

Aiic Africa news

MAY 2016

Editorial

Rigueur, créativité et humour

Ce sont les trois mots qui me viennent à l'esprit et trois qualités qui, lorsque nous en faisons nos meilleurs alliés, nous 'sauvent' des situations les plus incongrues et nous confèrent même parfois, le temps d'un dénouement heureux, le statut de héros.

Ces traits apparaissent en filigranes dans les magnifiques écrits de Martyn Swain, Nina Okagbue et Sylvia Amisi.

Martyn passe par la fiction – voire la science-fiction – pour nous dépeindre, avec une originale créativité, la situation extrême dans laquelle pourrait nous mener la mondialisation appliquée sans scrupules à notre profession...

S.O.S. d'un genre particulier. Nina nous relate ici avec beaucoup d'humour l'une de ses premières expériences en qualité de jeune interprète, assurant la liaison dans une situation rocambolesque...

Quant à Sylvia, elle surfe sur les vagues de la poésie pour nous offrir une ode lyrique à la diversité...

Je ne vous en dis pas plus ! Je suis certaine que vous vous reconnaîtrez dans les situations décrites et que vous vous délecterez du talent et du style de nos collègues.

C'est le lieu de vous inviter, vous aussi, à leur emboîter le pas et à nous envoyer vos 'petits papiers'. Nous en raffolons ! Alors, n'hésitez pas à nous faire part de vos expériences, de vos astuces, de vos avis et de vos réactions sur tous les sujets qui concernent notre profession ! Nous pourrions nous en inspirer dans notre pratique quotidienne et en faire également profiter les jeunes interprètes de notre région.

L'Afrique est le continent de l'avenir, dit-on. Pour qu'il en soit ainsi, toutefois, nous devons de nous investir, chacun(e) dans son domaine et à son niveau, pour

poser chaque pierre et ériger ensemble l'édifice commun dans le respect des valeurs qui nous sont chères. C'est dans cet esprit que je vous prie de consacrer un peu de votre temps à au moins une activité aiic afin de faire rayonner notre association et notre région.

Je ne saurais conclure sans saluer la belle initiative prise par nos collègues du Togo de se constituer en association. Je souhaite succès et longévité à l'AICT et à tous ses membres.

Caroll Moudachirou

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Globish Emissions: The New Newspeak

At the aiic Assembly in Addis Ababa at the beginning of 2015, Martyn Swain was asked to moderate the Assembly debate on Language Diversity, and in his response to the address of the keynote speaker, he described an, as yet, fictional, future scenario in which interpreters no longer play the role we are used to playing at meetings we service. This perhaps heretical construct is summarized in the article that follows:

For decades, we had witnessed the apparently unstoppable rise in the dominance of the global language of convenience at international meetings, known as Global English or Globish. The result was that many delegates would come away from meetings which they had been pressured to address in Global English feeling as if they had been wearing an ill-fitting suit, one they were

dying to get out of and get back into the comfy and familiar slippers and baggy trousers of their own language.

