

# French polish

## Anne de Freyman and Emma Paulay share their impressions of Translate in Chantilly, an event held over three days in August that impressed on many levels



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### Anne de Freyman reports:

The website said: 'We'll discuss techniques for making texts easier to understand and more enjoyable to read. We'll share strategies on how to make texts sound more naturally English or more naturally French. And you'll take away new skills that will help you win and keep premium clients.' The event took place over three days (3-5 August) in the charming Picardie town of Chantilly, 20 minutes by train from the Gare du Nord in Paris. What was not to like?

Translate in Chantilly was limited to 100 or so participants to ensure maximum benefit for all, organised in two streams (English to French and French to English) and delivered by a team of top translators who had done it so well across the Atlantic that word had got around. The price tag – €900 at the early-bird rate, not including the hotel, evening meals and travel – was a consideration... for all of a few minutes. The value was obvious. The event was a sell-out and I was delighted to find myself in Chantilly with a dozen or so familiar ITI faces.

As soon as I arrived in Chantilly in the scorching heat, having left behind a sun-free Yorkshire summer, I knew I was in for a treat. The venue was Chantilly's famous racecourse, an elegant building with very modern facilities in a stunning setting. Had I needed confirmation that a first-class venue was a must for a first-class event, there it was.

### Idiomatic solutions

Intent on making the most of every bit of the English to French offering, I had the pleasure of attending sessions by the renowned financial translator Dominique Jonkers (check out 'Des

pépites sur le bout de la langue' on Facebook), François Lavallée (author of *Le traducteur averti* and founder of Magistrad), Marc Lambert (translator-reviser, formerly of KPMG) and Réal Paquette (advertising specialist and president of OTTIAQ). All of them put us through our paces and challenged us to always look for more idiomatic French solutions, from using condensed verbs to avoiding strings of 'and', from communicating ideas instead of just translating to finding flexibility in the French language. Marc Lambert's final session on revision was a particular favourite of mine: he

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told us to take the first draft of a translation, look for the broken leg (error), then focus on the minor bruises and work out the cure (the better the cure, the harder it is to back-translate into English).

I asked Emmanuelle Darut, a French translator based in Essex, what she thought of the event. 'I had been waiting for the Québec gang to come to Europe for a while, though wondering about how it would be received by an audience of non-Canadian French linguists,' she said. 'I was pleased to see that we all stumble on the same issues. François Lavallée's 'yoga syntaxique' [an exercise on the flexibility of French sentence structure] was fantastic and stretched our grey matter in a relaxed

atmosphere, encouraging us to dare to share our translations.'

### Translation slams

The translation slams at the start of each day were a revelation. Two and a half hours just flew by, on both occasions. Watching Chris Durban joust with Grant Hamilton and Dominique Jonkers with François Lavallée was definitely educational, inspiring and entertaining in equal measure. The format of one text, two translators (and two screens), a moderator and an audience – plus a healthy dose of humour, camaraderie and humility – seemed to win everybody over. Look out for forthcoming ITI translation slams!

Aside from the actual content, one of the highlights of Translate in Chantilly was spending so much time with like-minded, passionate people – a sentiment echoed by fellow translator Nelia Fahloun, who is based in France and is the coordinator of ITI's International Network: 'What struck me the most was that the participants all attended Translate in Chantilly with the same goal of improving their style and gaining confidence in their writing abilities, in a relaxed atmosphere, with no competition or judgment.'

Has it changed the way I work? Absolutely. I'm questioning my choices and habits much more, but above all, I sit at my desk every day with renewed energy and confidence. Attending such an event means you learn a lot, but you also share your own knowledge and ideas. I asked Sandra Mouton, a freelance French translator based in Bristol, what she'd got from it: 'This was a much appreciated opportunity for hands-on training, and I find myself applying many insights from François Lavallée's workshop on word order and 'yoga syntaxique' to my own translation and editing projects every day.'

