *at the feet of* is relatively unproblematic in that the information provided in dictionaries and the two corpora is consistent: for this reason, a sequence

of the type *at the feet of the hill* – which does not sound right at all despite its semantic transparency – is presumably to be considered inappropriate. However, as in section 3.1, if we cast our net around we discover that other usage is not quite so straightforward along the axis of acceptability / non-acceptability. Combinations of the type *x kilometres far* are absent in the *British National Corpus* but do turn up in the *British Web 2007*, albeit infrequently. The phrase *in the last years* with the meaning *in recent years* is barely present in the *British National Corpus* but is recurrent in the *British Web 2007*, and relevant use of the definite article with *world war I / world war one / world war 1* is practically non-existent in the *British National Corpus* but again fairly recurrent in the *British Web 2007*. Once again, the conundrum is how trainers and trainees should react to this type of conflicting information.

3.3 Colligation

3.3.1 *view <u>on</u> the sea/mountains/bay*

Student translation:
there is a spectacular view on the stunning mountains

Dictionaries furnish examples of the combination *view/s on* followed by topics and themes (*issues, marriage, education*), but not by *mountains, sea* etc. From this the user can conclude that when *view* colligates with the preposition *on* it cannot have the meaning *panorama* – in this latter sense *view of* or *view over* are required[2]. This position is backed up by *British National Corpus* data: in this corpus there are, for instance, no occurrences corresponding to the simple (lemmatized) queries 'view on the mountain', 'view on the bay', 'view on the city' and just one corresponding to 'view on the sea'. The *British Web 2007* produces fairly similar outcomes, though there is a small number of relevant instances retrieved by the simple queries 'view on the mountain' (1), 'view on the bay' (2), 'view on the city' (4) and above all 'view on the sea' (9).

3.3.2 *(the) Nature, (the) mountains*

Student translations:

the wonders of the Nature; those of you who enjoy walking in mountains

English dictionaries and grammars include sequences such as *the wonders of Nature* – without the definite article – and *those of you who enjoy walking in the mountains* – with the definite article – yet both of these represent usage which appears to fall outside the general rules of English grammar. In the sense of 'natural world', logic and consistency suggest that *the Nature* would be better, along the lines of other instances of huge natural phenomena such

as *the environment, the countryside, the sea, the world, the universe*, and even *the great out-doors*, where the definite article is used both when the reference is general (*please respect the environment*) and when it is more specific (*the environment of the eastern Baltic sea*). For this reason, it is perhaps not surprising that trainee translators recurrently adopt the article in sequences such as *the wonders of the Nature*, though corpus searches in the *British National Corpus and British Web 2007* establish that this type of sequence is barely attested.

The case of *those of you who enjoy walking in the mountains* also entails what is apparently anomalous usage relating to the definite article. The plural use of a countable noun with preceding *the* usually denotes a specific reference (*the kids in my class are boisterous, the computers we bought are defective*), but in fact *the mountains* is used both specifically (*we were hiking in the mountains to the north of Lake Maggiore*) and generally (*since she was a girl she's always loved walking in the mountains*), a state of affairs similar to *the hills* and *the woods*, which also tend to be accompanied by the definite article even when the sense is more general.

Indeed, in the *British National Corpus* there is only a handful of occurrences of *in mountains* (9), *into mountains* (4) and *to mountains* (11, though 3 are used in the sense of *a large pile of*) while there are 245 occurrences of *in the mountains*, 75 of *into the mountains* and 52 of *to the mountains*, a substantial percentage of which seem to be references of a general nature. In the *British Web 2007* the proportional frequencies of these sequences are in line with those of the *British National Corpus*, but trainees may be influenced by the raw numbers of examples without the article in the larger *British Web 2007*: 181 cases of *in mountains*, 36 of *into mountains* and 138 of *to mountains*.

It can certainly be hypothesised that the perennial difficulty Italian students experience with these phrases links with the fact that in Italian *natura* is preceded by the definite article (*la natura*) when the meaning corresponds to the natural world, and that *in/into/to the mountains* as a rule corresponds to *in montagna* in Italian, which has no article. At the same time, it seems just as legitimate to hypothesise that they are led astray by the anomalous local grammar of both *nature* and *mountains*.

3.3.3 Summing up

The situation regarding *view on the sea* etc. seems uncontroversial, but the presence / absence of the definite article in *the wonders of the Nature* and *those of you who enjoy walking in mountains* is less straightforward. Some evaluators will simply mark these as wrong, firstly because the sequences seem unidiomatic, but secondly because they appear to stem from ignorance, i.e., the student in question may have simply produced a clumsy and fairly literal rendering of *la natura* and *in montagna*. Yet this may not be the case at all: in the first instance the student may have made an intelligent analogy with *the countryside, the world*, etc., while in the second instance the student may have made the coherent assumption that *in mountains* should not include the definite article because the reference in question is general, i.e., there

is no reference to specific mountains. In a pedagogical situation, this might constitute grounds for showing a degree of leniency towards *the wonders of the Nature*, and perhaps even greater leniency – once the trainer ascertains that *in mountains* turns up 181 times in the *British Web 2007* – towards *those of you who enjoy walking in mountains*. It goes without saying that vastly different opinions will be held from one trainer to the next.

