



FACOLTÀ DI STUDI UMANISTICI

Lingue e culture per la mediazione linguistica

# Traduzione Lingua Inglese 1

## LESSON 8

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a.a. 2022-2023





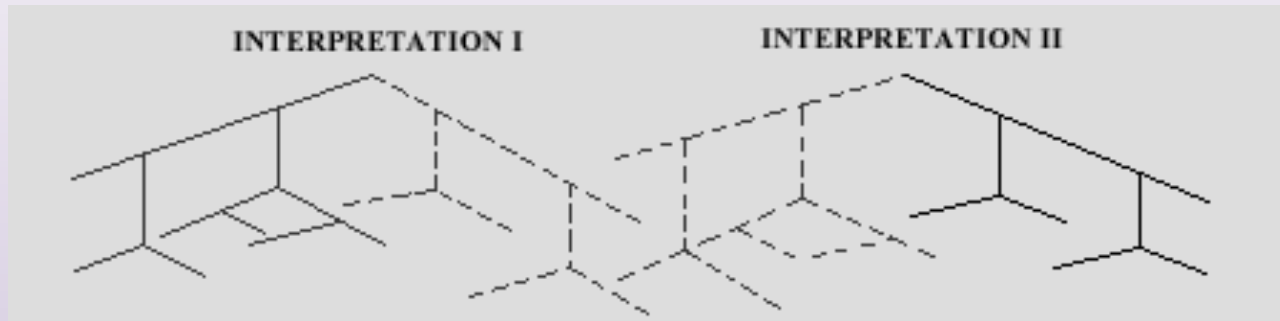
# Translation as a decisional process

[http://courses.logos.it/IT/4\\_5.html](http://courses.logos.it/IT/4_5.html)

[http://courses.logos.it/IT/4\\_6.html](http://courses.logos.it/IT/4_6.html)

- TRANSLATION = transfer of info with consequent NEGOTIATION: losses and compensation techniques
- Levy: 'Translation as a decision process' (1966).
- Translation as a game: consecutive situations where the translator has to decide their next move.

# Traduzione e teoria dei giochi



Various alternatives possible:

The choice depends on meanings, style, author's poetics

The more limited the range, the easier the choice (Levý 1967)

The next moves depend on and are influenced by the previous decisions and the reasons behind those choices

THE CHOICE IS RARELY A BINARY ONE



# Steps needed for an appropriate translation

## 1. Analysis of the ST

Spatio-temporal coordinates, textual and contextual factors

Defining the DOMINANT [ *«The dominant may be defined as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure»* (Jakobsón 1987, p. 41) ]

SO: understanding the message

## 2. Mental transfer of the message

## 3. Re-construction of the source message into the TL



# Christiane Nord's Text Analysis in Translation (1988/2005)

- **Documentary translation** 'serves as a document of a source culture communication between the author and the ST recipient' (Nord 2005: 80).

For example, in literary translation, where the TT allows the TT receiver access to the ideas of the ST but where the reader is well aware that it is a translation.

- An **instrumental translation** 'serves as an independent message transmitting instrument in a new communicative action in the target culture, and is intended to fulfil its communicative purpose without the recipient being conscious of reading or hearing a text which, in a different form, was used before in a different communicative situation' (p. 81).

the TT receivers read the TT as if it were written in their TL . The function may be the same for both ST and TT.

For instance, a translated computer manual or software should fulfil the function of instructing the TT receiver in the same way as the ST does for the ST reader.

# Christiane Nord's Text Analysis in Translation (1988/2005)



- External factors
  1. The intended text functions (documentary or instrumental)
  2. The addressees
  3. The time and place of text reception
  4. The medium (written – oral? same media, different cultural functions)
  5. The motive (intention + effect)



# Malone, J.L., The Science of Linguistics in the Art of Translation, 1988

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES: Malone provides a list  
of 9 strategies applicable at the lexico-  
grammatical and structural level.

(Cfr. Taylor C.CUP, 1998, pp. 47-64)

(Elena Manca, University of Salento)



# Malone's strategies

- MATCHING: EQUATION & SUBSTITUTION
- ZIGZAGGING: DIVERGENCE & CONVERGENCE
- RECRESCEENCE: AMPLIFICATION & REDUCTION
- REPACKAGING: DIFFUSION & CONDENSATION
- REORDERING

(Also see Chapter 6 & 7 from Ulrich's 1992 Translating Texts).



# EQUATION

## One-to-One Equivalence

Element in the ST translated with its closest correspondence, 'direct'.

Ex: uomo  $\Rightarrow$  man, dog  $\Rightarrow$  cane (se unless other ideological or connotation issues arise)

## Abundance of:

- loan words (baseball, lasagna, software)
- Calques (dribblare, crossare, loggare)

Equation is rare in long string of texts; only in small groups of contiguous words.