During the wrapping up session, Broadway was suggested as a location for the next 'Translate in...' event. However, Broadway will have to wait another year. Just as this year's event was hosted by the Société française des traducteurs (SFT), the 2016 edition of 'Translate in...' will be hosted by ITI, somewhere in the UK. The team responded very positively to an



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**Streamlined: Translate in Chantilly was limited to around 100 participants**

enthusiastic invitation and the wheels are now in motion. Look out for announcements in the new year and keep early August 2016 free.

#### **Emma Paulay reports:**

For the past few years in August I have found myself drooling over the programme of the 'Translate in...' seminars across the pond. Last year, I finally succumbed to temptation and combined Translate in the Laurentians with a holiday in Montreal. I wasn't disappointed: the seminar was excellent in terms of content, company and terrific waterside setting (and I had a memorable holiday, too). So when Grant Hamilton announced in the closing session that plans were afoot to bring 'Translate in...' to France, I was delighted to be able to attend again. Was my enthusiasm infectious? Well, suffice to say that nine translators in our local SFT group enrolled for Translate in Chantilly. Afterwards, I caught up with my colleagues in the French-English stream – David Goward, Miranda Joubioux, Clair Pickworth and Louise Normandière – to ask them for their impressions of the event.

All of us enjoyed the translation slams, in which two accomplished translators each presented their version of a text. Louise Normandière

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said the slam was 'a fantastic concept, something we should all be doing in our local groups. It's a great way of making the idea of displaying your work less scary, gauging yourself and gleaning ideas from others.' To Clair Pickworth it was 'pretty inspirational stuff – but surprisingly reassuring at times, too, when you realised that you were using a lot of those approaches already.' Miranda Joubioux came away with a similar feeling: 'Who would have thought that translation slams between top professionals could teach you so much, making you feel humble and yet reassuring you that everyone has something to offer and we can all learn something from each other?'

#### **Teamwork**

Having attended the literary workshop in the Laurentians, I jumped at the chance to take part in another workshop hosted by an author and translator. Crime fiction writer Dominique Manotti was amazed at our attention to detail. Miranda and I were in the same group and were both equally impressed by the excellent teamwork and the resulting translation produced between strangers. I hasten to add that although both of us work on texts for publication, neither of us are actually literary translators, but the techniques we learned from Ros Schwartz will be totally transferable to our everyday work.

Clair said: 'The trainers were a real treat to listen to, but the interaction between participants was often just as stimulating. It was great to have had this opportunity to get together

with other translators and sit down and discuss the nitty-gritty of our job – not something we get the chance to do very often but we should do more. It's so beneficial.'

#### **International reach**

Several of us appreciated the international attendance and the refreshing opportunity to work with translators from different areas of the world – the US, Canada and Europe. As Miranda said, 'The mix between French and English speakers was also very thought-provoking. Looking at translation problems from both sides can give very valuable insights.'

We also liked the mix of presentations and workshops, and found there was a good balance between listening, learning and hands-on practice. Although the programme was jam-packed, there was ample time to chat and mingle, something we don't always have a chance to do at other events. The table where translators could display their work was a hit with my friends from SFT Grand Ouest. Once they had overcome their initial fear, everyone welcomed the opportunity to show what they do and have a peek at what others produce. As Clair said, there was only one real problem with the event: 'The difficult thing was deciding which sessions to attend, but I have no regrets about the choices I made. I only regret that it didn't last a whole week.'

Miranda added: 'At the end of the day, it wasn't just about learning from professionals, but getting to know each other, making new contacts, working with people you had never met before and enjoying all sorts of discussions related to our profession.'

And just to prove that girls can be gallant too, I will leave the last word to David Goward: 'I found the course refreshing and particularly satisfying as I realised with great pleasure that old dogs can indeed learn new tricks, and that adopting a freer, more idiomatic style of writing is not confined to translators working on journalistic or advertising copy but can be extended to those of us who spend most of our time working on technical documents.'

**Full details of Translate in Chantilly can be found at <http://translateinchantilly.com>.**