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# *Cultus*

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL  
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

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TRANSCREATION AND THE PROFESSIONS

2014, Volume 7

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# CULTUS

*the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*

## TRANSCREATION AND THE PROFESSIONS

2014, Volume 7

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ICONESOFT EDIZIONI – RADIVO HOLDING  
BOLOGNA

## CULTUS

*the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication*

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## FOREWORD

It is with much pleasure that we introduce volume 7 of *Cultus*, which is aimed at capturing the role of the translator in an era where new trends in the market, the use of technologies and machine translation, seem to blur the edges between both professionals and amateurs involved in the field. The circulation of buzzwords such as transcreation and its semantic siblings (marketization, multilingual copywriting, transliteration to name but a few) reflect this confusion and uncertainty about the future of translation as a discipline and as a profession.

This year's issue focusses on *transcreation* in particular, a term which is primarily today related to the computer and video game industry, and seems to be more frequently used in sectors such as advertising and sales which deal with the conveyance of emotions. If transcreation is not a straightforward localization process what does it then imply? Does it imply that word-for-word translation is not enough to render affective language one culture into another? At the other end of the creative spectrum, what are the problems and opportunities raised by the use of technologies in translation? These and many others are the issues discussed in the opening conversation between the two scholars **Yves Gambier** and **Jeremy Munday**.

Translation technology tools are the main topic of **Cristophe's Declercq's** study as well, which looks at these as an essential added value in training courses for professional translators even though, as he himself underlines, IT still remains a peripheral topic in academic discussion on the world of translation.

By analysing statements from transcreation providers, **Daniel Pedersen's** contribution offers an overview of the definitions of transcreation mainly seen as adaptation of a message from one language by recreating it in another language. The paper shows that this process is used almost exclusively in advertising and marketing where texts require large amounts of creativity. He notes that translation proper is perceived as transferring words from one language to another, while transcreation implies something more. As he puts it, transcreation transfers brands and messages from one culture to another.

This added value of creativity, seen an intrinsic factor in transcreation, is shown in the following paper. The authors, **Jing Fang** and **Zhongwei Song** illustrate the commercial case of Australian health product brands

translated into Chinese. By investigating particular lexicogrammatical choices made by the translator the authors show that the Chinese version conveys “a toned-up impression of the products” with respect to the English source text. This study further confirms the efficiency of the functional grammar approach to comparative studies of translation in that it accounts for the reasons behind those ‘transcreating’ choices.

With the next two papers we move into the field of dubbing. Branding is still the theme of the paper written by **José Dávila-Montes** and **Pilar Otero**. They studied audio-description and decision-making strategies when branded objects are involved in cinematic scenes, especially objects that go beyond their mere physical or narrative function. Taking semiotics as their starting point they note how much is lost when ‘translating’ the text for the blind, given the importance of the branded objects in the context. The second point they note revolves around the moral dilemma a transcreator would have foregrounding (and hence further promoting) brand names. **Serenella Zanotti**’s contribution to dubbing lies in the discussion of a case study - Young Frankenstein – to highlight issues of agency and creativity. She notes that once the original film script was translated, it underwent a large number of further revisions, transcreations, during the recording process with the specific aim of increasing the humorous effect of the translated dialogues.

The last two papers shed light on transcreation in the realm of media translation. **Denise Filmer** concentrates on interviews with correspondents for Italy who work for British newspapers, pursuing the objective of uncovering journalists’ translation practices in the British press. Interviews are mingled with discussions of Berlusconi’s taboo language. Her results clearly show that it is the untrained ‘journalator’, to use her term, who is often responsible for the translation of highly important political language, which the reader then takes on trust. Yet, the journalists interviewed were not ‘translators’ nor did they use any professionals. To what extent the journalator effectively transcreates is a moot point.

**Cristina Caimotto**’s overview of the case of the Italian comedian Daniele Luttazzi, who plagiarized the works of some famous American comedians, contributes to the debate on copywriting, while also discussing cultural and political implications in the target culture of the use of satire. Caimotto clearly shows how the jokes were transcreated from the American culture to make them highly relevant and affective for the Italian audience.



We hope that the insights gleaned and the reflections inspired by the variety of contributions in this issue will be relevant for all students, practitioners, researchers and translators and invite them not to disregard ‘transcreation’, which has been around and has been both more affective and effective for more than we thought.

*Cinzia Spinzi*

## Introduction

*David Katan*

### **Uncertainty in the Translation professions: time to transcreate?**

This issue focusses on two principal areas: uncertainties in the translation profession and transcreation; with transcreation being tentatively suggested (see Katan, forthcoming) as a possible solution to this uncertainty. The uncertainties themselves are legion, first and foremost because it still remains to be shown that translation is indeed a profession (Katan 2011). Many of the classic signs of a profession are not yet in place, and may well never will be, such as: an accepted school (or schools) of theory and practice; a national register of certified practitioners; national laws regulating the practice and safeguarding clients from malpractice, and so on. Also, clearly a sign of a profession is the increased payment given to those who are more qualified, along with public recognition of the worth of a professional translator's creative abilities – which translators do not appear to have (e.g. Katan 2011: 149). We know for a fact that certification and legislation is unlikely to make a significant impact in the near future, partly because in the handful of areas where there is some form of regulation, there has been no discernable difference to translator status (Katan 2012), and also because (based on anecdotal evidence only) successful translators themselves are not keen on certification, as this would reduce their own individually gained status.

The crucial importance of translation has often been made clear, and lies at the heart of the Union of the 24 (and counting) languages that are safeguarded through the European Commission's translation service, and repeatedly vouched for.<sup>1</sup> But it was only in 2007 that the EU itself, moved 'translation' out of its grouping with 'secretarial activities'. This economic

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<sup>1</sup> In 1993 at a conference of literary translators Umberto Eco said "The language of Europe is Translation" (Buekenhout and Vonck, 2012 : 9) and this phrase has since been used by many at the EU to emphasise the importance of translation, such as the president of the EU, Romano Prodi on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2004 at the Interpreters' School, Trieste (personal comment); reiterated in 2010 during the Belgian presidency (<http://www.eutrio.be/language-europe-translation>)

grouping clearly labelled translation as a form of copying, at the same level as secretarial work, transcribing and typing, along with “envelope addressing, stuffing, sealing and mailing” (in Katan 2004: 2).

However, translation theory (and specialized academic training) has developed at a pace. Also, the traditional claim that translators are underpaid is being, at least questioned, by new figures becoming available from a 2<sup>nd</sup> global survey regarding the status of the translator.<sup>2</sup> Partial results (169 respondents) of the global survey of freelance translators shows that most earn more than the national average, with a peak of nearly 50% earning up to twice the national average, and then just under 5% earning up to five times the national average.<sup>3</sup> Though this is good news, the same translators (as Declercq notes in this issue) are not convinced that the future is healthy.<sup>4</sup>

Why this is so, what is going on, and who actually is involved, when text is produced in a second language—especially the creative part (hence ‘transcreation’) - is the subject of both this current issue of *Cultus* and *Cultus* 8. We will start by focusing on what was referred to as “the elephant in the room” at a recent *Translating Europe Forum*.<sup>5</sup>

#### *The first elephant: automatic translation*

Google Translate is already, for free and in real-time, translating more than human translators are. Though the quality is uneven, it is often “good enough”. And, as we go to press, Skype announces “the first phase of the Skype Translator preview program. [...] Skype Translator will open up endless possibilities for people around the world to connect, communicate and collaborate; people will no longer be hindered by geography and language.”<sup>6</sup> So, now, officially, the much discussed automatic interpreter

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<sup>2</sup> The survey was organized, and results analysed, following that of the first survey, available at [download2.hermes.asb.dk/archive/download/Hermes-42-7-katan\\_net.pdf](http://download2.hermes.asb.dk/archive/download/Hermes-42-7-katan_net.pdf), and update (Katan 2011).

<sup>3</sup> This figure includes 10% with less than 1 year’s experience and over 20% with 20 years’ experience. The larger group results of 418 (those who translate and interpret) show a very slight shift to higher earnings, with 45% at twice the national average and just under 10% with up to 5 times the national average.

<sup>4</sup> Of the 432 respondents (translators and interpreters) 51% were unsure as to whether there would be more or fewer jobs by the year 2025, and 30% who were convinced that there be at least a loss.

<sup>5</sup> [http://europa.eu/newsroom/calendar/events/2014/09/18-translating-europe\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/newsroom/calendar/events/2014/09/18-translating-europe_en.htm)

<sup>6</sup> <http://blogs.skype.com/2014/12/15/skype-translator-preview-an-exciting-journey-to-a-new-chapter-in-communication/>

extensively tested by the US (Zbib et al 2014) mainly for military use in Afganistan and Iraq is now freely available for all 24/7.

Only months before this announcement, at the *Translating Europe Forum*, a (not so tongue-in-cheek) date was given for the year in which the plug could be pulled out of translation training - and translation as a profession. Mikael Johansson, from the European Commission's translation department, said "Imagine a field of wheat. Somewhere in the background you hear a noise: it's a farmer with a big harvester who just cuts down the wheat, six-meter rows at a time. In 2027 we will have reached the end of the field."<sup>7</sup>

Both Jeremy Munday and Yves Gambier (in this issue) agree that machine translation is revolutionizing the market – though they are confident that translation studies (and translators) will be guiding the machines. It is mainly a question of highlighting “that a patient undergoing robotic-assisted surgery would need a highly competent and creative surgeon behind the robot”. However Declercq (in this issue) points to what he sees as a yawning – and ever increasing gap between translation training, professional translators and the reality in the market. He also underlines the existence of a further elephant, in his section on “Free and open worlds”, which Gambier (this issue) also points to in his juxtaposition of crowd and cloud. Interestingly, the global survey mentioned earlier so far has few respondents who see this as a major threat. In fact ‘machine translation’ comes in at 4<sup>th</sup> place (14%, 60 replies) as the major threat, compared to nearly a quarter (24%, 101 replies) who agree that price dumping is the number one threat to the profession.

#### *The second elephant: Crowd Sourcing amateurs*

The second major issue affecting professional translators is the use of social media, which prides itself in encouraging interaction rather than passive reception; and is also geared to creating virtual communities and networks. This new area was exploited by the fansubbing groups who collaborated to translate Japanese *manga* cartoons (originally adding their own subtitles to videotape) in the late 1980s. These fan communities now race to provide the first (and best) subtitled translations of favourite foreign TV programmes, using much more sophisticated but user-friendly cloud-based software. In Italy, for example, as Casarini (2014: 88) relates,

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<sup>7</sup> Push technology: why online translation may be Googling interpreters out of a job. <http://www.dw.de/push-technology-why-online-translation-may-be-googling-interpreters-out-of-a-job/a-17979947>

there is intense competition to produce subtitles between ItaSA (Italian Subs Addicted, [www.italiansubs.net](http://www.italiansubs.net)) and Subsfactory ([www.subsfactory.it](http://www.subsfactory.it)). ItaSA boasts over 400,000 active members and offers subtitles for 730 shows, while the more recent Subsfactory provides subtitles for 296 shows. Though the professionals tend to distance themselves from the amateurs, and their amateur ways, both Munday (this issue) and Casarini (2014) point to the fact that they are now also learning from the amateurs' more creative ways. Indeed, what transpires is that the quality genuinely improves through the 'wisdom of crowds' (Surowiecki 2004):

the fan community pools its knowledge because no single fan can know everything necessary to fully appreciate the series. [...] Collective intelligence expands a community's productive capacity because it frees individual members from the limitations of their memory and enables the group to act upon a broader range of expertise. (Jenkins 2006: 139 in Casarini 2014: 52)

The major social platforms were not slow to capitalize on this phenomenon (Declercq: this issue, Katan: forthcoming), which leads us to elephant number 3.

*The third elephant: creative non-translator translators*

There are 3 distinct groups here (professionals, amateurs and volunteers). Partial results<sup>8</sup> from the 2<sup>nd</sup> global survey show professionals to perceive the threat to their profession (along with price-dumping) as coming principally from the unqualified amateur 'cowboys' (23%), and then (19%) by the 'professional others' (those who are specialists in the area with some knowledge of the language). The volunteers come 7<sup>th</sup>, last in the list with 3%.

However different the potential threats, they all highlight the same basic issue at the heart of what makes a translation professional a professional: fidelity to the text, perceived by the majority of professionals as one of the two most basic defining feature of professionalism<sup>9</sup> (see also Katan, 2011, forthcoming). As noted in Munday and Gambier (this issue), non-professional translators are allowed, if not encouraged, to be creative - while professionals are not. This is not an area that professionals are

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<sup>8</sup> 421 replies from a mixed translator/interpreter group.

<sup>9</sup> Out of 478 replies, 61% agreed both that 'professionalism' involves "accuracy and fidelity to the source text" and that the "target text reads like an original text".

interested in pursuing, but which plays perfectly into the hand of Declercq's utilitarian approach to translation - mainly due to the fact that the very thrust of machine translation and the rise of 'translational cyborgs' (to quote Munday's citation of Cronin) must necessarily be based on meaning evincible from the text (rather than the context), and on some form of robot- friendly predictability.

As Jing Fang's article in this issue shows, when given freedom, translators can and do intervene on the text, adding their own understanding of the context to provide a final new language version. However, more often than perhaps we would like to admit, the translator does not. And, the dangers are plainly spelled out in Dávila-Montes and Orero's article (this issue), where they show very clearly how much is potentially lost when a translator accounts only for the text. They give the example of audio dubbing. The end-user will only have access to the audio channel (a close transposition or translation of the written, with some additional text for extra sounds, tone of voice and general visual description). Clearly a great deal of information, ideas and meaning will be implicit in the detail of the visual along with a strong aesthetic dimension.

In the film analysed, *The Devil Wears Prada*, the translator/audio-describer did not 'translate' the context, leaving the blind spectators literally in the dark as to when, where and on whom *Prada* and other fashion symbols were visible on the screen – except when explicitly commented on in the text. As far as translation theory is concerned, this form of audio-description follows a pre-cultural turn approach. Susan Bassnett's (1980/2002: 23) seminal book, which heralded a new approach to translation warned that:

In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his peril.

Unfortunately, this element, of accounting for the context, still goes against what is considered professional for the profession. Even more worryingly, this gap is being filled more than adequately by other professionals, amateurs and volunteers (see Katan: forthcoming). In the latter two cases, the 'translators' are not fettered with professional guidelines, while in the former case the professional translator is often employed to provide a 'faithful translation', which is then treated as a first draft before the more creative changes are made by other non-translation professionals.

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Serenella Zanotti (this issue), for example, discusses what she calls the genetic approach, whereby film scripts metamorphose from (in this case) English into the final audio script heard in Italian. The translator is part of the process, but as she concludes, “in dubbing the translator may well be left out of the creational part of the process”. Indeed, the translator is but the first stage in the process, encouraged through pressures on time and money on the one hand and professional constraints on the other to provide a fairly close translation of the original. The translation then leaves the translator’s control, and is adapted by a series of other people directed by the “dialogue adapter”, who then takes the credit for the translation.

But things can get even more extreme where, though translation is clearly the key to understanding, there is no professional translator to be seen. Denise Filmer (this issue), for example, investigates how foreign news is often ‘translated’, using the specific example of the translation of Berlusconi’s (infamous) words. The people responsible for the authenticity of the translations, which created diplomatic concern well beyond Italy’s borders, was left to what Filmer calls “journalators”, journalists with a spattering of the language who use a do-it-yourself approach, phone a friend, or if necessary have “an assistant”. What is potentially worrying about this approach is that non-professional translators have more credibility than professional translators. In this particular case, diplomatic protocol was bound to be breached however Berlusconi was translated; his outbursts are expected to be “beyond the pale” (in Filmer) and offend.

In other cases, such as the Iranian president’s inflammatory statement, echoing Ayatollah Khomeini’s belief: “Israel must be wiped off the map”, the outburst has much more serious consequences. According to Arash Norouzi (2007), Ahmadinejad’s exact words in Farsi were: “Imam ghoft een rezhim-e ishghalgar-e qods bayad az safheh-ye ruzgar mahv shavad”, and can be literally translated as: Imam (Khomeini) ghoft (said) een (this) rezhim-e (regime) ishghalgar-e (occupying) qods (Jerusalem) bayad (must) az safheh-ye ruzgar (from page of time) mahv shavad (vanish from). Or rather: “The Imam said this regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time”. There is no allusion to the annihilation of state of Israel, and be destruction the Jewish state, but to the current Israeli government. And, equally clearly, there was certainly no professional translator in charge.

We will probably never know who was responsible for the translation, but more to the point, as Norouzi continues: “Though the [Iranian

Republic News Agency] wording was inaccurate and misleading, the media assumed it was true, and besides, it made great copy”.

Finally, in this issue, Cristina Caimotto illustrates an even more extreme case of creative translation in the media, where ‘translation’ isn’t even mentioned. This is the case of political jokes, of satire, which were first coined and told in the States by well-known American comedians referring the American situation, and then ‘stolen’, relocalised and retold by Daniele Lutazzi a well-known Italian satirist. There was much controversy of his use of satire, which is seen to be much more destabilizing in a high power distance country such as Italy. Consequently, Lutazzi paid a high price for his translations, and has effectively been removed from the main TV channels. But not once in the controversy regarding copyright and plagiarism was translation discussed.

So, we have the case whereby, already translators are sidelined, and their already fragile habitus is being encroached on by machines, cloud and crowd sourcing and finally by professional-others who take the responsibility and the credit for what might be called “translation”. Hence, we are reliably told “translators” will either disappear by the year 2025 (Katan: forthcoming) or 2027.

### *Transcreation*

As hinted earlier, and discussed in Gambier and Munday (this issue) this term has been suggested as a way forward to a more certain future for this beleaguered profession. Leibniz in 1676 (in McCaffery 2001, fn. 24, p. 241) was the first to outline a theory of change based on transcreation: “the body *E* is somehow extinguished and annihilated in [place] *B* and actually created anew and resuscitated in [place] *D*, which can be called, in new and most happy terminology, *transcreation*”, which McCaffery (*ibid*: 42) calls “the ability to constantly move and shift perception”. Cook (2008: 456) further explains how Leibniz used ‘transcreation’ to reconcile the fact that though God can create and destroy, He cannot change the essence of substance. Hence transcreation was “a certain middle way between creation and an entire pre-existence” (Leibniz in Cook, *ibid*). This ‘certain middle way’ between faithful reproduction based on the pre-existent source text and totally new creation is taken up again by Coleridge (1839: 88) while reflecting on a “Commentary” on the 1st Epistle of St. Peter. In this reflection Coleridge considers his own reading of the epistle in English: “it is not the Scripture that I am reading. Not the qualities merely, but the root of the qualities is transcreated”. Again it is the essence of the



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substance that is retained.

Coleridge's quotation is recorded by the OED, which lists "transcreate" as a verb, though only as a 'nonce-word', and defines it as: "to create by or in the way of transmission". Again both ideas of (1) faithful transmission and (2) creation are retained. After Coleridge the term has been used both in the literary and the commercial field – for very similar reasons.

In the poetic field, transcreation often refers to intersemiotic translation, where one literary form is reinterpreted in another (e.g. written text to music; visual art to poetry). Fred Wah, for example, Canada's Parliamentary Poet Laureate, quotes Coleridge's use of the term to describe his transcreation of Indian rock pictograms in British Columbia into poems, which then illustrate the photographs of the rock drawings. As one reviewer (Cowan 1976:10) notes: "A whole chapter of our recorded history previously unintelligible (to visual illiterates like me) is here revealed by Wah as vivid, human and touching".

More or less in the same time period, transcreation has been popularised (especially in India) by Purushottam Lal, once again to focus on not only the importance of the source text, but on the translator's need to "edit, reconcile, and transmute" (Lal 1957/1964: 5). More recently the term has been taken up by the more commercial end of the language provision industry. And this is where Daniel Pedersen (this issue) takes up the story. His discussion shows how important the term is becoming in the field, and how close it follows recent developments in translation theory – as heralded by Bassnett.

So, we find that almost paradoxically, the language provision industry, which has been sidelining human translators to spearhead the premium, on-demand automatic one-click language solutions (as clearly illustrated by Declerk) is also reinventing translation and the translator by taking up 'transcreation' (rather than localisation or copy writing which do not require a translator's trained understanding of the source text). In the words of Gene Schriver, CEO of machine-driven GLOBO Language Solutions: "In transcreation, translators aim to produce a conversion [...] since it is an inherently creative process, a machine cannot touch it. Nor can anyone argue that it is a commodity or that anyone else could do the same job".

So, here we actually have a key player in the industry talking about translators and translation, according them a future-proof professional status, and doing what Munday (this issue) asked for, someone to

“highlight that a patient undergoing robotic-assisted surgery would need a highly competent and creative surgeon behind the robot”.

However, as mentioned elsewhere (Katan: forthcoming) it is more than likely that the translators’ own high uncertainty avoidance is the main factor preventing the translator from clawing control of the final product and of the machines. The least that we can hope for is, to quote Pedersen’s (this issue) final words taken from Schäffner (2012), that this discussion on transcreation “contribute to raising awareness of the complexity of processes and encourage rethinking the more traditional views”.

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**A conversation between Yves Gambier and Jeremy Munday  
about transcreation and the future of the professions**

JM: This issue of *Cultus* focuses on “Transcreation and the Professions”. I admit to some initial suspicion about the use of terms such as ‘transcreation’, since it strikes me that they are sometimes motivated by the desire to mark out a territory or to claim éliteness in competition with other terms (e.g. adaptation, localisation...). Since the focus is on professions, I might be permitted to refer to websites of a few companies that specialize in transcreation: the New York-based company Transcreation Services,<sup>1</sup> for instance, claims that the distinction of transcreation lies in "capturing the desired persuasive or emotive effect" of the source text and is "usually" (but not exclusively) used for the translation of advertising, marketing material and the like. So, in translation theory terms, it would seem to be strongly linked to the well-worn concepts of skopos and text type/genre; we might discuss later how transcreation refines or reorientates these terms. The international marketing consultancy Text Appeal specializes in what it calls "transcreation (creative translation)".<sup>2</sup> The real core of the argument, I feel, is to be found in the distinction that it draws between translation, transcreation, and copywriting: translation is placed on the factual end of the continuum, copywriting on the creative/motivational end, with transcreation in the "conceptual" middle<sup>3</sup>. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, transcreation is claimed to add something to a more prosaic translation, and therefore, to be a specialism that is worthy of being "moderately expensive" compared to translation's "moderately inexpensive". Clients need to pay for that extra service.

In truth, most, if not all, translators engage creatively with their texts, despite changes to working practices which would seem to impose uniformity. CAT Tools and Machine Translation are obvious examples. If you are a translator working with an existing termbase you are conditioned to conform to existing translation equivalents at the same time as you are

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.transcreation.com/transcreation-services/#.VBFzi\\_ldV-c](http://www.transcreation.com/transcreation-services/#.VBFzi_ldV-c)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.textappeal.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://transcreation.org.uk/>

penalized by being paid less for any exact or fuzzy match in the text. Creativity is either rejected (failure to conform is flagged as an error) or prized, to a certain extent, at least, in non-translated segments. An additional problem for the translator occurs when the segmentation is incompatible with the task. Imagine being given a list of supermarket food products and ingredients to translate when the segmentation is more or less at word level (and this does happen): you need to deal with ingredients that may occur in various orthographic forms, upper or lower case and with/without punctuation, each appearing as a separate entry in the termbase. This may be solved manually by joining the different terms but it requires skill in classification of concepts, while the translation of compound names such as *Jumbo oats* or *Choco Pops* requires a high degree of creativity.

YG: The multiplication of labels is intriguing: localisation, adaptation, versioning, transediting, language mediation, transcreation, etc. I don't know if this proliferation is taking place in all languages, in all societies but it certainly unsettles our students...and does not help us to know the job market better. Besides, it might destabilize Translation Studies (TS): what is then its object of investigation?

But let's come back to professions. How should we understand the situation and also the new hierarchy behind those labels? I think the term "translation" is rejected because it implies a formal transfer, a word-for-word work, in parallel with communication seen as a unidirectional conduit and with an ethics of neutrality. It is also rejected because it goes with the traditional image of the translator as a subservient worker. TS has deconstructed this definition for some time now and this image. And, I believe, now we have arrived at a concept of translation that recovers creativity, voice, interpretation and commitment, partly because we have a quite different concept of communication.

Nevertheless, today, different sectors use different labels, e.g. transcreation in the advertising industry. In a way, the job market is lagging behind research but also associations are slow to update their categorization since most of them still rely on differences between literary and non-literary (technical, commercial, medical, legal) translators. Such discrepancies are confusing and difficult to overcome because, as you suggest, if you work with certain term bases, translation memory software or certain Machine Translation (MT), you quickly realize that word-for-

word is still there even in this newer digital age. But why should we expect engineers in the language industry to be different from managers in marketing regarding “translation”? The long story of the concept in our countries cannot be changed in a flash. It heavily influences the current and popular ideology of “translation”. The clash of paradigms – from a tradition based on religious texts and printed matter to digital culture – is happening now. Hence the hesitation in denominating what we do when we translate or transcreate, transedit, or localise. Students must cope with this confusion, if not contradiction. Do you really think CAT tools and MT impose a derivative, mechanical approach to the creative practice of translating?

JM: I agree with you, Yves, certainly about the destabilisation of translation studies that has gone hand in hand with the expansion of the discipline in the past twenty years or so, and has happily permitted a much broader perspective on the role of the translator. As far as the professions go, the term "translation" becomes disadvantaged if added value is given to roles bearing other labels. This is fair enough if the other roles require superior skills and knowledge, but I'm not convinced that this is always the case. And I think it is definitely wrong if those working in Translation Studies allow the label “translation” to become devalued.

CAT tools and MT have revolutionized, and continue to revolutionize, the practice of translation and I do think they alter both the perception of translation amongst users and the conceptualization of translation amongst producers and theorists. For the general user, automatic translation programmes, whether online or on a smartphone, give the impression (indeed even provide a reality) that translation is an instantaneous activity. The quality they achieve can be quite high, depending on genre conventions and language proximity, and then the question becomes “do I pay for a slightly better human translation when I can get a reasonable one for free?” I think we have already seen that the role of the translator has shifted and I can see a time not too far off when the intervention of the human translator will be almost entirely centred on post-editing/quality assuring MT output or on providing very high quality translations of quality-sensitive texts such as publicity material, literary texts and legal documentation (Cronin 2013: 93).

I find the rise of CAT tools fascinating, arising from the developments in corpus linguistics from the 1970s onwards, themselves driven by enhanced computational power and the move to digital texts. They have

provided a real shift in the analysis of language because it is now feasible to calculate statistically the probability of occurrence of specific lexical items in specific genres and, in the case of translation in certain language pairs, to suggest or provide translation equivalents for source language items. This does not mean that creativity is totally discounted: translation variation or alternative solution is one area of interest in MT research, for instance, while the human translator working with a CAT tool can always challenge the suggested translation equivalent. The combination of different technologies is also exciting, for example the interaction of voice recognition software and CAT tools or subtitles.

YG: In addition to MT, one of the buzzwords today in translation is crowdsourcing. But let me put this in a larger context. From the use of micro-computers (i.e. desktop PCs), exponentially facilitating data-sharing and the creation of local networks, we have now moved to a kind of dematerialized computing (cloud computing) which lifts all the worries and burdens of management, maintenance and reconfiguration of work tools from the translator's shoulders. Indeed, infrastructures, platforms, software, services and solutions are now accessible at a distance, via Internet, and licensed on a subscription basis (SaaS, or Software as a Service). This new online distribution model of shared tools no longer belongs to a single entity nor constitutes a domain of fixed (static) installations on individual computers; it pushes the translator to become a member of an international virtual and collaborative community, since the updates and new versions are immediately available, and everybody benefits.

Such services in translation affect professional, amateur and occasional translators, as well as agencies, institutions, and companies.

This rapid evolution is not inconsequential for the practice of translation, nor on the organization of its practice and surely not on its supply. Shared resources accessible in real time are now dynamic; costs are reduced (nothing is bought, as price setting is based and calculated on-demand or according to use, i.e. by the hour, year, volume of words, etc.); management is shortened (both in terms of time and transparency); work is shared. Dematerialization favours simplification and productivity. On the other hand, it also creates a certain dependence on internet connections and poses problems concerning security and confidentiality breaches.

So what about crowdsourcing? “Cloud” shouldn’t be confused with “crowd”, but both are rapidly changing the landscape. Crowdsourcing in translation means using the huge reach of Social Media to encourage voluntary participatory or collective translation. This is used for example not only in the localization of software and Web sites but now for translating articles, reports, literary texts and interviews.

It has aroused a great deal of concern in terms of the people involved (Are they translators? How are they compensated for their work?); its ethics (What are the implications of this freely provided work or unfair competition because it can be used just as easily by the non-profit sector as by companies which seek to make a profit?); its quality, and in terms of the very concept of what translation is (How it comes to be and/or how it is perceived).

For this collective and unpaid effort, volunteer and (generally) anonymous participants translate a sentence, a paragraph, a page... all of which can be retranslated and revised by others, until the entire project is finished. These volunteers translate once, or can translate hundreds of times, thanks also to such tools as Traduwiki, Wikitranslate and Google Translate. Social media or socio-digital networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) take advantage of the passing craze in order to become more accessible to more people.

Very often crowdsourcing is understood as amateur translation, translation by fans (fan translation, fan subbing, fan dubbing, scan-trans) who deliberately choose a Japanese manga, an animated film, a video game... and proceed to translate (subtitle, dub) it in order for others to be able to watch it as soon as possible. These fans are not translation professionals – hence, they transgress certain conventions and respected norms of the profession (for example, for subtitling, this touches on the number of lines, scrolling speed, position, typographical characters used, glosses, etc.). Neither are they all ‘pirates’, as some of these volunteers do respect the copyright holders and withdraw their translated version from the Web as soon as the book or film has officially been released.

I should say that, denied for so long, as we can still see when people talk about translation as subordination, translation is now desirable because it is relatively easily done thanks to technology. However, an important issue must be raised with amateur work, beyond breaching the legal obligation: in infringing on broadcasting rights (or eliminating the delay between the release on the cinema circuit and the distribution on-line), amateurs play the Trojan horse of capitalism in apparently



emphasising “cultural inclusion” and “language diversity”. What a paradox! They do a non-profit job but actually act as capitalist actors responding with their instant supply to a perceived demand. In fact they produce and distribute at the same time, are not committed to local responsibilities and simply respond to the “market”.

I do not wish to confuse crowdsourcing with collaborative translation (teamwork), which is carried out on the same, single document by professionals. This includes document research, terminology, re-reading and revision, and the use of sites such as Proz, Translator’s Café, etc.

I also do not wish to confuse crowdsourcing with volunteer networked translation which can also be carried out by professionals (that is to say, those who have been trained for translation and/or have experience in translation), for example through networks such as Babel, ECOS or Translators Without Borders. These activist translators work for a specific cause, and respond to the needs expressed by NGOs and other associations. Their network is aligned with a specific social cause / activity, or allied with actions expressing certain values.