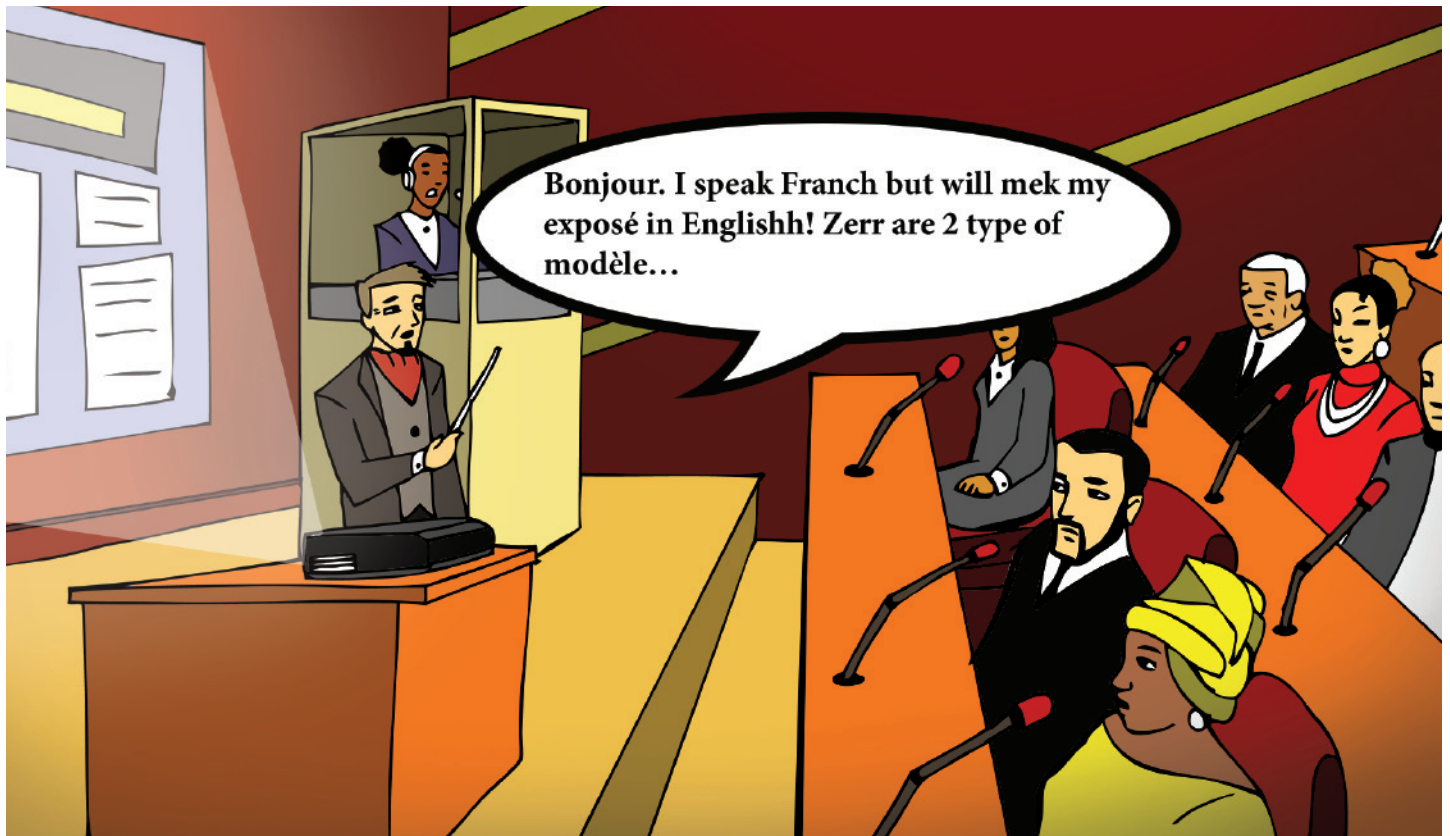
However, little by little, people had begun to resist, complaining that the dominance of Global English was stifling individual narratives and impoverishing the discussions taking place at international meetings to such an extent that few people came away feeling that they had really been heard. For them, Global English had almost become an instrument of oppression, similar to Newspeak in Orwell's 1984.

Unfortunately for the rank and file, many organizations had actively colluded and done away with the practice of using simultaneous interpreters who had been familiar figures at international meetings during the latter part of the 20th century

and the first part of the 21st. However, many interpreters themselves had become increasingly disillusioned with the new practices they had been forced to adopt, such as mediating discussions between people at some remove from the meeting itself, where trying to speak on behalf of people who were not speaking on their own behalf in the first place AND using a lexicon which made the Newspeak of George Orwell's imagining seem like poetry, had become little more than a refined form of self-flagellation.

Eventually, the early stirrings of resistance to Global English, became a tidal wave of opposition. Entire language communities rose up and refused to take part in international discussions unless they were able to speak in their own languages. International organizations





were suddenly faced with a crisis because the simultaneous interpreters they had relied on for so long had retired, booths everywhere had been dismantled and interpreter training schools had been forced to close their doors because of lack of demand for future graduates.

