



FACOLTÀ DI STUDI UMANISTICI

Lingue e culture per la mediazione linguistica

Traduzione

LESSON 3

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Topic of this lesson

- Another aspect of pragmatics
- Malinowski's context of situation & context of culture
- Participants, background knowledge, extra-linguistic environment, speech situation
- Hymes 1972
- Halliday 1985/1989



Introduction

- From the role of the translator to CONTEXT
- Language is influenced by dynamic elements present in its socio-cultural context:
participants in the speech act, topic & setting
(together with the addressee's goal & communicative purposes)
- Example: the use of *ciao* -> hello or goodbye?



Context

- A frame of reference
- How should we interpret “He delivered a punch?”
- Disambiguation of textual elements as crucial to understand the whole text and to translate it
- Co-text: con-text, the context of words and sentences that go with the text, an interrelationship and interaction between sentence elements, the linguistic context



- Context of situation: the extra-linguistic context, the total environment beyond the text
- Example: ALT – Halt or Stop? Same function of the text (warning, injunction) but diverse context and thus diverse translation
- Malinowski (1923) – a study on a group of a South Pacific islanders: intimate links to cultural background – how to render them in English? Free translation, literal translation, **translation w/ commentary** -> texts w/in their environment, -> immediate situation + cultural background
- -> see videos



<https://www.annabellelukin.com/malinowski.html>

- Primo video:

13.00-20.33

21.33-22.24

23.16-23.58

- Video 2

0.00-0.40

1.22-1.32

- Video 3

9.33-12.20

17.00-19.30

- Video 4

3.00-3.48

19.40-20.00



Context of culture

- Awareness of cultural differences and similarities
- Culture: the personal development, the knowledge of a country's history & institutions, the sociolinguistic & anthropological sense: socially conditioned aspects of human life (Ulrich 71)
- The definition of the Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Semiotics (Sebeok 1986 in Ulrich 71)



“Culture is the totality of the signifying systems by means of which mankind, or a particular group, maintains its cohesiveness (its values and identity and its interaction with the world). These signifying systems comprise not only all the arts (literature, cinema, theatre, painting, music, etc.), the various social activities and behaviour patterns prevalent in the given community (including gesture, dress, manners, rituals, etc.), but also the established methods by which the community preserves its memory and its sense of identity (myths, history, legal systems, religious beliefs, etc.)”



Language is an essential part of culture -> in terms of translation? Culture's influence/ reflection on people & lg

- CULTURAL RELATIVISM, Franz Boas and Malinowski
- SAPIR, 1921: *Language an Introduction to the Study of Speech*, the first monograph of linguistics which connects language use and culture

'Language is a guide to social reality'. Language influences society / language is the expression of a society.

Linguistic habits shape experience

Every language and every community are a separate reality

1. Sapir Whorf, THEORY OF LINGUISTIC RELATIVITY AND DETERMINISM

'No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached'

Extreme version: language determines the way speakers think (Hatim&Mason). **The problem of translatability:** if each language had a completely distinct reality encoded within it, how could a work be translated from one language to another?

Moderate version: Cultural Turn + translator as a MEDIATOR



Sapir/Whorf hypothesis: the principle of language relativity & translatability: ≠ perceptions of reality through lg that shapes thoughts (≠ ways of conceptualising reality) and impossibility to translate (ex., the egg yolk v il rosso dell'uovo, infanzia v infancy)



LOTMAN : Primary Modelling System [languages] e
Secondary Modelling System [arte e letteratura].