With teamwork and volunteer networked translation, professionals share tools, problems and solutions and put an end to a romanticized image of the translator. Their socio-professional enterprise is reconfigured due to technologies being implemented to meet the challenges of outsourcing, competition, job insecurity, online bidding, international RFPs, etc. For amateurs (fans), however, their only link is technological in most cases, with their common interest focusing on a site, a network, a product, etc. These “communities” on line are therefore short-term and limited in breadth and scope. What brings all these groups together is a shift in the direction towards the actor (translator, user), as the producer of content. The evolution is thus not only technical, but also economic and social. It is constrained by outsourcing, but equally pushed forward by multilingual production needing to be rendered accessible as quickly as possible, or by the rallying behind certain causes that have been ignited.

The jury is still open as to how, and to what extent, these new practices might disqualify, or de-professionalize, full-time translators who are trained and replete with experience. Likewise, how and to what extent could these practices assist in the development of areas of competence in translation? Technologies could offer new opportunities and niches that did not exist before, in addition to the new problems they raise.

JM: Your comment about “a certain dependence on internet connections” recalls Michael Cronin’s well-known description of “translation agents in the new millennium as *translational cyborgs* who can no longer be conceived of independently of the technologies with which they interact” (Cronin 2003: 112). Technologies challenge the identity of translators and have shaken up the translation community to such an extent that there is a clash of cultures between the vastly experienced “old school” translators trained, or brought up, in the “traditional” fashion with a focus on the transfer of meaning in a stable written text, and the types of crowdsourcing and collaborative and volunteer translating that you describe. This evolution is certainly social and economic since the forces of globalization (the ability to offer and source translations from more or less anywhere) and the rise of the intermediary (the translation agency) have generally drastically driven down the rates paid to the translator. In that context, there is still acute economic advantage for a professional translator in occupying niches, whether they be very specific subject domains, in-demand language pairs or expertise in the use or development of a new technology. This is to continue to look at translation from a capitalistic angle, but translators have to earn a living.

The question of quality and its relation to creativity is crucial, I think. The “transgression” of accepted conventions and norms in audiovisual translation, which you mention, with subtitles appearing in different parts of the screen and with the inclusion of explicative glosses for culture-specific items, has begun to be carried over in more mainstream releases. The creativity of the fansubbers has therefore coloured the professional market and maybe even changed expectations amongst viewers and their tolerance for invention.

On the other hand, the online translation or subtitling of, say, political texts and speeches, leaves open the possibility of manipulation and distortion, or simply error by a less than competent translator. How is the general user to detect this? Such undesirable creativity would ideally be checked by the online community, which would thus play the role of the translator reviser. It is interesting to examine how this occurs; my own analysis of discussions of technical translation queries on Proz.com suggests that a peer review and voting system does not always lead to the selection of the objectively best translation equivalent but is influenced by factors such as the status of the reviewer within the community.

YG: To what extent do technologies challenge the identity of

translators? Can we answer this question if we do not have an idea about the traditional identity of translators? The risk is always to be too simplistic and build on dichotomies, such as subservient translators vs creative translators? I think we (translators) are always working in a context of trial period, under economic, financial, cultural logic or constraints. You can translate for the OECD, or for refugees, and you can translate within a highly competitive environment or within the network of Babels. Be that as it may, the functions of translations and translators are ambiguous: subjugating, domesticating or in contrast, resisting and relieving.

But being a mediator does not imply being above or beyond contradictions. Technologies do not solve our contradictions; they might upset them and you might feel out of place. So, there are no professionals (for business) against amateurs (for entertainment), traditionalists (the mindless) against activists (the mindful). An analogy: the medical profession needs surgeons, nurses, ambulance employees, first-aid workers, and includes today high-tech medicine as well as alternative medicines (acupuncture, homeopathy, Chinese energetic medicine, etc.).

The technologies partly justify the multiplication of labels. For sure, they change some practices and challenge professional identities, and not only in the translation field. And without a doubt, they will create new jobs. Will we talk tomorrow about localisation coders, cultural mediators, traditors (Translators + editors), digital language engineers, digital content writers, style editors, global project managers in multilingual communication, content consultants, MT experts (acting also as revisers, post-editors), etc.? In all these cases, practices and identities are never frozen.

JM: I agree, practices and identities are fluid and our training programmes need to keep up and ahead of the game here, just as, in the past 15 years or so, we have broadened out the training of translators to encompass terminology and translation memory construction, revision, project management, and so on. Even if translation is eventually reduced to pure content management and automatic MT translation, there will still be jobs managing that content and MT system, just as there are still jobs in computer-assisted and robotic-assisted surgery.

What technology does currently do, though, when a website, a newspaper article or an email can be translated roughly, for better or for

worse, at the touch of a button, is to change the non-expert's perceptions; making it seem that translation is feasibly automatic, instantaneous and, often, free. That will condition many people's expectations in the business world. They expect high-quality (or at least "good enough"), low-cost translation with fast turn-round times from human translators working in all sorts of genres. We need to highlight that a patient undergoing robotic-assisted surgery would need a highly competent and creative surgeon behind the robot.

YG: Several times, you refer to text type/genre. I would like to come back on that issue. Since, whatever is or will be the name of the profession, you still deal with textual material, encompassing the usual texts, films, webpages, videogames, software, video-clips, with different signs – verbal, visual (still and moving images, pictograms), acoustic (sounds, music).

For a long time, only the linguistic dimension was discussed in Translation Studies, as if the discipline was mono-modal. Children's books, operas, comics, tourism brochures, songs, plays and advertisements, were "adapted" rather than translated – as if TS felt uneasy with the complex interplay of signifying codes that operate in the production of meaning... and with the concept of a targeted audience. Even a scientific article is multimodal, with different fonts, font sizes, graphics and tables; even a literary text can play with typography, margins.

Nevertheless, for decades, TS neglected multimodality. We have had different text-typologies and different definition of standards of textuality, based on verbal elements only. I must say Discourse Analysis has also for a long time considered texts as institutional and as standardised (e.g. a political text) i.e. coming close to standardised genres belonging to politics, trade union, printed media, academia, sciences, even if they were anti-establishment. Then Conversational Analysis dealt with less standardised genres. What about today with SMS, blogs, hybrid discourse, speeches which are pathological, etc.? The digital genre challenges any taxonomy because of the way the texts are produced and updated, and by the way they are read – from a slow, meditative reading of printed matter to a fragmented, frenzied reading on screen.

These new texts or hypermedia texts justify partly certain new labels for the profession, such as transcreation and localisation. But they also challenge the training. Our programmes are still deeply based on the written (translation) - oral (interpreting) opposition, whereas both

channels are becoming more and more blurred. Should we not include graphic design or better digital literacy in our curriculum?

JM: The linguistic content of textual material still remains central in translator training because we feel it is so basic to the practice of translator. If a student or translator fails to get that right, then it is probably time to look for another job. You are right that much training is structured according to standardised conventional written genres, but I think this is also logical. Students need to familiarise themselves with what is conventional and with techniques of parallel text use, and so on, before dealing with more complex genres and text types.

Discourse and genre analysis initially developed mainly through studies based on standardised genres, institutionalised genres such as academic articles, history textbooks, political texts and so on. The development of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) from the 1960s onwards has had a deep effect on translation theory, although this only really began to be felt in the 1990s (Hatim and Mason 1990, Bell 1991, Baker 1992, House 1997, etcetera). That is some 25 years ago, and research and practice have moved on. Subsequent developments in monolingual SFL have included a wide range of new hybrid and multimodal texts, but these still have to find their way into translation theory. Here I am thinking about works on the discourse of Twitter and social media (Zappavigna 2013), hypertext social media (Eisenlauer 2013), the discourse of text messaging (Tagg 2012) as well as discourse of particular social and professional groups and critical discourse studies.

Multimodality has emerged as an interdisciplinary area in its own right and with theoretical foundations in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2001), Bateman (2008), O'Halloran et al. (2011), amongst others. This is beginning to have an effect on Translation Studies, especially on localisation studies and on audiovisual translation. Luis Pérez González's recent book *Audiovisual Translation: Theories, methods and issues* (2014), for example, applies multimodal theory to the semiotic analysis of language, image, sound and music.

The best translation training programmes already train students in the use of a wide range of software that allows them to manipulate text and deal with some of the basic principles of multimodality which they are likely to come across. With the rise of the use of digitization in Humanities, I am also sure that the route for Translation Studies, and

translator training, is towards collaboration with specialists in various areas of publishing, including graphic design.

YG: Yes, and I am sure that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is already changing the ways we are reading, writing and translating. So, instead of focusing on new labels, such as transcreation where there is indeed a marketing flavour, we should perhaps focus on the initial stages. Paradoxically, our daily life is becoming increasingly more textualized but also more decontextualized: an international document on-line is taken away from its source context. When you read a Web site, you usually do not know much about its origins. When you internationalize it in English (*lingua franca*), you ignore who the readers will be, their background and their expectations. On the other hand, when you localize a video, you adjust the text and its lay out, its graphics, you may change the order of the information, and sometimes you shorten or lengthen the video (with its music) for a particular audience.

In addition, with Twitter, SMS and blogs, we are getting used to shorter texts – not to mention changes in the use of language itself. This all changes our perception of what makes a coherent text and how our assumptions play a role in our interpretation of the implicit, the presuppositions. What is the shared knowledge you can assume in an on-line document? Who will read *this* conversation? Certainly, a Net surfer in Russia, student in languages, will understand some of our remarks one way while another surfer in Brazil, a specialist in cultural studies, will understand them differently. If there were only a print version, this conversation would have only circulated in a journal specialising in Intercultural Communication, for a given readership.

A hyperlink creates “holes” between textual elements: I surf, I navigate, I jump, I skip...far from the continuity imposed by the printing or the binding. The semiotician Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the text* (1975) already talked of this ludic dimension of a text.

ICT (I mean crowdsourcing here) also changes our experience of translating. The translation act can be visible on the screen; readers, including other translators, can participate in the process and compare different translated versions or solutions, rather than comparing only the source and target texts.

Languages on-line and computer-mediated-communication are affecting our own language, how we identify ourselves, how we make assumptions, how we combine thoughts, data, emotions and social

cognition.

JM: The public for web-based texts is huge compared to a solely hard-copy document, but I would not say that they are fully decontextualized nor that the internationalization of a website totally ignores the audience. I would see this type of text production as geared towards standardization (of spellings, avoidance of geographically distinct terms, idioms, etc.) in order not to exclude or offend any likely readership. The creativity of the translator may be limited in such cases, but a readership, albeit general, would still be contemplated.

There is certainly much creativity in the new practices. They are transformative in their meshing of different codes, though in some cases perhaps the new media have accentuated a potential that existed already. Thus, hypertexts facilitate surfing and jumping but there have always been different forms of reading paper texts: scanning, skimming, etc. as well as close reading. Just because a book is bound doesn't mean that the user always reads from cover to cover uni-directionally, nor does it stop the reader from going outside the text to look up a word in a dictionary or a reference in an encyclopaedia or picking up another book on the shelf or a newspaper on the table. Short texts have always existed too (hand-written notes, postcards, shopping lists, telegrams...) even if they have generally been ephemeral and have not been the subject of academic study.

A text on a screen, which opens up the kinds of possibilities you note, can still accommodate close reading. It is the search facilities that have dramatically changed the way texts are ordered, archived and retrieved, and the relation between texts and items contained in those texts, whether they be located on a website or in a pdf or other text document. This has profound effects on the process of researching knowledge and, as we know, for the translator has meant that the skill in finding an equivalent for a specialized term lies in quickly and reliably identifying and evaluating potential equivalents found in other texts available online. A huge benefit of such search power for language study has been seen in the area of corpus linguistics and, increasingly, corpus-based translation studies, which I am sure will be used more sophisticatedly by translators in the future. Sites such as *Intellitext*<sup>4</sup> are being set up expressly designed for non-specialists to upload and manipulate their own corpora as well as to

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<sup>4</sup> <http://corpus.leeds.ac.uk/it/>

interrogate existing collections. These latter are increasingly drawing on tweets, emails, etc.

It is the availability of digital resources in one virtual space, of course, that makes the whole textual process so fluid and spontaneous that it allows the user to copy, manipulate, create and disseminate new products almost at will. Those possibilities are transforming our professional and social communication as well as relationships and creating (following Wenger, e.g. 1998) new “communities of professional practice”.

YG: Let’s look a little more closer at this. Professionalism includes a set of references to competences, knowledge, qualifications, experience, regular and deliberate practice, ethics and work efficiency; while professionalization encompasses individual and collective efforts aiming at a status, defining best practices, checking/testing access to the profession, organizing training courses and job advertising. Signals of recognition are part of the ongoing professionalization of translation but imply professionalism.

Expertise has given rise to controversy: who can decide who is an expert, when and where? There has been a variety of cognitive and linguistic approaches and, more recently, the inclusion of a sociological dimension of the profession. In training, we have used the naïve-novice-advanced student-professional-expert cline.

Any expert must be recognised and legitimized as a reliable person whose ability to make the right decision is evaluated by peers or the public. In this view, expertise is both socially constructed and is also a characteristic of individuals able to achieve highly appreciated performance, to adapt and to advise. I would also add that experts are aware of their own convictions and opinions and of their possible conflicts of interest when applying their expertise. Not all professionals are experts. Amateurs are very often considered as “non-professionals”. And subject specialists who translate or self-translate texts in their field are not necessarily professionals since they do not earn their living by translating. Categorization and classification are subject to change.

JM: I don’t think Translation Studies has paid enough attention to the phenomenon of subject specialists, professionals in their own fields who translate their own works, nor to how translators and such subject specialists interact with each other. Their views of the role of translation may be radically different and their tolerance of non-standard language



forms may be higher.

YG: Several studies have recently analyzed how translators evaluate themselves, their status, and how they have built their self-image (see e.g. Katan 2012). I think if we want to know the job market better and anticipate certain changes, we should consider the social entities which select their members, i.e. associations of translators and Web sites on translation.

Most of the translator associations in Europe act as strong signals of status, requiring sometimes professional exams and/or strict entrance criteria, such as formal qualifications (academic degree), a certain working experience in translation, acceptance of a code of ethics and sitting for a test (See Pym *et al.* 2012).

Are these signals and mechanisms efficient? Are employers satisfied with them or do they tend to trust professional experience or their own recruitment test? What happens today with on-line translator-client portals, such as Proz.com, whose service becomes more valuable as their databases increase (and gets more used)? Do they develop new modalities of translator certification or reinforce low status and declining prices for translations? How do they signal quality? Let us consider one example.

Proz.com, a profit-making company, to which you referred earlier, claims to be a leading workplace in the translation industry and have over 300,000 professional translators and translation companies (in 2014). Anyone may register and create a profile for free. It is then easy for Proz.com to offer one of the largest directories of professional translation services: freelance translators, specialized or not in certain fields, can be contacted directly by agencies who display their own rates. The Proz “certified professional network” is a network of translators who have either been certified by an association, or who have been screened by professional peers. The Proz community identifies qualified translators, according to certain requirements.

The portals function as marketplaces where clients can find translators. The signals to access a translator’s professional status are proven language ability, feedback from clients and investment in the community, while formal qualifications play a rather minor role. This confirms predictions formulated recently by almost 650 experts in education working within the

frame of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE):<sup>5</sup> in less than 20 years, peer and professional approval will begin to compete or even take the place of school certification. The rise of amateurs might support this view. Could it be that we have been too much under the spell of institutional certification? It is not too late to compare non-trained and trained translators, and consider again the validity of our training programs especially if and when students would have worked previously as amateurs.

JM: Definitely. Variation in performance as a result of translator experience and qualifications, and the differentiation and development of competence, should be central to what we research and apply to our training programmes. Proz.com and its forum Kudoz are interesting cases since, as you say, they have created an informal online community with a forum where thousands of questions are asked and answered and language- and subject-specific glossaries are constructed. There are users who consciously consider their participation as both helping and “leaving traces” that might encourage others to hire them as translators. What is most interesting from my point of view is the data which the forum provides on decision-making, since the suggested translations for the queries are usually accompanied by a justification and, in some cases, detailed discussion over the best choice.

My own analysis of examples from Kudoz, to which I referred above, noted that the discussion rarely articulated solid linguistic reasons for the choices and didn’t use the metalanguage from translation theory that we teach our students. It was rather based on intuition, experience of language and translation, supported by links to dictionary definitions or examples of websites. I think a lot more research is needed into the ways translators interact with online resources and how our students do or don’t make use of applied translation theory.

YG: One of my last words will indeed be for scholars in TS. Until recently, we dealt with different types of translation, based on conventional texts and limited to certain subject-domains. What about today when the working conditions, the practices and the agents of translation vary so much? Can scholars take into account all those differences? Can they base their studies only on their own experience? Can

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wise-qatar.org/future-school-2030-key-findings>

they pretend to be familiar with all kinds of translation, from interlingual translation to transcreation? This vitality of the profession could bring even more fragmentation in Translation Studies.

JM: This is without doubt a challenge. I think we will see more focused studies on very specific niche areas that together build a bigger picture of translation practices. In my opinion, that does not invalidate what has gone before, because even in the past, when there was a lot less research, it was not possible to consider every ‘conventional’ subject-domain. Theories which purported to be ‘integrated’ or ‘general’ sought to identify basic principles that held firm across practices as a whole, even though such theories emerged from the study of familiar types of texts, many of them literary. However, the rapid emergence of radically new practices and working conditions does raise some new methodological problems. One is that those of us whose education was primarily centred on stable hardcopy texts and the associated forms of stable analysis now find ourselves having to deal with a range of new media and text types, which are often unstable and evolving, and translation situations of which we have no first-hand experience. But there is no reason why many of these should not be studied by careful observation or empirical work.

Indeed, the World Wide Web has meant there are more translation products available to study than ever before. Will this the lead to fragmentation? To an extent it has already happened, especially with the growth of clear sub-disciplines such as audiovisual translation studies and interpreting studies. Just look at some of the larger international conferences where themed panels run in parallel, sometimes almost as mini-conferences in themselves.

I think that the umbrella term “Translation Studies” will persist because translation, in its many diverse guises, remains a pivotal concern; whether “transcreation” survives as long is another matter.

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## **Crowd, cloud and automation in the translation education community**

*Christophe Declercq*

### *Abstract*

*Following the global technological turn of the 1990s, translation education has increasingly begun to include technology from the late 1990s and the early 2000s onwards. Translation and technology has now become a dominant research topic in Translation Studies. However, academic analyses of translation technology concepts, processes and usages are on a knife's edge. Potential usages of the latest technology are being scrutinized on the one hand, but the uptake of that same technology in the classroom poses substantial problems on the other hand. Exposing aspiring translators at Masters level to contemporary language and translation technology trends endangers the sense of security students need in order to learn new concepts and develop new skills. Including concepts such as automation and crowd, as well as their underlying technology and working processes, is often seen by more traditional teaching staff as the opposite of risk aversion and in fact it could have several advantages for Masters level students. These technological trends therefore need to be addressed more clearly in the curricula of Translation Studies programmes.*

### **1. Taken by storm?**

“Our world is changing around us, the IT world is changing. The information world is changing and we need to follow the wave, we need to be part of this wave. It's happening in every industry and our industry needs to adapt to this wave and take advantage of what this wave of technological changes can bring to us.” (Gervais 2010)

When in 1990 Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere coined their expression 'cultural turn',<sup>1</sup> it was the cultural context rather than words of a text that became the driving force in translation. The subsequent years saw Translation Studies (TS) become more interdisciplinary, a process that is still ongoing.<sup>2</sup> Including Cultural Studies in TS not only saw translation move away from its more linguistics-based peninsula, but the change in perspective, which now superseded the rather narrow 'source text/target text analysis', also built many bridges across fields of research and application, such as Postcolonial Studies. At the same time, the diverging scope of TS became increasingly affected on another level too, namely, the waves of technological change.

Not only did computers become faster and cheaper from the late 1990s onwards, and computer use more widespread, but the emergence of software applications, which supported the work processes of the translator and aimed to increase productivity and quality through consistent re-use of relevant segments and terms, also created a whole new dimension. Language and translation technology (LTI) have been around for many years. From fields such as machine translation technology projects such as METAL, ALPAC, Météo, Systran, Logos, MELTRAN and ATLAS emerged. From natural language processing came NLP projects like EAGLES and related corpus linguistics methods such as computer-assisted text analysis, annotation procedures, concordances and parsing in corpora. In 1990, the first proper computer-aided translation application was MultiTerm, a multilingual terminology manager for DOS, created by the German company TRADOS in 1990. By 1994, TRADOS had established both MultiTerm and the Translator's Workbench for Windows. This technological turn, a phrase first coined by Sin-wai Chan in 2004<sup>3</sup>, coincided with the cultural turn mentioned earlier. The approach to translation as a multifaceted process embedded in a specific cultural context found itself encapsulated in a growing technological practice.

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<sup>1</sup> On how Translation Studies often turns to turns, see Michael Cronin (2010) 'The Translation Crowd', in: *Revista Tradumatica* 8. Available online via [www.fti.uab.cat/tradumatica/revista/num8/articles/04/04central.htm](http://www.fti.uab.cat/tradumatica/revista/num8/articles/04/04central.htm) (last accessed 30 October 2014).

<sup>2</sup> In their call for papers for a 2011 issue of the journal *Multidisciplinarity in Audiovisual Translation*, Rosa Agost, Elena Di Giovanni and Pilar Orero claimed that "multidisciplinarity is without any doubt a reality, although not always acknowledged. It has increasingly come to the fore in the last five or six years in Translation Studies".

<sup>3</sup> Sin-wai Chan, 2004. *A Dictionary of Translation Technology*. Chinese University Press, page viii.

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Translation technology (TT), a loosely defined set of computer applications, which boost productivity and consistency in translation,<sup>4</sup> progressively gained ground in the curricula of translation Masters courses in the late 1990s and early to mid-2000s. The presence of translation technology had already been present in papers at conferences such as EAMT and LISA, followed by magazines such as *Language International* (discontinued) and *Multilingual Computing* first of all, *Translation Journal* and *Jostrans* next, but only became fully institutionalized with Sin-wai Chan's dictionaries of 2002 and 2004 on the topic and with formative publications, such as Frank Austermühl 2001, Bowker 2002 and Somers 2003. But those days are now gone. Gone as well are explaining to students regional settings in Windows and spending time on how to use the scanner and its OCR. Tools such IBM Translation Manager, SDLX or Trados Translation Workbench have also disappeared. However research into applied technology use in Translation Studies has expanded since the early 2000s, and translation technology in translation education is still a complicated matter today, and the ever increasing speed of new emergent technologies is not helping. How translation technology affects the role and position of the translator on the one hand and the translational act itself, on the other, is also an ongoing discussion in translator education. But as students need a sense of direction and security, a solid basis is needed in order to learn new concepts and develop new skills. In addition, the ever changing digital world, for aspiring translators in the form of technological resources at hand for the purpose of improved translation quality and productivity, have taken the more conceptual and theoretical considerations of implementing translation technology in Translation Studies programmes by storm.

Our era has become one of social media, microblogging and smartphones. Numerous apps rely on machine translation and crowd-sourced translation. Free and open source software tools (FOSS) such as the OmegaT translation memory and the Moses machine translation system now influence the profiles of both the professional translator and the translation student in equal measure.<sup>5</sup> Before FOSS translation tools

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<sup>4</sup> Tools for media accessibility (subtitling etc.) are not excluded, but are not specifically included in this text either. European co-funded projects such as EU-Bridge, QTLaunchPad and SUMAT cover multilinguality, accessibility and inclusion. The aims for Europe in these fields are contained in the Meta-Net Strategic Research Agenda for Multilingual Europe 2020, available from [http://www.meta-net.eu/vision/reports/meta-net-sra-version\\_0.9.pdf](http://www.meta-net.eu/vision/reports/meta-net-sra-version_0.9.pdf) (last accessed 30 October 2014)

<sup>5</sup> Due to the rapid speed of updates of application versions, no version numbers are provided this

were able to establish themselves fully in TS curricula and professional workflows, they were overtaken by a newer development: SaaS, *software as a service*. Online software such as Wordfast Anywhere first, and Memsource and XTM then saw many students and practitioners move to the cloud.<sup>6</sup> Online statistical machine translation systems are increasingly open to training on customised data. Meanwhile, students share that characteristic pan-21<sup>st</sup> century feature: social media, apps and the big data that are generated thereof.<sup>7</sup> These phenomena still form peninsulas of technology use that need plenty of bridges before an amalgamated translation technology teaching approach surfaces. Yet, providing an insight into these new technologies and related concepts relies on analogies with existing practices in translation education, thus potentially facilitating uptake among students and avoiding unnecessary risk aversion and uncertainty from educators. This uncertainty in the profession<sup>8</sup> needs to be addressed through translator training, associations and institutions, best practices, industry standards, quality control and quality assurance.

## 2. A utilitarian turn

A clear and increasingly typical convergence of recent language and translation technology concepts can be found at Geni.com. When this big American genealogical website launched its multilingual pages, it boasted that it had used crowdsourcing.<sup>9</sup> It had, however, used Google Translate output as a draft for its community-based and user-generated post-editing.<sup>10</sup> Although the scale of the translation projects could not be more

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paper.

<sup>6</sup> In the cloud, dynamically scalable and often virtualised resources are provided as a service. (He 2014: 3) This is considered more than a “silent revolution” by Muegge 2012.

<sup>7</sup> For an industry view on these issues, see Rex Martin (2013) ‘Exploring the Intersection of Big Data and Machine Translation’. Available online via TAUS, [www.taus.net/executive-forums/exploring-the-intersection-of-big-data-and-machine-translation](http://www.taus.net/executive-forums/exploring-the-intersection-of-big-data-and-machine-translation) (last accessed 30 October 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Through a questionnaire in 2012, David Katan sampled from 393 replies on the future of the job of translator. Most people agreed that no one knows, there might be a loss or there might be more jobs (Katan 2014).

<sup>9</sup> *Geni Brings Crowdsourced Translations to the Masses with Release of tr8n Translation Engine*. Available online at [www.redorbit.com/news/science/1968700/geni\\_brings\\_crowdsourced\\_translations\\_to\\_the\\_masse\\_s\\_with\\_release\\_of/#cB8G8WC7ziDahO1M.99](http://www.redorbit.com/news/science/1968700/geni_brings_crowdsourced_translations_to_the_masse_s_with_release_of/#cB8G8WC7ziDahO1M.99) (last accessed 30 October 2014).

<sup>10</sup> If translation becomes either user-driven or partly machine translated, a traditional theoretical dichotomy from Translation Studies needs a third dimension: besides Schleiermacher’s translation/Dolmetschen dichotomy the computed or crowdsourced draft attains a new level.



different, the core workflow for the project at Geni is very similar to translation and language technology teaching and group projects in practice-oriented Translation Studies programmes at Masters level today, in which individual input benefits from peer support and community control. No surprise then that online machine translation and translation crowdsourcing, currently best represented by the crowd-sourced Facebook interface, Google Translate (GT) and the TED Open Translation Project,<sup>11</sup> can rightfully claim a growing share in translation teaching.

However, it has not always been easy to marry expectations of the wider translation community (students, educators, freelance translators and commercial parties) with the continuous development of applications and the potential they offer. Most Translation Studies programmes at Masters level did not incorporate translation memory (TM) tools into the curriculum until the mid and even late 2000s. Based on personal experience, one suspects that there are still many TS programmes today that do not thoroughly cover the applied use of technology as a means of support for translation work but only teach ‘about’ it so as to attract students or tick boxes for peer assessment such as EMT, the European Masters in Translation.<sup>12</sup> Although it is indicative only, many TS programmes include SDL Trados Studio in their teaching, but hardly any worry about certification. According to SDL Education only 91 courses from the 454 universities that are participating in the SDL University Partner Programme are actively putting their students through SDL Certification (SDL Education, personal communication 2014). One can only assume that reasons for not including this added feature to students CV’s when they graduate is that the time spent on SDL Trados Studio is not sufficient to even reach a Certification level or that tutors are simply not interested. Hence, these classes will evolve around demos and the basic concepts.

Translation technology tools should be viewed as added ability for students and tutors alike, as facilitators for increased quality (through consistency) and productivity (through speed). This can only be done through practice and real-life hands-on exercises. *However*, the prevalent

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<sup>11</sup> TED Open Translation Project launched in 2009. “Today, more than 50,000 translations have been published in 104 languages, created by more than 15,000 volunteers.” (TED online)

<sup>12</sup> More information from the website @DGT, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/index_en.htm)

descriptive urge of TS has often conflicted with that need for sustained productivity. Clearly defining ideas and concepts first before further elaboration or exercises is a well-established practice in education, but elaborating on concepts only sets theory and practice further apart, a point of view seconded by Risku (2004).

A scientific analysis of the use of technology in translation, for freelance use or aspiring translators, must adhere to the golden rule of usability research, namely that a valid assessment of the sense and purpose of a particular piece of technology is only possible if the researcher is aware of and understands the environment in which it is either used or to be used (Risku, 2004: 86). This approach goes beyond the functionalist approaches taken by translation in the 1970s and 1980s by Hans Vermeer and Christiane Nord and adds an even more utilitarian level to translation projects, whereby the validity of the purposeful use of translation technology is measured according to its useful consequences and results.<sup>13</sup> A scientific foundation for translation procedures and concepts might make a translation project sounder for a translation student (the purpose of a translation, source text analysis, target audience analysis...), but in real life situations there is no time to look for definitions or descriptions, and yet a utilitarian, and preferably critical, attitude is expected from graduates. This tension associated with how to implement translation technology in a translation education setting in a pedagogically sound manner is even more complicated. Translation technology is affected by the progress of its underlying base, the continuously updated tools and applications, and the data that they are fed (sentences, phrases, terms...). This becomes clear in the current trend in which language technology (LT) processes are applied to translation technology (TT) content or translation output, effectively creating a field of LTT, language and translation technology.

The most obvious overlap between TT and LT is the combined use of machine translation and translation memories as a platform for the freelance and/or amateur translators and the fact that statistical machine translation engines (SMT) are trained on translation memory data sets. However, the most obvious thing is also the most problematic: risk aversion and secure basics do not come close to a merged language and translation technology approach to teaching. Translation students need to be taught the difference between human translation aided by computer

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<sup>13</sup> Whether or not these results lead to Benthamian happiness is a different matter altogether.

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applications and machine translation through the explanation that they are intrinsically related.<sup>14</sup>

In order to add a further dimension to a paradigm in which translators are “employed on programs that have cycles” and “work with databases, glossaries, and a set of electronic tools” rather than “on complete definitive source texts” (Biau Gil and Pym 2006: 6-8), three themes from LT and TT of relevance to translation students need to be expanded upon: 1) free and open source solutions, 2) the combined use of TM and MT, and 3) crowdsourcing platforms for freelance translators and in particular amateur translators. All these concepts form quite another field compared to more traditional Translation Studies research and more comparative literary or linguistics-based translation training, but the practical value of transferable skills that come with the three themes mentioned earlier is invaluable.