Despite this, it is the preferred method: one should translate using the 1:1 correspondence, unless other semantic or stylistic reasons force to do otherwise.



# COGNATES

- Possible traps of this strategy:  
cognates/false  
cognates
- C.: words that look similar and have similar meanings (cfr. Ulrich 271-274)

*dizionario*—dictionary  
*farmacia*—pharmacy  
*intelligente*—intelligent  
*mercato*—market  
*museo*—museum  
*necessario*—necessary  
*oceano*—ocean  
*onesto*—honest  
*stazione*—station  
*teatro*—theater



# FALSE COGNATES = FALSE FRIENDS

words that look alike in two different languages but have different meanings

*camera*—room (NOT a device for taking photographs)

*candido*—clean, spotless, innocent (NOT candid)

*confetti*—sugar-coated almonds presented at weddings (NOT small pieces or streamers of colored paper that are scattered around)

*crudo*—uncooked (NOT crude)

*fastidio*—annoyance, boredom (NOT fastidious)

*genitori*—parents (NOT genitals)

*libreria*—bookstore (NOT library)

*magazzino*—store, warehouse (NOT magazine)

*parente*—relative (NOT parent)



# PARTIAL COGNATES

- Direttore v Director
  - Manager, Managing Director or CEO – Chief Executive Officer (Amministratore Delegato)
  - Newspaper: Editor
  - School: Headmaster, Principal (US)
  - Orchestra: Conductor



# The example of REALTA'

l'arte come imitazione della realtà = art as imitation of nature

la realtà è dura = life is hard

la sua malattia è una realtà = her illness is genuine

progetti che diventano realtà = plans which are realized (come to fruition)

spesso la realtà ci sfugge = often we don't see things as they really are

ha il senso della realtà = he's realistic

bisogna tenere in considerazione la realtà locale = we must keep local needs in mind

As we can see, English often has to resort to more specific terms, to circumlocutions, to paraphrase and at times to zero translation, e.g.

la realtà del mondo della moda = the world of fashion



# SUBSTITUTION

## An item is replaced with another item

- Grammar level: The Italian 'di' replaces the English Saxon Genitive
- The Italian subjunctive can be replaced by an English infinitive: *Farò in modo che si interessi ...* - *I'll try to get her to .....*
- Proverbs, **signs**, **warnings** require substitution on a semantic level "The straw that broke the camel's back" = "La goccia che fece traboccare il vaso"
- Cultural relocation: Caffè – Espresso; Waffles – Frittelle; Cupcake – Bigné; Bertrand Russel – Alice in Wonderland



# At the rhyme and sound level

At the beginning of the Walt Disney Pictures version of 'Alice in Wonderland' (1951), Alice is given a song to sing, all about 'Cats and Rabbits'.

Diligent translators will provide compensatory mechanisms in their substitutions. The third verse of the song goes:

There'd be new birds  
lots of nice and friendly howdy do birds  
everyone would own a dozen blue birds  
within that world of my own

Gli uccellini  
sempre allegri, affabili e carini  
canterebber l'aria di Puccini  
in quel mio mondo ideal

Much liberty is taken in translation: the third line has been clearly 'substituted'. The reasons for the change are not merely linguistic (there are questions of rhyme, of scanning and of cultural relocation) but it can be seen that from the very beginning linguistic fidelity had to be rejected in the interest of a greater good: the entertainment of children.

Translation by cultural substitution (adapted from Baker, M. In Other Words, Elena Manca, University of Salento; also cfr. Unlrich)



**A culture-specific item or expression is replaced by a target-language item** which does not have the same propositional meaning but it is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader.

The main advantage of using this strategy is that it gives the reader a concept with which s/he can identify, something familiar and appealing.



The translator will use this strategy according to the degree of freedom s/he will be granted by the editor/publisher/customer and to the translation purpose.

On a more general level, this choice will be influenced by the translation conventions & norms prevailing in a given community, i.e., deviating from these norms

# Example A: Source text (A Brief History of Time – Hawking, 1988)



A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russel) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: ‘What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a **flat plate** supported on the back of a giant tortoise’. The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, ‘What is the tortoise standing on?’ ‘You’re very clever, young man, very clever’ said the old lady. ‘But it’s turtles all the way down!’