Languages are embedded in their cultural systems, and
cultural systems have language at their core

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR TRANSLATORS? You can't work
on a text (= you can't understand it AND recreate it)
unless you know the cultural context in which the text
was generated

BILINGUAL + BICULTURAL EXPERTS



- *Langue*: the system
- *Parole*: the linguistic activity, the personal use of *langue*

When we translate, we work on *parole*

Translatability according to:

2. Chomsky:

- surface structure: what the speaker expresses and produces;
- Deep structure: the rules that, combined, shape the utterances or the texts. Rules are universal (language universals)
- any meaning can be transmitted from one language to another because the universals are shared and the surface structure can be reproduced

3. Lyon: lexical distinctions tend to reflect important cultural features of the society where the language is spoken.

Translatability depends on the degree to which the **text** is **culture-bound**

Translatability is to be assessed at TEXT LEVEL



2. Chomsky's opposite view: principle of lg universals -> any meaning can be transmitted from one lg to another: recoding of surface structures from ST to TT + semantic structure of ST intact in the TT (non-linguistic)
3. Lyon in the middle -> lexical distinctions < culturally important features of objects, institutions & activities of society -> translatability of a text < the degree to which it is embedded in its own culture – ± culture-bound



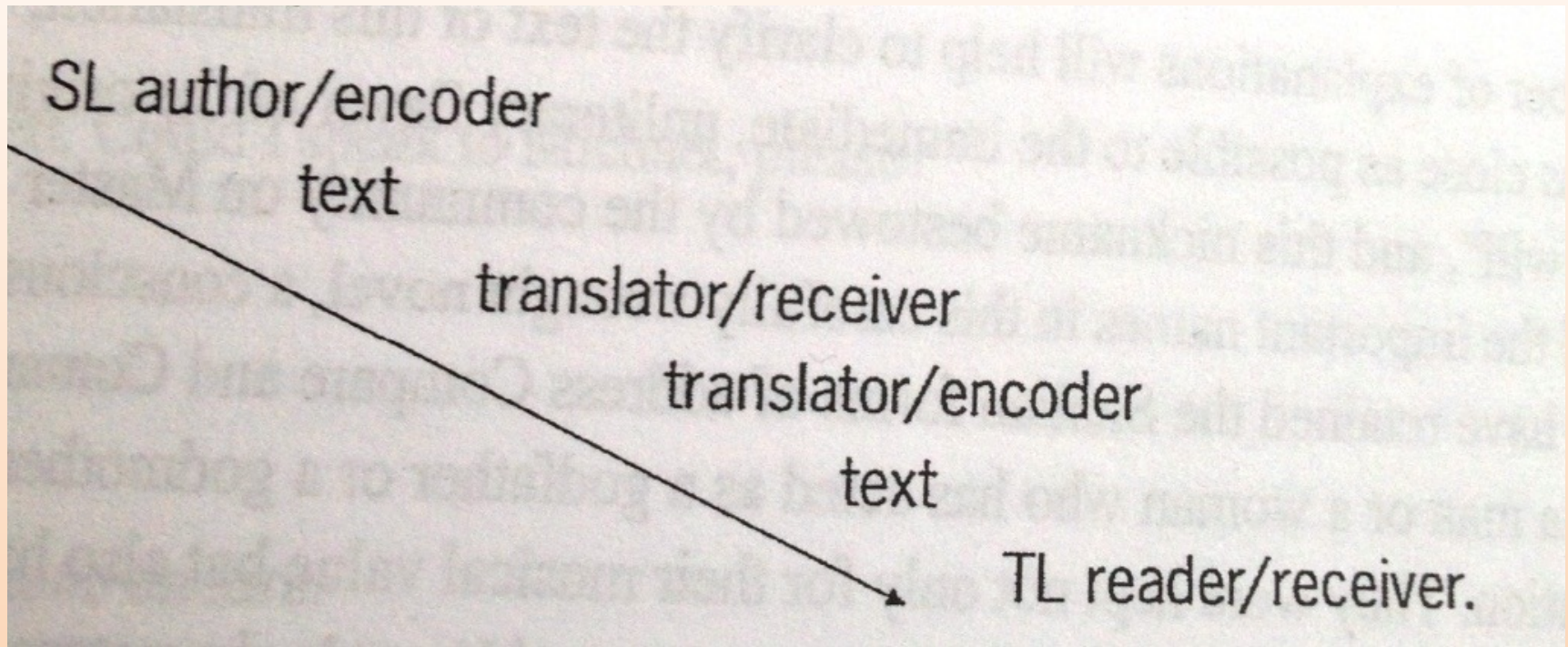
Thus,

- Discourse genres (expressive literary text v informative/apparently informative texts)
- Vocative texts – adaptation to TL culture
- Stereotypes (Irish/Carabinieri)
- Sliding scale of translatability: discourse genre of the TT + SL cultural bond