### 3. Free and open worlds

A highly appealing idea to people managing a Translation Studies department-- and to SMEs as well for that matter-- is the prospect of being able to use language and translation technology tools for free. As an important additional dimension to free software, open source software allows users to customise the source code of an application that is available as a free download. Support for free and open source software (FOSS) sees online forums being added to manuals, the community of users becoming pivotal to the specific tool. The most well-known FOSS program is Linux, a free operating system that is an alternative to Windows and Macintosh. For translators FOSS tools of renown are OmegaT and Anaphraseus.<sup>15</sup> The most enticing aspect of FOSS tools, more particularly free and open TM solutions, is that they ensure that translators are able to enjoy the same freedoms as those granted to software users by the FOSS initiatives. The main benefit of using a FOSS TM tool is of course the lower costs. By no longer staging a usually

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<sup>14</sup> For a history of MT and how M features there, see John Hutchins (1995) ‘Machine Translation: A Brief History’. In: *Concise history of the language sciences: from the Sumerians to the cognitivists* (E.F.K.Koerner and R.E.Asher, eds.). Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp.431-445. Also available at <http://www.aymara.org/biblio/mtranslation.pdf> (last accessed 30 October 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Credit due to ForeignDesk, released in 2001 by LionBridge and now almost abandoned, owing to the fact that it was the first publicly available free and open translation tool. The FOSS release of OmegaT followed the next year.

expensive CAT tool platform and its subsequent updates, the translator is relieved of any direct costs made upfront. However, other expenses might be incurred. FOSS applications often have a very limited software version cycle time so that updates rapidly follow on from each other. Training and support are subsequently more fragmented than with proprietary software. Santoro (2010) argues that this total cost of ownership is an important factor in that it ensures company fidelity to proprietary software, whereas migrating to FOSS is not much of an issue for freelance translators (Santoro 2010:24). This leaves translation students somewhere in the middle. Open source solutions might well be added to existing proprietary applications installed in the respective computer labs to form part of translator training.<sup>16</sup> This is not necessary because of budgetary constraints alone, but also because it is “in response to student requests” (Bowker 2008:28).

With application customisation and fragmented support acting as major hindrances to FOSS, it should not come as a surprise that a subsequent development is more appealing. Keeping expenses as low as possible is also a driving philosophy behind SaaS, *software-as-a-service*, software that has moved from standalone to online, to the cloud. The selling proposition of SaaS has shaped a change in expenses, with a shift from the customisation of software, hardware, IT personnel and maintenance on the one hand, to implementation, training and subscription fees, on the other. Although subscription is often waived for translation students, a cloud environment for practical translation classes has a major advantage on standalone software: students can continue working on projects wherever they are; they only need a login and a wireless connection. In a contemporary translation Masters teaching environment, students get course material delivered through a cloud-based online learning platform (Blackboard, Moodle...but also MOOCs<sup>17</sup>), access online software for terminology management (Termwiki, TaaS...), use translation memory systems online (Wordfast Anywhere, XTM Cloud, MemSource...), often with a live link (through an Application Programming Interface) to an online machine translation engine (Google Translate, Microsoft Bing, SDL Language Cloud, Matecat, LetsMT!...) and acquire experience in translation management processes (MemSource, Lingotek...).

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<sup>16</sup> See also Rothwell and Shuttleworth 2001, Declercq 2006b, Bowker 2008 and Santoro 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Like Blackboard and Moodle, a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) is an online platform also aimed at learning, but in a non-restrictive setting. MOOCs aim at unlimited participation through web access. They are data-driven and provide educational data and metadata to provide a better insight into how people learn.

However, changing proprietary standalone solutions for free, open or cloud-based systems means leaving a safe haven of support behind. For Translation Studies programmes, teaching lab support is usually a combined effort shared by the department's IT person responsible for the lab, the module convener or tutor teaching a particular tool and support by the software provider. Cloud-based systems take away a lot of the industry support and, as with FOSS tools, replace it with community support. This also means that the people who used to be involved are less prominent. Student expectations of the trainer gradually shift to the online community. These peers no longer come in the shape of students from the same Masters course alone, but in the form of complete strangers: user groups, forums, translation portals, topic-specific social media (such as the SDL group on LinkedIn). Despite the multitude of new practices, a framework of pedagogical considerations can be put in place.

Whether Master courses in translation opt for a year by year approach or not, in which the inclusion of new (versions of) tools into the curriculum is stipulated well before the start of the new academic year so as to anticipate compatibility hiccups, or choose a more ad hoc uptake of new technology, the key drive in translator education and technology concerns transferable skills. Extending translation technology skills beyond one or two tools adds value to a respective student's profile. The "ability to engage in critical analysis and problem solving" (Bowker 2008:31) is extended by moving from one platform to another. This can be done through sharing a translation project across various TM tools, knowing how to export and import TM content, rightly gauging the issues of industry standards and potential noise in leveraging depending on the TM tool of choice. This is quite the point of view expressed by O'Brien and Kenny 2001, who position the choice of tools within a skills versus knowledge debate, in which "the ability to evaluate and to learn to use" (Bowker 2008:33) CAT tools is prior to use only. This is similar to the importance Rothwell and Shuttleworth (2001) give, not just to procedural exercises ("which buttons to press to accomplish a particular task"), but also to conceptual analysis ("how the product has been engineered to accomplish a particular task, and the advantages and disadvantages of doing it that way") (Rothwell and Shuttleworth 2001:17). CAT tool selection, evaluation and usage by students need to be based on a fit for purpose approach and should therefore be highly pragmatic, functionalist and utilitarian. One could hardly manage the industry requirements for professional skills during education any better.

Three work processes become clear. With recent trends in translation technology, such as light versions of proprietary tools, FOSS applications and cloud-based systems, a TS programme's lab range of software can be mirrored at a student's home pc or laptop. Traditional homework now extends to practical knowledge and experience of tools. Many subtasks can be transferred to a setting in which students can access 'subtasks' remotely. This then adds to the itemisation of translation projects, but also effectively creates a distance problem-based learning approach that leads to a more individual-based critical analysis of concepts and group-shaped transferable skills of procedures.<sup>18</sup>With increased technological capabilities, translation students find themselves part of a continuum that moves from individual work (mimicking freelance work) over small community (group projects) and larger community (peer support for a specific tool) to a crowd (the online forums and the like). Trending topics in the translation industry such as community and crowd, have been around in slightly different forms for a long time, so it should therefore be easy for Masters courses to incorporate them, making them even more closely aligned with the latest trends.

#### 4. Crowd and community

“In my 21 years working in localization, I have never ceased to be amazed at how inefficient the traditional desktop paradigm is for a highly collaborative environment such as translation.” (Zydron 2012: 20)

Incorporating the concept of crowdsourcing into TS is straightforward. Whereas crowdsourcing is the outsourcing of a task (or several tasks at the same time) to an undefined, generally large, group of people or community,<sup>19</sup> mutually connected through an e-medium, the use of TT in

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<sup>18</sup> Critical analyses possibly run along the lines of the following questions: Are there any differences between standalone applications and cloud-based systems in an approach to the translation memory functionality and if so, why do you think this is? To what extent have XLIFF files replaced TMX compatibility, or not? And how do you view the position of SDLXLIFF files in this? Performing a quality assessment translation of crowdsourcing efforts such as Facebook Translation and Transifex, which evaluation metrics would be able to assist you in this? Is it possible to gauge whether or not any of the translation provided was based on MT output? How can you, as a trained translator, maintain an added value over MT output and crowd-sourced translations?

<sup>19</sup> In an ideological way, crowdsourcing falls well within the spirit of utilitarianism, the belief that the action is to the benefit of a large number of people.

TS programmes has already lowered the threshold for including that concept. Without exaggerating too much, sharing an SDL translation memory on a network drive, a Wordfast Anywhere™ online or working on a large translation project in a group, editing its contents and adding to it, are all examples of limited crowd-sourced efforts: sharing tasks in a small group of people or within a restricted community of a few dozen Masters students. In the end, a group of translation students working on the same file together at the same time involves a similar amount of peer assessment as, say, Facebook Translation does for one language.

For example, about 70 translators were active in the period mid-May to mid-June 2014 for Facebook translations into Dutch. However, the overall bulk of translations was covered by about two dozen people only. A handful of people provided more than 10,000 translations for free. Most of them voted for translations as well, increasing or decreasing the value of suggested translations of Facebook interface strings. In smaller groups of students, some translators feel more comfortable with specific tasks and domains than others, whereas others are more confident with post-editing and reviewing. The interaction between, and peer support among, Masters students certainly adds value to a translation in a way that moving up or down a suggested translation with the like/dislike button cannot; but the collaborative level of the smaller community in the classroom is not that different from the marginally larger community of Facebook Translation users. This is confirmed by Muzii (2009), who adheres to the view that when a collaborative translation project follows “a typical crowdsourcing approach only the best translators in the project subject field are engaged, to work on their most productive side” (Muzii 2009:3). As such, crowdsourcing as a concept and activity should be embraced by the translation education community as an additional asset in translator training. What is also clear from the Facebook translation model is that crowdsourcing approaches reach out to a target audience previously uncatered for.

The driving purpose behind crowdsourcing is to create demand and visibility: crowdsourcing is a method of production. Serving markets that were under-served previously increases the value of a corporation, a brand or an idea. With the odd exception, such as the CrowdFlower and Mission 4636 in Haiti after the earthquake struck there in 2010,<sup>20</sup> any crowd-

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<sup>20</sup> “Crowdsourced crisis response harnesses distributed networks of humans in combination with information and communication technology (ICT) to create scalable, flexible, and rapid communication systems that promote well-being, survival, and recovery during the acute phase of

sourced effort, which is generated by a company, has an eye to an increase in productivity and as a way to access a potential workforce. This allows the company to obtain a business result at virtually no cost other than the implementation of the crowdsourcing platform. However, the cost of creating a translation crowdsourcing platform and putting it in place might not compensate by what is saved on translation costs. A return on investment (ROI) needs to be in place in the long-term in order to justify the creation and/or presence of the crowdsourcing platform (Muzii 2009:3).<sup>21</sup> But the amateur-translator will hardly enter the world of the trained translator. Provided amateur translators aim to produce *fit for purpose* translations and that they don't behave like cowboys, these amateurs will only nibble at the edges of the ever-increasing pie of content waiting for translation. With their more in-depth background in the issues that come with translating, trained and professional translators will always retain their edge as better navigators across language divides.<sup>22</sup> However, crowdsourcing translation is not a trend that will fade. The main task of the TS community and its graduate students is then to repeat the mantra that the outcome of a (translation) crowdsourcing effort is not done by specialists or people who have been trained for the purpose of achieving a quality output.

An example of a collaborative platform is Transifex, an “open service allowing people to collaboratively translate software, documentation and other types of projects straight from the project's source” (Transifex 2011). Even though the initial idea might have been to set up a proper translation crowdsourcing effort, Transifex also offers a platform for people who can post translation jobs perfectly anonymously, hoping to get the work done for free by amateurs and professionals alike. The translation into Dutch by a user called *Siebrand* was verified by three native speakers and deemed to be good. Even Facebook Translation allows for more identity and interaction than Transifex, which aims for more varied and ‘professional’ translation.

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an emergency.” A recent experience of such a response is one “in which CrowdFlower conducted crowdsourced translation, categorisation and geo-tagging for SMS-based reporting as part of Mission 4636 after a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010”. (Hester 2010: 1)

<sup>21</sup> To that extent it can be argued relatively easily that the Google Translator Toolkit offers a vehicle for stealth crowdsourcing, whereby user-verified data can be used to train systems.

<sup>22</sup> This is precisely the point often made by David Katan (2014) “...that translation *is*, in fact, intercultural communication”.



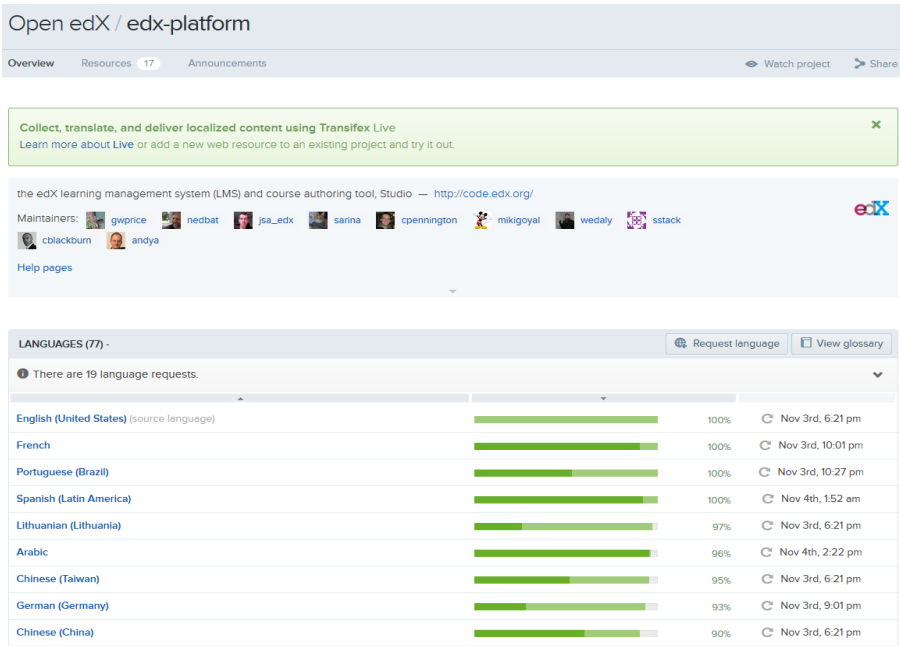


Figure 1 – Dashboard in Transifex for the Open edX platform, an open-source e-learning platform crowdsourced into 19 languages.

Although the identity of the maintainers of this Transifex project can be traced easily as they are related to the edX project, members of the Transifex community with similar IDs are less likely to be ‘traceable’. The light green bar concerns translation, the darker green reviewing. French, 100% translated is nearly fully reviewed.

This lack of user verification is an advantage for translation students and the TS community at large as the Transifex model of translation crowdsourcing still leaves plenty of leeway for a combined ‘training the client’ and ‘raising awareness’ effort, not least for the likely need of proofreading and post-editing. However, not all members of a user community see contributing to crowdsourcing as an honourable thing to do and there are amateurs about who aim to earn kudos points quickly just by uploading machine translated strings. Luckily, Transifex allows for a review round to be included.

1186 ALL		0 UNTRANSLATED	53 UNREVIEWED
1	Open Ended Panel	Tableau de bord des questions ouvertes	
2	Discussion	Discussion	
3	Problem	Exercice	
4	Advanced	Avancé	
5	Section	Section	
6	Subsection	Sous-section	
7	Unit	Unité	
8	You cannot create two cohorts with the same name	Vous ne pouvez pas créer deux cohortes avec le même nom	

Figure 2 – Detail of one of the 17 resources in need of translation, into French here, for 1186 strings. Translation of strings like ‘Discussion’, ‘Advanced’ and ‘Unit’ easily allow for post-edited machine translation input. This also makes clear why ‘cowboys’ can be around too.

When the element of machine translation is added to translation crowdsourcing, the role and position of the more traditional translator (trained in a TS programme) in the chain initiator-crowd-MT is unclear, if not absent. Drupal, the successful free and open source content management system, for instance, offers a free Application Programming Interface (API) to what it calls a translation framework, a machine translation setting that “does not attempt to be a replacement ... since machine translation is just not that good ... The module is just there to provide a basic translation that people can then alter if they wish in order to make it correct”.<sup>23</sup> TS programmes should act and move in on all this. Proofreading and post-editing will be needed for crowd-sourced efforts and not just for machine translation, but the addition of machine translation to crowdsourced efforts affects the range of future opportunities for human translators.

## 5. Free but not without human cost

"So we can all go home now?" (Katan 2010)

<sup>23</sup> As per drupal.org (last accessed 24 June 2014), more machine translation plug-ins (Lingotek, SDL BeGlobal, TMGMT etc.) can be found through Drupal’s ‘Download & Extend’ page, available from <https://www.drupal.org/download> (last accessed 30 October 2014).

Given the boost the world of automated translation received with both Moses and Google Translate from 2007 onwards, the image of translation, both as a process and an end product, has changed for the good. Yet, people in the field of TS have difficulty in acknowledging this. Machine translation is and remains a difficult topic for colleagues to discuss, let alone incorporate into the curriculum in a sound manner. It can even be argued that the period of what was euphemistically called ‘gisting’, using MT for basic communication purposes, is nearing its end for a limited number of language pairs (often language pairs that include English and a FIGS language - French, Italian, German or Spanish, but also Dutch). The quality of Google Translate can hardly be used in proper translation contexts, but the use of statistical machine translation like the customisable cloud-based KantanMT and MT uptake through apps clearly proves that, however much the quality of the output falls short of the acceptable, the output is deemed by millions of mobile phone and online users as fit for purpose. That is a paradigm.

This is a major concern for translation trainers. It would be better for the TS world to come to terms sooner rather than later with the fact that more and more translators and translation jobs will involve post-editing of amateur or MT output. Maintaining the quality of MT output is an aspect that is currently more or less absent from most Masters courses in translation. Understandably, the world of literary translation, cultural transfer and contrastive analysis is much more diverting from a humanistic perspective, visualising differences between near translations and raising critical awareness in students, but teaching it lacks weight in terms of transferable technology skills. In fact, in 2010, at a conference in Trieste on new pathways in translation, David Katan, who had been listening to the discussion regarding the increasing automated future for translators asked whether all the translator educators should go home now. At the time, the changing role and the competences required was not the focus of intention. Indeed, Terence Lewis, a member of the ITI who has been involved with the translation industry for 40 years, replied to a related blog post by stating that the merged TM-MT systems would be something every new translator had to take on board. He added that he had been claiming this since the 1990s and had been regarded as “nuts”.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Terence Lewis, a reply to “So we can all go home now?”, CenTraS blog post, 24 June 2010, available from <http://centrasucl.blogspot.be/2010/06/so-we-can-all-go-home-now.html> (last accessed 16 November 2014)

Although the following figures are dated, the fear of and, as a consequence, the lack of automation is confirmed by statistics published by the Common Sense Advisory, who in May 2009 estimated that of the 300,000 professionals earning their living in translation, many used fewer automated processes than they could and should (Muzii 2009: 4). The focus on the future uptake of wider professional and educational classes has been confirmed in more recent reports, such as the Meta-Net Strategic Research Agenda for Multilingual Europe 2020 (2012) and the Translation Technology Landscape Report by LT-Innovate and TAUS (2013). The former stipulates that Language Technology is a key enabling technology for the next IT revolution that will help to overcome language barriers. The latter sees a convergence of cloud, crowd and big data take to the stage in front of the wider language technology audience.

We can ponder the pedagogical and practical considerations associated with the use and implementation of language and translation technology in Translation Studies programmes for a long time to come, but we should not overlook a hugely important element in all this: the students themselves. In line with online developments of user-driven data and community-based needs, the profile of the post-Google Translate and post-Facebook Translation era Masters students in translation has changed equally substantially in the past few years. Students have become dangerously tech savvy. Gone are the days of library shelves; the wired up generation of students spends an average of 5+ hours a day on a digital screen (online, mobile or other) and only a fraction of this is television. The incredible leap in virtual interaction through social media networks has moulded a generation with a profound sense of e-community, a prerequisite to susceptibility to crowdsourcing ideas in the first place. Additionally, they are members of a global community that accepts machine translated content for their apps or tweets as long as the quality fits their purpose.

Ideally, in a Translation Studies programme today, there will be an increased use of online learning, and tools will be interactive carriers of multilingual content (TM's go viral and infect MT training, for instance). Existing 2.0 technology is already being increasingly exploited, with collaborative technologies becoming ever more pervasive. One of the main trends is the increasing reliance on online usage-based subscription models, in which users go online to access language and translation technology for their translation needs. XTM Cloud, Lingotek and Geoworkz are among the prime software packages and service platforms,

embodying the next step in technology uptake by the wider professional community and providing a valid and qualitative alternative to translation crowdsourcing efforts.

All of this could be mirrored in TS by having community feedback on individual coursework, by sharing translation memories not only across institutions but also across national boundaries and by additional community building through the (re)distribution of communication content. Translation education must address the presence, use and implications of MT and consider a partial shift of the amalgamated transferable skills of the translation graduate and trained (amateur) translator towards a multilingual IT-skilled (post-)editor and supervisor.

Although papers like the current one should have a fitting conclusion, as with any academic text, the content presented here and the concerns that originate from the newer concepts in the broader language and translation technology, demand a more open-ended final paragraph. The conviction by Muzii (2009) that the “translation industry, and translators first, should rapidly adapt to freemium, offering basic services for free, while charging a premium for advanced or special features” certainly is not the most alluring prospect for a future translation student. But what is more worrying is that translation education does not properly address the issues accompanying current developments. Productivity skills might not be withheld from the curriculum, but with the web of user-generated content and social networking sites, translation has become a kind of reversed localisation. There a ‘hive’ translation, the outsourcing of web content translation to bilinguals within the community (Garcia 2009), sees the target users define the needs and desires of the target audience -- a very utilitarian approach.

Awareness must be critical if possible, but practical for sure.<sup>25</sup> A completely utilitarian or even just consequentialist approach should be included in 21<sup>st</sup> century technology-based translation education. In order to overcome risk aversion in education and include a better defined sense of direction towards future use of technology in translation, the functionalist approaches by Vermeer and Nord should be supplemented by the utilitarian ideologies of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. There is a lot of work ahead still, challenging and incredibly interesting stuff. Clearly, we’re not all going home just yet.

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<sup>25</sup> For more practical details, please see Muegge 2013.

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## **Exploring the concept of transcreation - transcreation as ‘more than translation’?**

*Daniel Pedersen*

### *Abstract*

*During the last couple of decades, it has become more and more frequent to see seemingly translation-like activities being carried out under a different name. One of these names is ‘transcreation’ – basically a merger of the two words translation and creation. The term transcreation has found its way into several different domains. One of the most predominant ones is the world of marketing and advertising, which is the focus of the present paper. Here, the term is often used to describe the adaptation of advertising material for different markets. Extensive adaptations are often called for in this context, and this seems to have led to the genesis of a concept that is often described both as a kind of translation and in opposition to translation, as ‘more than translation’: transcreation. Thus, the transcreation industry itself often defines transcreation based on how it differs from translation. This paper will take the discussion of transcreation vs. translation from the industry to the academic discipline of Translation Studies by analysing statements from transcreation providers, and bringing their conceptualization of transcreation into translation related contexts. The attention will be on how the industry’s perception of transcreation relates to already existing Translation Studies literature.*

### **1. Introduction**

This paper seeks to investigate the concept of transcreation in an advertising and marketing context. It will initially analyse the concept of transcreation as seen from the perspective of a selected number of transcreation providers. This analysis will, a posteriori, lead to a comparison between the conceptualizations of translation and transcreation to be found among these providers (in this paper also

referred to as *the transcreation industry*) and some of the most dominating conceptualizations of translation within the Translation Studies (TS) community. The aim of this endeavour is to discuss the perception of translation within this particular transcreation context.

### 1.1 The term “transcreation”

Despite its only recently obtained status as a field of particular academic interest, transcreation as a term has existed for a number of decades. It seems to have its roots in India and especially in the work of the Indian translator and academic P. Lal (Munday 2013: 280; Di Giovanni 2008: 34). Transcreative practices in India are often performed on sacred texts. Hence, in India, transcreations are not considered as replacements of the original (Tymoczko 2007: 68), which could at first lead to an idea of faithful reproduction, but the fact is that P. Lal defines transcreation as a “readable, not strictly faithful translation” (Di Giovanni 2008: 34). Acknowledgement of the sacredness of the source has not, it seems, taken away a willingness to make adaptations so creative that they are regarded more as transcreations than translations. Transcreation can be found in many different places and cultures. India is just one example. The term has also found its way into other literary contexts, primarily used by the writer Haroldo de Campos and the theorist Else Vieira (1999). De Campos sees transcreation as a “transformative recreation of inherited traditions” (1999: 97) – much in line with the original meaning of Indian transcreation.

But there is also another field, much more commercially oriented, where transcreation stands out as a phenomenon that becomes more and more visible, and that is the world of marketing and advertisement, where the denomination of transcreation is used to describe a specific kind of product and process. Generally, transcreation in this context seeks to perform all the adjustments necessary to make a campaign work in all target markets, while at the same time staying loyal to the original creative intent of the campaign.

## 2. Analysis

Transcreation is a term and a practice that, like localization (Mazur 2009), is currently being developed by the industry, and it is this industrial development of transcreation that will now be subject to scrutiny. The

meaning of transcreation, in a marketing and advertisement context, originates from the needs and ideas of practitioners who have their own agendas. So when observing this phenomenon from an academic angle, it is important to bear in mind that this kind of transcreation is primarily defined from a practical point of view. In the present section, the concepts of transcreation and translation, as seen from the point of view of the transcreation industry, will be briefly described. This will be done by looking at definitions taken from a number of different transcreation providers.

*(Example 1): Transcreation is the creative adaptation of marketing, sales and advertising copy in the target language. It involves changing both words and meaning of the original copy while keeping the attitude and desired persuasive effect. (Branded Translations)<sup>1</sup>*

This example starts by mentioning the areas where transcreation is applied. A common feature of the texts represented within these areas of application is their persuasive character and their ability to have a certain effect on the target audience. So in many ways, this transcreation provider defines the text types found in transcreation based on the (commercial) goals they share. Here, transcreation is seen as creative adaptation, and what is being adapted is both words and meaning. As we move on to the next example, we will find a further elaboration on which kinds of texts are most typically being transcreated.

*(Example 2): Text featuring creative wordplay and techniques such as assonance or alliteration requires more than a straightforward translation, they need to be transcreated to ensure this impact is retained. (TransPerfect)<sup>2</sup>*

In this case, the focus is not that much on the goals of the texts, but more on what they actually contain. Elements such as wordplays and alliterations that are normally deemed difficult to translate would, according to this transcreation provider, not just benefit from a process of transcreation but would actually require it, if hopes are set on reaching the same impact when speaking to a new target audience. And in this

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.brandedtranslations.com/transcreation/> (consulted 6/6-2014)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.transperfect.com/services/multicultural\\_marketing\\_transcreation.html](http://www.transperfect.com/services/multicultural_marketing_transcreation.html) (consulted 6/6-2014)

particular claim we also find an indication of the intended goal of transcreation – retention of a desired impact.

Another thing worth mentioning is that, in this quote, the term *translation* is actually used. There is an indication of translation somehow being involved, but as we go into the process of transcreation there is something more than translation going on. When moving on to other examples, it is possible to detect this same indication.

*(Example 3): If you want to realize your brand's potential, it has to be tailored for its audience. And when you're a global brand, translation isn't enough. You need to make sure you speak to your audience using the right cultural nuances too.*

*We call this dual focus 'transcreation'. (Tag)<sup>3</sup>*

Once again, translation is mentioned. And once again, there is a reference to the insufficiency of translation, when it comes to certain types of text. In this example, we are faced with the expression “dual focus”, which seems to be a reference to a sort of *added value* that transcreation has compared to translation. The adaptation of cultural nuances is an essential part of what constitutes transcreation. Besides describing the elements that constitute transcreation, there is also a statement of what the goal of transcreation is, and that is “to realize your brand’s potential”. So according to this transcreation provider, the brand is at the very core of transcreation. And there are other providers who share this focus on the brand.

*(Example 4): Transcreation goes far beyond transferring words from one language to another. Looking at advertising content from strategic and creative perspectives, we leverage both linguistic and cultural expertise to deliver the message and brand voice to the target audience in each local market. (Hogarth World Wide)<sup>4</sup>*

This is another example of the brand having a very central position in the transcreation process. Earlier, we saw the content of a transcreated text as consisting, among other things, of wordplays and other kinds of “tricky” elements. In this case, the description of the content is taken to a

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.tagworldwide.com/services/index.php> (consulted 6/6-2014)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hogarthww.com/transcreation/transcreation-language-services/> (consulted 6/6-2014)

more general level, indicating that a transcreated text contains a message and a brand voice that have to be adapted for each local market.

The word *translation* is not present in this example, but it should be fair to assume that the idea of translation is present in “*transferring words from one language to another*”. If we assume that this refers to translation, then there is, in some way, a commonly shared perception of translation among a number of different transcreation providers. The following example adds little new information on transcreation and translation, but seems to place both concepts more or less within the same perimeters as the majority of the transcreation industry:

*(Example 5): Alpha CRC features a dedicated marketing transcreation team which can recreate your marketing and advertising texts in a new language, rather than just translating the source version. (Alpha CRC)*<sup>5</sup>

As we have seen before, the area of application is marketing and advertising. This example also indicates the language transfer and the fact that transcreation is performed in teams, although it is impossible to deduct anything with absolute certainty from this limited piece of information. As in many of the other examples, the concept of transcreation is placed in opposition to translation.

The final example is from a transcreation provider, which states the following under the headline ‘Transcreation’:

*(Example 6): A real growth market for the localisation industry where the focus is on transferring the essential message of a text into the target language and culture – as opposed to a more traditional translation between two languages. (TextMinded)*<sup>6</sup>

What makes this definition differ slightly from the rest is the fact that it has a very explicit focus on transcreation as an industry. What is more, this particular provider places transcreation within the localization industry and thereby places it as a subcategory within a localization paradigm. A comparison between localization and transcreation will follow in section 3.2. When moving on to the remaining part of the definition, it is once again possible to find transcreation being opposed to translation.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.alphacrc.com/linguistic.php> (consulted 6/6-2014)

<sup>6</sup> <http://textminded.dk/EN-GB/Text-Services/Transcreation.aspx> (consulted 6/6-2014)

These six examples represent some of the most general statements about transcreation in a marketing and advertising context. They reveal very little of the actual process of transcreating, but help form a general picture of how transcreation is conceptualized by the entities that provide this particular kind of service. So what is there to extract from these definitions?

Within marketing and advertising, texts usually have a persuasive character, and elements such as wordplay, assonance and alliteration are frequently applied. The focus is on ensuring cultural/local relevance, and commercial intent involved. These assumptions seem to be supported in almost all the definitions, but there are other general observations to be made. What seems to be a common factor in transcreation when it comes to comparing it to translation is the assumption that when transcreation takes place, it involves something more than translation. Phrases like “*more than translation*” and “*just translation*” seem to be repeated over and over again and contribute to the impression that transcreation gives an added value to a job that would otherwise be subject to translation. So, the client is offered a transcreation product, which is considered to be more effective or valuable than a translation. Based on this observation, it could be said that rather than transcreation having no relation to translation (transcreation  $\neq$  translation), transcreation is more than translation (transcreation  $>$  translation). If we take this added value as being a defining feature of transcreation for the advertising and marketing industry, what is it then that transcreation can do that translation cannot?

An element that appears paramount when treating transcreation is *culture*. There seems to be a focus on all the cultural nuances needed to convey the right message (*Example 3*). The amount of adaptation required to obtain success in this quest is, apparently, not easily reached using “straightforward translation” (*Example 2*). Another aspect worthy of attention is the fact that at the centre of the marketing and advertising transcreation we seem to find the brand. Behind the message of each single text we find the voice, which is speaking: the brand voice. Ensuring that the brand is presented in the desired way in each target market appears to be a main focus of transcreation.

To sum up this short analysis and formulate some general observations, we could probably say the following about translation and transcreation based on the words of the transcreation industry: Translation is transferring words from one language to another. Transcreation is transferring brands and messages from one culture to another.