4. Other language features

Clearly the features put under the microscope above are merely a selection of those produced by Italian trainee translators in tourist texts, since many others could be discussed. On a lexical level, it is worth noting the persistent use of the verb *valorise* in the sense of *give or ascribe value or validity* to (this is the *Macmillan Dictionary* definition but interestingly this verb is not listed in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* or the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*), and on a collocational level the overuse of combinations such as *valorise the area / territory / zone* – according to the *British National Corpus* and *British Web 2007* this verb normally combines with abstract nouns such as *notion, individuality* and *autonomy*.

Also recurrent in trainee translations is the use of Roman numerals with reference to centuries (*the XIV century, the XVIII century*), unusual in native-speaker English. Consider the following outcomes in the *British National Corpus* and *British Web 2007*:

British National Corpus

fourteenth century	345
fourteenth-century	95
14th century	102
14th-century	28
XIV century	0
XIV-century	0

British Web 2007

fourteenth century	1,819
fourteenth-century	334
14th century	4,472
14th-century	348
XIV century	18
XIV-century	0

Note that in the exclusively native-speaker corpus *fourteenth century* is much more common than *14th century*, whereas the reverse is true in the *British Web 2007*. As regards the formula *XIV century / XIV-century* with Roman numerals, there are a few attestations in the *British Web 2007* but none at all in the *British National Corpus*. This should probably be considered a mistake, especially since much of the intended international readership will struggle with Roman numerals. At the same time, regardless of possible incomprehension, Roman numerals tend to be adopted in English for popes (*Pope Pius XI, Pope John XXII*) and royalty (*Elizabeth II, Louis IV*), so it might seem churlish to judge *XIV century, XV century* etc. as being completely wrong.

5. Discussion

It emerges from the analysis so far that within the type of translation classroom scenario envisaged above, some solutions can be dealt with in fairly straightforward fashion while others are rather more contentious. The straightforward ones are those for which searches in dictionaries, grammars and corpora produce similar findings, for instance *only if, km far, at the feet of, view on the sea, nature*. It seems hardly worth stressing that the apparently more appropriate solutions are not necessarily the fruit of sounder logic. Nobody would argue, one imagines, that *the river is 50 metres wide* is somehow more logical than *the next town is 20 km far*, that *at the foot of the mountain* makes inherently more sense than *at the feet of the mountain*, that *the 20th century* is more logical than *the XX century*, or that the inversion of subject and verb after *only if* can be successfully rationalized. Frustrating, perhaps, but students can at least draw consolation from the fact that in these cases consistent answers are to be found if good searches are conducted in language resources.

The more contentious solutions are those for which language resources provide contrasting information. This may be from one dictionary to the next, for instance the plural *evidences* is included the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, whereas the *Macmillan Dictionary* and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* discountenance the plural use of *evidence*; similarly, the verb *valorise* (in reality *valorize*) is present in the *Macmillan* but not in the *Oxford* and the *Longman*. Information may also be in conflict (i) between dictionaries and corpora, for example the countable use of *scenery* is absent from dictionaries but moderately recurrent in the *British Web 2007*, and (ii) from corpus to corpus, as described above for the adjective *whole* + uncountable noun, *in the last years, the world war I, in mountains*, and for the countable usage of traditionally uncountable nouns.

It was also pointed out that, by an irony, some examples of questionable usage (for instance *only if* + SV in the main clause, *in mountains, the wonders of the nature*) are probably clearer for most of the intended readers than the 'correct' versions (*only if* + VS in the main clause, *in the mountains, the wonders of nature*). Where does this leave the translator trainer

within the framework outlined at the beginning of this paper (tourist texts from Italian to English where English is the students' L2; international readership mostly comprised of non-native speakers of English)?

As regards the cases I have described as 'straightforward' above, it seems to me that the trainer has little choice but to deem them inappropriate. I write this with some reluctance, as I am heartily sick of correcting *only if* + SV, *20 km far, view on the sea* etc., firstly because over the years I have done it so often, secondly because they are semantically transparent, thirdly because in some of these cases most of the target readers would understand the 'inappropriate' option better, and fourthly because such usage now appears to be part of global English – for instance in the gigantic *English Web 2020* corpus (*enTenTen20*), *km/s far* occurs 2,645 times, the sequence *view on the sea* occurs 333 times, and even *at the feet of the mountain/s* has 66 occurrences. Not to mention the results retrieved by Google – suffice it to say that the combinations *km / kms / kilometres / kilometers far* generate around two and a half million hits. The crucial point here is that if a trainer decides to accept sequences because they turn up very frequently in enormous web corpora or on Google, then s/he will be in the ludicrous situation of having to accept virtually everything (see Stewart 2013, 228-229). Consequently, this cannot be a viable methodology.

