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Translation in the South African popular media: A case study of YOU and Huisgenoot

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Appendix A: Interview with Dawid Yzelle (*Huisgenoot* Translator): September 2005

Please could you describe how you go about a translation.

The story comes to me from *You*, laid out so I can see the format and how long my translation has to be. I really don't get any instructions as to how I must go about the translation as there is a lot of work coming through and there is no time. However, you can judge what format, etc. the translation must take via the English copy that is sent.

[With regard to the content of the magazines, he said that they are basically the same but the aspects that are not appropriate for the different readerships are not included. Regarding letters, English letters are published in *You* and Afrikaans letters are published in *Huisgenoot*.]

In which language do the articles that you translate, originally appear? What types of articles (and in which language) do you most regularly have to translate?

Sometimes articles are written in Afrikaans and sometimes they are written in English, but more often than not they are written in English. On the odd occasion that they are written in Afrikaans, the articles are rewritten in English (by a rewriter) and then they are given to me. [Julia Viljoen denied that articles were rewritten on a regular basis. She said that most of the articles carried by the two magazines are generated in English and it falls to Dawid to translate them. Some of the regular items – for details of these items, see interview with Julia Viljoen – are generated in Afrikaans and it falls to the *You* staff to translate them.]

Who accepts the translations that you do?

Our assistant editor, Julia Viljoen, accepts my translations and she may change a few things if those items are not appropriate to the *Huisgenoot* readership. They then go to the sub-editor, Dalene Muller.

[Dawid Yzelle was only employed a year ago and before then, the journalists themselves and the sub-editors would do the translations.]

Appendix B: Interview with Dalene Muller (Sub-Editor at *Huisgenoot*): October 2005

Lia Marus: What are the present objectives of *You* and *Huisgenoot*?

Dalene Muller: Regarding translation?

LM: Basically – what do you try and achieve with your translation?

DM: To entertain, and yes, to educate in some sense. Well you know, inform people.

LM: When you say education, do you mean school education?

DM: There is something for learners in the book – there's one article *Jongspan* that's for smaller children. Basically, I think it is to entertain, educate and inform. There are some news articles as well.

LM: Would you say that this would be the same for *You*?

DM: Yes

LM: What is the target audience?

DM: That you would have to ask management but I think it's between 30 and 40 or 35 – 45. You know, I'm in language, I'm not in the marketing section. You'll have to contact someone else there.

LM: If I were to contact someone like Julia Viljoen [Assistant Editor of *Huisgenoot*], would she know that?

DM: Ja. Actually the magazine's for the family, hey.

LM: Middle class, educated, with money to buy the magazine [what I surmised the target audience to be]?

DM: You have to get definite answers there – I know that they do have the figures and age groups.

LM: Who selects the articles?

DM: The editor, the news editor, the journalists, the writers. They bring ideas to a meeting and there they discuss it, you know, so ja. I can suggest something if I feel like it – something topical.

LM: I noticed that *You* and *Huisgenoot* are carbon copies but there are slight differences. What motivates these differences?

DM: That is something you can ask that news editor or Julia because they select and they will know better than me – I'm more of a language person; I'm not involved in the choices of articles – I'm at the end of the chain.

LM: So Julia would be able to tell me why certain articles are arranged in certain places in the magazine?

DM: Ja.

LM: OK, very interesting. I noticed that in *Huisgenoot*, the health column is entitled *Vra die Huisdokter* but the equivalent column in *You* has various health hints and tips. Why is this?

DM: Well I think – because I'm not there long enough – maybe it was because of the history. Maybe some people prefer the doctor or they don't have somebody. I'm not sure about that reason. They [the columns] are slightly different but I don't know how is happened to be like that.

LM: Now, Dawid [Yzelle] told me that certain articles are written in English and certain are written in Afrikaans and the ones that are written in Afrikaans are rewritten in English. My question to you is what kinds of articles are usually written in English and which are usually written in Afrikaans?

DM: Oh, that you can ask the news editor or Julia as it depends, you know, on who has the contacts, you know for say a celebrity, a local celebrity, whose idea it was, was it one of the English writers or one of the Afrikaans writers.

LM: Why are the Afrikaans articles rewritten in English and then translated back into Afrikaans?

DM: I'm not sure if that happens that much, maybe it could be that it's somebody available to shorten it or something like that. Or on the English side, they feel they can use somebody better there or you know.

LM: OK, so it's very much a circumstantial type of thing?

DM: Ja.

LM: Now, once Dawid hands in a translation, where does it go from there?

DM: Julia is, as well as being the Assistant Editor, she's also doing the quality control in the sense that she knows *Huisgenoot*'s style and that's why she rewrites the translations in 'Huisgenoot-jargon' so that there's one person or one person speaking throughout the magazine.

LM: I understand that – it's so very important. So she would determine what changes need to be done, things like that.

DM: Ja.

LM: Does a translator need specific qualifications to be employed by the magazine?