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This view on translation is rather simplistic and is certainly not coherent with dominating ideas within TS. To say that using the right cultural nuances (*Example 3*) and going beyond transferring words from one language to another (*Example 4*) constitute characterising features of transcreation as opposed to translation is something that would undoubtedly encounter great opposition in a TS context. Surely, when Nida (1964) talks about dynamic equivalence in translation, it certainly involves going beyond just transferring words from one language to another. A point that is also emphasized by Katan (2009), who talks about “translation as intercultural communication”, and as something that “requires treating the text itself as only one of the cues of meaning” (2009: 91). And when Toury (1995) characterises translations as facts of target cultures there is clearly a suggestion of using cultural nuances. “Translating cultures” is a common collocation, and these are but a couple of examples of how transcreation, as presented by the industry, fits perfectly well into a translation paradigm. A further elaboration on this issue is to be found in the following section 3.

### 3. Scholarly literature

#### 3.1. Transcreation

The literature on transcreation is taking a number of directions. In section 1, attention was brought to some of the more literary uses of the term, and it was mentioned that in some contexts there has been talk about transcreation for a number of decades. In other contexts, the term *transcreation* has only recently gained considered attention. Consequently, literature in contexts such as marketing and advertising transcreation is relatively scarce. Its existence, however, must be acknowledged, and Bernal Merino (2006) notes that transcreation “is being increasingly used by a new wave of companies seeking to distance themselves from traditional translation firms. These new firms offer translation-like services that include not only translation but also creativity” (2006: 32). Rike (2013) also acknowledges the element of creativity as being central to transcreation. She then goes on by placing transcreation within the same context as the present paper by calling it “an approach used in particular for websites, marketing and advertising texts” (2013: 73).

When concluding her description of the concept of transcreation, Rike sees a link to localization but distinguishes between the two concepts by placing localization in a context of “software, manuals, user instructions” and emphasizing the more creative intent of transcreation (ibid: 73). Linking transcreation and localization has also been done by others.

Mangiron and O’Hagan (2006) state that “In game localisation, transcreation, rather than just translation, takes place” (2006: 20), and according to Munday (2013: 280), a lot of the vocabulary and the ideas behind transcreation come from the discourse of localization and translation.

While Rike sees transcreation and localization as two separate concepts belonging to different domains, Mangiron and O’Hagan place transcreation as a specific approach to localization. The following section will take a closer look at the possible relation between localization and transcreation.

### 3.2. Localization vs. transcreation

The previous section did to some extent open the question “Is transcreation a sort of localization?” The present section will treat this question by looking at a description of a transcreation workflow and comparing it to one of localization, albeit, in a simplified form.

On their website, the transcreation provider Hogarth World Wide describes one of its overall workflows in the following way:

*Hogarth uses its in-house team of native insight planners who will analyse the creative brief, identify any differences in consumer behaviour, consider cultural nuances, validate creative ideas, copy and visuals. The creative agency will refine the campaign based on feedback from Hogarth’s native insight team. Once the revised master creative<sup>7</sup> has been approved, Hogarth can begin transcreation.*

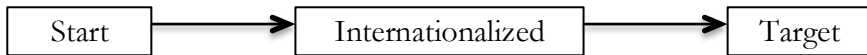
According to the description of this particular workflow, the process of marketing and advertisement transcreation goes on hand in hand with the creation of the original campaign. If transcreation is involved in the development of the master copy (the source text), then we are probably looking at a process that involves creation of both source and target texts. This process is in many ways similar to what Pym (2014) describes as

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<sup>7</sup> creative (n.): “(Advertising) creative material produced for an advertising campaign, such as the copy, design, or artwork.” (OED)

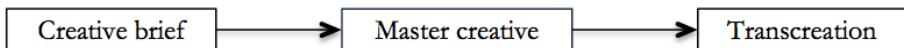


*internationalization*, which is usually associated with localization. Internationalization is a sort of intermediary stage between source and target, which Pym illustrates using this simplified model:



Pym (2014: 121)

Although the starting point may differ whether you are dealing with localization or transcreation, the intermediary phase of internationalization that follows in localization does look like the creation of the master creative in transcreation. Pym (2014) says that internationalization prepares a product prior to its translation (2014: 121). Hogarth World Wide say that they help the creative agency “analyse the creative brief, identify any differences in consumer behaviour, consider cultural nuances, validate creative ideas, copy and visuals”. This is a preparatory phase that ultimately leads to the transcreation of the master creative. A tentative model of this process inspired by Pym could look like this:



Even though these processes are not entirely identical, the similarities seem to be apparent. There is, of course, a difference in the fact that the preparation of the master creative is a phase of counselling and collaboration between a creative agency and the transcreation experts. Internationalization, on the other hand, as defined by the former Localization Industry Standards Association (LISA) in 1998, is “the process of generalizing a product so that it can handle multiple languages and cultural conventions without the need for re-design. Internationalization takes place at the level of program design and document development” (In Pym 2014: 119-120).

However, when it comes to localization and transcreation, there are some commonly shared features that could be emphasized. First of all, they both seem partly to be a result of a need for fast, global distribution. The nature of the involved types of texts makes it clearer to see why this could be the case. Localization is primarily concerned with software programs (Pym 2004, 2014; Mazur 2009; Rike 2013), while marketing and

advertisement transcreation mainly deals with creative campaigns. Both these text types have a relatively short life expectancy, and therefore, fast and efficient distribution is in many ways essential. Secondly, the fact that both localizations and transcreations usually have the ultimate goal of provoking a sale makes the focus on local relevance and cultural (consumer) behaviour appear as an important factor. Thirdly, they both share a structure of one-to-many-languages/markets that is normally applied.

It is most likely possible to highlight even more similarities between localization and transcreation. According to LISA (In Pym 2014: 119) localization involves taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold. More or less the same thing could be, and has been, said about transcreation. The task of framing transcreation and localization is probably all but done, and we may continue to find examples of transcreations deemed to be localizations and vice versa. But so far, there seems to be a tendency detectable in the abovementioned examples and in the writings of Rike (2013), which would be that as a process and in its general structure, transcreation is close or similar to localization. The difference between the two seems to lie mainly in the fields of application.

### 3.3. Advertising translation vs. transcreation

If we assume that there is a general difference between localization and transcreation in the field of application, then the next step in the description of transcreation could be to shift focus from software to marketing and advertising. So, whereas the ‘transcreation’ of advertising is a field that has enjoyed only little academic interest, the ‘translation’ of advertising is frequently discussed in the TS literature. And much of what is deemed essential to transcreation is also valued within advertising translation. Guidère (2000), for example, assigns great importance to reaching the same effect when translating advertising material and admits that this effect can be something as straightforward as simply purchasing the product (2000: 62). De Mooij (2004) states that “if advertising is translated at all, the translator should closely co-operate with the copywriter/art director team and not only translate but also advise about culture-specific aspects of both languages” (2004: 196). Cooperation between the translator and the copywriter or art director, which includes

giving advice on culture-specific elements, is to a large extent similar to the workflow described in section 2 of this paper.

Another element that has been highlighted earlier in this paper is the value of the brand, which George Ho (2004) discusses in his article on translation of advertisements across heterogeneous<sup>8</sup> cultures. As consumer behaviour becomes more sophisticated (Gobé 2001), showing one particular product's superiority is not enough to "win the heart of the consumer" (Adab & Valdés 2004: 162). According to Gobé (2001), this development in consumer behaviour has led to a change in marketing strategy with a greater focus on emotional value – *emotional branding*. Ho (2004) elaborates on what this new trend of emotional branding means to advertising translation. For him, there is no doubt that the changes in consumer behaviour and marketing strategies must have implications on translation as well. Ho says that "the translation strategy for commercial translation should be changed accordingly, from focusing on the product itself to highlighting the personal needs of the consumer" (2004: 226). In many ways, this perspective fits very well with the earlier mentioned transcreation goals of *keeping the attitude and desired persuasive effect (Example 1)*, *speaking to your audience using the right cultural nuances (Example 3)*, and *delivering the message and brand voice to the target audience in each local market (Example 4)*.

In general, transcreation and advertising translation share common grounds above all in the field of application, as both concepts evolve around persuading the client. Consequently, there is a shared need to emphasize cultural adaptation, local market specificities, etc. The importance of the brand and how it is presented in each target market is also recognized both in advertising translation and transcreation.

### 3.4. Translation vs. transcreation

Earlier in this paper, it was indicated that the transcreation industry seeks to distance itself from traditional translation activity. A matter that still needs attention is the more general theoretical aspect of translation and how this relates to transcreation. Jakobson (1959) divides translation into three groups that embrace both interlingual, intralingual, and intersemiotic translation, which includes transfers that are not necessarily

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<sup>8</sup> "heterogeneous" is a term used by George Ho himself. It is used to distinguish between what he calls homogeneous Eurocentric cultures and more heterogeneous cultures, i.e. Chinese vs. Western cultures.

between two different languages. According to Toury (1995), translation, or *assumed translation*, includes “all utterances which are presented or regarded as such within the target culture, on no matter what grounds” (1995: 32). The same ‘open’ approach to the definition of translation can be found in Tymoczko (2007). Tymoczko does not seem to have any intention of delimiting translation, which she sees as an open cluster concept. She states that “there are no necessary and sufficient conditions that can identify all translations and that at the same time exclude all non-translations across time and space” (2007: 78). Based on these views it is difficult to say what translation is or to exclude transcreation from potentially belonging to translation. However, Toury’s own concept of assumed translation makes it possible to argue that transcreation is *not* translation, simply because it is assumed to be something else. Nevertheless, when bringing forth this idea, Pym’s questioning of who is supposed to be doing all the assuming (2006: 4) becomes relevant, because it would imply that the conceptualization of one particular group of people, in this case the transcreation providers, determines what transcreation is (and is *not*).

If we move on from these general views on to what can be deemed as belonging to the field of translation and take a closer look on how translation is categorized, we find that many theories tend to create translation dichotomies. From a number of these dichotomies it is possible to identify a series of different approaches. In 1813, Friedrich Schleiermacher distinguished between two general approaches to translation, one being a naturalizing and the other being an alienating strategy. Much in the same line, we find Lawrence Venuti, who talks about translations being either foreignizing or domesticating. One thing they seem to have in common is the idea that one is faced with the choice of either hiding or showing that a text is a translation. This idea can be recognized in many other translation dichotomies, e.g. Levý’s illusory vs. anti-illusory translation, House’s covert vs. overt translation, and Gutt’s indirect vs. direct translation. When comparing these different strategies, they all seem to leave the translator with a choice between two general options: either you move towards the source or towards the target.

This overall theoretical framing of translation might also be applicable when describing transcreation strategies. Target-orientation, which seems to hold a strong position within translation theory, is also an important factor in transcreation. Nida’s dynamic equivalence is one such term that could be placed in the category of target-oriented strategies. Regarding

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dynamic equivalence, Nida himself says that it means “that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (Nida 1964: 159). This brings in another factor much valued in transcreation – the idea of same or equivalent effect. This idea is later put forth by others focussing on translation, e.g. Eco (2001) who says that “a good translation must generate the same effect aimed at by the original” (2001: 44-5). The ideas of both Nida and Eco seem to be more or less similar to the Branded ‘Translations’ idea (*Example 1*) of transcreation being something that “*involves changing both words and meaning of the original copy while keeping the attitude and desired persuasive effect*”. Target-oriented translation is also at the heart of the functionalist approach as formulated principally by Reiss & Vermeer (1984/2013) and Nord (1991), who see translation as being determined by its function or purpose. It thus seems plausible that some approaches to translation could also be considered as approaches to transcreation.

#### 4. Conclusion

Although marketing and advertising transcreation as a concept *per se* has only been subject to a modest amount of theoretical description, there are other concepts with a much richer description that seem to be able to embrace transcreation – at least to some extent. Within the transcreation industry itself the tendency is towards classifying transcreation as being something more than translation. According to Schäffner (2012), phenomena such as transcreation “contribute to raising awareness of the complexity of processes and encourage rethinking the more traditional views” (2012: 881). And it is perhaps in this aspect that the concept of transcreation gains its value.

Be that as it may, the fact that the industry and the TS community generally operate within two very different discourses when it comes to translation is hardly surprising. What would seem more revealing is to investigate why the transcreation industry seeks another word rather than “translation” to describe its activities, and what implications this might have. In this perspective, the present paper has sought to establish a basis for addressing these questions in future research.

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## Exploring the Chinese Translation of Australian Health Product Labels: Are they selling the same thing?

Jing Fang and Zhongwei Song

### *Abstract*

*In recent years, Australian health products have become highly popular in the Chinese market. In this context, labels of some big Australian health product brands have been translated into Chinese and appeared in pharmacies and online stores. This paper aims to examine to what extent these translations have become “transcreations”, where something new has been created and added into the translated labels targeting Chinese buyers. Using systemic functional linguistics as the theoretical framework, the paper tries to find some detailed linguistic evidence, exploring how the actual transcreations happen through lexicogrammatical choices made by the translators. A comparative analysis of the English labels and their Chinese translations is conducted, mainly focusing on the following linguistic features: the generality of the nouns representing targeted symptoms and disease names, the experiential features of the lexical choices representing claimed health benefits, and the use of modality words in the texts. Results of the analysis indicate that lexicogrammatical analysis of the translators’ choices can provide very valuable insights into the process of a transcreation, especially into the ‘creation’ part of the process, and an analysis of the context where transcreation takes place can help us discover the motives behind the translator’s choices. An open attitude is needed in translation criticism, based on which transcreation can be judged on the basis of a dual-perspective analysis involving both macro and micro aspects of the source and target texts.*

### **1. Introduction**

“Transcreation” is a relatively new term in the field of translation studies. With its meaning still being defined, the term means different things to different people. That said, transcreation is largely used by advertising and marketing professionals, who, in order to reach their international audiences, adapt advertisement texts from one language to another. So in essence, it can be argued that “transcreation” is, to a significant extent, a form of translation activity for it fundamentally involves the transfer of



meaning from one language to another. However, as the term itself indicates, “transcreation” also is something more than “translation” since it involves “transfer” and “creation”, with the latter being often driven by the intention to make the meaning more relevant to the target readers. In a translator’s eye, what is created is always deemed as relevant, yet paradoxically what is relevant cannot always be taken as universal by others (Katan, 2004). As a result, the boundary between the transferred message and the one being created in the target language text cannot always be so clearly defined, which is compellingly evidenced by the research focusing on the invisibility and manipulation of translators (cf. Lefevere, 1992; Venuti, 2008) and analyzing their role as social and cultural agents actively participating in the production and reproduction of textual and discursive practices (Inghilleri, 2005). Based on a case study, this paper explores and analyzes some Chinese translation of Australian health product labels, the texts that presumably contain a limited potential for ‘creation’. The aim of the paper is to investigate the linguistic environment where a covert transcreation is realised, and what strategies that a translator may use to realise the process of transcreation.

Before the case study is presented, it is important to give an overview of the situation of transcreation in the field of translation studies, and the prevalent approaches to the study of translation choice.

## 1.2 Viewing transcreation in translation studies

In the field of translation studies, contrasting terms have been used to refer to sharply different translation approaches, which are all adopted in attempts to achieve equivalence across the “free” to “literal” translation spectrum. There are, for example, “dynamic equivalence” (Nida, 1964) versus “formal equivalence” (Catford, 1965), “domestication” versus “foreignisation” (Paloposki, 2011), “translator’s invisibility” versus “translator’s visibility” (Venuti, 2008), “covert translation” versus “overt translation” (House, 2001) and thick versus thin translation (Hermans, 2003). The farther a translated text has departed from the original, the more it is tilted towards the ‘free’ end of the spectrum, and the greater it becomes transcreative.

With its usage predominantly in the global advertising and marketing industry, transcreation generally involves “the process of adapting a message from one language to another” (Wikipedia), and it is aimed to make sure that “the target text is the same as the source text in every

aspect: the message it conveys, the style, the images and emotions it evokes and its cultural background” (Balemans, 2013). ‘Creation’ only comes into play when, with all the possible considerations taken, the transferred meaning of a concept, an idea, a product or service is still believed unable to strike the chord with the intended audience from one language to another language. According to Stibbe, the aim of transcreation is in essence to yield something that translation in itself won’t be able to achieve (Stibbe, 2009). This embracing definition reminds one of what is called transfer-oriented approach of translation, as the latter focuses on “considerations of the source side, the target side, and of the differences between them” (Frank, 1990:12) and views translation as a compromise on the part of the translator. Further, this view is subscribed by the approach of intercultural communication, for which Bennett (1998: 3) convincingly argues that ‘cultures are different in these languages, behavior patterns and values’.

In line of these approaches, transcreation is a form of intercultural communication, and transcreating a text is both an act of translating as well as copywriting in that both are carried out as and in the form and process of rewriting, an activity that “contributes to constructing the ‘image’ of a writer and/or a work of literature” (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990:10). So in the course of the rewriting process regardless of however transfer, adaptation or creation is performed in either translation or transcreation, both translators and transcreators are unable to completely break free from the influences of “the status of the original, the self-image of the culture that text is translated into, the types of texts deemed acceptable in that culture, the levels of diction deemed acceptable in it, the intended audience, and the ‘cultural scripts’ that audience is used to or willing to accept” (Lefevere, 1992:87). In this context, transcreation that inherits many, if not all features of free translation could be viewed as an act of translating that pushes further its freedom across and over the free translation approaches.

So entrenched as a translation tradition for various reasons, however, ‘free’ approaches still often entice criticism, as they involve the sacrifice of semantic equivalence between two languages and prioritize target cultural and language needs over the original ones.

In fact, the existence of so many different terms, such as “appropriation”, “adaptation”, and “transcreation” and so on, distinguishing their practices from the term ‘translation’ has highlighted the complexity in the field of translation studies. The argument still exists about whether approaches

such as transcreation and alike should be accepted as translation (cf. Rabbassa, 1989; Chan, 2009). To seek answers, it is essential to have a clear knowledge about the process of each of these approaches – knowing how and why the translator/transcreator makes particular choices in the translating/transcreating process provides new perspectives of viewing the situation.

### 1.3 The study of translator's choice

When it comes to the reasons behind a translator's choices, the explorations generally fall into two categories: one is the macro-analytical approach focusing on social cultural and political factors, and the other is the micro-analytical approach focusing on the linguistic choices. In recent years, translation critics have laid a great emphasis on the macro factors of ideology, culture, genre, power relations and sociological factors (e.g. Lefevere, 1992; Flotow, 1997; Robinson, 2001; Wolf, 2007), reflecting a new trend in the translation studies since 1990s, where growing concerns are given to the cultural, ideological and political impacts on the translation products. However, most of these macro-analytical approaches remain qualitative, and cannot provide concrete and objective evidence to examine translator's actual strategies in realising their translation purposes.

As House (2001: 132) points out, one needs to consider the micro-perspective, the linguistic “nitty-gritty” of the text because translation is first and foremost a linguistic procedure – however conditioned this process may be by “external forces”. On the other hand, however, some linguistic approaches to Translation Studies are also criticized for showing little considerations of social, cultural and ideological impacts on the translator's decision-making (e.g. Venuti, 2008) in the belief that translation practitioners are more interested in what is visible on the surface (Katan, 2009). What we need is an integrated, complementary perspective, from which both macro and micro concerns can be embraced. For the importance of taking this dual perspective Juliane House argues:

In taking this dual, complementary perspective, the translation critic will be enabled to approximate the reconstruction of the translator's choices and to throw some light on his decision processes in as objective a manner as possible. (2001: 156)

It is with this spirit of enquiry that the present study is unfolded.

#### 1.4 Systemic functional linguistic analysis of translator's choices

Systemic functional linguistics provides functional approach to study language, where language is viewed as a network of systemic choices simultaneously realising three major functions in meaning: ideational metafunction for construing human experience, interpersonal metafunction related to personal relations, social distance, social status and attitude, and textual metafunction related to the mode and organisation of the text (see further in Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The multidimensional nature of systemic functional theory, where choices of lexis and grammar are interpreted as the reflection and realisation of deeper semantic and contextual meanings, provides rich resources for identifying and interpreting translation choices from both micro and macro perspectives. In the present study, we aim to use systemic functional linguistics as the analytical tool to reflect the strategies that the translator adopts in realising the process of transcreation. The relevant aspects of the systemic functional linguistic theory that are applied in this study will be introduced in detail in Section 3.

## **2. Methodology**

In recent years, Australian health products have become highly popular in the Chinese market. In this context, labels of some big Australian health product brands have been translated into Chinese and appeared in pharmacies and online stores in China. These translations were done by anonymous translators. Given so many different Chinese versions of the same English labels, it is assumed that these translators are not assigned by the Australian product manufacturers. Further, judging the significant differences between these versions and the original labels, it is further assumed that the translators are most likely those who either sell the products themselves or are hired by those sales agents to conduct the translation.

### 2.1 Data

48 pairs of parallel texts are collected with 48 English texts with 48 Chinese translations. The English label texts are extracted from the official

websites of the product manufacturers, while the Chinese translations are from the webpages of the Chinese online stores operating at Taobao. The texts are presented as the labels of 5 health product brands made in Australia, and fall into 5 general categories: marine products, bee products, herbal supplements, vitamins, and farm products. The five brands, Wealthy Health, Australia by Nature, Blackmores, Nature's Way, and Healthy Care are some of the major Australian brands being marketed at Taobao, China's No.1 online shopping website, equivalent to, though bigger than eBay.

The collected texts are short in length and clearly laid out in structure. A typical label text includes the following parts:

- product name
- background information on the key ingredients
- the therapeutic function/health benefit
- list of ingredients, dosage and warning

It is found that both English texts and their Chinese translations share these generic structural features in general.

## 2.2 Analytical framework

With a parallel corpus established, a manual analysis was conducted, mainly focusing on the lexicogrammatical choices in both the source texts and the translation texts. The analysis aims to answer the following questions:

1. In presenting the value of the product, how is the positive appraisal realised through the lexicogrammatical choices? Does the translation reflect the same level of appraisal?
2. How are the targeted medical conditions presented? Is the presentation generally the same in the translations?
3. How are the claimed therapeutic actions realised in lexicogrammatical choices? Are there any differences between source and target texts in this regard?
4. How is modality presented in the parallel texts? Are there any differences?

In addition to the manual analysis, SysCon, a computational tool based on systemic functional linguistics, has also been used for frequency search of certain types of lexical items, and which is particularly useful in analysis of lexical realisation of process types.

### 3. Analysis and results

The analysis of the data was conducted on the basis of some fundamental aspects of systemic functional linguistic theory, including appraisal, the general-specific cline of things,<sup>1</sup> process types, and modality.

#### 3.1 Positive appraisal

In systemic functional linguistics, the appraisal system provides resources for the speaker/writer to position their audience/readers into thinking positively or negatively about the information (see further in Martin & White, 2005). The lexicogrammar provides important resources for creating and interpreting appraisal, as the choice of lexicogrammatical patterns influences the audience's personal reaction to the meanings in a text (Martin & White, 2005). In the corpus of the present study, positive appraisal is widely found in the labels, especially in the section of 'background', where background information of the key ingredients is presented, and also in the section of 'therapeutic functions', where information of health benefits is given. In terms of lexicogrammar, the positive appraisal is mainly achieved in two ways in these texts: one is through the use of attitudinal adjectives or nominal groups representing positive attributes of the ingredients, and the other is by adverbs and adverbial groups representing positive circumstances of manner and extent. A circumstance of manner gives a positive aspect of the process being construed, and a circumstance of extent shows the volume of the appraisal. Below are examples illustrating these choices:

*Positive attributes realised by adjectives and nominal groups:*

It is a valuable source of the omega-6 fatty acid gamma linolenic acid, which is a healthy essential fat that has a vast array of positive effects in the body.

*Circumstances of manner and extent realised by adverbs and adverbial groups:*

- Salmon Oil is carefully manufactured and specifically formulated to provide a therapeutic amount of the omega-3 fatty acids. (manner)

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<sup>1</sup> "Thing" is a systemic functional term, which is the semantic core of a nominal group and is typically realised by a noun.

- 月见草油能够明显改善痛经症状，改善经期不适症状，以及经期较短的问题。(extent)

**Back translation:** *The Evening primrose oil can distinctly reduce period pain, and relieve menstrual symptoms as well as the problem of short menstrual period.*

Figure 1 shows the analytical results of the use of positive appraisal items in both the source and translation texts:

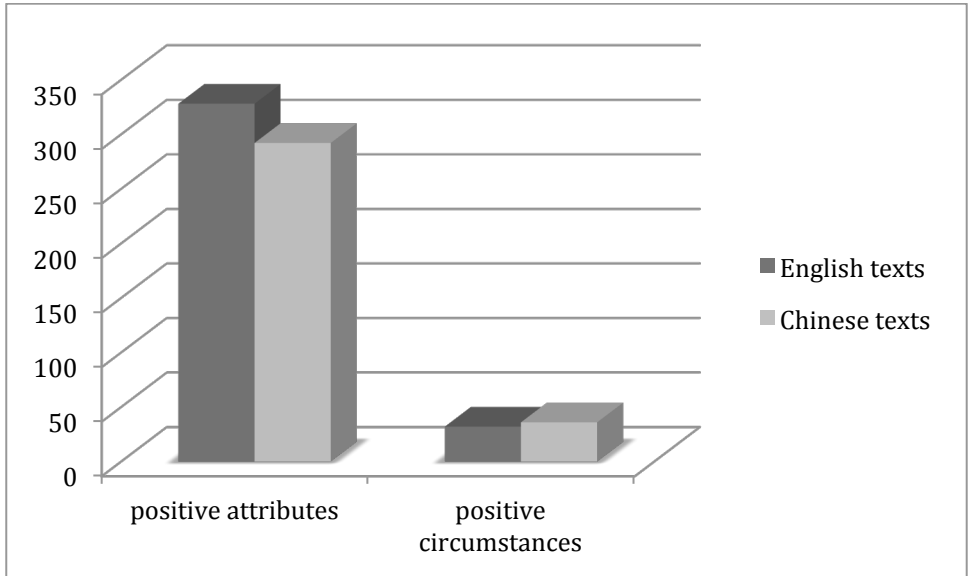


Figure 1: A comparison of positive appraisal

The results indicate that, in terms of presenting positive appraisal, the source and translation texts are very similar – in other words, they achieve the similar level of positive evaluation of the products being presented. A slight difference lies in the distribution of the lexicogrammatical patterns: the source language texts seem to use more adjectives and nouns than the target language texts in representing positive attributes, but fewer adverbs in representing positive circumstances of manner and extent. Therefore, it seems that little has been ‘created’ in this respect of the translation.

### 3.2 The presentation of the targeted conditions

The description of the medical conditions that a health product targets is mainly found in the section of “Background information of the key

ingredients” as well as in that of “Therapeutic functions”. They are typically realised by nominal groups, representing either names of symptoms or physiological states. So the targeted conditions generally fall into two types in the text environment: one is the symptomatic conditions that the products claim to prevent or relieve, and the other is the physiological conditions that the products claim to maintain or improve for better health.

In systemic functional theory, one of the most important semantic features of naming of things is the cline of generality where the naming of the same type of things can be selected on the cline of “general-specific” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999). The naming of health conditions is no exception. The example below illustrates how the lexicogrammatical choices realising the same health condition reflect different selections on the “general-specific” cline (see Figure 2):

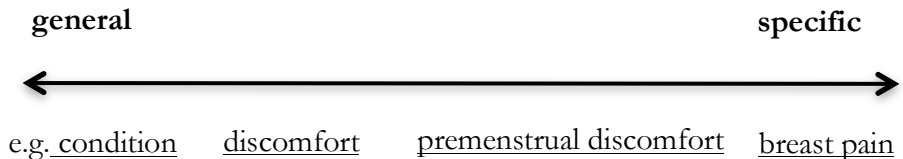


Figure 2: condition descriptor on the general-specific cline

Based on this cline, the nominal groups realising the targeted conditions in the corpus can be analysed in terms of generality. Figure 3 shows the result of general and specific conditions being presented in both source and target language texts:



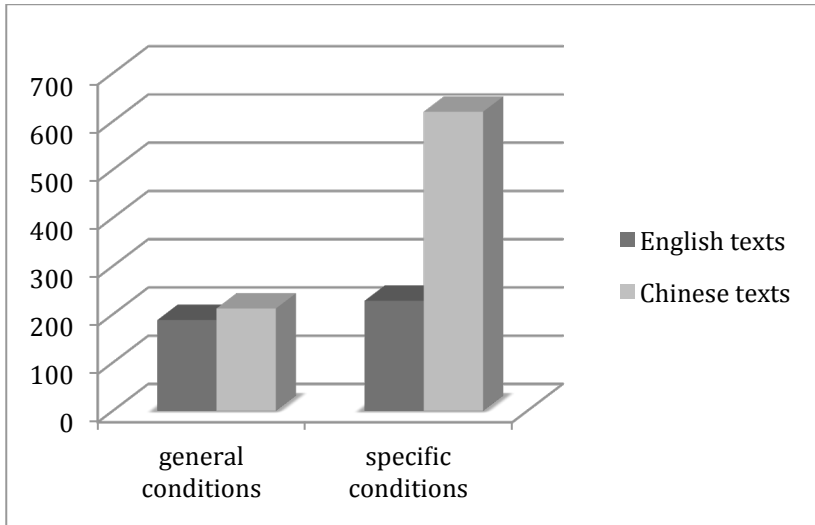


Figure 3: A comparison of the presentation of targeted conditions

The results in Figure 3 yield some interesting indications. Firstly, the total number of conditions being presented in the source texts is significantly smaller than the target texts. Secondly, in terms of specific conditions, there is a huge difference between the source and target language texts, with the latter presenting much more specific conditions than the former. The results unequivocally indicate that some new information has been created in the translation, and in particular that the new information represents some specific conditions which the products target. In fact, a closer look at the translations show that the presentation of the health conditions, which cannot be found in the aligned source texts, typically functions as a further elaboration of a general condition presented in both texts. Example:

**Source text:**

Evening primrose oil maintains normal menstruation; aids in the relief of premenstrual symptoms. (**general condition**)

**Target text:**

月见草油能调经, 缓解月经前的各种症状或综合症 (*general conditions*), 如 :  
缓解乳房胀痛、经期不准、腹痛腰酸等。 (*specific conditions*)

**Back translation:** *Evening primrose oil can maintain normal menstruation, and relieve a variety of premenstrual symptoms and conditions, such as: relieving breast pain, irregular period, lower abdominal pain and back pain.*

### 3.3 The construal of therapeutic actions

In the present study, therapeutic actions refer to the processes of preventing, relieving, maintaining and improving the targeted conditions. In systemic functional theory, the construal of our experience of what goes on is modelled by the configuration of three components: a process unfolding through time, the participants involved in the process, and circumstances associated with the process (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

So in the case of label texts, it is reasonable to assume that a typical experiential configuration in construing a therapeutic process would be:

*participant 1 (product/ key ingredients)*  
+ *process (e.g., prevent/ relieve/ maintain/ improve)*  
+ *participant 2 (targeted condition)*  
+ *circumstance (e.g., manner/ extent)*

However, it is found after analysis that those verbs that are generally chosen to realise the therapeutic process in this context, such as *maintain*, *prevent*, and *treat*, are nominalised in a considerable number of instances in the English texts. Examples:

- Assist in the maintenance of a normal/healthy cardiovascular system.
- May assist in the prevention and/or treatment of osteoporosis.
- May assist in the maintenance of cholesterol within the normal range in healthy individual

As shown in the above examples, when these processes are nominalised, the nominalisation is often included in a prepositional phrase functioning as a circumstance. Such a shift in the grammatical organisation causes a re-

mapping of semantic meanings in the clause, as an element of process is, experientially speaking, always more important than a circumstantial element. As Halliday and Matthiessen point out (2004: 176), the configuration of process + participants constitutes the experiential centre of the clause, whereas the status of circumstantial elements in the configuration is more peripheral and they are not directly involved in the process. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that, when nominalised, these therapeutic processes can only have an indirect impact on the participants (targeted conditions). Compared with the source texts, the instances of nominalised therapeutic process are significantly fewer in the target language texts (see Figure 4). This indicates that the translators have made some shifts to unpack the nominalised processes and re-present them as the centre of the experience in the translation. Example:

**Source text:**

Bioinskin collagen assists in the maintenance and repair of skin, hair and nails.