Luckily, however, help was at hand and it came from a not entirely unexpected quarter, namely the community of professionals which had borne the brunt of the impact of the scourge of Global English, the interpreters themselves. The interpreters had known all along that the freedom to speak one's own language was crucial to the formation of identity and to the acquisition and sharing of knowledge, however they also knew that an attempt to revive the practice of simultaneous interpretation at international meetings that had been so prevalent in the last century and the first part of this century, was doomed to failure: it was costly and cumbersome and actually, people did not want someone else to speak on their behalf: interpreters had been regarded

as a necessary evil by many of the users of interpretation. No, a new approach was needed and it was borne of the interpreters' own experience, which taught them that people did not need to speak another language in order to communicate with someone who did not share their language, or indeed, to have what they said, translated. What they needed was to UNDERSTAND what was being said to them in the first place.

A revolutionary new approach to second language acquisition focusing on the acquisition of **fluent comprehension** had been trialed over a number of decades in schools and universities around the world and had been discovered to shorten the time and effort involved in acquiring new languages, AND, had released people from the frustrations and inhibitions linked to speaking, mostly imperfectly, the languages they had learnt.

Now, at the 1st International Conference on Idiodiversity, the experience of these years of learning was being put to the

test. Delegates met across the floor, each having learnt to understand one or two or more of the languages being used. It was a nervous beginning and no-one knew what the outcome would be. In order to reassure participants, a number of former interpreters had been invited to facilitate the discussions in case of misunderstandings or possible errors in comprehension.

So there they were, no longer hidden behind the plated glass but present in the room, not translating, but guiding the discussion, informed by years of immersion in the languages and cultures which they used to mediate in the years when simultaneous, conference interpretation was still practiced.

The meeting opened with a welcome address by the French-speaking delegate, "Monsieur le Président....."

Martyn Swain

Do you like adventure? If so, consider interpretation as a career. At the beginning of your interpreter training, you will refine your natural public speaking and stress management skills.

My introduction to essential skillsets for interpreters came thirty-six years ago last month. Like any interpreter working on the African continent, I was in a plane. However, this flight was a whistle-stop tour to seven African countries in just three days. That day, 17 April 1980, and that plane, a Lockheed Jet Star, turned out to offer a most unusual lesson to the rookie interpreter that I was.

To begin with, this was no ordinary plane. It belonged to President Omar Bongo of Gabon. As such, it was a most sophisticated business jet and the service was impeccable. I had never seen so much champagne at breakfast. Beginners, beware! If you drink, finish interpreting first!

Secondly, this was no ordinary group of passengers. These were Ministers from the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of countries visiting key Presidents from North to South and from East to West. I had already seen the waters of the Blue Nile meet the White Nile at Khartoum; we had landed south of the Ubangi River at Gbadolite Airport for a lavish reception at the African Versailles. Now we were flying from Kenya to Botswana to meet the great nation-builder and first President, Sir Seretse Khama.

We had already landed and taken off countless times over the past few days and this was to be our last port of call. As a result, most of the polite chatter to the person in the adjoining seat had dwindled to a comfortable silence. All the briefing documents for each of the courtesy calls had been used and re-

used. By now, everybody was trying to fall asleep so that they could dream about going home.

There was a 'ping' as the seat belt light went on. There had been no announcement from the pilot about turbulence ahead. Most passengers had gotten into the habit of leaving their seat belts on throughout the duration of the flight anyway. So, we hardly paid any attention. We were not flying high – only at some 15,000 feet (being an interpreter, I had actually listened to the pilot's welcome on board) – but suddenly the engine whir changed tone. We all felt that slight change when a plane slows down and starts to descend. Everybody looked around. What were the flight crew doing?

On came the passenger service announcement, "Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, the captain has put on the fasten seat belt light. Kindly return to your seats and fasten your seat belts."

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs, le commandant de bord vient d'allumer le signal de sécurité, veuillez retourner à vos places et attacher vos ceintures.

This crew was from Gabon. Surely they could explain – in excellent French – why we seemed to be going down? Then the plane started lurching as the nose dipped. Left to right, right to left. Suddenly we were all concentrating on what was going on. In silence. Then there was a crackle of static as the intercom came on.

Interprète! Interprète!

All eyes turned to me. What was I supposed to do? Had we not all been instructed to remain in our seats with our seatbelts fastened?

Interprète! Interprète! Au poste de pilotage.