DM: Yes, definitely. They must have some experience, normally you know a B or journalist's degree or diploma. Definitely some experience – they won't take on anyone without experience.

LM: So they don't need to have any translation qualifications as such?

DM: There's a diploma at Stellenbosch but it is not necessary – a B degree will suffice.

LM: Would they have to have Afrikaans as a major?

DM: Not necessarily – if they worked at a newspaper they can start there with a degree or diploma without Afrikaans as a major. It depends on how their language abilities are.

LM: Is Dawid given any instructions before he undertakes a translation – is he given a brief?

DM: I'm not sure about that – normally not. They will tell him not to go over the length of the story.

LM: But not with regards to style

DM: I doubt it – what did he tell you? I think when he started there they gave him some guidelines but I'm not sure about that.

LM: I noticed that you've only recently started to include the "vertaler" on your masthead. When did that start because I've been quite an avid reader of *Huisgenoot* and *You* for sometime and that never used to happen.

DM: When I started there, the translator's name was there. I don't know why [the translator's name only recently appeared on the masthead]. Maybe they spread the workload among the sub editors – I think something like that. Because of the volume

of work, they appointed someone for that task. Sometimes we have to help Dawid out because he can't manage.

LM: Who holds the copyright for the translated articles?

DM: *Huisgenoot* – it's not the translator.

LM: Do you know if the same situation exists with *You*?

DM: In their case, I think that workload is spread among a number of people – I think that is the major difference.

LM: Would you say that articles are also translated on their side?

DM: Yes

LM: Interesting.

DM: I don't know if Dawid mentioned this to you but say if they buy an article from the syndication, something from overseas like something for teenagers like "how to date" or something like that (lifestyle things), we will make it more local. We will change the names, something like that. For example, for *You* or *Drum* they will use a black name and we will use an Afrikaans name.

LM: So that's obviously a cultural type of thing. I don't know if you know this but I noticed that some staff work on both *You* and *Huisgenoot*. Do you possibly know why this is?

DM: OK, say for example the lifestyle editor or something like that or the fiction, they handle all the stuff. They coordinate with the photographers, especially the fiction, short stories, they will liase with the artists to do the illustrations. [From what I understood here, the areas in which staff are common to both magazines are the sections which are the same in both magazines. This ensures the corresponding English and Afrikaans sections are identical as one person manages both of them.]

LM: It's basically the copy that's common to both.

DM: Ja.

LM: OK, interesting. Now, you've just said that *You* gets things translated as well. What types of things would that be?

DM: The sub-editors?

LM: What type of article [gets translated in *You*] because it looks like most of the stuff that *You* gets is originally in English.

DM: Ja, but say for example the food that is generated in Afrikaans I know and décor, what else ... something like "Local is Lekker" – but I don't think that there is an English version of that ...

LM: I think there is the same sort of thing ...

DM: ... but different people. The readers of *You* are not interested in Afrikaans singers. Generally it's the lifestyle things that are written in Afrikaans. That happens all the time.

Appendix C: Interview with Julia Viljoen (Assistant Editor at *Huisgenoot*): November 2005

Lia Marus: What is the target audience for *You* and *Huisgenoot*?

Julia Viljoen: Look, I can't answer for *You* – there are differences. *Huisgenoot* – OK, I can try on *You*. *Huisgenoot* is – the buyers are mainly women. The readers are about 50/50 male and about 60/40 male and female. The target person would be, as a buyer, would be a female of all ages but possibly most likely aged between 25 and 40, in the higher LSM, 9 [that is, category 9]. For *You*, it's 6 – 8 [that is, the target audience falls in the 6 – 8 LSM].

LM: I noticed that, between *You* and *Huisgenoot*, there are certain subtle differences, for example the covers are different ...

JV: Not always

LM: ... also the arrangement of the articles, most of the articles are the same but they are in different places in the magazine. Also, some of the regular columns like, for instance in *You*, for the health column, there are hints and tips for health but in *Huisgenoot* there is "Vra die Huisdokter". Why is this?

JV: In *Huisgenoot* there are also hints and tips but we have the *huisdokter* additionally because he is a feature in the Afrikaans community – he's a bit of a left-over from the old days but we also do run the health tips every week. We have that in addition. He's a well-known personality, he was on television and he is on radio, and so on. It's something we find our readers are more interested in them than the *You* readers, for some reason or other. Bit of a historical left-over.

LM: And what about the different arrangement of the articles in the two magazines?

JV: I'm not sure exactly what you mean ... some of the news articles are placed in a different position?

LM: Ja. For certain topical issues, in the You they are in the front of the magazine but in the *Huisgenoot* they are at the back of the magazine.