*A little old lady at the back of the room* is an English stereotype of someone who is charming but tends to get the wrong end of the stick

# Target text (back-translated from Greek)



**Alice in the Wonderland** was once giving a lecture about astronomy. She said that the earth is a spherical planet in the solar system which orbits around its centre the sun, and that the sun is a star which in turns orbits around the centre of the star system which we call the Galaxy. At the end of the lecture **the Queen** looked at her angrily and disapprovingly. ‘What you say is nonsense. The earth is just a **giant playing card**, so it’s flat like all **playing cards**,’ she said, and turned triumphantly to the members of her retinue, who seemed clearly satisfied by her explanation. **Alice** smiled a superior smile, ‘And what is this **playing card** supported on?’ she asked with irony. **The Queen** did not seem put out, ‘You are clever, very clever’ she replied, ‘so let me tell you, **young lady**, that this **playing card** is supported on another, and the other on another other, and the other other on another other other ...’. She stopped, out of breath, ‘The Universe is nothing but a **great big pack of cards**,’ she shrieked.

cultural substitution: characters which are familiar and interesting + image of a chaotic absurd world, which is particularly appropriate in this context.

Example B: Source text (*The Patrick Collection* – a leaflet produced by a privately-owned museum of classic cars).



The Patrick Collection has restaurant facilities to suit every taste – from the discerning gourmet, to the Cream Tea expert.

Target text (Italian)

... di soddisfare tutti i gusti: da quelli del gastronomo esigente a quelli dell'esperto di **pasticceria**

In Britain, *cream tea* is 'an afternoon meal consisting of tea to drink and scones with jam and clotted cream to eat. It can also include sandwiches and cakes.' *Cream Tea* has no equivalent in other cultures. The Italian translator replaced it with 'pastry', which does not have the same meaning (for one thing, *cream tea* is a meal in Britain, whereas 'pastry' is only a type of food). However, 'pastry' is familiar to the Italian reader and therefore provides a good cultural substitute. (Elena Manca, University of Salento)

## Example C: Source text (Italian – Gadda, ‘La cenere delle battaglie’)



Poi, siccome la serva di sue piani sotto la sfringuellava al telefono coll’innamorato, assenti i padroni, si imbizzì: prese a pestare i piedi sacripantando “porca, porca, porca, porca ...”: finchè non la ismise, che non fu molto presto.

Target text (English: ‘The ash of battles past’):

Then, because the servant-girl two floors down was chattering at the telephone with her young man, her employers being away, he lost his temper: and began to stamp his feet, bellowing ‘**Bitch, bitch, bitch ...**’ until she gave up, which was not very soon.



*Porca* is literally the female of *swine*. A translator's footnote explains that the Italian word 'when applied to a woman, ... indicates unchastity'. *Bitch* represents a straightforward cultural substitute. Although the literal meanings of *porca* and *bitch* are different, both items are used chiefly for their expressive value. Their literal meanings are not relevant in this context.



# DIVERGENCE

**A relationship one to many:** the equivalent is chosen from a potential range of alternatives

There may be a limited number of alternatives, e.g.

*cream* = panna or crema

or a bewildering selection, e.g.

*girare* = to turn, to switch on, to pass on, to twist, to go round, to avoid, to tour, to travel, to endorse, to invest, to shoot, to spin, to circle, to wind, etc.

Nipote ⇒ nephew, niece, grandson, granddaughter

# DIVERGENCE: the example of the Italian SEMPRE and NIENTE



Viene **sempre** di venerdì  
*He **always** comes on Fridays*

Il Parma preme ma la Juventus è **sempre** prima in classifica  
*Parma are putting on the pressure but Juventus are **still** top of the table*

Non ho **niente** da dire  
*I have **nothing** to say*

**Niente** male!  
***Not** bad!*



# DIVERGENCE: grammar level

more than one construction may be acceptable:

*Se dovesse succedere*

If it should happen

Should it happen

Were it to happen

If it were to happen

The translator aims at making the right choice according to purpose & style



# CONVERGENCE

## A relationship many to one

- tu
  - Lei
  - voi
  - loro
- You

Commercialista  
Ragioniere  
Contabile

Accountant

(but also

Registered/Chartered  
Accountant)

Advertising, advertisement, ad, advert, commercial, spot, publicity -> pubblicità



# AMPLIFICATION

- The **addition of some elements to the source text** for greater clarity.

**Ex.** Swansea is the birth place of Dylan Thomas – S. è il luogo di nascita *del poeta DT*

Frequent in specialised/ academic publications as a support to full comprehension

‘Callaghan still needs to find two more votes before tonight’s division’  
⇒ Callaghan deve trovare altri due voti prima della *votazione per divisione di questa sera + [n.d.t. ]*

But also dependent on collocations in the TL

Best before ⇒ da consumarsi preferibilmente entro

iron ⇒ ferro da stiro

- The most obvious form of Amplification is the translator’s **note**, be it in endnote, a footnote or a **bracketed addition** following the item itself.



# REDUCTION

**The omission of elements in the target text**

because they are redundant or even ambiguous.