In terms of translation,

- Difficulties < differences in situational features v cultural backgrounds (*deities*) – pragmatic equivalent; cross-cultural behavioural patterns (*tamponamento, Buon Appetito, drinking wine*)
- Degree to which the meaning of a text is deemed translatable -> at text level -> compensation



- Bilingual, bicultural
- cultural clash
- equivalent effect
- footnote or note



Context of Situation

- Language use/context of situation: J.R. Firth (1950s-1960s) -> linguistics as the study of meaning in terms of how lg functions in context
- Variables: the participants, the verbal and non-verbal action, other features, the effect of the verbal action
- Hymes's variables: the form and content of the message, the setting, the participants, the intent and effect of the communication, the key, the medium, the genre, the norms of interaction



Nord: internal factors (language) +
external factors – related to the communicative situation

1. Who transmits
2. What for: intentions and effect? The receiver does not know the intentions, only the effect
- 3. To whom: ideal reader?**
4. By which medium: channel, written or spoken?
5. Where: criteria related to the place of production and reception
6. When: diachronic perspective
7. Why: the communicative situation, style, register
8. With what function



Hymes's communicative competence

Utterances must be both linguistically correct and appropriate to the socio-cultural context: linguistic competence + ability to use & interpret lg appropriately with reference to the social context -> more than grammatical competence to communicate effectively in a language + how language is used by the members of a speech community to accomplish their purposes (*Prego*)



- *Potrebbe passarmi quel libro, per favore?*
- *Prego.*
- *Grazie.*
- *Prego.*

"Could you pass me that book, please?"
"Here you are".
"Thank you".
"You're welcome".

- *Potrebbe passarmi quel libro, per favore?*
- *Prego?*
- *Vorrei che Lei mi passasse quel libro.*

"Could you pass me that book, please?"
"Sorry?"
"I said, 'Could you pass me that book?'".



Four kinds of judgment:

- 1- Whether (and to what degree) something is formally **possible**
- 2- Whether (and to what degree) something is **feasible**
- 3- Whether (and to what degree) something is **appropriate** in relation to the context in which it is used
- 4- Whether (and to what degree) something is actually **performed**



1- **possible**

2- **feasible**

3- **appropriate**

4- **performed**

- 1- Something possible within a formal system is grammatical
- 2- Something reasonable to say and unambiguous (e.g., two sisters were reunited after 8 years at a checking counter)
- 3- An act of communication which is pragmatically effective (appropriate in different contexts)
- 4- Co-occurrence (collocations): patterning in language; idioms; proverbs: too many cooks spoil the broth; by and large; by hook or by crook.....



Thus,

- There is a linguistic phenomenon + a communicative event
- Translator's communicative competence: linguistically correct messages, appropriate to the context of situation & the context of culture (*Pronto?*)



Register and the variables of language:

Systemic Functional Linguistics in text analysis

- Halliday: language as the exchange of meanings in interpersonal contexts
- Connection between situation and language
- Different languages for different purposes
- Language, a part of the social system and therefore subject to two types of variation: according to the user – in accent, dialect, not entailing variation in meaning, and according to the use, which causes variation in meaning.
- Register variation, whereas with register he meant language spoken at a particular time, influenced by what the participants are doing there and by the ongoing social activity



- Through register we relate the functions of language – ideational, interpersonal and textual – with those aspects of the situation in which it is being used, the structure of its context – the field of discourse, the roles of tenors, and the mode of communication.
- Different things and meanings according to the social activity
- Registers tend to reflect conventionally-accepted types of discourse, which mainly differ in grammar & vocabulary