JV: That is very difficult for me to tell you off the cuff but it depends on what exactly it is. For instance, we might have the wedding of Jurie Els, which is a much bigger story for *Huisgenoot* than *You*. Then they [the *You* editorial] might put any topical thing in the front. What is the strongest news thing is the determining factor. There will never be anything more topical in the front of *You* and less topical in the back of *Huisgenoot*. It's always – views override everything else. Sometimes, something is more newsworthy in the Afrikaans community than in the English and the other way round. I think more of *You*'s readers are non-white readers and sometimes also some of the things that happen, for instance on television – they might be watching 'Generations' more than the Afrikaans readers so a big star in Generations, would be right up front in *You* – not in *Huisgenoot* because the readers just don't know that much about it. News range, news worthiness [these would be the most important factors determining the arrangement of the various articles in *You* and *Huisgenoot*]

LM: Now, I understand that you are responsible for accepting the translations that Dawid Yzelle [the *Huisgenoot* translator] does.

JV: That is correct.

LM: When would you change a translation that he has done and when would you not?

JV: I change it so that it's for readability and for, you know, for grammatical corrections and so on. It's most unusual that we would leave out something [here, she is referring to the same articles appearing in both magazines], in fact I can't think when we would really do that. The issue is that it's more for a completely difference audience [here, she is referring to the fact that the selection of articles for both magazines is done in accordance with the interests of the two magazines' readers]. What I'm doing is seeing that it's a good, understandable read and if I think that the article hasn't been constructed well in English, I will rewrite it and very often they will then also pick that up on the *You* side. We work together so that we can get out the best product.

LM: I learnt from Dawid that articles that are originally written in Afrikaans are re-written in English and he translates them back into Afrikaans. Why is this done?

JV: Is this what Dawid told you? That articles are written in Afrikaans, rewritten in English and that he translates them back?

LM: Ja, where articles are written in Afrikaans.

JV: That might have happened exceptionally once or twice because of a staff crisis like someone who is supposed to be working on our side is sick or something like that. But I would discount that – that doesn't generally happen. What usually happens is that things are written in Afrikaans, generated in Afrikaans, rewritten on this side and then they go over to the English side. Quite a lot of stuff is generated in English and then it might be that he translates it and then I might actually tweak it on this side. I think what he's talking about might have been a very exceptional thing.

LM: Is he told to translate in a specific way or adopt certain *modus operandi* for his translations?

JV: Being a good translator is a combination of things. But I will say that when I read it I should not be able to detect in any way that it was originated in English. It means that it has been well-translated in a magazine [that is, for a magazine]. He should obviously stick to the facts, he should convey whatever – I sometimes say to him "Think of yourself as a reporter. What you're getting in the English is like an interview and you are asked to translate the soul and the heart of it but you should stick to the facts". It should also read like Afrikaans. For example, you don't translate "I was as mad as a bee because of that" [literally] – you don't translate it like that. You translate it like "Ek was so woedend ek was uit my stand uit". You want to translate what they convey – you are not allowed to actually start putting in you own stuff there. You're in rigorous service of the copy. Possibly, on the *You* side they rewrite it but I wouldn't know. If you think it's not a very good article, and you have some good ideas, I suppose you can do that [rewrite it slightly]. But as far as I'm concerned, Dawid translates – he's not a writer, he's a translator. Sometimes we do

give things to translate to people who are actually creative writers – [when] we find the article is a bit boring [in the ST] and we want them to spice it up a little bit.

LM: Who did the translation before Dawid was employed?

JV: They were done by various members of staff – journalists. We didn't have a full-time translator – it just became, the load became too much. Before it used to be that this [*Huisgenoot*] was the generating engine and they [*You*] were just translating but the balance has shifted considerably.

LM: So I would assume that that is why *You* doesn't have a translator on their side because I would imagine ...

JV: They were all appointed as translators in the first place. Their writers were appointed on the understanding that they would be handling copy coming in from *Huisgenoot.* Some of them lately have been appointed to actually write but originally that whole editorial staff were appointed as translators.

LM: Dalene [Muller] said that some of the regular items, such as the food, are generated in Afrikaans. Which other regular items are generated in Afrikaans?

JV: Food and décor are all done in Afrikaans. The promotional stuff – I'm not sure what they're doing these days – sometimes they write in Afrikaans and sometimes they write in English. Depends on if they are Afrikaans speaking. For some reason or other, the regular stuff is generated more in English with the exception of the lifestyle stuff [*Wensrespte, eetsaam, vir die huis* are all generated in Afrikaans]. Fashion and Beauty are always generated in English as Pépé [the person responsible for these columns] is English. 'Spot On' and 'Stars' are also in English. I'm not sure about "Have you Seen and Heard". I know that there is one Afrikaans and one English writer working on that. *Jongspan,* I think that's generated in Afrikaans. *Local is Lekker* is Afrikaans. The *blokraaisel* [and related articles] are obviously in Afrikaans. *Blaarkuns* is only ours. *Geldsake* – the money column is also generated in Afrikaans. We have our own agony aunt. Technotalk is English. The TV programs are translated as far as I know – the TV stuff is all done in English.