**Target text:**

保持皮膚健康美白, 修復受損肌膚, 增加皮膚、頭髮和指甲的活性。

**Back translation:** (It) maintains the health and fairness of skin, repairs skin damage, and increases the vibrance of skin, hair and nails.

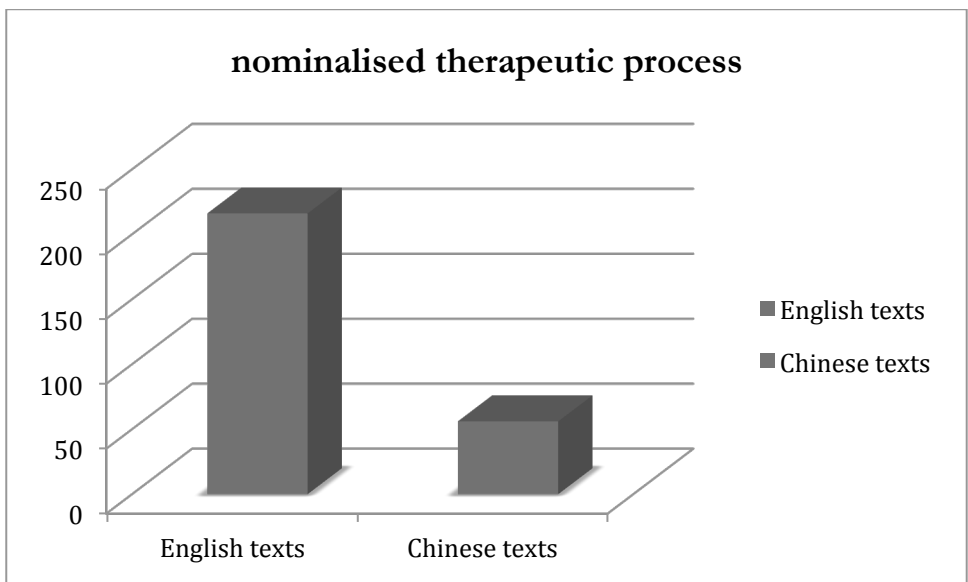


Figure 4: A comparison of nominalised therapeutic process

To explain the shift from nominalisation to verbalisation in the translated data, one might need to consider several potential factors, including the different distribution of lexicogrammatical resources in the two languages, the generally accepted rhetorical features in presenting this particular discourse in Chinese, which might be different from English, and so on. All these factors might play a role in what we see here.

However, even taking these potential factors in consideration, it is still very possible for the translators to maintain the original nominalised form in the translation without being accused of sounding awkward, as Chinese language does have lexicogrammatical resources available to maintain the nominalised structure – this can be supported by Halliday’s investigation of Chinese scientific texts (Halliday, 2003). Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that it is NOT purely out of lexicogrammatical concerns that such shifts happen in these translated texts.

A frequency search of the lexical items by the computational tool SysCon shows the picture of the frequency of words being used in the texts. Among the lexical items on the list, the following in Table 1 are found as the top 8 most frequently used verbs (including verbal finites):

Frequency rank (verbs)	Source texts	Target texts
1	is	是 <i>is/are</i>
2	assist	有 <i>have</i>
3	maintain	改善 <i>improve</i>
4	help	防止 <i>prevent</i>
5	support	缓解 <i>relieve</i>
6	are	调节 <i>adjust</i>
7	aid	促进 <i>enhance</i>
8	provide	增加 <i>increase</i>

Table 1: A comparison of frequency of verbs

If we exclude the verbal finites, such as *is*, *are*, and *have*, from the list, the remaining verbs generally fall into two categories when they are seen from a semantic experiential perspective: those which will not generate an immediate impact on the participants, such as *maintain* and *aid*, and those which will, such as 增加 *increase* and 调节 *adjust*. This differentiation can be interpreted by viewing all the processes through time: whether the process being construed creates a direct and immediate impact on the participant or if it is unfolded slowly through a period of time and the impact on the participant is not immediately visible. Based on this differentiation, analysis of the therapeutic process in the clause is conducted: those that construe a process with an immediate impact on the targeted conditions fall into the group of “direct process”, and those without an immediate impact are grouped as “indirect process”. Figure 5 shows the results.

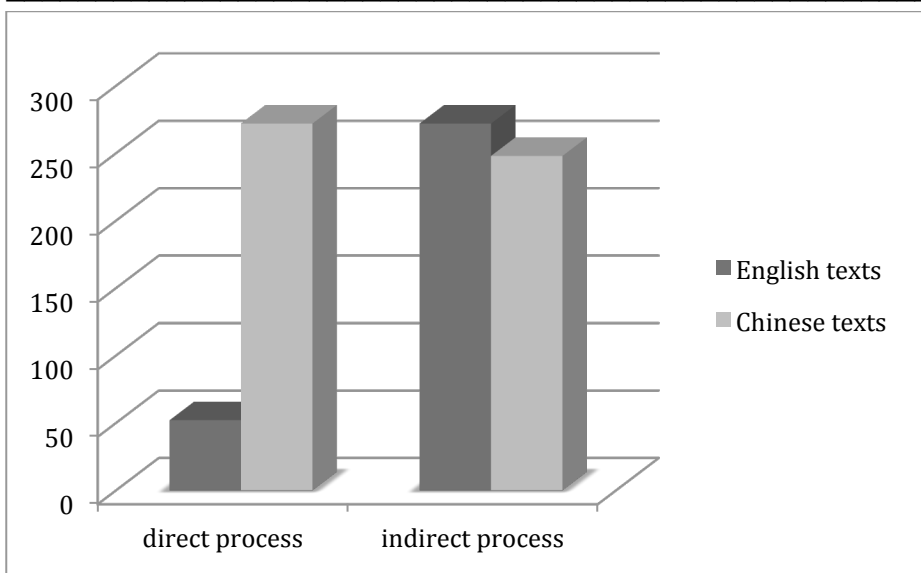


Figure 5: A comparison of the presentation of therapeutic process

As shown in Figure 5, there is a significant difference between the source and target texts in the construal of ‘direct process’. It seems that, in the English texts, the therapeutic impact is more often presented as indirect, and therefore weaker than in the translations. The examples are compared as below:

**Source text:**

(Prosta Strong 1 Enhance Plus+ For Men) Supports male sexual function and performance and maintains healthy libido. Assists in maintaining healthy levels of the male hormones. (Indirect process)

**Target text:**

提高雄性激素水平，提高性功能，增加性慾望。 (Direct process)

**Back translation:** *(It) increases the level of male hormones, enhances sexual function, and lifts libido.*

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### 3.4 The use of modality

Modality refers to the choices that construe the region of uncertainty between “yes” and “no” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). When a speaker/writer uses modality in his/her proposition, the arguability of the statement will be influenced. In systemic functional theory, the meaning of modality is further categorised into four groups: (i) degrees of probability, (ii) degrees of usuality, (iii) degrees of obligation, and (iv) degrees of inclination. Also recognised is a further category standing on the fringe of the modality system, degrees of ability/potentiality (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 621). In the present study, the analysis focuses on two of these five types of modality: we aim to look at the presentation of degrees of probability in making a claim of therapeutic function, as well as the degree of ability/potentiality in presenting the health benefits that a product can bring out.

These two types of modality are mainly realised in two ways through lexicogrammatical choices. The most common way is through the use of a modal finite, such as *may* and *can*. There are also a few cases where grammatical metaphor is used to achieve modality. The following are three examples:

- It may benefit people who suffer from cold feet and hands, or tired and painful legs. (modal finite realising probability)
- Supplementation with antioxidant herbs such as grape seed extract can therefore support the body in the fight against these free radicals. (modal finite realising ability)
- It is thought to strengthen the immune system and assist in combating colds and flu. (grammatical metaphor realising probability)

Figure 6 shows the situation of using different types of modality in the source and target texts.

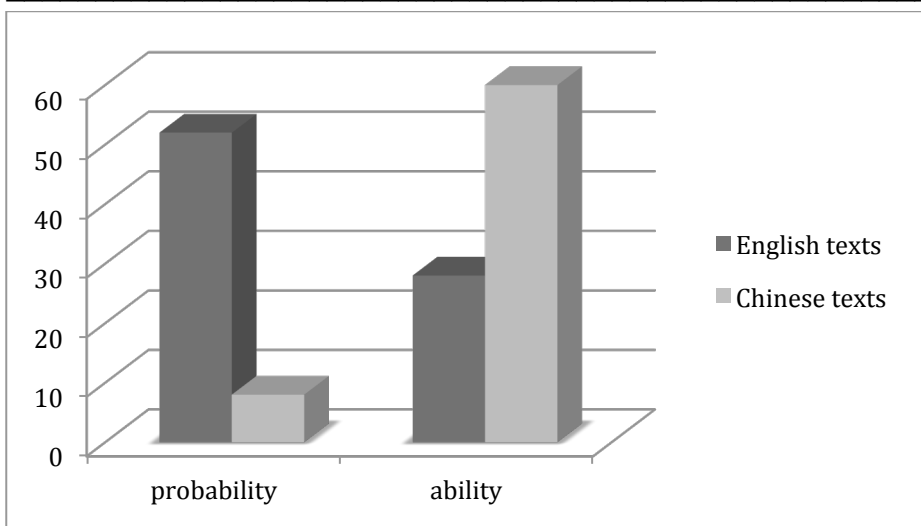


Figure 6: A comparison of the use of modality

Although the general use of modality in both groups of texts look very similar, the difference in the distribution of modality patterns between the two is striking. In the source texts, most of the modality items are about ‘probability’ whereas most of the modality used in the target texts are about ‘ability’. Therefore, through translation, “what a product may do” in the source text is presented as “what a product can do” or even as “what a product does” in the target text. Examples are as follows:

#### Source text

- May assist blood circulation.
- May help to maintain cholesterol levels within the normal (and or healthy) range
- May help maintain healthy (and or normal) blood pressure in healthy individuals.

#### Target text

- 能够促进血液循环
- 帮助维持胆固醇水平在健康标准范围之内
- 有助维持正常血压



**Back translation:**

- *can enhance blood circulation;*
- *help maintain cholesterol levels within the healthy range*
- *help maintain normal blood pressure*

**4. Further discussion**

The findings in the previous section shed some light on the process of how translation has mutated into transcreation. Based on the results acquired thus far, we can explore even further.

4.1 Covert transcreation

The analysis of the lexicogrammatical features in the source and target texts provides an interesting picture of what has been ‘created’ as new information in the target texts. It is significant that, through these choices in lexis and grammar, the labels in Chinese create a toned-up impression of the products: as compared with the presentation in the English labels, the products depicted in the Chinese texts are targeting a wider range of and more specific health conditions; with greater certainties conveyed, they create a more immediate and direct impact on these conditions. In general, it is found that the Chinese texts become more positive in evaluating the products than the original English texts. However, the achievement of this toning-up effect is not straight forward, as can be evidenced by the findings of insignificant difference in the use of positive appraisal items in the two groups of texts. Rather, the increase in appraisal is more often achieved through implicit lexicogrammatical choices: through grammatical devices such as de-nominalisation and grammatical metaphor, or through lexical devices such as verbal choices, and use of modal finites.

It is reasonable to argue that based on the case study, the process of a transcreation may take place in an implicit manner, not always following the traditional perception that the ‘created’ part is always clearly visible. In this context, the search for linguistic evidence is very important in the exposure of covert transcreation from translation.

4.2 Viewing transcreation from above

A comprehensive understanding of the process of translation/transcreation requires more than just a lexicogrammatical analysis of the translators’ choices, as these choices are representations of higher-level meaning-making process. As Halliday and Matthiessen point out, the grammar has to interface with what goes on outside language: with the happenings and conditions of the world, and with the social processes we engage in (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 24). This explains why a macro-level analysis of context where the translation/transcreation takes place should also be brought into consideration. In other words, our perspective needs to be shifted from the lexicogrammatical level and we need to observe the choices from the higher level of context, seeking the motives and reasons behind them. To this end, we will base our analysis of context on the systemic functional model, approaching the context from two layers – the context of situation and the context of culture.

Context of situation covers the things going on outside the text world that make the text what it is. There are three parameters that construct a context of situation: Field (what the text is about; what purpose the text is created for), Tenor (the relationship/social distance between the writer and readers), and Mode (the role played by language in a given context) (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Table 2 presents a comparative analysis of the general context of situation for the source and target texts:

	Source texts	Target texts
Field	The socio-semiotic function of this text is recommending and the situation type is that of therapeutic product labels. The domain is concrete and concerned with providing product information such as ingredients, therapeutic claims, dosage and safety warnings.	The socio-semiotic function of this text is recommending and the situation type is that of therapeutic product labels. The domain is concrete and concerned with providing product information such as ingredients, therapeutic claims, dosage and safety warnings.

Tenor	The institutional roles are therapeutic products manufacturers to the consumers. The social distance between them is large, and the power relations are unbalanced as the consumers have the right to select products of different brands.	The institutional roles are therapeutic products importers to the consumers in China. The social distance between them is large, and the power relations are unbalanced as the consumers have the right to select products of different brands. The consumer group in China is much larger than in Australia, and there are more brands available than in Australia.
Mode	The texts are in English and appear on the packaging of the products.	The texts are translated from English as a Chinese version of the product label, and are mainly found on the webpages of Chinese online stores.

Table 2: A comparison of context of situation

As shown in Table 2, both source and target texts are recommending in nature, functioning as advertising. The tenor relations are also quite similar in terms of social distance as well as power status. However, it is worth noting that the power relations between seller and buyer in the Chinese context tend to be more unbalanced than the Australian context due to the fact that there are more brand options available to the online shoppers – apart from the Australian brands, brands from US, Canada and New Zealand are also the major players in China’s health products market, and most of them are targeting online shoppers. The shift in mode, more specifically in the channel or medium of delivering the texts, creates a different impact on readers. Unlike reading a hard copy label attached on the bottle of the product, online shoppers rely solely on the pictures and texts at the webpage to judge a product. This requires the online texts to play a bigger role in achieving the recommending purpose of the texts, which would inevitably influence the lexicogrammatical choices.

Clues in the other layer of context, the context of the cultural and political environment, can help further justify the translator/transcreator’s choices. A comparison of the regulations governing the labelling of

therapeutic goods in Australia and China finds one striking difference: in Australia these goods are under the same regulations for prescription and non-prescription medicines, whereas in Chinese they are categorised as “health food” and are under the same regulations for food products<sup>2</sup>.

The different definition of the same type of goods in the two regulatory contexts means a difference in the degree of regulation, this is evidenced by the fact that the Australian regulation has some more specific and strict requirements on the labelling of health products than that in China. For example, the Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia specifies a list of diseases, conditions, ailments and defects for which the advertising of serious forms is restricted unless approved by appropriate expert committee. This explains the very cautious lexicogrammatical choices in presenting the therapeutic functions in the source texts. The regulatory gap between the two countries gives the translators more manoeuvring space to achieve their translation purpose and allows them to ‘create’ something new in the translated texts without the worries of being accused of crossing the line.

China’s less stringent regulations on the labelling of health products would be both a causing factor and a reflection of a reading culture of the Chinese consumers in the health product market, where consumers are used to a more explicit, direct and specific presentation of health claims. A faithful rendering of the English labels with equivalence achieved at the lexicogrammatical level may not be able to evoke the same level of emotions among the Chinese consumers as the labels that they are familiar with tend to be more recommending in sense. As Catherine Firth argues, good advertising not only tells us about the products we consume, it also tells us what those products signify in our culture (Frith, 1997). Viewed from this perspective, the transcreation behaviours in the current study seem to be highly justifiable.

## **5. Conclusion**

By presenting a comparative study of English labels and their Chinese transcreations, we can achieve the following conclusions. Firstly, a lexicogrammatical analysis of the translators’ choices can provide very

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<sup>2</sup> Relevant regulatory documents are available at <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/C2004A03952> (Australia) and <http://www.sda.gov.cn/WS01/CL0056/10749.html> (China).

valuable insights into the process of a transcreation, especially into the ‘creation’ part of the process. Secondly, from a macro perspective, an analysis of the context where transcreation takes place can help us discover the motives behind the translator’s choices. Based on the knowledge acquired from this “complementary, dual perspective” (House, 2001), one can claim with confidence that being ‘free’ and ‘creational’ is not necessarily unprofessional. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that the field of translation criticism should adopt a more open and flexible attitude towards transcreation and other approaches alike by evaluating them on the basis of a dual-perspective analysis involving both macro and micro aspects of the source and target texts.

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## Strategies for the Audio Description of Brand Names<sup>1</sup>

José Dávila-Montes and Pilar Orero

### *Abstract*

*Colours, places, emotions and character traits in audio description of fictional TV and cinematic materials usually describe a degree of detail that is highly dependent on the parameter of the time available between dialogues or parts of dialogues. Actions and plot are thus narrated for the blind or the visually impaired with a varying degree of attention to detail, depending on the space (or rather, “time”) available. Beyond its merely professional dimension, audio description can be considered a mode of intersemiotic translation that entails a decision-making process comparable to that in other modes of audiovisual and interlinguistic translation. It is also able to incorporate a number of features typically related to the term “transcreation”: transporting “meaning” from an audiovisual system to an exclusively aural one.*

*Transcreation is not only a semiotic operation between disparate systems, but also a key concept in marketing and advertising. Dealing with objects in audio description, and particularly with those objects that have a clear designer imprint or branding, inevitably becomes a complex matter. This article will look at the audio description of brand names in different genre films in an attempt to account for a number of possible strategies in situations where objects, and very especially those with a conspicuous commercial brand, play an integral role in the construction of cinematic scenes, or even in the plot itself. The article will examine first some readings of objects from a semiotic perspective, with special attention to the emotional and the symbolic/cognitive implications intended on the original audience and their impingement on a transnational culture of contemporary consumerism. It then will move on to analyse some of the functions that commercially branded objects play in a film, and finally will proceed to list some examples of existing techniques used to describe such objects.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Audio description (AD) is the technique of inserting audio narration, explanations and descriptions of the settings, characters, and actions taking place in a variety of audiovisual media, when such information about these visual elements is not offered in the regular audio presentation. This ad hoc narrative can be created for any media representation: dynamic or static, i.e. from a guided city tour of Barcelona or a 3D film, to a Picasso painting. Its function is to make audiovisual texts available to all in order to avoid the risks of excluding a large sector of society whose needs require this special service to compensate for their sensorial difficulties.

The technique of AD has been around for centuries, both for blind people and for those who could not access the visual content due, for example, to lack of culture or education. This was the case in the Medieval Ages when pilgrims needed oral explanations to “read” and enjoy the visual narrative in stained glass windows. In the 20th century, with the development of silent movies, narrators were hired by cinema owners to explain the film, and to read intertitles. In those years, literacy in both film language and reading texts was not a common occurrence. In the 21st century, when culture and society have significantly moved from paper to audiovisual formats, the need for access to content is more poignant. This article begins with a brief theoretical discussion of narrative, first, and then on advertising, in an attempt to explain how different levels of meaning and functions are sought after by advertising and how these play out in movies. The article moves later into discussing possible audio-description and decision-making strategies when branded objects are involved in cinematic materials.

## **2. Objects as Characterisation and Narrative Tools**

The field of Narratology studies, among other things, the implication of objects in the construction of character identities, and also their precise placement in space. Objects, and their location, determine not just the perception but also the interpretation—understanding and cognition—of a scene as part of a film. Objects may be used for wallpaper effect, as props, or to characterise the time, period or social status of the character. They may also have very specific “roles” in how the story is constructed

from a semiotic point of view, with metonymic and metaphoric functions that “weave” the story together, by acting as visual links between consecutive scenes or as anaphoric/cataphoric references in the relation of scenes that are chronologically distant within movies: a smoking gun during a flash-back, for example, or a flag waving over a mountain after showing the marching of troops, may constitute an element indispensable to fully grasp the plot of a movie.

As crucial as they are in the construction of a narrative or in the characterization of time, space and people, objects may become a source of embarrassment when they inadvertently and inappropriately make their way into filmic materials. Some Internet sites are devoted to recounting the many blunders in films and TV series that can be seen in some frames, such as the use of a fork in Rome in the classic BBC TVI *Claudius* mini-series, or the watch Russell Crowe wears in *Gladiator*. In another movie about pre-Roman times, a baby is shown with a modern-day pacifier (*Troy*, 2004).

Movies from the Roman Empire are, for some reason, the subject of special delight for “goof-hunters”, but while the former instances in *Gladiator* or *Troy* are clear examples of production blunders that are actually irrelevant to the plot unless spotted by a scrutinizing audience, some others may have serious implications for the credibility of the movie. In *Claudius*, the emperor consents to eating poisonous mushrooms from his wife’s fork and dies. It is difficult to ascertain which of the gaffes is more detrimental to the viewers’ experience; at any rate, these three instances require an increasingly sophisticated encyclopaedia on the part of the audience: gladiators did not wear watches (easy), there were no pacifiers in the times of Achilles (nearly as obvious) and (alas!) forks are a relatively “modern” invention.

The cases above may be used as extreme exemplification of the kind of intervention that audio description may have in the dealing with objects in scenes. While it may seem obvious that the accidental watch on Maximus’ wrist will be —advertently or inadvertently— omitted in the audio description of the movie, the long, silent take during which Claudius faces the slowly advancing fork with a poisonous mushroom may become a touchstone for the cultural efficacy of the audio descriptor, who will enjoy an unusually long period of time to describe a rather static scene: “to mention or not to mention” becomes the crux for the descriptor. The particular example of *I Claudius* illustrates that intersemiotic translation is not just arbitrated by a matter of communicative or interpretive relevance,

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but it is also as much of a decision-driven activity as interlingual translation may be.

While some work is already underway in how audio description constructs both camera and ideological points of view, focusing, time or the portrayal of emotions in films (Igareda 2012, Maszerowska 2012, Orero & Vilaró 2012, Orero 2012), little attention has been given to the audio description of objects, especially of objects that go beyond their (physical or narrative) function and have a brand name more or less conspicuously attached to them. The difference and implications between the Mac Book Air and a standard PC go beyond the computer description of its parts. In the movie *The Bucket List* (Reiner, 2007), laptop computers are not merely described as “portable”, with the significant loss of contextual meaning that this entails, but their conspicuous branding (Mac) is also omitted, involving also a loss of symbolic meaning that actively contributes to conforming the personal traits of the characters. They become visually related to a set of values associated with Apple products (slick, expensive and fashionable), but the relationship can’t be established if the brand is not mentioned in the audio description. As noted by Sudjic (2008, 8) “The ‘real’ things ... are calculatingly designed to achieve an emotional response. Objects can be beautiful, witty, ingenious, sophisticated, but also crude, banal or malevolent”.

Audio description, in its goal to render an interpretation of a multi-channel medium (audio and visual) into a different, mono-channel one (audio only), can take different approaches when describing objects, advertising or design. Towards those, the audio describer can take a stand that presents many shades, from the innocent to the manipulative, and also a possible attitude of actively ignoring objects in audio description as a nuisance to be avoided. All these stands have direct implications at several levels: the narrative level, the symbolic level and the ideological. But before moving on to these three categories, an attempt to describe the intricate way in which images and words interact in advertising is in order, because the audio description of brands seeks to reproduce the semantic interaction of images and words by the use of solely words.

### 3. Narrating Symbols, Narrating Brands: Audio Describing the Empty Signifier

The cognitive *dynamis* that advertising seeks to activate may be compared to how objects in filmic material contribute to the overall construction of meaning: by laying out a network of internal references and relating to aural text and actions on the screen). At this point, however, the discussion needs to turn into how would the above help to discern the relevance in the description of objects that are clearly identified, in their visual nature, as belonging to a commercial brand of some kind. Dávila (2008) discusses that brand identification is a crucial aspect of positioning:

According to Reis and Trout (1996, 54), creating an idea in the consumer's mind and associating it with the advertised product is the main key to advertising success. In this area [...] the logo and to a lesser extent the slogan become [...] "empty signifiers" in semiotic [terms]. While it may have in its origins a particular symbolic or iconic value (the McDonald's logo is based on the first letter—"M"—of the brand name), its ultimate objective, or at least its success, resides not in its *a priori* value but in its capacity to be freely associated by the user with the body of his own experiences related to the product—whether real, if he has already consumed it at some point, or fictional.

Chandler (2006, 74) discusses empty signifiers, saying that they:

[...] mean different things to different people: they may stand for many or even *any* signifieds; they may mean whatever their interpreters want them to mean..

Logos and well-established slogans aim to become such empty, pure signifiers: the almost mechanical trigger for consumption, the utmost distillation of the whole persuasive mechanism of advertising, an indicator of that "meaning" previously created by the spectator/consumer experience, a button that, by the simple fact of having been pushed before, compels a consumer to start consuming or to consume again. Brands, logos and slogans would somehow concentrate what Eco summarily states about advertising in general (1999)[1968], 273, our translation):

[A]dverts unveil their argumentation as if using acronyms, in a way that reminds us of the story about some madmen that told jokes by remembering only their numbering: mentioning a joke's number was all they needed in order to recall it and start laughing.

Perhaps because of the unprecedented pervasiveness of visual media in recent times, empty signifiers have already managed to go beyond the limits and restrictions of the actual graphic design of a logo. The very same distinctive characteristics of the product, its design, its ability to “position” itself as a “shape”, or as a “color” seem to have turned products, goods, objects, into actual “empty signifiers”. Mercedes Benz cars are no longer just distinctive because of their three-pointed star logo on their nose; Apple products are identifiable without the bitten apple, some drugs and pills are recognizable to many consumers without having to read the wording on them. The unique shape of some consumer objects identifies them already with the consuming experience, actual or forthcoming.

Talking of the design of consumer goods, Sudjic (2008, 89) states that “[t]he most successful designs are those that make simultaneous use of all these [physical] qualities, and do it with a conscious understanding of what they can do.” How would this work in audio description, where the “simultaneous use of all these qualities” is sometimes confined to a few seconds at the very most and is all subdued through a single perceptive available channel? Would this sensorial limitation void any possibility of audio description to play the “meaning-making game” that is inherent to brand-names and advertising in general? Not really. Brand designs and brand-names acquire an archetypical status that goes beyond their actual signifier (shape, design, form). They become living semantic entities. Blind people will have a limited sensorial experience of how the latest smartphone looks and works. They may have the experience of its shape, weight and feel if they have held one in their hands. Nevertheless, this is irrelevant to their actual “knowledge” about the product, to the “meaning” that the object has managed to inject into a common, shared (and not necessarily visual) iconography.

Thus, there is no need to describe the feel and shape of a luxury car appearing in a movie: mentioning its brand may suffice in order to unleash a whole meaning-making mechanism. Conversely, omitting the audio description of a brand-name that happens to be visually conspicuous in a scene entails depriving the audience from the triggering of the machinery of associations which is, per se, a “pleasurable” experience as a cognitive process.

The audio description of brands takes place on rather uneven grounds not just when comparing different movies, but within the very same film. The movie *RocknRolla* (Ritchie, 2008), for example, constructs an atmosphere of luxury in an underworld of crime and gangsters. In part, this is achieved by conspicuously showing luxury cars and branded items. The original English audio description of the movie does not mention their brand in some cases where the “character” of the car (Bentley, Land Rover) appeals to archetypical values in contemporary society (unaffordable luxury, adventurous spirit). In a different scene, another brand of car with similar symbolic associations is instead described in detail (“They get into a waiting BMW7 series”). Back again to *The Bucket list*, some cars are described by their brand (“a Morgan”), while a conspicuous bottle of Listerine is described simply as “mouthwash”. Is there any underlying reason for such uneven treatment? Should there be one?

As with any decision-making in translation, deciding whether to audio describe a brand name is not, though, a completely “clean handed”, detached process: it has structural, ideological and procedural implications. The next sections in this article will address the ideological and procedural dimensions. It must be noted too that there may be a natural imbalance between the inherent “implicitness” of a branded item as a participating item in a scene, embedded in a whole range of additional visual stimuli, and the intrinsic “explicitness” of its audio description. The audio descriptor makes a choice—due to time constraints—that eliminates from the “imaginary screen” of the visually impaired all other elements that concur in time and space within the real screen. A selection is made of “what is” and “what is not” part of the story. Explaining the brand of cigarettes that a character draws from the pack may entail omitting the fact that she wears a diamond ring.

However, there is an inevitable decoupling between visual and auditory processing speeds due to the very nature of the stimuli: the visual may stay or may move, but the auditory, except for background effects or melodies taken as a scene-long lasting unit, is necessarily always “moving”. This decoupling will jeopardize the possibility of audio describing even very simple scenes (one hand, one diamond ring, one pack of cigarettes) if they stay on the screen for a short enough period, or if there is dialogue between the characters. The decision making and the choice may or may not have very particular implications at the most basic structural level of the viewer experience, in the understanding of character traits or action developments.

Whether it has or not such implications surely is a consideration for the audio descriptor to keep in mind. In audio description, a diamond ring must surely override the importance of a luxury brand of cigarettes. But a crunched, soft pack of unfiltered Gauloises will most likely trump most jewellery in any scene that both items share.

#### **4. Audio description of brands and ideology**

In the field of translation and ideology, Michael Cronin (2003) has (un)covered interesting aspects of the interaction of translation and globalization that are easily (if not explicitly) extrapolated in the paradigm of advertising. Somewhat positioned within the framework of post-colonial studies, Cronin resorts to the notion of “clonialism” (a hybrid term between “cloning” and “colonialism”) applied to the transcendent role of translation in a globalized world (Ibid., 34).

Cronin identifies the socio-politics and linguistics of globalization with the socio-politics and language of empire at a number of levels. In a globalized world, cloning or duplication, “same McDonald’s, same episodes of Dallas or Friends, same Disney films [...] same Microsoft Windows and same Britney Spears” (Ibid., 128), entail the gradual blurring of “otherness”. Duplication of aesthetics in consumer products, becomes then a new form of colonialism, or “clonialism” (Ibid., 128).

Along these lines, Cronin presents the notion of “neo-Babelianism”, defined as “the desire for mutual, instantaneous intelligibility between human beings speaking, writing and reading different languages” (Ibid. 59). Neo-Babelianism responds to the same spirit of reaching the sky that promoted the construction of the mythical tower, but it aims to reach a less heavenly target: not the sky this time, but the global market (Dávila 2007). The post-Babelian multilingual paradigm needs to work out its success by translating. Reluctantly, translation is recognised as indispensable and becomes a mechanical, additional cost to the building project. Translation is “accepted but only on the condition that it can be engineered to produce a pre-Babelian illusion” (Cronin 2003, 62).