The field of discourse

- What (event, activity), what the participants are doing w lg (in space & time), what (the subject-matter) & what the participants know about it (shared/unshared knowledge)
- > technical, scientific, legal, institutional registers
- Identification of the field of discourse through lexis & grammar

How to detect field: experiential metafunction



1. Check the lexical items:

- semantic domains: which discipline do the lexical words refer to? (more than one answer possible)
- Specialisation: how well-known are the lexical words to a general audience and to a specialised audience?
- Process and circumstance types: in a news text about terrorist attack, a large proportion of the participants will refer to terrorists and a large proportion of the processes will refer to acts of terrorism



Tenor: interpersonal metafunction

- the roles we take up (student, parent, customer, employee) and our relationships with others in any particular situation: **What kind of person the author is, or is presenting himself/herself to be**
- status, level of expertise, age, ethnic background, and gender of the participants: **What kind of people the expected audience are.**
- Language choices will vary according to such factors as how well people know each other, how frequently they meet, and how they feel about each other. **What the relationship between them is, or what relationship the author is presenting it as.**

Tenor: interpersonal metafunction



- easiest to analyse in spoken conversations: all speakers are present and participating.
- more difficult to analyse in written texts: the author is anonymous and the recipients are not present.

Tenor in interactive texts (typically spoken)

- Relative status (equality, inequality): the terms of address used (“Mister’ vs Robert), who chooses the topic of conversation, who chooses who speaks.
- Social distance (familiarity, friendliness): presence of formal or informal vocabulary, slang. Ex.: “I’ve got a lump” (colloquial), “I’ve developed a lump” (formal). Contractions: “I’ll” (informal) instead of “I will” (formal); given names, nicknames, pet names indicate closeness, formal names indicate distance.



Tenor: interpersonal metafunction

Tenor in non-interactive texts (typically written):

- **Personalisation** (how much attention is drawn to the writer or to the reader) and also the related technique of deliberate impersonalisation.
- **Standing**, or how much the author comes across as possessing expertise and authority on the subject.
- **Stance**, or how much the author allows the reader to disagree with the content. Stance breaks down further into:
 - Attitude, revealing whether the meanings communicated come across as negative or positive. Also the topic of agency and affectedness is mentioned here as a technique used to trigger attitudes.
 - Modality, which breaks down into: Epistemic modality (how much the content comes across as being true). Deontic modality (how much obligation to do something the text seems to put on the reader).

Tenor: interpersonal metafunction



Tenor in non-interactive texts (typically written):

- **Personalisation** (how much attention is drawn to the writer or to the reader) and also the related technique of deliberate impersonalisation.
- Directives (“Click here to...”, “Don’t panic”)
- Rhetorical questions (“What’s a girl to do?”)
- Questions seemingly coming from the reader or from another, imagined participant.
- Personalisation can be used:
 - To position the audience as agreeing, thereby making it difficult for them to disagree. Ex.: “Surely you of all people see that Darwin’s theory of evolution cannot explain human nature.”
 - To create a feeling of solidarity between the author and the audience (“we”).
 - To create a feeling of intimacy.
 - To create an impression of the interactivity of a one-to-one conversation (“pseudointeractivity”)
 - To make the reader feel like they are physically present in a situation.

Tenor: interpersonal metafunction



Tenor in non-interactive texts (typically written):

- **Standing**, or how much the author comes across as possessing expertise and authority on the subject.
- Does the writer come across as being in a position to criticise or give praise?

evaluative expressions: EX. when describing an existing state of affairs, a neutral expression (e.g., “feature”) vs an evaluative one (e.g., “weakness”).

An adjective may be inserted into an otherwise neutral expression : “the fragile bond of trust with the mainland” instead of just “the bond of trust with the mainland”.

Criticism and praise may be given in less obvious ways : it is an example of the tenor being manipulated deliberately.

- Does the writer come across as being in a position to tell other people what to do? imperative sentences (very obvious) + meanings involving obligation and necessity (less obvious), for example “will have to”, “can no longer afford”, “should”, “must”.