The plane was now in full nose-dive, it was almost as if we could hear the sound of rushing wind as cabin pressure was changing. Even to get up to the front would require some serious fighting spirit. Vas-y, hissed the head of delegation. My only thought as I tried to clamber towards the front was that I was like a cock being thrown into the pit, head first.

I pushed open the door and tumbled into the flight deck. I had never seen such an array of dials and switches. One pilot was jabbing away at buttons on the radio and the co-pilot was pulling with both hands on the joystick. Both hands??

The first words I heard were: *Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!*

Was I supposed to interpret that into English or French??

I hunched over the pilot. What did he want me to do? What was he saying? And, more importantly, what did he mean??

He whipped his head around from the controls and said, in very fast and very fluent French, something about the fact that the control tower seemed to be trying to tell him – in English – that we were being shot at. Was that possible? he wanted to know. Could I hear the original again? I wanted to know.

Crackle, crackle, hiss, hiss, came the radio.

"Tell them we are not enemy," he shouted. Them, who?

I went into Interpreter 101 mode. Slowly and calmly I asked the pilot:



*Quel est notre numéro d'identification?
Notre position?*

Then, I took the hand-held mike on its long cord from him.

I could hear through the static that I was talking to Zambian air traffic control. Our aircraft was flying across the border between Zambia and Rhodesia. Ground to air fire was coming from border troops defending the Zambezi River and our pilots had been instructed to take evasive action.

Now, another voice came over the radio. Rhodesian air traffic control had identified an unauthorised small aircraft flying across the Zambezi where they and South African Security Forces had lost so many soldiers to black nationalists.

A thick Rhodesian accent was now speaking: "This is Air Traffic control! Salisbury Air Traffic Control! You are to make an emergency landing. We cannot guarantee your safety."

Suddenly, "You are being escorted to Livingstone Airport."

To our left and to our right, jet fighters had appeared out of nowhere. The well-trained Rhodesian army pilots were waving to us from their cockpit windows. Follow us, they seemed to be saying. Did we have a choice?

Qu'est-ce qu'ils disent?

My Gabonese pilots had lost all their English. I interpreted slowly everything that I had heard, keeping my voice even,

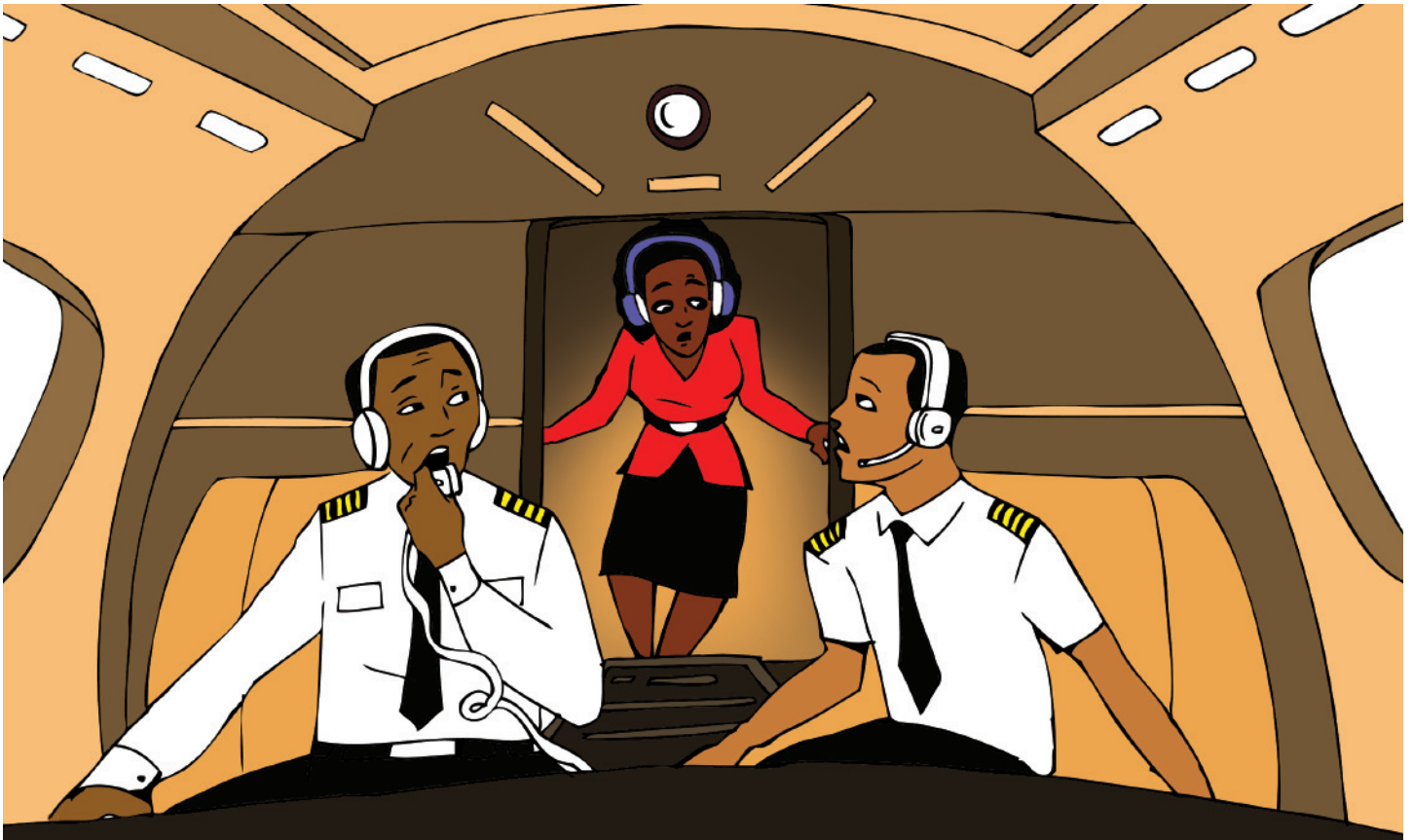
enunciating clearly, reading the relief on their faces. They righted the plane and gave a thumbs-up to their escort.