Translation thus becomes homogenisation. Taking audio description as a form of translation, what would be the import of the audio description of brands in the “post-clonial” world? And what would be the ethics of audio description within the aesthetics of this “clonialism”/colonialism? Is the audio descriptor to contribute to what Baudrillard (1988) called, “the

murder of the real”, the “implosion” of ideas, systems and values into the economics of consumption? To what extent needs the audio descriptor be concerned with these notions? Is there or should there be an underlying code of ethics in the decision making that professionals need to apply in their audio descriptions of brands?

These questions are not inconsequential and their answers are likely to shape any possible procedural considerations in the audio description of consumer brands. The discussion would not constitute, therefore, a matter of ideology on the one hand *and* a matter of audio description of brands on the other, as separate, unrelated notions. It rather becomes a matter of whether *brands and ideology* are unavoidably, perhaps implicitly audiodescribed in a concurrent way. Beyond specific narratological implications, the audio description of brands does not only unleash a set of cognitive, pleasurable meaning making referential systems: it also gives free rein to a whole set of ideological mechanisms. As with the fork in the poisoning of Claudius, the audio descriptor may be faced with a difficult decision to make.

## 5. Suggested Guidelines for the Audio Description of Brands

Audio description of brands works at three levels: the narrative level, the symbolic level and the ideological. Dávila and Orero (forthcoming) analysed these functions within the film, *The Devil Wears Prada* (Frankel 2006).

Two opposing AD strategies were found within the same **narrative function** of brand names: omission and literal audio description. When omission was the chosen option, experimental research could be useful to attempt to identify, with an audience listening to audio description as the only input, the precise time throughout a particular film in which the eureka moment of understanding a given relationship takes place. In the movie mentioned above, identification takes place between the “devil” and “Prada”, the title of the movie and the main character “Miranda”. There is a foreseeable delay in the identification for the blind audience, due to the fact that in the very first scene of the movie the brand of Miranda’s purse (Prada, of course) is not mentioned in the audio description. The subsequent disambiguation required would be sufficient proof of how audio descriptions need to extend their awareness into considering brand names as structurally relevant narrative objects.

The second case is that of “literal audio description”. In *The Devil Wears*



*Prada*, Andy, the young woman working for the tyrannizing Miranda has an epiphany and changes accordingly: a cathartic moment in which she realizes her lack of adaptation to her professional environment. This leads her to a change in attitude, which is also reflected in the clothes she wears. During the film, she moves from anonymous woolly shapeless garments to Chanel, a style that will characterize her for the rest of the movie. The AD picked up on the brand name “literally” because it has been explicitly mentioned when the receptionist says: “Are you wearing the Ch..?”, to which Andy replies: “The Chanel boots? Yes I am”. Later on in the street, as the new Chanel Andy meets her boyfriend, the AD describes her as “with the Chanel boots”. In this approach, brands are mentioned in the audio description when the characters have already mentioned them. However, there is no apparent effort by the AD to understand or help to create or clarify the function and role of brand names, which would seem contradictory to the fact that the very essence of the movie deals with such specific themes in the life of fashionistas.

The strategy used to audio describe also affects the reception of the film at a symbolic level. Throughout the film, two of the main characters, the two receptionists, present quite a different approach to everything in life. This is characterised not only by their physical looks, but is also displayed through their clothing, as Emily wears “Vivienne Westwood” while Andy wears “Chanel”. What it represents in fashion terms is that Westwood is the fashion catalyzer of the Punk movement into the mainstream consumer market, while Chanel is the epitome of elegance. This portrait of characters is reinforced with an echo-effect of **symbolic relevance** that emphasizes this contrast by showing to the audience the wallpapers on their Apple computers: Andy’s has the Eiffel Tower at night (refined and stylish) while Emily’s shows a picture of nature (spontaneous and wild). These details, or narrative objects, are built into the film for a purpose and should be consequently understood and considered when drafting descriptions.

On a third level, **ideology**, the discussion could easily make inroads into issues of translator ethics and translator agency. In *Midnight in Paris* (Allen, 2011) characters appear carrying Chanel fashion complements and even a sizeable Chanel shopping bag that are not audio described. The strong stereotypical and symbolic links between the city and the fashion brand become severed when they are not audio described. However, a conscious consideration could be made about those values that an explicit

mention of the brand would entail: in a movie so intrinsically and explicitly entangled with an ironic, yet stereotypical vision of Parisian mythologies, how relevant is it to add yet another layer of self-referentiality that is solely based on a consumer brand? A significant portion of the ethical debate in the profession could easily apply to the AD of consumer brands: is the audio describer to contribute to an overarching, global tendency dictated by consumerism? Would this help to reinforce stereotypes and to dilute the traits of the particular? Or, conversely, is the descriptor entitled to deprive the blind audience of such intentional iconic redundancy on the basis of an ideological posture? The answer to this question would undoubtedly deserve a better grounded discussion.

As seen in the introduction, brand names can be used for many purposes in the narration, and also for different functions: it is the responsibility of the AD to understand why they have been chosen. Audio describers should, therefore:

- Consider the explicitness of brand names in the visual construct of the movie.
- Gauge time constraints and narratological demands in deciding whether a brand name has an overarching significance in the plot, beyond its belonging to a specific scene in the movie, and it is, therefore, worth describing.
- Establish priorities when deciding on the symbolic dimension of brand names, considering how these contribute to the characterization of personae.
- Reflect on the incidence of their activity upon cultural and economic dynamics that are embedded in contemporary audiovisual products, and establish the limits to the actual need of describing brands.
- Attempt to keep a consistent approach in their decision-making strategies that avoids inadvertent omissions, erratic results, or systematic ignorance.

## 6. Conclusion

We have demonstrated that a thoughtful analysis of the narratological and symbolic functions of brand names within the audio described movie is needed in order to enhance the audience's experience of the filmic material. Brands go beyond meaning, and transport the audience into an additional, symbolic plane in which both channels, word and image, are

intertwined as signifier and slowly realise the signified. While at the narrative level, this association of brand and the signified has less of an implicature value, in the sense that disambiguation is easier to establish, a more subtle link is created when brands feature on a symbolic level. Hence audio description, as Vercauteren comments (2007, 152), should strike “the right balance between frustrating the audience with insufficient information to follow the story and patronizing them by spelling out obvious inferences”. This principle should be applied to the audio description of brands, inasmuch as their meaning-making nature extends beyond the anecdotal and contributes to constructing imaginary and symbolic experiences in the audience.

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# Translation and transcreation in the dubbing process. A genetic approach

*Serenella Zanotti*

## *Abstract*

*This article aims to show the relevance of archival and manuscript research (Munday 2012, 2013) for the study of dubbing and focuses on the role played by the various figures involved in the translation process. The production process of dubbing involves a chain of agents who all contribute to “the creative construction of the target dialogue” (Taylor 1999: 432). The dialogue translator will usually do a rough translation, a more or less literal version of the dialogue list, which will then be passed on to the dialogue adapter, whose task is to create convincing dialogues that meet all the lip-sync requirements (Pavesi 2005, Chiaro 2009, Chaume 2012). We know that the dialogues are further altered in the subsequent stages of production, since both the dubbing director and the dubbing actors may intervene and modify the dubbing script to a greater or lesser extent (Bollettieri Bosinelli 2002: 87, Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005). A case study is discussed to illustrate the application of process-oriented methodologies based on manuscript analysis for investigating the issue of agency and creativity in dubbing.*

## **1. Introduction**

According to Gianni Galassi (1994: 64), the talent of a dialogue adapter is closely connected to his or her ability to forget how the original line is structured and to recreate it in another language as if it were not a translation, while fully grasping its meaning, the allusions it contains as well as the intentions that underlie it. In order to achieve this goal, dialogue adapters have the freedom and hence the need to abandon the literal meaning of the source text if this makes it possible to preserve elements that are essential to the narrative (67). As Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli posits, they “ha[ve] to be creative in order to be effective” (1994: 14). It should be added that, like the dubbing director, the dialogue adapter has to take into account not only the author’s intentions but also

the client's needs. So, when examining dubbed versions of feature films, one should bear in mind that decisions, including translation choices, are ultimately in the hands of film distributors, who exercise strong control over foreign language versions produced for theatrical release (see Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 31).

It is the aim of this paper to investigate the process through which the dubbed version of a feature film comes to light in the Italian context, in order to better understand the complex dynamics at work in the dubbing process as well as the role played by the different agents involved. Dubbing translators' manuscripts provide the material for the study and are analyzed using *the methodologies of genetic criticism*, a discipline of textual studies which focuses on processes rather than on products (Deppman *et al.* 2004). Finally, the notion of transcreation is called into question in as far as it highlights the role of the translator as a creative agent. As suggested by O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013: 106), *transcreation* "draws attention to the human agency of the translator in the process of translation, inviting variable, non-uniform and at times non-predictable solutions".

The term is a buzzword that is often used by the translation industry nowadays. It denotes adaptive translation strategies typically associated with advertising and has been recently extended to include the sometimes radical "transformative operations" involved in the localization of video games (O'Hagan and Mangiron 2013: 199). In the context of audiovisual translation, the word *transcreation* has been used instead of *translation* or *adaptation* "to account for processes of transfer where verbal and visual language cannot come apart" (Di Giovanni 2008: 40). As Di Giovanni points out, "[s]hifting from translation to transcreation, verbal language has definitely lost its prominence and words have come together with visual references to form a broad cultural unit" (*ibid.*). The term is hence used in this paper to denote transformative translation practices that are sometimes found in dubbing, which lead us to reconsider the notions of translator's agency and authorship.

## 2. The dubbing process

The production process of dubbing involves a chain of agents who modify the translated script to a greater or lesser extent (Chiaro 2008, 2009, Matamala 2010 and Chaume 2012). The dialogue translator will usually do

a rough translation, i.e. a word-for-word translation of the original script, which will then be passed on to the dialogue adapter (also called the adapter), whose task is to create credible dialogues that meet all the lip-sync requirements. At this stage the translated text is changed at various levels in order to achieve different types of synchrony. All of this is made possible because dubbing allows the translator a certain leeway and helps explain why dubbed versions often stray from the original considerably (Sánchez 2004: 13). Matamala (2010: 113) shows that, even though the vast majority of changes in her corpus of Spanish dubbed dialogues occur in the synchronization stage, reductions, amplifications and modifications are also abundant in the recording stage “due to improvisations or last minute changes proposed either by the actors, the dubbing director or the supervisor” (105). Chiaro (2008: 247) points out that the Italian “dubbing cycle” is structured in such a way that the actors “will often have the freedom to manipulate utterances as they think fit according to artistic or other criteria” and that the dubbing director “may intervene in the dialogue whenever he or she wishes”.<sup>1</sup> According to Paolinelli and Di Fortunato (2005: 42-43), the manipulation of dubbing scripts in the final stage of production often results in loss of features that are essential to the meaning of the text.

Looking at what has been illustrated so far, we may conclude that: 1. the dialogue adapter very often has no real control over the finished product; 2. because the dubbed version is always the result “of multiple manipulation forces by several professionals” (Minutella, in press), it is very often difficult to discern what the individual contributions to the dubbing process are.

### 3. The study

#### 3.1 *Textual resources*

One of the problems in studying the translation process that lies behind dubbed texts is the lack of textual evidence. As stated above, it can be very difficult to figure out how the various agents intervene in the process and contribute to the final product. This study moves from the idea that traces

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<sup>1</sup> A similar divergence is observed between film scripts and the words that the actors utter (Taylor 2004: 79 and Perego and Taylor 2012: 68).

of the conjoined efforts of this multiplicity of forces can be found in dubbing scripts.

The material for the study has been collected from the archive of the Italian General Directorate for Cinema, Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (Direzione Generale per il Cinema, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, MiBAC), based in Rome. This archive contains a large collection of documents pertaining to the film certifications produced by the Italian film commission, which is in charge of the examination and rating of films. In order to obtain public screening for a film, the distribution or production company submits an application form to the film commission. Included in the documents that accompany the application form are certified copies of both the original and the translated dialogue list. It is important to mention that the translated dialogue list is declared to be an exact reproduction of the dubbed dialogues.<sup>2</sup> As will be shown, this is hardly ever the case.

A preliminary investigation was conducted on a total of fifty English-language films and their corresponding translated dialogue lists (Table 1). Manuscripts are all typewritten and some have handwritten revisions.

	<b>Certification Year</b>	<b>Film Title/Year of Release</b>	<b>Revisions</b>
1	1948	Jezebel (1938)	-
2	1947	The Wizard of Oz (1939)	X
3	1949	Gone with the Wind (1939)	X
4	1946	Gaslight (1944)	-
5	1947	For Whom the Bell Tolls (1943)	-
6	1959	The Wild One (1959)	-
7	1955	The Blackboard Jungle (1955)	X
8	1955	Rebel without a Cause (1955)	-
9	1961	Butterfield 8 (1960)	X
10	1960	The Apartment (1960)	X
11	1962	The Children's Hour (1961)	X
12	1961	Splendor in the Grass (1961)	X
13	1962	Walk on the Wild Side (1962)	X
14	1965	Patch of Blue (1965)	X
15	1965	Lady L. (1965)	X
16	1969	Justine (1969)	X
17	1969	Easy Rider (1969)	-

<sup>2</sup> The following formula is found on the last page of all the manuscripts: *La presente lista dialoghi [...] è conforme al parlato del film* ("The present dialogue list is an exact reproduction of the film dialogues").



18	1971	Summer of 42 (1971)	-
19	1972	The Godfather (1972)	X
20	1974	American Graffiti (1973)	X
21	1974	The Exorcist (1973)	X
22	1975	Mean Streets (1973)	-
23	1979	The Lords of Flatbush (1974)	-
24	1975	Young Frankenstein (1974)	X
25	1976	Taxi Driver (1976)	-
26	1978	Saturday Night Fever (1977)	X
27	1977	Gone with the Wind (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.)	X
28	1978	Grease (1978)	-
29	1978	The End (1978)	X
30	1979	Animal House (1978)	-
31	1978	For Whom the Bell Tolls 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	-
32	1979	Apocalypse Now (1979)	X
33	1984	Footlose (1984)	-
34	1984	Fear City (1984)	-
35	1987	Full Metal Jacket (1987)	X
36	1987	Dirty Dancing (1987)	-
37	1988	A Fish Called Wanda (1988)	-
38	1991	Life of Brian (1979)	-
39	1994	Reservoir Dogs (1992)	-
40	1994	Pulp Fiction (1994)	-
41	1995	Clerks (1994)	-
42	1995	Clockers (1995)	X
43	1996	Fargo (1996)	-
44	2001	Apocalypse Now Redux (2001)	-
45	2005	Everything Is Illuminated (2005)	-
46	2006	Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan (2006)	-
47	2007	No Country for Old Men (2007)	-
48	2007	Juno (2007)	-
49	2010	Wall Street (2010)	-
50	2010	The King's Speech (2010)	-

Table 1. Revisions in the MiBAC manuscripts examined for the study.

As Table 1 shows, the number of dialogue lists bearing revisions decreases from the late 1980s onwards.

To illustrate the types of features and content of the dialogue lists stored in the MiBAC archive, those pertaining to two American films (no 6 and 7) released in 1955, namely *The Blackboard Jungle*<sup>3</sup> and *Rebel without a*

<sup>3</sup> *The Blackboard Jungle*, directed by Richard Brooks (MiBAC file no. 20088, USA 1955),



~~For me~~ *As far as I'm concerned* this school does not exist. ~~How right you were!~~ *What was it you called it? A big garbage can, right? Oh, yeah. How right you were! Well, I've had it right up to here. I can't stand it any more. I'm quitting. I'll find another job... A thousand miles away from these *filthy* delinquents.*

This manuscript allows unprecedented access to at least two stages in the translation process and makes it possible to compare the earlier version of the translated dialogues, corresponding to the typewritten text, with the revised version resulting from the changes carried out in pen, which can be identified as the final dubbing script. Importantly, for what follows, the differences between the final version in the manuscript and the actual dubbed version are minimal. The chief interest of this document thus lies in the revisions it contains.

In the same year the *Rebel without a Cause* (dir. Nicholas Ray) dialogue list presents us with a completely different process. The comments in pen refer to the quality or overall effect of the translated lines. For instance, the comment *Fiacco!*/"weak", occurs in the margin of p. 14. This is a criticism of the translation of "you'll turn to stone" in example (2), which was in fact changed in the final dubbed version:

(2) example

Original dialogue	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
JIM: Grandmother, you tell one more lie and you'll turn to stone.	JIM: Senti nonna, se dici un'altra bugia / <b>diventerai una statua di marmo.</b> / (III/14)	JIM: Senti, nonna, se dici un'altra bugia <b>farai la fine di Pinocchio.</b>
	Back translation	Back translation
	JIM: Listen, grandma, if you tell one more lie you'll turn into a marble statue.	JIM: Listen, grandma, if you tell one more lie you'll end up like Pinocchio.

Comparison between the MiBAC manuscript and the actual dubbed dialogues reveals that the translated dialogue list underwent extensive rewriting before the recording. I would like to point out that the changes that were implemented often resulted in significant divergence between ST and TT. For instance, in example (3), below, the final dubbed version opted for the addition of information that has no counterpart in the original:

(3) example

Original dialogue	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
FATHER: My first day	FATHER: Il mio primo	FATHER: Il mio primo

of school, Mother made me eat so much <b>I couldn't swallow until recess.</b>	giorno di scuola mia madre mi fece mangiare tanto <b>che rimasi ingozzato per tutte lezioni.</b> (III/14)	giorno di scuola mi fecero mangiare tanto <b>da avere bisogno più della purga che delle lezioni.</b>
	<b>Back translation</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	FATHER: My first day of school, my mother made me eat so much <b>I couldn't swallow</b> until the end of classes.	FATHER: My first day of school, they made me eat so much that <b>I needed laxatives</b> more than I needed classes.

A similar tendency can be observed in example (4) below. In the source-language dialogue Jim wryly addresses his father as “the king of the ball” and has him sit on the elevated shoeshine chair in the lobby of the police station on which he has been sprawling.

(4) example

<b>Original dialogue</b>	<b>MiBAC manuscript</b>	<b>Dubbed version</b>
JIM: Well, then, there now. Were you having a ball, Dad? Well, everybody's been having a ball. You're the king of the ball, Dad.	JIM: Beh / sai com'è, sai com'è! Tu sei stato a ballare, papà? / Eh?/ <b>Di queste serate tutti vanno a ballare.</b> / H'm. / Tu sei il Re dei ballerini. (II/5)	JIM: Beh, sai com'è, sai com'è! Sei stato a ballare, papà? Eh? Tu sei sempre stato il Re dei ballerini. Vieni. <b>Siediti sul trono di Tersicore.</b>
	<b>Back translation</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	JIM: Well, you know how it is, you know how it is! You went dancing, Dad? Eh? <b>These nights everybody's been going dancing.</b> H'm. You're the king of dancers.	JIM: Well, you know how it is, you know how it is! You went dancing, Dad? Eh? You've always been the king of dancers. Come here., <b>Take a seat on Tersichore's throne.</b>

In the Italian version, Jim's action is accompanied by words that are not in the ST (“Take a seat on Tersichore's throne”). The addition of new information was made possible by the deletion of another line in the preceding co-text. It may be interesting to note that the extremely cultured reference to the Greek goddess of dance that was added to Jim's speech may not have been immediately obvious to Italian audiences. A marked tendency to alter and even improve source language dialogues has been a feature of Italian dubbing for over four decades since the emergence of this technique (Raffaelli 1994, Rossi 1999, Pavesi 2005). And it is noteworthy that, until recently, the scripts provided by some international

distributors contained the following warning: “Don’t improve the movie!” (Paolinelli and Di Fortunato 2005: 19).

The examples discussed in this section are illustrative and do not do justice to the full range of features that characterize the translated dialogue lists found in the MiBAC archive. What is immediately clear, though, is that these documents have a complex and at times very different textuality, and that the type of relationship that holds between each dialogue list and its corresponding dubbed version is equally complex and variable. Furthermore, they suggest that there is great potential in studying translator manuscripts to better understand the translation process that lies behind film dubbing.

### 3.2 Methodology and research questions

The study of manuscripts and the reconstruction of creative processes is the focus of genetic criticism (De Biasi 1996, 2000, 2004), a discipline of textual scholarship that investigates modern manuscripts (van Hulle 2014) focusing on processes rather than on products. Unlike textual criticism, genetic criticism does not aim to reconstruct one particular state of the text, but rather the process by which the text came into being, its focus being on the essential continuity between a text and its genesis (Deppman, Ferrer and Groden 2004). Central to genetic methodology is the notion of *avant-texte*, which is the result of the critical analysis of “all the documents that come before a work when it is considered as a text” (Deppman, Ferrer and Groden 2004: 8).

By giving a full account of the textuality behind the discursive surface of dubbed films, this methodology makes it possible to examine the various stages of the translation process, focusing not only on the alterations made by the dialogue adapter on the text of the rough translation, but also on the alternative options, commentaries, and notes provided by the first translator, as suggested by Richart-Marset (2013). In the present study, the genetic approach will be used to investigate the interventions made on the translated text by agents other than the translator and the dialogue adapter.

The methodology adopted in the study seeks to combine descriptive approaches (Toury 1995) with process-oriented research methodologies borrowed from genetic criticism.

According to Pavesi (2005: 12), since voice is the medium through which oral communication takes place, dubbing actors fully participate in

the translation process. However, while recognizing the composite nature of the translation process in dubbing as well as the fundamental role played by the dubbing actors and the dubbing director, Pavesi argues that the main responsibility for the translation lies with the dialogue adapter, who often takes care of all of the stages of text preparation before the recording. She also maintains that, even though translation solutions may be arrived at in the dubbing studios, leading to modification of the dubbing script prepared by the dialogue adapter, they are but minor changes on an already existing text. The present study aims to illustrate the extent to which dubbing scripts can be manipulated in the final stages of production, by addressing the following research questions: What is the role of these other agents? What happens to the dubbing script at the recording stage? What is the role of the dubbing director? And how do the agents who intervene at a later stage in the translation process deal with the presuppositions and intentions that underlie the text?

### 3.4 Case study: Young Frankenstein

In order to investigate these research questions, a case study involving the manuscript containing the translated dialogue list of the film *Young Frankenstein* (MiBAC file no. 66418) was conducted.<sup>6</sup> This film was selected because Mario Maldesi, the dubbing director, himself confirmed that extensive rewriting of the dubbing script took place during the recording (personal communication). According to Maldesi, most of the final dialogue lines were literally invented in the dubbing studio to make up for lack of creativity and humour in the translated text prepared by the dialogue adapter Roberto De Leonardis.<sup>7</sup>

The manuscript consists of 62 typed pages with handwritten corrections probably by the dialogue adapter (see Figure 1).

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<sup>6</sup> Mell Brooks (USA 1974). Dubbing director: Mario Maldesi; Italian dialogues by Roberto De Leonardis and Mario Maldesi.

<sup>7</sup> Mario Maldesi, personal communication. See also Bollettieri Bosinelli 2002: 87 and Sgamberulli 2011. Interviews with Mario Maldesi, Mario Maranzana (Inspector Hans Kemp), Oreste Lionello (Frederick Frankenstein) and Gianna Piaz (Frau Blücher) on the making of the Italian dubbed version of the film are included in the special features of the Italian Fans Edition released by Fox Video in 2006.

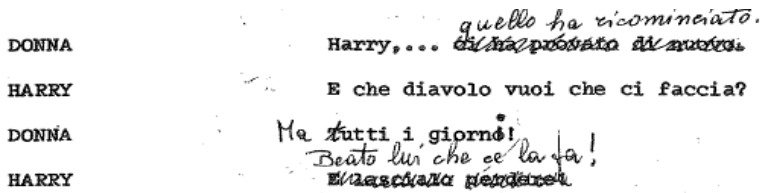


Figure 1. Example of corrections in pen

In order to evaluate the extent of the changes carried out by the dubbing director and the actors during the recording, the translated version in the manuscript was compared with the final dubbed version, which was transcribed from the Italian soundtrack contained in the 2006 DVD edition. Over 250 changes were counted. Revisions were classified according to their focus, leading to the identification of five main categories:

- 1) changes due to synchronization, which involve the deletion, addition, or modification of lexical items with the aim of producing a target-language version that allows different types of synchrony to be achieved;
- 2) changes made for the sake of linguistic characterization, that mainly concern the way in which non-English-speaking characters are depicted through language;
- 3) changes involving forms of address;
- 4) changes targeting humour (e.g. visual humour, wordplay, sexual innuendos).

The impact of synchronization on translation choices becomes apparent in the following exchange between Frau Blücher and Frederick (5), where the changes made to the original wording depend almost exclusively on lip sync. The actress' lip movements are clearly visible on screen and therefore lexical substitutions had to be made:

(5) example

Original version	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
FRAÜ BLÜCHER: Would the doctor care for a brandy before retiring?	FRAU BLÜCHER: Il dottore gradisce un brandy prima di ritirarsi? FREDDY: No, grazie.	FRAU BLÜCHER: Il dottore gradisce un brandy prima di ritirarsi? FREDDY: No grazie.

<p>FREDDY: No, thank you.          FRAÛ BLUCHER: Some warm milk, <b>perhaps?</b>          FREDDY: No, thank you very much. No thanks.          FRAÛ BLUCHER: <b>Ovaltine?</b></p>	<p>FRAU BLÜCHER: Una buona camomilla, <b>per dormire?</b>          FREDDY: No, grazie mille comunque, no grazie.          FRAU BLÜCHER: <b>Latte caldo?</b>          FREDDY: Niente! Grazie. Sono <b>piuttosto</b> stanco. (14)</p>	<p>FRAU BLÜCHER: Una buona camomilla, <b>può darsi?</b>          FREDDY: No grazie mille comunque, no grazie.          FRAU BLÜCHER: <b>Orzata con latte?</b>          FREDDY: Niente grazie, sono <b>alquanto</b> stanco.</p>
	<b>Back translation</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
<p>FREDDY: Nothing, thank you. I'm <b>a little</b> tired.</p>	<p>FRAÛ BLUCHER: Would the doctor care for a brandy before retiring?          FREDDY: No, thank you.          FRAÛ BLUCHER: <b>A nice camomile</b>, for sleeping?          FREDDY: No, thank you very much. No thanks.          FRAÛ BLUCHER: <b>Warm milk?</b>          FREDDY: Nothing, thank you. I'm <b>rather</b> tired.</p>	<p>FRAÛ BLUCHER: Would the doctor care for a brandy before retiring?          FREDDY: No, thank you.          FRAÛ BLUCHER: <b>A nice camomile</b>, maybe?          FREDDY: No, thank you very much. No thanks.          FRAÛ BLUCHER: <b>Barley milk?</b>          FREDDY: Nothing, thank you. I'm <b>very</b> tired.</p>

In example (6), the solution found during the recording involved replacing the Italian equivalent for “wedding” (*matrimonio*) with a higher-register synonym associated with emphatic or solemn utterances (*sponsali*, meaning “nuptials”). This shift in register was opted for because, as well as being perfectly in tune with Elizabeth’s character, it also allowed lip synchronization to be maintained.

(6) example

Original version	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
<p>FREDDY: Well, yes. But I, I thought perhaps tonight, under the circumstances, I might stay here with you.          ELIZABETH: Would you want me like this <b>now, so soon before our wedding? So near we can almost touch it?</b></p>	<p>DR. FRANKENSTEIN: Beh sì, ma io... ecco, pensavo che stanotte, date le circostanze, potrei... stare qui con te.          ELIZABETH: Mi vorresti, così, adesso? <b>Ora che il matrimonio è così vicino che quasi mi sembra di toccarlo?</b> (54)</p>	<p>DR. FRANKENSTEIN: Beh sì, ma io ecco, pensavo che stanotte, date le circostanze, potrei, stare qui con te.          ELIZABETH: <b>Forse tu mi vorresti così, adesso? Non vedi che gli sponsali sono così vicini che quasi li puoi toccare?</b></p>
	<b>Back translation</b>	<b>Back translation</b>



	FREDDY: Well, yes, but I... well I thought that tonight, given the circumstances, I might ... stay here with you. ELIZABETH: Would you want me like this, now? <b>Now that our wedding is so near that I can almost touch it?</b>	FREDDY: Well, yes, but I... well I thought that tonight, given the circumstances, I might ... stay here with you. ELIZABETH: <b>Perhaps</b> you would want me like this, now? <b>Can't you see that our nuptials are so near that you can almost touch them?</b>
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One of the areas where major revisions took place was linguistic characterization. In the recording stage, phonological features stereotypically associated with German were introduced into the speech of Transylvanian characters. Furthermore, syntactic and morphological alterations were made to mark the utterances of these speakers. An example from this category is Inspector Kemp's speech in example (7) below.

(7) example

Original version	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
INSPECTOR KEMP: A riot is an ugly thing. And once you get one started, there is little chance of stopping it, short of bloodshed. I think, before we go around killing people, we had better make damned sure of our evidence. And we had better confirm the fact that Young Frankenstein is indeed following in his grandfather's footsteps.	INSPECTOR KEMP: <b>Una sommossa è una brutta cosa e una volta che si è cominciata esiste poca probabilità di fermarla</b> senza spargere sangue. Io dico... che prima di andare in giro a <b>ammazzare la gente sarà</b> meglio essere <b>ben certi delle nostre prove e... dovremo ben assicurarci del fatto</b> che il giovane Frankenstein <b>stia</b> veramente <b>seguendo le orme</b> di suo nonno Victor. (28)	INSPECTOR KEMP: <b>Un sommosso è un cosa brutta, und, <u>quando</u> l'incominciate, <u>quando</u>, c'è <u>poca</u> probabilità, <u>poca</u>, di lei fermare</b> senza spargere sangue. Io dico che prima di andare in giro ad <b>ammazzaren</b> gente è meglio essere <b>molto</b> certi, <b>molto</b> , di <b>nostro probò. Noi dev'essere molti sicuri, molti</b> , che giovane Frankenstein è veramente <b>sui passi</b> di suo nonno.
	<b>Back translation</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	INSPECTOR KEMP: A riot is an ugly thing <b>and</b> once you get one started, there is <b>little</b> chance of stopping it, without bloodshed. I say... before we go around killing people, we had better make <b>really</b> sure of our <b>evidence</b>	INSPECTOR KEMP: A riot is an ugly thing, <b>und</b> , once it is started, there is <b>little little</b> chance of it stopping, without bloodshed. I say that before we go around killing people, we'd better make <b>very very</b> sure, of our

	and ... we had better <b>confirm</b> the fact that Young Frankenstein is really following in his grandfather Victor's <b>footsteps</b> .	evidence. We'd better be <b>really really</b> sure, that Young Frankenstein is in fact following in his grandfather Victor's <b>tracks</b> .
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In the original version, Inspector Kemp stands out for his impenetrable German accent. In De Leonardis' adaptation no trace of the character's idiolect was found, while the dubbed version played on this aspect and even added extra features to the character's speech style. Apparently, it was the dubbing actor, Mario Maranzana, who suggested that an echo should be heard when the character spoke as a result of his having an artificial cranium.<sup>8</sup> For this reason, word repetitions functioning as echoes were introduced in his dubbed utterances.

