



Changes and exchanges: Back and forth in English culture, language and history

An exchange can be succinctly defined as the act of giving one thing so as to receive another. Exchanges are among the most common forms of interaction in day to day life, as they are the favoured means of acquiring anything in nearly all contemporary cultures. Exchanges can take on many forms, they may be deliberate (trade and compensated labour are deliberate forms of exchange, in which a good or currency is exchanged for another good or a service); but they also may be incidental: cultural exchanges, in which two cultures clash and mix with one-another, aren't always done deliberately. This year, Limoges's ITC Master's second year students (class of 2020-2021) have set-out, during this one day conference, to study the matter of exchanges through the myriad perspectives offered by English Studies, taking both the historical, literary, linguistic and cultural approaches to better comprehend how exchanges define and redefine the way we interact with society and the world at large. We have chosen to focus on the English Studies fields of British and American Civilization, English Literature and Linguistics/Translation Studies.

Exchanges between countries, groups and individuals are a fundamental part of every society, and the anglophone world is no exception. This is why one can glean useful insight on the topic within the British/American Civilization framework. World history has been shaped by exchanges, in the form of warfare, commerce, diplomacy etc... The British Empire, as a colonial power and a hub for trade, played a central part in such processes, whereas the United States, the contemporary global hegemon, is the product of exchanges on an international scale, namely immigration from Great Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, Germany or Italy (to name a few). Through the conjoined study of historical, sociological and political factors Civilization lends itself to, one can hope to better understand the role exchanges played in defining the English-speaking world.

The matter of exchanges is also crucial in the study of English Literature. To reiterate, Great Britain's colonial past led to many forms of exchange, the repercussions of which echoed within the entire Anglosphere. This includes mutual artistic influence between colonizer and colonized: the depictions each made of the other, the images and narratives born from confrontation and mixing of various cultures, were central to the evolution of English Literature as both an art-form and an academic discipline. For instance, such topics are particularly relevant to World Literature and Postcolonial studies, two branches of English Literature studies that specifically focus on the influence of cultural exchange on written art. On a broader scale, Literature must be understood as fundamentally intertextual. The great corpus of English writings is effectively a dialectic, in which

every piece, genre, literary movement comes as a response to its predecessors. Literature is, as Bakhtin put it, dialogical, and a dialogue is nothing if not an exchange.

In addition, such exchanges allow speakers of different languages and cultures to interact for a variety of reasons, through foreign language teaching, learning, interpretation and translation, all of which fall under the purview of Translation Studies and Linguistics. Translation itself can be considered as a means of linguistic and cultural exchange, operating at the threshold of two or more cultures and permitting a dialogue, which is itself both cultural and linguistic, between source text and target text. In doing so, the field lends itself to meditations on the translation of the Other and on cultural differentiation. The translator is a facilitator of exchanges, who bridges the gap between two cultures, and sometimes has to go through “negotiations”, using translation strategies, for an effective communication.

From such observations, we have gleaned two core hypotheses:

1: It may be proposed that exchanges are the cornerstone of all societies: in cities and tribes alike, the conceit is that each member relinquishes some of their individuality in exchange for the benefits of living within a collective. This implies a tacit recognition of other members of a society’s value. This, in turn, tends to ease tensions and facilitate cooperation, the need for one another allows for a social contract to be forged. Without mutuality, there is no functional society, and there is no act that makes mutuality as clear and concrete as an exchange.

2: An exchange is, paradoxically, both diversifying and homogenizing. Indeed, the circulation of cultural items, information and products, facilitated by exchanges, births diversity, but once something has circulated worldwide, it becomes universal and, therefore, unifying.

English studies perfectly lend themselves to the application of such hypotheses because of its multidisciplinary nature. Indeed, they are not merely the study of a language, but of the entire Anglophone world, which also includes its history, culture and art. The conceit of English studies is that such elements cannot be approached separately from one-another, they are closely intertwined, part of a greater whole. The discipline is, itself, an exchange, between the fields of Civilization, Literature and Linguistics, from which a more complete perspective on the Anglosphere can be gained. With such things in mind, we’ve chosen, during this one-day conference, using the two aforementioned hypotheses, to tackle the following topics:

- The role of exchanges in the spread of both multiculturalism and the homogenization of culture
- Exchanges and mutuality as the essential language of global and local politics.
- The simultaneously transactional and cooperative nature of exchanges.
- The intricacies of exchange processes, and how they operate in fields such as translation, literature, history etc.

The one-day conference will take place on the video conference software Big Blue Button because of the health crisis on the 11th of December 2020. There are, of course, no entrance fees to either host or attend to any of the conference, as the event is open to the public. We invite anyone, student or professor, from any field pertaining to English studies who might be interested to send their propositions for conference topics up until the 4th of December. The written proposition must contain between 300 and 500 words, and each presentation will be allowed to last up to 30-40 minutes. Please send your proposition at either or both of the following e-mail addresses: flsh-master2-itc@unilim.fr or sofiane.estrade@etu.unilim.fr

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