With regard to the cases I have described above as 'contentious' (adjective *whole* + uncountable noun, *in the last years, the world war I, in mountains, valorise*, the countable usage of traditionally uncountable nouns), in my view the situation is more complex. They lie for the most part outside resources based on native-speaker input (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, British National Corpus* etc.), but once we begin to move beyond those exclusively native-speaker confines, for example into the uk-domain *British Web 2007*, the situation changes significantly. It is at this point, sadly, that evaluation risks turning into a lottery.

Some trainers will reject these contentious cases outright because they are not sufficiently backed up by native-speaker usage. Other trainers will half-accept them – treating them as minor errors – because though mostly absent from exclusively native sources they do turn up in uk-domain sources. And other trainers will accept them totally for an amalgamation of different reasons: they don't sound too bad, they are perfectly comprehensible (*the whole Europe*), they are very close to native usage (the structure of <u>*the*</u> *world war I* is analogous to the unobjectionable <u>*the first world war*</u>, and *in mountains* respects native-English norms), they fill a gap in native English (there appears to be no exact synonym of *valorise* in English), they can be more flexible than some 100% native counterparts (*in the last years* is temporally more flexible than the uncontroversially native *in the last few years*, which appears to restrict the temporal reference to the last 3-4 years), while the countable usage of traditionally uncountable nouns is part of a massive ongoing process in English and therefore a tolerant attitude is defensible. For this reason, it is advisable for trainers to clarify which parameters they prioritise right from the outset, though of course the choice of parameters will be highly subjective

and will thus differ markedly from one translation teacher to another.

6. Conclusions

This article is concerned with the enormous repercussions that the constantly evolving status of the English language can have upon the way trainers evaluate student translations. In the past I have advocated – in a European context – the use of British English for the translation scenario described in this paper, mostly because it offers a well-documented framework within which to operate, notwithstanding two main reservations: firstly, the patent incongruity of adopting a single variety of English for a global readership, and secondly, the perhaps not so patent incongruity of adopting a native variety of English for a predominantly non-native English readership.

The first of these reservations can be overcome – in Europe but also in many other parts of the world British English is a variety which non-native English speakers have studied from a young age. This, combined with the fact that it is flanked by a wealth of didactic materials, make it a good candidate for the translation classroom. In these respects it has a major advantage over ELF, which has not been taught in European schools and which at the present time still has very limited language resources to support it. The second of the reservations above is, in my view, a far greater obstacle. Why insist on native parameters when both translators and target are prevalently non-native? Why insist on native fluency when so many people around the world communicate successfully with non-native fluency? Why exclude the transparent and inoffensive *the whole Europe, the world war I, in the last years* in the sense of *in recent years* etc. simply because native speakers of English are not likely to produce them?

A cogent modus operandi could be that of allowing non-native sounding usage found with at least moderate frequency (though this too is subjective) in a uk-domain corpus such as the *British Web 2007*. This would at least represent a compromise between an exclusively native-speaker corpus such as the *British National Corpus* and a massive web-based corpus such as the *English Web 2020*. Of course, one could take the view that, within reason, it does not matter which variety of English or which language resources are prioritised, the crucial criterion is that trainer and trainee are clear about which have been chosen. I have subscribed to this position in the past, but the danger is that of requiring trainees to become mere information managers without any real connection to the current world of vocational translation. Truth be told, the situation is something of a muddle, with very different criteria being adopted from one translation classroom to the next. The muddle will presumably persist until such time as the transition towards a truly global language is more or less complete, with most of the world having expertise in a common language. If that common language is English, then this paper will – fortunately – be little more than a quaint historical relic.

Notes

[1] The *British Web 2007*, also known as *ukWac*, is a web-derived corpus assembled in 2007 containing over 1 billion 300 million words from websites in the uk Internet domain. It is a general-purpose corpus with a broad range of text types. The *British National Corpus* contains approximately 100 million words of British English from the late twentieth century. It too is a general-purpose corpus offering a broad range of text types. It contains 90% written texts and 10% spoken. The two corpora have been consulted via *The Sketch Engine*, a corpus manager and analysis software created by Lexical Computing Ltd in 2003, now with over 500 corpora in more than 90 languages. See https://www.sketchengine.eu (Last visited July 15 2021) for further details.

[2] One cannot exclude exceptional cases, for example *there is a wonderful view on the mountain* could in theory imply that the viewer is or was standing on the mountain (i.e., *the view is wonderful when you're actually on the mountain*), but I have not found any occurrences with this meaning in the two corpora, perhaps because in this type of sequence *from the (top of the) mountain* sounds more natural.

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