I stepped back into the cabin, my improvised public speaking opportunity concluded. A salvo of applause went up from the passengers.

We flew for another, lengthy 20 minutes or so, one scrambler jet to the right, one scrambler jet to the left.

Never had a small group of passengers in a plane been happier to hear, "Flight attendants, prepare for landing."

Never had an interpreter been so attentive to the 'blump, blump, blump' of the plane's wheels across each tar strip on the runway. We even had a welcome



crew of hurriedly dressed Rhodesian soldiers, weapons slung across their bare backs in some cases, straddling motor bikes that bounced along with our spinning wheels as we slowed down and finally came to a halt outside a little airport. The pilot shut off the engines. There was a collective exhalation from the passengers when we heard that distinctive sound: 'Boing'. The seat belt light had been switched off.

Once we had our feet firmly on the ground, airport authorities informed us that although the Zimbabwe War of Liberation had been declared officially over four months earlier, Freedom Fighters were still active along the border between what had once been Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia. Perhaps they were now celebrating the fact that white minority rule had successfully been ushered out. Tomorrow, in Harare, Robert Mugabe would become the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe.

This high-level delegation of African Ministers who had entered Rhodesia without permission would have to be turned back. However, given the wind of change blowing over Southern Africa, they begged us not to turn this into a diplomatic incident. Tomorrow was a new day. Today, why didn't we enjoy their hospitality – and accept a courtesy visit to Victoria Falls? We became the first delegation of African Ministers invited, under escort, to cross over to the south side of the Zambezi River. The delegation's interpreter now turned into a tourist guide, soaking wet despite the umbrellas we had been given to shield us from the spray. Shouting to project my voice over the inimitable roar of the awe-inspiring 'Smoke that Thunders' on the border between Rhodesia and Zambia.

I never got to meet Sir Seretse ('The clay that binds') who was to pass away just three months later, nor did I get to see Ian Smith who had unilaterally declared

Rhodesia's Independence. But I did get to see one of the seven natural wonders of the world, the day before the official birth of Zimbabwe.

So, what is your crash course story, dear colleague, for me to illustrate interpretation skills acquisition and share with our students?

NB.

Some people may be wondering why anybody would yell "May Day" when they are in trouble. Here is why:

It derives from the French "m'aidez", pronounced "mayDAY," and means literally "help me."