In the film, Inga's linguistic characterization is achieved exclusively through the use of phonological markers. In the original dubbing script she comes out as speaking a standard variety of Italian, whereas the dubbed version plays on her linguistic diversity, making it a further source of humour. Inga's speech is replete with syntactic deviations stereotypically attributed to speakers of Germanic languages, as illustrated in example (8). Here we also observe the addition of an extra joke, for Freddie is ready to immediately adopt Inga's irregular syntax (he says "Proviene da libreria dietro" 'Coming from the bookcase behind', instead of "Proviene da dietro la libreria" 'Coming from behind the bookcase').

(8) example

Original version	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
FREDDY: What's that strange music? INGA: I have no idea, but it seems to be coming from behind the bookcase. FREDDY: Behind the bookcase. Hand me that robe, would you dear?	FREDDY: Cos'è questa strana musica?  INGA: <b>Non ne ho idea.</b> / Però sembra che <b>provenga...</b> Sì, proviene <b>dalla libreria.</b> FREDDY: <b>Proviene dalla libreria, eh?</b> /Dammi la vestaglia, per favore./	FREDDY: Cos'è questa strana musica? INGA: <b>Io non so</b> , però sembra che <b>provieni, proviene da dietro di libreria, ja.</b> FREDDY: <b>Proviene da libreria dietro.</b> Mi dia la vestaglia per favore!
	<b>Back translation</b>	<b>Back translation</b>

<sup>8</sup> See Maranzana's interview in the Italian Fans Edition.

	<p>FREDDY: What's that strange music?  INGA: <b>I have no idea</b>, but it seems to be coming <b>from behind the bookcase</b>.  FREDDY: <b>From behind the bookcase?</b> Hand me that robe, please.</p>	<p>FREDDY: What's that strange music?  INGA: <b>Don't know</b>, but it seems to be coming, coming <b>from the bookcase behind, ja</b>.  FREDDY: <b>From the bookcase behind?</b> Would you please hand me that robe, please.</p>
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Forms of address were another major area of intervention. In the original dubbing script, the non-reciprocal use of T/V pronouns was opted for in dealing with Frederick's interactions with his assistant Inga, in the first part of the film, whereas in the dubbed version both use V forms, as can be seen in example (9):

(9) example

Original version	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
<p>FREDDY: [...] It seems louder over here. <b>Hand me</b> that candle, <b>will you?</b> <b>Put</b> the candle back. Alright, I think I have it figured out now. <b>Take out</b> the candle, and I'll block the bookcase with my body. Now <b>listen</b> to me very carefully. <b>Don't put</b> the candle back. With all of <b>your</b> might, <b>shove</b> against the other side of the bookcase. Is that perfectly clear?</p>	<p>FREDDY: [...] Eh! Sembra più forte da questa parte. <b>Dammi</b> quella candela, <b>vuoi?</b> <b>Rimetti</b> a posto la candela. Bene, penso di aver capito tutto ora. <b>Togli</b> di lì la candela e io bloccherò la libreria col mio corpo. Ora <b>apri</b> bene le orecchie: non <b>mettere</b> la candela a posto. Con tutta la <b>tua</b> forza <b>fai</b> leva in senso contrario sulla libreria. È... È... è tutto ben chiaro? (16)</p>	<p>FREDDY: [...] Sembra più forte da questa parte. <b>Mi dia</b> quella candela, grazie!  <b>Rimetta</b> a posto la candela. Bene, penso di aver capito tutto ora. <b>Tolga</b> di lì la candela e io bloccherò la libreria col mio corpo. Ora <b>apra</b> bene le orecchie, <b>non metta</b> la candela a posto, con tutta la sua forza <b>faccia</b> leva in senso contrario sulla libreria, è tutto ben chiaro?</p>
	<b>Back translation</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
	Freddy uses T forms	Freddy uses V forms

A large number of revisions was aimed at increasing the humorous effect of the translated lines. The manuscript reveals that finding a translation solution in some cases required much labour on the part of the dialogue adapter, as illustrated by Figure 2.

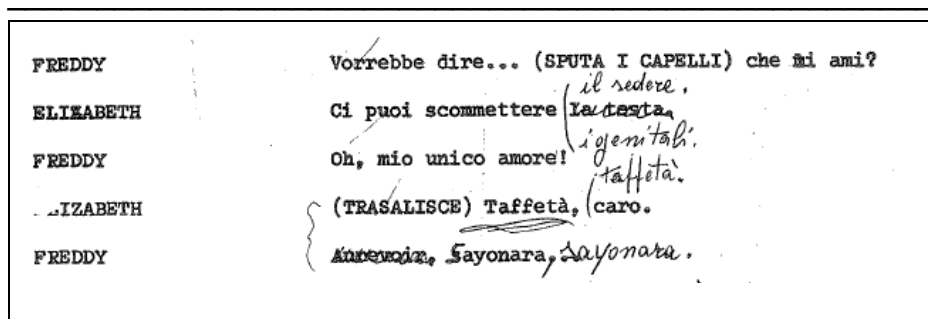


Figure 2. Dubbing script of *Young Frankenstein*, p.8.

Cases such as the above constitute what Jeremy Munday calls “critical points”, that is, “recurrent doubts” or points “where each translation draft revisits and further explores the same problem” (Munday 2012: 133). In this specific case, the dialogue adapter tried three different solutions in attempting to translate the idiomatic expression *to bet one’s boots*. As illustrated in (10), the translation solution that was adopted in the dubbed version involved the replacing of the word “boots” with “panties”, which results in an enrichment of the source text that increases the humorous effect of the original dialogue. Prompted by the dialogue adapter’s tentative solutions, the final dubbed version seems to take the source text one step further.

Finding a translation for Freddy’s misuse of the word *taffeta* was equally laborious – at least this is what the manuscript suggests. In De Leonardis’s version, Freddy understands the word *taffeta* as a French equivalent of “goodbye” and replies with a greeting formula in another language (*sayonara*). Contrary to the previous example, the dubbed version opted for closer adherence to the source text, restoring the word *taffeta* in Frederick’s line.

(10) example

Original version	MiBAC manuscript	Dubbed version
<p>FREDDY: Does that mean you love me?            ELIZABETH: <b>You bet your boots it does.</b>            FREDDY: Oh, my love.            ELIZABETH: <b>Taffeta, darling.</b>            FREDDY: <b>Taffeta, sweetheart.</b>            ELIZABETH: No, the dress is taffeta, it wrinkles so easily.</p>	<p>FREDDY: Vorrebbe dire che mi ami?            ELIZABETH: Ci puoi scommettere <del>la testa il</del> <b><i>sedere/i genitali.</i></b>            FREDDY: Oh, mio unico amore...            ELIZABETH: Taffetà, <b><i>taffetà / caro.</i></b>            FREDDY: <del>Au revoir,</del>  <i>Sayonara, sayonara.</i>            ELIZABETH: No, il vestito... E' di taffetà. Si sgualcisce [...] tanto. (8)</p>	<p>FREDDY: Vorrebbe dire che mi ami?            ELIZABETH: Ci puoi scommettere <b>le mutandine.</b>            FREDDY: Oh mio unico amore...            ELIZABETH: <b>Taffetà, caro.</b>            FREDDY: <b>Taffetà, tesorino.</b>            ELIZABETH: No, il vestito è di taffeta. Si sgualcisce.</p>
	Back translation	Back translation
	<p>FREDDY: Does that mean you love me?            ELIZABETH: <b>You bet your bottom/genitals it does.</b>            FREDDY: Oh, my love.            ELIZABETH: Taffeta, <b>taffeta, darling.</b>            FREDDY: <b>Sayonara, sayonara.</b>            ELIZABETH: No, the dress is taffeta, it wrinkles a lot.</p>	<p>FREDDY: Does that mean you love me?            ELIZABETH: <b>You bet your undies it does.</b>            FREDDY: Oh, my love.            ELIZABETH: Taffeta, darling.            FREDDY: <b>Taffeta, sweetheart.</b>            ELIZABETH: No, the dress is taffeta. It wrinkles.</p>

Figure 3 below contains De Leonardis' version of what is probably the most memorable exchange of dialogue in the whole film.

INGA	(Senta (i) lupi. Ululà, ululà.
FREDDY	(Ci sono i lupi? Ulu dove?
IGOR	Là.
FREDDY	Cosa?
IGOR	(Là ci sono i lupi... è là, c'è il castello! Ulu là... castello là.
FREDDY	(E i lupi, (di) là, non ci vanno? Ma di che diavolo parli?

Figure 3. Dubbing script of *Young Frankenstein*, p. 12.

This is an instance of what Delia Chiaro terms “ping-pong punning”, which describes “what happens when the participants of a conversation begin punning on every possible item in each other’s speech which may contain the slightest ambiguity” (Chiaro 1992: 114). The manuscript makes it clear that the final solution was arrived at in the dubbing studio, as stated by Maldesi, who claimed authorship for this ingenious solution.

(11) example

<b>Original dialogue</b>	
INGA: Werewolf. FREDDY: Werewolf? IGOR: There. FREDDY: What? IGOR: <b>There wolf. There castle.</b> FREDDY: Why are you talking that way?	
<b>Italian dubbed version</b>	<b>Back translation</b>
INGA: Lupo ulula. FREDDY: Lupo ululà? IGOR: Là! FREDDY: Cosa? IGOR: <b>Lupo ululà e castello ululi!</b> FREDDY: Ma come diavolo parli?	INGA: <b>Wolf howling.</b> FREDDY: <b>Wolf howling there?</b> IGOR: There. FREDDY: What? IGOR: <b>Wolf howling there and castle howling [just a little bit nearer than] there.</b> FREDDY: Why are you talking that way?

As in the previous example, the translation solution adopted in the dubbed version (11) was prompted by the dialogue adapter, who had not been able to find a convincing solution but nevertheless provided cues for

the salient features of the text (namely the sequence “ululà”, “ulu dove?”, “là”), which the dubbing director used as a point of departure for the recreation of the wordplay. In the original dialogue the pun revolved around the near homophony of the word “werewolf” and the phrase “where wolf”, which originates Igor’s nonsensical response “There wolf, there castle”. In the dubbed version the comic trigger is the word *ulula*, the third person singular of the verb “to howl”. A shift in stress from the first to the last syllable creates a phonological wordplay based on the two Italian variants for the adverb “there” (*là/là*) that perfectly matches the images.

FREDDY	<del>Tirami su.</del> <i>Mandami in elevazione</i>
INGA	Ora? Proprio qui?
FREDDY	Sì, sì. Alza <sup>(la piattaforma).</sup> il piano mobile.
INGA	Oh, ... <sup>(la piattaforma! ...)</sup> <sup>(quella)</sup> il piano mobile! ... Oh, <sup>(quello)</sup> sì, sì.

Figure 4. Dubbing script of *Young Frankenstein*, p. 25.

Figure 4 shows the dialogue adapter’s attempts to convey humour based on sexual innuendo. A double entendre is created over the verb *to elevate*. Frederick asks Inga to lift the platform on which he is standing with his creature as a lighting storm approaches. Inga is surprised and flattered by what she takes to be a sexual invitation and realizes her mistake only when Frederick makes it clear that it is the platform that she has to raise.

(12) example

Original dialogue	
FREDDY: <b>Elevate me!</b>	
INGA: Now, right here?	
FREDDY: Yes, yes, raise the platform.	
INGA: Oh, the platform, oh that, yeah, yes.	
Italian dubbed version	Back translation
FREDDY: <b>Lo tiri su!</b>	FREDDY: <b>Lift it up!</b>
INGA: Ora? Proprio qui?	INGA: Now? Right here?
FREDDY: Sì, sì, alza il piano mobile.	FREDDY: Yes, yes, raise the platform.
INGA: Oh, il piano mobile, oh quello, sì, sì, ja.	INGA: Oh, the platform, oh that, yes, yes, ja.

De Leonardis’ original solution (*tiramelo su* ‘lift it up’) carried out the implied meaning of Freddy’s request, whereas the second solution (*mandami in elevazione* ‘take me to elevation’) focused on both semantic







references, as well as to the close link that is established between verbal and visual humour (Bollettieri Bosinelli 2002, Filizzola 2008). As Chiaro (2006: 199) points out, manipulation of the source text may be necessary to achieve an equivalent humorous effect in the target text, so that very often “equivalence will need to be relinquished in favour of *skopos*”. According to Pedersen (2008: 112), a felicitous translation is one which manages to convey the speaker’s intentions to the target-text audience. In the case of filmic speech, the speaker’s intentions, if not his or her actual words, as well as the *skopos* of the utterance will have to be preserved; if conflict arises between the two, it would be more felicitous to give priority to the *skopos*, since the ultimate addressee of the utterances on screen is the viewer.

As Fuentes Luque (2010: 179) points out, in dealing with humour the translator’s work involves not only “problem identification and solving, but also a complex and creative writing strategy that has more to do with the work of dialogue writers, scriptwriters and comedians”. Analysis of dubbing translators’ manuscripts thus has an interesting potential: by opening up windows into the translation process (Munday 2013), it provides direct access to the creative strategies that are involved in dubbing translation, thus allowing us to better understand the fine line between manipulation and creativity (Bucaria 2008).

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

The goal of this study was to provide tangible evidence as to how dubbing translation is the result of multiple interventions. The case study conducted on the dubbing script of the film *Young Frankenstein* reveals that the text prepared by the dialogue adapter underwent extensive rewriting during the recording process. Manuscript analysis has shown that the changes and revisions made during the final stage were so extensive that the dubbed version was truly the result of a co-creative process in which various agents took part. If it is true that dialogue adapters “can gain the status of original authors” (Ranzato 2011: 121), owing to the transformative dimension of audiovisual translation and its focus on equivalent effect, it is also true that the role played by dubbing directors and dubbing actors cannot be overlooked.

The extracts examined above confirm that the manipulation that film dialogues undergo when they are translated and adapted for dubbing, at

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least in the Italian context, is to be ascribed to all of the agents involved in the process. It has been noted that good quality dubbing “is the result of a collaborative rewriting process that starts with a good, detailed dialogue list which is translated by a highly qualified professional and is then reworked and given new life by the dialogue adapter” (Minutella, in press). This process, however, does not finish when the dubbing script is handed in to the dubbing director. The dubbing scripts from the MiBAC archives that have been presented and analyzed here are an important source of information regarding the role played by the various agents. These documents open up windows on the translation process and the translators’ decision-making, while casting light on the issue of agency, an aspect of dubbing that is very often overlooked.

Comprehensibility and equivalent effect are a major concern when it comes to dubbing (Perego and Taylor 2012: 166-169). Even though “the original words are the blueprint to work from and should never be regarded as optional” (Taylor 1999: 432), the changes that audiovisual texts undergo, owing to the creative strategies adopted by the various agents involved in the process may result in radical manipulation. The genetic approach allows us to reconstruct the interventions made by the various agents involved in the dubbing process, whose individual contributions are hardly ever accounted for. It also brings to the fore an essential and fundamental aspect of dubbing: the fact that the changes film dialogues undergo in the process of dubbing are sometimes so radical and unpredictable that the notion of transcreation may be usefully called into question.

It must be pointed out that, given the multiple agency behind transcreation, the role played by each individual agent may be difficult to pinpoint. Moreover, owing to the prominence given to the creative element in the dubbing process, the translator may be completely forgotten. The conclusions that can be drawn from the findings of this study are hence twofold: on the one hand, the genetic approach allows us to better understand the role played by the various agents involved in the different stages of the dubbing process; on the other, it clearly shows that in dubbing the translator may well be left out of the creational part of the process.

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## Journalators? An ethnographic study of British journalists who translate

Denise Filmer

### *Abstract*

*This article discusses the blurring of boundaries between journalist and translator (van Doorslaer 2012: 1050) in the context of British news discourse on Italy. Focusing on the journalists' perspective, the article presents data gathered from a series of qualitative interviews with correspondents for Italy who work for major British newspapers, Reuters chief correspondent for Italy, and also the former editor-in-chief of The Economist. The study aims to ascertain exactly who translates the extracts and quotes that are "embedded as raw material for the construction of news stories" (Orengo 2005: 173) that are published in the newspapers under discussion. Further objectives of the study are to uncover some aspects of the "journalator's" habitus, to find out how the journalists perceive translation in their work, and to learn something of their translational practices. In order to shed light on this last point, two examples of Berlusconi's taboo language as reported in the media were discussed with the interviewees. The article concludes with some tentative observations on the data discussed.*

There is one feature of researching the media which still manages to surprise even experienced practitioners: the porcupine reaction of media personnel. If there is any one institutional disease to which the media of mass communication seem particularly subject, it is a nervous reaction to criticism, a reaction that puzzles us, for it is the media themselves which so vigorously defend principles guaranteeing the right to criticize.

Bell, Alan (1991: 4)

## 1. Introduction

“Translation is not the job of the journalist”. Thus affirms John Lloyd (15 July 2013)<sup>1</sup>, veteran foreign correspondent, contributing editor to *The Financial Times* and co-founder of the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*. Lloyd’s response to the notion that journalistic training should include translation and intercultural skills highlights a crucial issue in intercultural communications today, that is, the role of translation, and indeed, the “translator” in the production and circulation of international news. If, as Lloyd sustains, translation is not the task of the journalist, then who does the translating, recontextualising, and reformulating so intrinsic to foreign news reporting? Contrary to Lloyd’s assertion, this article posits that journalists, in particular foreign correspondents, do in fact translate although the translational process in news discourse is rarely explicit (see van Dijk 2009: 191-205 on news as discourse). This blurring of boundaries between journalist and translator (van Doorslaer 2012: 1050) and the subsequent invisibility of translation (Schäffner 2008: 3) prompt a series of ethical and ideological issues. As Bielsa (2010: 10) explains: “Invisibility implies the assumption of transparency, that texts are unproblematically rendered in another language [...]. The nature of translation as a process which necessarily mediates between cultures is ignored”. Pioneering research (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009; van Doorslaer 2010, 2012; Federici 2011; Holland 2006; Kelly 1997; Orengo 2005; Schäffner 2004, 2008, 2012; Valdeón 2010) has initiated discussion on the production, transfer, and consumption of translation-mediated news across linguistic and cultural spaces, yet there are still many research lacunae. This article contributes to the debate with an ethnographic study of correspondents for Italy in the British press. The following section provides an overview of the research and its aims.

## 2. Research questions

Stemming from a larger research project on the representation and translation of Silvio Berlusconi’s politically incorrect discourse in the

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd was a key panellist at the event, “Watchdog and Lapdog? A comparison of British and Italian journalism”, held at the Institute for Italian Culture, London 15 July 2013. His comment was in response to my questioning him on the role of translation in reporting foreign news.



British press, this study focuses on the journalists' perspective. Telephone interviews were carried out with seven correspondents for Italy who work for British newspapers (see table below). Reuters' chief correspondent for Italy and the former editor-in-chief of *The Economist* were also interviewed.

The interviewees were asked to discuss their experience of and attitudes to translating, and the role of the foreign correspondent today. Unlike Schäffner's (2012) "Unknown agents in translated political discourse", foreign correspondents are identifiable subjects who write under a by-line. Thus, they are exposed and can provide accountability for the use of translation in the texts they generate. The aims of the interviews were threefold:

- 1) to ascertain who translates the extracts and quotes that are "embedded as raw material for the construction of news stories" (Orengo 2005: 173);
- 2) to uncover some aspects of the journalator's<sup>2</sup> habitus (see Simeoni (1998) on the translator's habitus);
- 3) to find out how these journalists perceive translation within their work and learn something of their translational practices. In order to shed light on this last point, some examples of Berlusconi's taboo language<sup>3</sup> as reported in the media were discussed with the interviewees.

Before presenting the interviews, the following sections outline the theoretical and methodological frameworks devised for this research and offer an overview of key scholarship relevant to this study.

### 3. The Literature: translation in the news

Valdeón (2010: 156) observes that "The connection between news production and news translation has been non-existent in academic circles

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<sup>2</sup> The term coined by van Doorslaer (2012: 1050) denotes the "interventionist newsroom worker who makes abundant use of translation when transferring and reformulating or recreating informative journalistic texts". While this definition might not perfectly describe the work of the foreign correspondent, it emphasises the conflation of what have traditionally been perceived as separate spheres.

<sup>3</sup> As a working definition of the concept of taboo we take Hugh's (2010: 46) acceptance: "Taboo has now become mainly semantic[...] and is used in the broad modern sense of "highly inappropriate" rather than [...] "strictly forbidden".

until very recently”. Scholars first began to reflect on issues surrounding translation in the news in the late eighties; however, interest has burgeoned during the first decades of the twenty first century. A special issue of *Language and Intercultural Communication* (2005) opened up the debate, while “Translation in Global News”, a conference held at Warwick University in 2004 provided the incentive for Bielsa & Bassnett’s seminal work *Translation in Global News* (2009). Their research brought together strands of earlier scholarship, exploring the relationships between translation, globalization, and the international news media. The authors (ibid.: 2) contend that in news contexts “the very definition of translation is challenged and the boundaries of what we might term as translation have been recast”. For example, Van Doorslaer (2012: 1048) explains that producing a single news item often involves the integration of various source texts: “journalists will base [that] article on several earlier news items, on information and feedback from experts, and possibly also on other national and international coverage on the topic”. Translated information is invisibly recontextualised and embedded in the target culture product thus creating multiple source news texts. This “cut and paste” approach to producing news texts in which the translational act is invisible could to some extent vindicate Lloyd’s reluctance to view translation, or rather “translation proper” (Jakobson 1959: 114) as part of the journalist’s remit.

Christina Schäffner (2004) was one of the first to focus on the ways in which political discourse is translated in journalistic texts. She (2008: 3) observes “Newspapers regularly provide quotes of statements by foreign politicians, without explicitly indicating that these politicians were actually speaking in their own languages”. Her critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to translation in news texts can reveal ideological slippage, manipulation and distortion in rendering political discourse across cultures (Schäffner 2004). Federici (2011), for his part, states that information in news texts is “framed by the journalists’ perspectives, altering translation procedures and tactics”. Ultimately, Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 10) assert “In news translation, the dominant strategy is absolute domestication, as material is shaped in order to be consumed by the target audience”.

In order to reveal the agency behind the “absolute domestication” in news translation ethnographic methodologies can be extremely useful. The following section outlines the ways in which ethnographic approaches have been adapted to the aims of this study.

#### 4. Ethnographic approaches in translation research

Following Hubscher-Davidson (2011) and Koskinen (2006, 2008), Schäffner (2012: 122) calls for research that investigates the agents involved in translating and interpreting political discourse, and the actors who create discursive events. Speculating on agentless “processes of meaning transfer” is not sufficient to understand the mechanisms afoot in producing translation-mediated news texts: researchers need to speak to the practitioners. According to Schäffner (2012: 122), “we need to employ ethnographic methods such as observing actual processes, interviewing translators, interpreters and other agents involved in the institutional process”. The author (*ibid.*) suggests that ethnographic interviewing techniques can be fruitfully combined with critical discourse analysis in order to examine translated political discourse. The interviews carried out for the present study adopted techniques developed by naturalist researchers Rubin and Rubin (2012: 10) who describe their notion of qualitative interviewing as the ‘responsive interviewing model’. It has three principle characteristics:

1. The researcher seeks rich and detailed information with examples, experiences, narratives and stories not yes/no answers or agree/disagree responses.
2. Questions are open-ended, that is, the interviewee can respond in any way s/he chooses, elaborating upon answers, disagreeing with the questions or raising new issues.
3. The questions asked are not fixed. The interviewer does not have to stick to any given set of questions or ask them in any given order; s/he can change wording or skip questions or make up new questions on the spot to follow up new insights. s/he can pose a separate set of questions to different interviewees

(Rubin and Rubin 2012: 29)

These three features form the basis for the semi-structured interviews discussed below, shedding light on the research questions through the journalists’ individual narratives and idiographic accounts. By speaking directly to the journalists who regularly translate words or phrases in their news reporting it is possible to gain some insight into attitudes to and practices of translation within the journalistic profession. Likewise, it gave me the opportunity to obtain first-hand accounts of translational decision-making related to specific “critical points” (Munday 2012: 2), i.e. Berlusconi’s verbal transgressions.

The prospective interviewees were located between Rome, London and Milan therefore face to face interviews were not feasible within the constraints of the research project. Remote interviewing techniques via the internet (email with open questions) or by telephone seemed the most practical options. I was not sure of the availability or indeed the willingness of the subjects to participate so in the first instance I sent out 'feelers' in the form of personalised emails to each of the potential interviewees. Between 26th September 2012 and 3rd October 2012 emails were sent to eight correspondents for Italy for major British newspapers, and to the chief correspondent for *Reuters*, explaining the nature of the enquiry and asking if the subject would be willing to be interviewed telephonically. In all the emails I expressed my interest in discussing the subject's work experience, training and background in languages and translation (see table 1), and newsroom translational practices in general. I also specified that I was interested in their experience of translating Berlusconi. Then, for instance, to Michael Day of the *Independent* I specifically asked about the publication of Berlusconi's alleged insult to Angela Merkel, rendered as 'unfuckable lardarse' [Culona Inchiavabile]. This question would have been irrelevant to some of the journalists as the story was not published in all the newspapers. I suggested to each potential interviewee that they might prefer to answer the questions in a scheduled phone interview at a time that suited them, or respond to the questions in a written reply. Of the nine subjects, seven opted for the phone interview (see below) while two (John Hooper and Tom Kington) responded by email. The phone interviews were transcribed.

King and Horrocks (2010:81) suggest guidelines to ensure that telephone interviews yield quality results, for instance, asking the informant to set aside a substantial amount of time, perhaps 30-40 minutes, receiving the call in a private place, agreeing on a time of day when the participant is free of other commitments, and so forth. The authors also observe that men tend to use the phone in a more instrumental way, keeping the call as brief and to the point as possible, thus possibly decreasing the chances of getting more in-depth information from the informants. For the type of subjects who were participating in the study I was preparing, the suggestions were not easy to adhere to.

Firstly, my subjects were highly experienced journalists far more used to being the interviewer than the interviewee. I imagined they would be assertive, possibly defensive, and therefore probably difficult subjects to interview. Secondly, given that they are high-profile correspondents who

work under pressure with tight deadlines, it seemed unrealistic to dictate when and where the interview should take place, or how long it should last: ultimately I had to work round the constraints under which the interviews were conducted. In spite of these imperfect conditions, the conversations yielded significant data relevant to the research questions.

The interviews ranged from 20 to 45 minutes in length. While it was not always possible to record the phone calls, notes were taken during the interviews and then immediately transcribed. At a later stage of the research Bill Emmott, former editor in chief of *The Economist* kindly agreed to two interviews; one face to face and a follow-up session on Skype (22 February 2014, 8 March 2014 respectively). Both were recorded and transcribed.

The following section discusses the role of the foreign correspondent in national image building and how translational decisions can influence the reproduction of stereotypes in news discourse.

## 5. National Image and Narratives in the media

According to Tunstall (1996: 341) “A nation’s foreign news [...] reflects its prejudices and sentiments”. Kelly’s (1998: 57-63) study on the role of translation in national image-building and stereotyping in the media substantiates this posit, demonstrating that evaluative translational decisions on culture-bound terms influence the (negative) portrayal of Spain in the British press. News items are selected according to pre-established news values (Bednarek and Caple 2012: 41-49) that create consonance (ibid) with the audience’s pre-conceived ideas thus reinforcing national stereotypes. Van Doorslaer (2010: 18) points out that “The de-selection and framing principles used in the newsrooms (also in news agencies) are likely to be influenced by existing stereotypes, national and cultural images, and ideological convictions or sometimes prejudices”. Evidence of such framing processes can be identified in certain news narratives surrounding Berlusconi in recent years.

### 5.1 Constructing news from linguistic taboos

Former Italian Prime-Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s (mis) use of language has often been the *raison d’être* and the focus around which journalists have constructed news stories. These discursive events in which the

offending phrase or word is mediated through translation have extremely high news value and are widely disseminated through both traditional and digital news outlets. For instance, Berlusconi's alleged utterance "Forza Gnocca", translated as "Go Pussy" (see section 10.2 for full discussion) generated worldwide media coverage. A simple Google keyword search for Berlusconi+go pussy, produces 234,000 results. Culturally sensitive lexemes such as these are what Munday (2012: 2) refers to as "critical points" in translational decision-making: "those points in a text that require interpretation and in some cases substantive intervention from the translator" (ibid.). "Critical points" occur where the translator, either consciously or unconsciously could demonstrate evaluative attitudes to the text s/he is translating. Munday (2012: 4) explains:

The way in which [these] critical points are resolved produces a specific representation of the foreign that reflects an ideological point of view and evaluative reading and seeks to guide the response to international events.

The foreign correspondent is a key figure in the process of portraying the cultural Other through the filter of translated news discourse. It is appropriate, then, to ask what expertise they have and what their perspectives are on the role of the journalist in intercultural mediation. The following sections discuss the figure of the foreign correspondent, introduce the correspondents for Italy, and present the data garnered from the interviews.

## **6. Meet the correspondents**

Walter Lippmann (1921) posited nearly a century ago that newspapers have enormous sway; they can influence public opinion through the use of stereotypes, values, beliefs and prejudices that, according to the editor of any given publication, reflect the views and taste of his/her audience (Lippmann 1921/1997: 329). Thus the worldview of journalists can simultaneously mould and reproduce public attitudes and ideas. More recently it has been argued that through gatekeeping processes journalists can shape what we think *about*, but not necessarily what we think *of* a particular issue (Valdeón 2012: 69). In other words, news providers select the agenda but ultimately audiences will make up their own minds on the issues at stake and not be influenced by editorial slanting. Either way,

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foreign correspondents are considered experts in their field and as such enjoy the authority and celebrity status that representing an elite newspaper brand confers. Conboy (2010: 103) asserts that “the future of journalism is linked to ‘brand trust’ that is, the public’s confidence in the reliability of the source”.

### 6.1 The role of a foreign correspondent

According to Beliveau, Hahn and Ibsen (2011: 129-164) foreign correspondents act as a cultural interface, mediating, translating, and negotiating tensions between foreign and home cultures. While sharing the perspective of the audience for whom they write, reporters must fully comprehend the cultural traits of the Other, and fill in the “meaning gaps” between cultures (ibid: 143). In a very general sense, this is certainly true but such a view of the foreign correspondent evades the pragmatics and praxis of translation in conveying news across cultural boundaries and disregards the commercial pressures journalists in all spheres have to contend with nowadays. Instead Bill Emmott, former Editor in Chief of *The Economist*, describes the foreign correspondent’s task thus: “the role of the [foreign correspondent] today is not just as a reporter of facts or conveyer of news but as the analyser, the interpreter of those facts and that news. [...] He concedes, however, that “The foreign correspondent today is [also] trying harder to be more entertaining than they probably did 50 or 100 years ago. They need to get attention, to get things published”. Emmott acknowledges that translation can play a significant part in this.