Tenor: interpersonal metafunction

Tenor in non-interactive texts (typically written):

- **Stance**, or how much the author allows the reader to disagree with the content. Stance breaks down further into:
 - Attitude, revealing whether the meanings communicated come across as negative or positive. Attitude is typically realised in text by:
 - Lexical choices : “peril”, “lost” and “feared” carry negative meanings for most people so the author is using them to construct a negative attitude
 - Evaluative expressions

How to detect attitude:

“The government’s behaviour was disgraceful”: ASSERTED A. OPENLY MENTIONED

“After nine years of the government’s betrayal, (Main argument follows.) ”: ASSUMED A., mentioned as if they were truths

“Even though Fred’s father is very old, Fred only visits him once a year” TRIGGERED A. Syntactic manipulation of two facts (old age + Fred never visits)



Tenor: interpersonal metafunction

Stance, attitude and affectedness

if a certain event is constructed with a certain attitude by a text, the participants who have **the most agency** in the event also tend to be viewed with **the same attitude** by a typical reader

Different degrees:

“demonstrators were shot at by the police”, “the police” have agency.

“shots were fired by the police”, “the police” have some agency but not as much

agency of a participant can be further manipulated:

- Shot passives, e.g. “shots were fired” (as opposed to “shots were fired by the police”).
- Nominalisations, e.g. “the 1970s saw several factory closures” (as opposed to “in the 1970s, the company management closed several factories”).
- Ergatives, e.g. “several mines closed” (as opposed to “several mines were closed”).



Tenor: interpersonal metafunction

Tenor in non-interactive texts (typically written):

- Stance and modality
- Modality, which breaks down into: *Epistemic modality* (how much the content comes across as being true). *Deontic modality* (how much obligation to do something the text seems to put on the reader).

Modality is usually expressed by:

- **Modal verbs.** There are nine of these in English: “can”, “could”, “may”, “might”, “shall”, “should”, “will”, “would”, “must”.
- **Semi-modals,** for example “had better”, “have (got) to”, “ought to”, “be supposed to”, “be going to”.
- **Various lexical word classes,** for example the verbs “need to”, “be obliged to”, the adjectives “definite”, “possible” and the nouns “certainty”, “likelihood”

Tenor: interpersonal metafunction



Indicators of Epistemic modality are:

✓ Modal verbs:

1. “will” = certainty (strong epistemic modality)
2. “would” = probability based on a hypothetical condition
3. “must” = deduced to be fairly certain
4. “may”, “might”, “could” = possibility (weak epistemic modality)

✓ Modal adverbs (“definitely” = strong epistemic modality, “possibly” = weak epistemic modality)

✓ Modal adjectives, often used in the pattern “It is definite/possible that...”

Indicators of Deontic modality (the amount of obligation, permission or necessity)

“have to”, “must”, “had better” = strong obligation 2. “ought to”, “should” = obligation 3. “need to” = necessity 4. “be supposed to” = weaker obligation



Summarising ...

- The role relationship between the participants in the communicative event -> level of lg formality < social situation & status of the participants
- Joos's levels of formality (1961):
 - Frozen
 - Formal
 - Consultative
 - Casual
 - Intimate



In terms of translation,

- Degree of formality:
 - Formal (much/many, first/firstly, moreover/furthermore, in addition, however, as/as to)
 - Neutral,
 - Informal (a lot of, to start with, on top of that, what's more, anyway/anyhow, talking about)
- Degree of familiarity (social status, rank, politeness)



- The use of Mr. with a Christian name
- Attitude & stance of the addresser
- Use of modality: modal verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns, verbs + hedging (caution)
- Modal verbs: **epistemic modality** (attitudes & opinions regarding the truth or reality of a proposition) v **deontic modality** (some kind of control over actions & events)
- It+passive+that-clause & personal subject+passive+infinitive constructions. Ex. it has already been claimed that they will improve v they have already been claimed to improve



- Writer's stance (assertive, tentative, committed, detached) expressed through attitudinal adverbs: admittedly, certainly, evidently, doubtfully, fortunately, frankly, obviously, naturally, surely, surprisingly, etc...
- The appropriate semantic area must be activated in the TT
- Ex.: *dovere, potere*