If you are in distress while flying an airplane, calling "Mayday mayday mayday" over the radio will give you top priority and any help people on the ground or in the air can offer.

by [Athene Airheart](#) May 02, 2004

Nina Okagbue



Aiicers at the Joint UNECA- AUC Ministers of Finance, Economy and Planning Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, April 3, 2016.

Ode to the aiic Afrika Mavericks

*I salute the Afrika Region
Where mavericks are legion
Rarely acquiescing
Oft speaking their mind
Sometimes voicing their dissent
With eloquence on aiic
Be it on the Agreement
The WS, PriMS or grey, blue and green
markets.*

*The Afrika Region abhors homogeneity
It celebrates diversity
Reminiscent of its grandeur
And beautiful, independent minds
Hail to difference
And pursuit of the common good
Hail to candour
That adds a good squeeze of sunshine to
aiic Afrika.*

Sylvia Amisi



LES INTERPRETES DU TOGO DECIDENT DE CREER L'AICT

Une vingtaine d'interprètes réunis le 19 décembre 2015 au Restaurant Vivi Royale à Lomé décident de créer une association, dénommée l'Association des Interprètes de Conférence du Togo (AICT).

Parmi les temps forts de la rencontre-dîner, il y a lieu de retenir la création d'un comité ad hoc devant conduire l'Association jusqu'à sa création formelle, la décision de retenir les tarifs de l'Union Africaine comme tarifs de référence au Togo.

REUNION /FORMATION DE L'AICT

Les membres de l'AICT se sont retrouvés en séminaire de formation le 16 janvier 2016 dans les locaux de Global Excel International à Lomé.

Le séminaire de formation essentiellement axé sur les normes professionnelles a été l'occasion pour les interprètes et aspirants-interprètes de mettre leurs connaissances à jour et d'assimiler toutes les règles régissant l'exercice de la profession.

La première séance facilitée par Eli Amemavor a porté sur l'éthique professionnelle.

La deuxième séance pilotée par Elogo Kumodzi a évoqué les questions de tarification et d'établissement de factures, ses différentes composantes avec, à la clé, une simulation de discussion entre un client et un interprète conseil).

Il faut noter la présence à cette formation d'experts en assurance venus entretenir les participants sur les différents produits d'assurance pouvant intéresser les travailleurs indépendants. Déjà, les échos favorables à cette démarche se traduisent par un nombre important de collègues ayant souscrit à des produits phares comme le CREDUS de la C2A/GTA.

La journée s'est achevée par une Agape digne du savoir-faire des interprètes.

LE COMITE AD HOC A PIED D'OEUVRE

Les membres du Comité Ad Hoc chargé de coordonner provisoirement les activités de l'AICT se sont réunis à cinq reprises à Lomé pour élaborer les projets de textes fondamentaux devant régir l'Association.

VIE ASSOCIATIVE

L'Association étant aussi un cadre d'échanges, ses membres échangent entre eux des glossaires, partagent des informations sur les écoles de formation, les cours de remise à niveau, les stages, les vacances de postes disponibles dans diverses organisations africaines et internationales.

SENSIBILISATION A L'ECOLE ARC-EN-CIEL

A l'invitation de la Direction de l'Ecole Arc-En-Ciel, Elogo KUMODZI s'est rendu le 9 février 2016 dans ledit établissement en vue de sensibiliser et intéresser les élèves des classes de Première et de Terminale à la profession d'interprète. Un compte rendu a été fait au comité ad hoc qui a préconisé la répétition de ce genre d'initiatives à l'avenir.

RENCONTRE AVEC LES PRESTATAIRES DE SERVICES DE LOCATION D'EQUIPEMENTS D'INTERPRETATION SIMULTANEE

Les membres du comité ad hoc, élargi au Conseiller, ont rencontré deux prestataires en vue d'engager avec ceux-ci des discussions devant mener à une harmonisation des tarifs sur les marchés béninois et togolais. L'initiative a été accueillie avec beaucoup d'intérêt par les prestataires déjà rencontrés et elle se poursuivra dans les mois à venir.

Elogo Kumodzi et Kekeli Akwei