Omission of realia or compromising excerpts  
(censorship)

- Carta geografica: map
- Three-toed sloth: bradipo
- Esporre in modo visibile: display (Tim Parks 1994)
- Vietato sporgersi dal finestrino: do not lean out
- Many rings on his fingers: diversi anelli



# DIFFUSION

**A source text item is expanded but no extra information is added**

It is a matter of linguistic elements, not content

- Magari! -> If only I could or Would that it were! or I wish that were the case!



# DIFFUSION: FURTHER EXAMPLES

Italian subjunctive and conditional usage can express a wide range of meanings, often requiring diffusion in English translation.

Required with conditionals: *La banda avrebbe rapinato altre tre banche* requires the use of a conventional passive voice expression of the type  
-> *The gang is alleged /said / reported to have robbed three other banks*



# DIFFUSION: FURTHER EXAMPLES

Similarly, the common use of the imperfect form of the Italian verb 'dovere' in clauses such as

- *Doveva arrivare alle tre* needs diffusing to *He was supposed to arrive at three o'clock*
- Consiglio  $\Rightarrow$  piece of advice



# CONDENSATION

**A source text is contracted without omitting any layer of meaning.**

- The target text expression is linguistically more economic. English is reputed to be shorter & more economical than Italian.
- *a buon prezzo, a buon mercato = cheap*
- *far vedere = to show*                      *BUT*
  
- *to look at = guardare*
- *to make up = inventare*
- *to make up for = compensare*



# CONDENSATION:

- *Lo scandalo suscitato dai risultati del rapporto del Ministero dell'Ambiente sull'inquinamento dell'aria.*
- Environmental Department Air Pollution Report Findings scandal
- *Il nuovo libro di Dan Brown, autore del Codice Da Vinci*
- Da Vinci Code author Dan Brown's new book



# DIFFUSION VS CONDENSATION

- Diffusion and condensation are economic procedures : the TT is shorter than the ST
- We can also add IMPLICITATION: omission of REDUNDANT INFO  
EX. Be sure the iron is unplugged *from the electrical outlet* before filling with water ⇒ TT  
staccare sempre la spina prima di riempire il ferro d'acqua.



# REORDERING

It requires the translator to **operate basic inversion procedures** with, for example, adjective-noun sequences or verb-object positioning.

The way words are repositioned in the co-text. The syntactic rules in the metalanguage lead.

- collocations:

Black and white ⇒ bianco e nero

Testa o croce? ⇒ heads or tails?

Something strange happened ⇒ È successo qualcosa di strano.

- *white horse / cavallo bianco*
- *(tu) mi piaci / I like you.*



# HOWEVER

***Pressione alta*** is the correct translation for medical ***high (blood) pressure*** , but not in the meteorological sense where ***banks of high pressure*** have to be rendered by ***alta pressione***.

# REORDERING: further examples



While Italian will typically front a verb phrase, for example, when an intransitive verb is used to introduce a new phenomenon into the discussion - e.g. *è successa una disgrazia* -, the English version of such clauses is usually the typical subject-verb structure: *something terrible has happened*.

# REORDERING: further examples



- ***Non è ancora giunto il tempo***
- *The time has not yet come / It is not yet time*
- ***Spuntò una donna alla svolta***
- *A woman appeared from round the bend /  
There appeared a woman from round the  
bend*
- ***Apparve dal nulla un uomo con in mano una  
borsa di pelle marrone***
- *A man with a brown leather bag appeared  
from nowhere*



# REORDERING

The **English passive voice** may be rendered in Italian with:

- Its **passive forms**: **è amato da tutti** / He is loved by everyone
- an **impersonal si** construction: **i risultati si possono vedere** / results can be seen; **si pensa che molte persone siano intrappolate sotto le macerie** / many people are thought to be trapped under the debris;
- an **active form using verbs with impersonal agents** whose nominal or pronominal identity never appears: **mi hanno detto che** / I have been told that

# Translation using a loan word or loan word + explanation



This strategy is effective when coping with culture-specific items, modern concepts, and buzz words.

The use of a loan word followed by an explanation is successful when the word is found several times in the text. Once introduced, it may be used freely.



# Translation by ellipsis or omission

This strategy may sound rather extreme and free, but in fact the omission of a word or expression, which is not particularly relevant in some contexts, aims at easing the development of the text, making it less ambiguous, less heavy and clearer for the reader.



# Culture-specific associations of words

Some associations of words (collocations) mirror the cultural setting in which they occur. If the cultural settings of the SL and TL are diverse, like with culture-specific words, the translation may need some changes



Translators cannot opt for accuracy of meaning relaying each word from the ST to the TT.

Words may be used differently from one L to the other. Thus, we can't use *double-ends hair*, *harmed hair* or *for hair which is dry, of weak structure or liable to breaking*.

We can use *dry, oily, damaged, permed, fine, flyaway, brittle*, and so on.

Context and collocations matter!