The mode of discourse

- The part lg is playing in the situation, the medium (written, spoken, etc.) & the channel (dialogue, essay, lecture, etc.)
- Register: how meanings are activated, how lg functions in a given situation -> the translator must reconstruct the context through field, tenor & mode
- Register: a continuum
- Restricted languages, fixed registers, conventionalised expressions -> easy to translate



- Spontaneous conversation – not totally free
- The translator:
 1. Reconstructs the context, identifies the register -> a framework for ST analysis -> how? What (field), who (tenor), medium (mode)
 2. Then, s/he will be able to relay the intended message appropriately in the TL



The mode: textual metafunction

- prototypical spoken texts (such as a face to-face conversation) -> high interactivity
- Prototypical written texts (such as a scientific journal article) -> no signs of interactivity at all.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- The presence of terms of address
- The presence of attention catching words, such as “look”
- The presence of questions and answers.



How to detect mode: textual metafunction

- Whether the text seems to have been produced on the spot, that is without an opportunity to edit or correct it.
- whether it seems to have been produced off-line, when it is possible to edit and correct it
- Intentionally vague language if the vagueness concerns information which can be found in the shared environment.
- Discourse markers, for example: 'Anyway' to indicate return to another topic. 'Right' to indicate desire to move to another topic.



Dialect

- Lg variation according to the *user*
- Who and what the user is: geographical varieties (regional dialects – function and effect?), social varieties (social dialects), temporal dialect (SENSITIVITY TO LANGUAGE + CREATIVITY; Function + coherence) & idiolect (an unconscious style)
- Dialects: phonological, lexical & grammatical variation, not semantic
- Phonological differences are of marginal importance to the translation of written texts (but spelling, vocabulary & grammar)



Geographical dialect

AmE v BrE

Spelling, grammar, syntax, vocab & punctuation

- Spelling:
 - ✓ -am v -amme (program, programme)
 - ✓ -er v -re (center, centre)
 - ✓ -o- v -ou- (color, colour)
 - ✓ -ize/yzē v -ise/yse (analyze, analyse)
 - ✓ -s- v -c- (offense, offence)
 - ✓ -l- v -ll- (traveling, travelling)
 - ✓ -og v -ogue (dialog, dialogue)



- Grammar & syntax:
 - ✓ Use of articles (in summer, in the summer; in future, in the future; at the end of the term, at the end of term)
 - ✓ Beginning now/from now on v in future
 - ✓ In the future v at some point in future time
 - ✓ Prepositions (different than, different from)
 - ✓ On sale (at a discounted price v for purchase)
 - ✓ Pronoun reference (*one* mixed v *one* mandatory)
 - ✓ Get, got, gotten v get, got, got



- ✓ Accommodations v accommodation
- ✓ Adverbs & prepositions (afterward, afterwards; toward, towards)
- Vocabulary:
- ✓ Ivy League / British Honours degree or A-levels (no correspondence, cultural divergence)
- ✓ University systems
- ✓ Monosemous words (garbage, rubbish)
- ✓ Polysemous words (faculty)
- ✓ Words with different meanings (chips, crisps)



- Punctuation:
 - ✓ Quotations, inverted commas and full stops
 - ✓ Expression of time – colon v full stop
- Sometimes the equivalent effect is rendered through the regional dialect instead of the social one
- Which dialect's function? The intended effect inherent in the dialect, a potpourri of dialects



Temporal dialect

- Variation along time
- New items: coining an equivalent in the TT or paraphrasing (ecoterrorista v animal-rights activist)
- How to translate? Who has commissioned the translation? What is their purpose?



Idiolect

- The most individual user-related variety of lg
- At a particular time in life
- Frequently-repeated words, structures & favorite expressions
- Sometime difficult to establish the idiolect's uniqueness
- Linked to style: style comprises a conscious choice for a particular effect, the idiolect unconscious expression of an individual's personality