Now let us turn to those who have participated in the construction of Italy’s image through translation in the British press. It should be noted here that while all the subjects interviewed were men,<sup>4</sup> this is not to say that there were no women reporting on Italy at the time. However, in 2012 when the interviews were carried out the high-profile regular correspondents for the major British newspapers were indeed all men. This is important for two reasons; firstly it suggests that foreign news reporting is still male dominated. Secondly, might a female journalist have interpreted the language in a different way, making different translational choices?

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<sup>4</sup> Since carrying out the interviews in 2012 two prominent women have emerged as reporting on Italian affairs for British newspapers. The first, Hannah Roberts for *The MailOnline*, and the second, Lizzy Davies for *The Guardian*.

## 7. The “journalator’s” habitus

In order to contextualise the interview data, it is helpful to know something of the professional trajectory of each of the respondents to this project. The table below lists the journalists interviewed, summarising salient data on their backgrounds, training, and career. This data was gleaned through a series of standard questions asked during the course of the interviews. However, following the responsive interviewing model the questions were not necessarily asked in the same way or in the same order. Due to time constraints, it was not feasible to ascertain the participants’ level of L2 competence. However, this would be a desirable aim in future research projects.

			Experience	Language Training
James Bone	<i>The Times</i>	Correspondent in Italy, based in Rome	<i>The Times</i> Correspondent, United States	No formal training.
Michael Day	<i>Independent, Sunday Telegraph, Express</i>	Freelance correspondent in Italy, based in Milan	<i>Sunday Telegraph</i> , reporter covering Health and Social Affairs	No formal training
John Hooper	<i>The Economist</i> <i>Guardian</i>	Correspondent in Italy Southern European Editor, based in Rome	30 years’ experience as a foreign correspondent for BBC World Service, <i>Guardian</i> , <i>Observer</i> , and <i>The Economist</i> ; based in countries including Spain, Cyprus, Germany and Italy.	No formal training.
Tom Kington	<i>Guardian, Observer</i> <i>Los Angeles Times</i> .	Freelance correspondent, based in Rome for last 10 years.	Correspondent in London and Lebanon.	Not known
James MacKenzie	<i>Reuters</i>	Senior Correspondent, based in Rome	<del>Reuters</del> bureaux in Frankfurt, Berlin, Paris.	No formal training
Nick Pisa	<i>Daily Mail, Express, Mirror, Sky News, Sun.</i>	Freelance correspondent in Italy based in Rome for 12 years (now based in the UK).	Not known.	No formal training
Peter Popham	<i>Independent</i>	Foreign correspondent and feature writer	20 years with <i>Independent</i> as foreign correspondent; five years in India, seven in Rome.	No formal training
Nick Squires	<i>Telegraph</i>	Italy Correspondent, based in Rome	<i>Telegraph</i> correspondent in Australia	Italian language course, L’Universita’ per Stranieri (Perugia).
Bill Emmott	Independent writer, regular contributor, <i>The Times, La Stampa</i> .	Former Editor-in-Chief of <i>The Economist</i> . Under Emmott’s direction <i>Economist</i> campaigned heavily against Berlusconi.	Foreign Correspondent in Brussels, (1980-83) and Japan (1983-86).	None.

Table 1: British newspaper correspondents for Italy: essential information



In Sambrook's (2010: 104) report, *Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant? The Changing face of International News*, he asserts: "For most of the 20th Century, the average foreign correspondent was likely to be white, male, [and] middle class [...]. They probably didn't speak the language of the country in which they were based [...] but they would over time, develop a degree of specialist expertise". While Sambrook does not provide evidence of this "specialist expertise", nor any indication of how it might be measured, it can be observed, however, that foreign correspondents today bear an uncanny resemblance to those of the past: the table above shows that of the nine subjects interviewed, all are white, male, and middle class. None has any formal knowledge of translation or intercultural skills, and language instruction is very limited. Nick Squires, the *Telegraph's* correspondent in Rome comments: "It goes with the job, your knowledge of the language". Journalism's do-it-yourself approach to language-learning is also reflected in the translation practices and perceptions of the correspondent's role as cultural mediator, discussed in the next section.

## 8. Translation and intercultural mediation: the journalist's view

Despite their lack of training, all the interviewees claimed that they personally translated quotes and other material for their articles, and did not rely on news agencies such as ANSA (L'Agencia Nazionale Stampa Associata). Nick Squires of the *Telegraph* believes that, on the whole, journalists take a serious attitude to translation: "Bearing in mind the constraints of time and the deadlines, none of us [correspondents] have a cavalier approach. People make a huge effort to get it right". When asked if the invisibility of translation in new discourse could lead to misinterpretation on the part of the audience, Squires rejoined "Translation is implicit, readers know." On the issue of accountability he replied that with approximately 40 foreign correspondents working on the news desk, crediting translations to individuals would create "a mess" on the page.

With reference to Munday's "critical points" in translational decision-making, Squires says: "If the word is ambiguous, I'll ask an Italian colleague". He quoted an example, the culture-bound Italian term "bamboccione" [chubby baby], that he had found difficult to render in English. The source-language lexeme is used to signify single adults, usually male, who live at home with their parents. In order to convey this

concept to a British audience Squires employs thick translation (Appiah 2000/2004: 399), annotating and glossing the word to locate it in its social-cultural and linguistic context: “Italians have a word for people who choose to live with their parents well into their thirties and even forties – bamboccioni, or ‘big babies’, who refuse to fly the nest and instead sponge off their families” (Squires 27 August 2013). If we reflect a moment on Squires’ rendering it becomes clear that a series of evaluations have been made. While it is true the SL term implies immaturity and an unwillingness to leave the parental home, in the target text these negative inferences have been greatly magnified. The annotations of the term itself, its contextualisation, or rather lack of it and the ideological slant of the article fail to convey the social reality of Italy where the rate of unemployment is at 13 percent, while nearly 44 percent of young people aged between 15-24 are out of work (Istat 1 August 2014). The decision to use evaluative verbal phrases such as “choose to stay at home”, “refuse to fly the nest” and “sponge off their families” alongside semantically loaded adjectives such as “workshy” clearly indicates the journalist’s attitude, if not the editorial position. The message conveyed is that Italy’s youth is lazy and unwilling to work, thus conforming to stereotypes of Italians generally as feckless and idle (Beller 2007: 321).

James Bone (*The Times*) says he was “familiar” with Italian before commencing as correspondent for Italy. He states that he always translates himself, adding “there is no great mystery” thus confirming anthropologist Ulf Hannerz’s (1996: 120) observation that “newspeople do not seem much given to deciphering foreign meanings at all. The working assumption, apparently, is that understanding is not a problem, things are what they seem to be”. Bone concedes, however, that like Squires, he sometimes takes advice from colleagues to find the best English rendering for culture-bound language “which is not always easy, especially with some of the [Italian] dialect”. On cultural mediation Bone’s approach appears to be rather ambivalent. For Bone, “The job of the foreign correspondent is to catch the cultural peculiarities – and Berlusconi is a good example”. He illustrates this point with what he calls one of Berlusconi’s “less offensive” comments, describing Barack Obama as “Alto, bello e anche abbronzato” [Tall, handsome and suntanned, too] (6 November 2008 *La Repubblica*). *The Times* correspondent explains:

In Italy to say one is ‘abbronzato’, ‘suntanned’, is a complement while in England it is clearly an insult. It is not politically correct and cannot be excused. It’s like 50s Britain. The use of language says a lot

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about a culture.

On the one hand Bone's interpretation seems to justify Berlusconi's use of the expression because in an Italian context it would be a "compliment". On the other hand he compares it with Anglophone values and deems "it cannot be excused". Finally, the journalist concludes: "We [correspondents] should analyse and explain, not judge". Yet Bone's comparison of Italy to "50s Britain" can be construed as an evaluation; an unconscious manifestation of the ways in which familiar stereotypes of "Backwards Italy" are resorted to in news discourse.

Another journalist who believes in learning the language on the job is the *Independent's* Michael Day who asserts "You become proficient [in a language] living in a place". Although he has no training in translation he believes that "translation is an art". Nick Viverelli, Rome Bureau Chief for *Variety*, the American trade journal for show business, is Day's inspiration when it comes to approaches in translation. According to Day, Viverelli "literally re-writes texts from Italian into American English, but with the vernacular slang used in the tabloidy style of *Variety*". Day adds, "Most foreign journalists don't do that. Especially the agencies, they tend to translate too literally". Ideally, he suggests the translation process should aim at "honing" the source text into "lovely English".

John Hooper (*The Economist* and the *Guardian*) has lived in Rome on and off since 1994. It would seem that he believes translation is part of the foreign correspondent's job and says he is responsible for all the translated text that appears in his articles:

For better or worse, all the translations, whether taken directly from a speech or press conference or indirectly via a newspaper or magazine, are made by me. Some correspondents, and this is particularly true of American correspondents, rely on translations made by their Italian assistants. Agencies do not come into it, though we do sometimes use interpreters for interviews with visiting special correspondents or editors.

Email correspondence 26 September 2012

The description of "assistant" to describe the Italian native speakers who perform translation tasks for American correspondents is revealing. Bielsa and Bassnett (2009: 60) point out:

If the foreign correspondent is the most visible face of international news organisations, often enjoying personal prestige and recognition, in some cases even considerable fame, the local translator can be considered the most humble and invisible among those directly involved in the production of global news. The low status of this figure, generally known as the interpreter, is reflected in the way its task is described and classified as part of a whole variety of local services including drivers and other media assistants.

It should be added here that what the authors refer to as ‘the local translator’ is likely to be a non-professional translator, rather a person who “also translates”. Hooper, however, prefers to translate for himself. He says: “Well, the translation tool I use most is my head, and what is inside it already. But I also turn to dictionaries. None is perfect, but I find Collins perhaps the best. I have their app on my iPhone and iPad too”. News translation often demands immediacy, i.e. apps and smart-phone technology, underlining expediency as the main translation criteria; nuances of meaning or cultural interpretation take second place. Tom Kington (the *Guardian*) affirms: “I always translate Italian myself, without recourse to agencies. That is not to say that my choice of words won't be the same as agencies or other papers”.

Nick Pisa was born in the UK but his parents are from Naples. Thus we might assume, rightly or wrongly, that he had some knowledge of Italian, or possibly Neapolitan dialect, before moving to Rome where he worked as freelance correspondent for major tabloids, the *Sun* and the *Mirror*, and the middle market *Daily Mail*. He still writes for the *Mail* and is now correspondent for *Sky News*. Pisa could therefore be identified as a crucial figure in disseminating information on Italian affairs and to a much larger British newspaper-reading public<sup>5</sup> compared to the elite papers. He is also significant to the representation of Italy on a global scale as the *MailOnline* is the world's most popular online newspaper<sup>6</sup>. On the question of translation, Pisa has a certain notoriety: he wrote the article for the *Mail Online* (3 October 2011, now deleted) in which the verdict of the Amanda

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<sup>5</sup> *The Sun* has the largest circulation in the UK with 2,409,811 while the *Mirror* has 1,058,488. In comparison the best-selling elite paper, *The Times*, has a circulation of 399,339 (Audit Bureau of Circulation, May 2013.).

<sup>6</sup> The average global total for daily ‘browsers’ for the *Mail online* was 8.2 million, up 46.8 per cent year on year. Its total number of unique browsers for May 2013 was 129 million (Audit Bureau of Circulation, May 2013.).

Knox Appeal was erroneously reported as “guilty”<sup>7</sup>. According to Pisa, “The *Sky* translator [sic.] got it wrong and pressed the button”, triggering the online publication of the “news”. Pisa was exonerated by the *Mail* who launched an inquiry into the matter stating “It is common practice among newspapers to prepare two versions of an article ahead of a court verdict and these are known as ‘set and hold’ pieces.” Colleague James Bone from *The Times* corroborates this. Says Bone “We all did it, it is routine practice”. An in-depth discussion on the ethics of certain journalistic practices goes beyond the scope of this contribution; nevertheless, it should be underlined that Pisa’s “reporting” goes beyond a simple statement, false or not, of the verdict. For example he describes scenes that never took place: “Knox sank into her chair sobbing uncontrollably while her family and friends hugged each other in tears”, not to mention the false quotations attributed to the prosecution (Press Complaints Commission, 9 December 2011). Might not such a blatant divergence from the truth arouse suspicion that similar tactics prevail in recontextualising translated information?

Peter Popham (the *Independent*) acknowledges that comprehension itself becomes more of a critical issue when one is not fluent or trained in a second language. In particular Popham recalls inadvertently misrepresenting a comment Berlusconi had allegedly made regarding Margaret Thatcher. “Yes, I got that wrong. I understood that Berlusconi had called Margaret Thatcher a “bella gnocca”<sup>8</sup>, instead of which he said “*Non e’ una bella gnocca*” (see section 10.2 for discussion on the taboo nature of the translation of “gnocca”). He observes: “We are correspondents, we are not trained translators and if we do have the language it’s been learned in an informal way. Given the pressures of deadlines, the translation process is an informal one that is open to errors”. Popham’s admission here is most telling; he recognises that a lack of training could lead to mistakes in the translation process.

*Reuter’s* chief correspondent in Rome, James MacKenzie, has no translation training, but describes *Reuter’s* translation ethos thus: “When

<sup>7</sup> In fact Knox was found guilty of slander but acquitted on the count of murder.

<sup>8</sup> Apart from “getting it wrong” as to whether Berlusconi did or did not think Margaret Thatcher was a “Bella Gnocca”, Popham’s rendering of the epithet is also questionable from an ideological point of view. While it is true the term “gnocca” literally denotes the female genitals, pragmatically it is used as a compliment to an attractive woman and although vulgar is not strictly considered a taboo word. In terms of equivalent effect “bella gnocca” might be better rendered as “beautiful babe” rather than Popham’s solution, “a great piece of pussy”.

we translate we try to get as close to the original sense as possible". The target language rendering prefers "neutral" terms that avoid local connotations so as not to be "too English or too American". This strategy would seem to illustrate Toury's law of standardisation (1995: 267-74) producing neutralising effects, particularly with culture-bound lexis. According to Mackenzie, Reuters adopt a "literal approach" to translation, while some newspapers might be tempted to use "poetic licence to make a quote appear more scandalous" than the original source language.

## **9. Image of Italy**

Following van Doorslaer's observation that national stereotypes are perpetuated through translation in the news, it is interesting to note the opinions of the interviewees regarding the nation, culture and people they report on.

Although Bone observed that it was not for the correspondent to judge (see above), the interviewees expressed strong opinions on Berlusconi, Italy and Italian culture. Pisa blames Berlusconi for worsening international opinion about Italy: "A G8 leader indulging in Benny Hill-style humour and behaviour deserves what he gets from the international press". An opinion shared by Michael Day who exclaims "Berlusconi is totally beyond the pale". Bone, on the other hand observes: "Berlusconi is not an aberration [in Italy] he is mainstream" and maintains that journalists who have been trenchantly anti-Berlusconi "have missed a lot". Popham confirms that for the world's media, Berlusconi is a synecdoche: "He has become a symbol of Italy's political failings. It was tempting to succumb to expressions like 'former cruise ship crooner' or 'media tycoon' but I don't think unfairly". Squires is of the same opinion. When asked if his use of evaluative adjectival phrases to denote Berlusconi was appropriate for a quality paper he replied "It is all true, there is no libel". Emmott observes: "2011 was a crucial moment for Italy in the International media – that press conference with Sarkozy and Merkel, that look, laughing at Berlusconi creating an official image of Berlusconi as a buffoon and unreliable in international affairs".

The next section focuses on specific examples of Berlusconi's controversial language and the ways in which the foreign correspondents conveyed these expressions from Italian into English.

## 10. Bad language? Berlusconi's linguistic taboos

Baker (1992/2011: 234) observes “Sex, religion, and defecation are taboo<sup>9</sup> subjects in many societies, but not necessarily to the same degree within similar situations”. The perception, then, of what is or what is not taboo is culturally and contextually contingent requiring exceptional lingua-cultural competency in the SL and the TL to achieve equivalent effect across linguistic and cultural barriers. Editorial policy on censoring obscene or offensive language vary from newspaper to newspaper in Britain, therefore the challenge of rendering linguistic taboos from Italian into English and “getting it into the paper” was a theme discussed with relish by the interviewees. Here we summarise the journalists’ comments on taboo language in relation to their publications and discuss two examples of Berlusconi’s taboo-breaking language around which news stories were constructed. The aim here is to initiate a process of describing the phenomenon in order to understand what translation effects are created and to what ideological ends. An in-depth analysis would extend beyond the scope of this article but is part of the broader project from which it stems.

### 10.1 “Unfuckable Lardarse”

Allegedly uttered during a wiretapped conversation, Berlusconi’s soubriquet for Chancellor Merkel, “Culona inchiavabile” [unscrewable big arse]<sup>10</sup> (*Il Fatto Quotidiano* 10 September 2011) made headlines across the gamut of the British press and caused an international scandal. Mackenzie of *Reuters* observed that the communicative event was significant “because it coincided with the euro crisis. Italy was dependent on the Germans who were their paymaster”. Diplomatic reverberations were indeed felt, and the German tabloid *Bild* (13 September 2011) ran the headline: “Hat Berlusconi Merkel übel beleidigt?” [Has Berlusconi rudely insulted Merkel?]. In spite of its high news value, not all the papers ran the story.

This could be due to the uncertain source of the information, or simply because the taboo nature of the utterance and its reverberations in translation would not be printed in certain publications. Squires of the *Telegraph* comments: “It is not a question of censorship; it’s a question of

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<sup>9</sup> See Allen and BurrIDGE 2006; Hughes 2006, 2010 for an overview of language and taboo

<sup>10</sup> This is, in my opinion, the most neutral rendering of the Italian ST, although it undoubtedly loses the comic undertones of the SL version.

decorum” while James Bone of *The Times* states: “Some language is too strong [for *The Times*] and won’t get published on the grounds of taste”. the *Mail Online* on the other hand had no qualms publishing the story with the asterisked rendering ‘an un\*\*\*\*able fat \*\*\*\*’, thus magnifying the taboo nature of the expression for the target audience by using censoring strategies. The exaggeratedly vulgar uncensored translation, “unfuckable lardarse” made the rounds of the online international news outlets following its publication in the “quality” paper, the *Independent*. The rendering apparently originated from Michael Day, although the by-line on the article is Tony Patterson( 15 September 2011):

For your information, the original “rendering” – I presume you mean “translation” – “unfuckable lardarse” for the phrase "culona inchiavabile" came from me (actually, an Italian TV writer friend suggested it to me on the phone).

Email correspondence 5 October 2012

Thus, an alleged insult uttered by the Prime Minister of Italy was translated into English by a native speaker of Italian, a friend of a friend of the journalist whose by-line appears on the article. Day defended the publication of the story by saying “Newspapers are there to entertain”. This view of journalism clashes with others, as Emmott warns: ‘If there is a desire to entertain it can be dangerous, [...] if you’ve got to try harder to be heard then the danger of sensationalising, or distorting or trivialising or any of those sins increase. It’s across all kinds of journalism but perhaps there is more now in foreign correspondence compared with 50 years ago. Then there is an extra issue with translation”.

## 10.2 Forza Gnocca Goes Pussy

In a conversation with his deputies, Berlusconi reportedly suggested “Forza Gnocca” (*La Repubblica*, 6 October 2011) as a new party name. As happened with the alleged remark on Angela Merkel, “Forza Gnocca” rendered as “Go Pussy” fuelled yet more international news narratives on the then Italian Premier, already dogged by various sex scandals.

It is useful here to briefly gloss and contextualise these two terms. “Gnocca” and “pussy” have different connotations within their lingua-cultures although they both denote the female genitalia. The former is considered a synecdoche to signify a very attractive woman (*Zanichelli*



*online*, 2011), the latter is connoted “A woman, or women collectively, regarded as a source of sexual intercourse” (*OED online*). “Gnocca” can be heard on prime-time Italian national radio and television whereas the lexeme “pussy” is often censored in Anglophone contexts, for example asterisks were used in some British newspapers to render Berlusconi’s expression. Although Hooper of *The Guardian* and *The Economist* explained his translational decision thus:

I chose "Pussy" because there were two possible English translations: one, "crumpet", was just too English (our [*Guardian*] website now has a vast US readership, about 30% of the total); the other, which also begins with c, is a word we use only if the context absolutely requires it and which, I felt, was much cruder than “gnocca”. “Pussy” was comprehensible on both sides of the Atlantic and, I felt, more faithful to the original.

Email correspondence 30 September 2012

Hooper’s ‘think aloud protocol’ is revealing. It demonstrates how translation choices are made in journalistic contexts and illustrates a domesticating strategy that bows to the requirements of an international English-speaking audience. Although the majority of the *Guardian* readers are clearly British, Hooper rejected the two “English” options he had found in favour of a term that has stronger taboo connotations within the target culture than the original SL term has in its own lingua-cultural context in order to be “comprehensible” to an American audience. While appearing to have lexicographical equivalence, the translational decision produces a significant shift from the SL pragmatic meaning. It could be argued that there is a wealth of other lexical alternatives or translational strategies that could have been employed to render “gnocca”, but this would go beyond the scope of this article (see Filmer, forthcoming). Suffice it to say that by relying only on quick dictionary solutions Hooper’s translation tools and resources were severely limited. This point demonstrates how more research into the role of translation in the news remains a critical priority to the discipline.

## 11. Conclusions

This contribution has presented some initial findings garnered from qualitative interviews with journalists who translate. The aim of the study was to investigate translational practices in news reporting in the British press with specific reference to Italy and Berlusconi. The results of the sample study strongly suggest that further ethnographic research is needed in order to gain a clearer picture of the role of translation in the production of international news. While the limited evidence adduced here can only provide some very broad indications, nevertheless some tentative conclusions can be outlined.

Firstly, Lloyd's affirmation that translation is not the job of the journalist is in stark contrast with the evidence brought to light in this study, and the broader project to which it belongs (Filmer forthcoming). For all the journalists interviewed, translation is part of their work -although they might lack the necessary skills and knowledge. Furthermore, Lloyd's dismissal of translation/intercultural communication training for journalists is at odds with the findings of a recent report for which he was a member of the editorial committee. The report entitled "Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant? The Changing face of International News" (Sambrook 2010: 101) concludes "In the long term, news editors must commit to greater professional training for foreign staff[...]. It is increasingly clear that language skills, cultural awareness and subject or country expertise are more important than ever for the accurate portrayal of international events and issues. Cultural gaps need careful bridging". Fine words indeed but as operators across international media fail to acknowledge the pivotal role of translation in the distribution and making of news, the advent of the "journalator" is still a long way off.

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## Transcreating a new kind of humour: the case of Daniele Luttazzi

M. Cristina Caimotto

### *Abstract*

*In 2010 a popular but controversial Italian comedian, Daniele Luttazzi, was accused of having plagiarized the works of a number of well-known American stand-up comedians. The issue was debated among non-professionals and generated discussions that would normally occupy academic gatherings, thus making more visible laypeople's notion of "translation". This paper aims to offer an overview of the various aspects of the case. First, a parallel is drawn between Luttazzi's transcreative process and that of 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian author Iginio Ugo Tarchetti, whose introduction of the Gothic tale to Italy as described in Venuti (1995) can be seen as analogous to Luttazzi's introduction of the dark humour typical of Anglo-American sketches into Italian comedy routines. The paper also offers an overview of the political background which influenced the debate about Luttazzi's work on both sides. Finally the role played by ComedySubs fansubbers is described together with the reporting of some of their reactions and comments, expressed both in public – on forums and social networks – and in private email interviews which were carried out for this research.*

*Luttazzi's humour is interesting for the Translation Studies scholar because his whole production is clearly influenced by Anglo-American comedians and the Italian public was not used to the humour he introduced. Although his work can be considered a form of infotainment, his style was so far removed from the expectations of Italian audiences that public opinion failed to rally to his support when he was attacked by politicians and his programmes were pulled off the air, making his position all the more difficult to defend. The aim of this work is to contribute to the debate about translation and copyright and to stir new debate on issues of translation and plagiarism: by pointing out what Luttazzi and Tarchetti have in common, the important role translation and transcreation can play in the dissemination of ideas and the spreading of critical awareness is highlighted and discussed.*

“One of the surest of tests is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion. A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest.”

T.S. Eliot, 1960, *The Sacred Wood* (127)

## 1. Introduction

The present paper was inspired by the case of a supposed international copyright infringement that was widely debated in Italy in 2010. The issues raised by this case show that the contradictions of copyright laws are still a reality. The paper starts by illustrating Venuti's work on the production of Iginio Ugo Tarchetti, a minor 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian author who wrote his own works and - at the same time - plagiarized, imitated and rewrote foreign works that he translated, or transcreated, from English into Italian. Tarchetti can be considered the author who had the merit of introducing the Gothic tale to Italy and, as Venuti (1995) explains, his works were an important vehicle for the introduction of new cultural elements, especially in terms of political awareness. If Tarchetti were alive and working today, he would probably be accused and prosecuted for copyright infringement, while back in 1865 he could safely pass his translated work off as his own without being found out, nor was there yet an Italian law against copyright infringement to prosecute him. His case is used here to present a reflection on the work of a contemporary Italian artist, Daniele Luttazzi, who, as this paper will demonstrate, has many points in common with Tarchetti.

Apart from contributing to the debate about translation and copyright, and to a new discussion on issues of translation and plagiarism, this case study is also an occasion to illustrate the attitude of the general public towards translation and dubbing. The analysis is focused on the reactions of those who contributed to create the scandal and the comments published on social networks. They are employed here to observe how most non-experts conceive the practice of translation, which, as expected,

can be very different from the way Translation Studies scholars envisage the work of a translator.

The paper starts by illustrating the contradictions of copyright laws and Venuti's notion of "foreignization", which is fundamental to understand the role that Tarchetti and Luttazzi have played in different fields. It then moves to the discussion of what role translation can play in the reshaping of a national canon and what influence it can have on the local culture, especially in terms of political issues. After having outlined Tarchetti's transcreation strategies and the points in common with Luttazzi's, the events concerning the latter are then detailed before moving on to the closing section, which focuses on the reactions of fans, amateur translators and the general public.

## 2. Copyright and Translation

The US Constitution, article I, section 8, states "The Congress shall have Power [...] to promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries". Many scholars argue that this position – which is not dissimilar from the copyright laws of many other countries<sup>1</sup> – is problematic (e.g. Basalamah, 2001: 162). Moreover, copyright laws imply that full originality can exist and that a clear line can be drawn to separate original works from imitation and plagiarism. But, as Bruns (1980: 115) points out,

between imitation and translation other categories (besides forgery) intervene: parody, adaptation, collaboration, quotation, allusion, diverse codes of attribution ('as myn auctour seyde, so sey I'), the utterance of commonplace matter, mnemonic storytelling (who could not extend this list?).

Many copyright laws include the category of derivative work: but they still rely on the clear-cut separation between original and imitative works, which in reality can prove to be more complex than expected. Venuti (1998: 65) highlights the contradiction between the goal of copyright laws

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<sup>1</sup> In Italy copyright is the subject of law n. 633 (April 22nd 1943) subsequently modified by various amendments and regulations. The Italian Constitution does not refer to copyright explicitly.



to protect and encourage the creation of cultural and educational works while assuming that the authors of derivative works, like translations, should not share the commercial motives of other authors.

In order to understand the cases of Tarchetti and Luttazzi, the notion of foreignization is fundamental. Drawing on the work of Schleiermacher, Venuti (1995: 20-1) explains that a foreignizing translation aims to “send the reader abroad” and register the difference, both linguistic and cultural, that divides the target from the source. The action of translating a text through foreignizing practices is a way of revising the domestic canons and to question the status quo. Venuti states that, along with few other Italian translations of Gothic tales, Tarchetti’s translation initiated a change that resulted in a significant reformation of the canon (1995: 185). Venuti (1995: 148) also demonstrates that there is a strong connection linking foreignizing translations and dissidence: both our artists have been considered dissidents by their contemporaries.

The term *transcreation* is generally employed to describe the process of creative translation usually carried out by poets. Drawing upon the work of André Lefèvre (1975), McClure (1991: 197-8) discusses the best strategies to evaluate the translations of poems and explains that transcreation is a form of close imitation attempting to retain the culture-bound elements. Thus what he calls “verbal fidelity” can be of minor importance if what is being translated is “a whole conception of poetry and set of poetic practices”. This is why the notion of transcreation can prove helpful when analysing the work of Luttazzi, even if his works are not poems.

### 3. Criticizing the bourgeois

Tarchetti belonged to the *Scapigliatura*, a Milanese bohemian subculture. As Venuti (1998: 13) explains, he “aimed to shock the Italian bourgeoisie, rejecting good sense and decency to explore dream and insanity, violence and aberrant sexuality, flouting social convention and imagining fantastic worlds where social inequity was exposed and challenged.”

Tarchetti was the first practitioner of the Gothic tale in Italy, through the appropriation of foreign texts. He adapted, reproduced, translated and even plagiarized texts by writers such as Hoffman, Poe, Nerval, Gautier, and Erckmann-Chatrian. These discursive practices – which could be reunited under the label “transcreation”- played a political function by

addressing hierarchical social relations and interrogating ideologies. Tarchetti's Gothic tales demonstrate how forms of appropriation such as translation can operate as political interventions (Venuti, 1992: 197).

It is precisely on the latter concept of political intervention through appropriation in the form of foreignizing translation that the parallel between Tarchetti and Luttazzi is drawn. Their points of resemblance can be introduced by reading their own words:

It must not be forgotten that Italy, unique in the world, possesses a guide to brothels, that our licentious novels are reproduced and popular in France as well, that the men who write them enjoy every civil right and public admiration, and belong for the most part to the periodical press [whereas] the circulation of every political text opposed to the principles of the government, but consistent with those of humanity and progress, is immediately obstructed (Tarchetti, II: 534-5 in Venuti, 1995 - originally published in 1865).

Satire seems to have disappeared because it is not allowed on TV in its free, unfettered state. Control of satire diminishes its impact. This is a uniquely Italian phenomenon that suffocates our country and makes it undemocratic. Television satire can be satire at its best, but it is not wanted. Hence the problem is political. The point is thought control. They want to be able to censor the ideas that they don't share. But then it is not satire anymore [...] The scandal of satire does not reside in its indecent terms, but in the fact that its expressive freedom corrodes our prejudices. Prejudices reassure. Satire doesn't. (Luttazzi, 2009: 203, 206, my translation).<sup>2</sup>

The two authors believe in the necessity to protect democracy and encounter similar problems due to censorship – Tarchetti's second novel caused an uproar in the press and copies were openly burned (Venuti, 1995: 149). They criticize what they consider the real vulgarity of their country, that is, bourgeois hypocrisy and ignorance. Both authors introduce a new genre (Gothic tales and dark humour) and subvert bourgeois values by doing so. As Venuti (1995: 148) explains, foreignizing

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<sup>2</sup>*La satira pare scomparsa perché non è più ammessa in tv nella forma libera che le è propria. In questo modo le tolgono impatto. È un fenomeno solo italiano che rende il nostro paese una provincia asfittica e poco democratica. La satira in tv fa picchi di ascolto, ma non la si vuole. Quindi il problema è politico. Il punto è il controllo delle idee. Loro vogliono poter censurare quelle che non condividono. Ma così non è più satira. [...] Lo scandalo della satira non è nei termini indecenti, ma nel fatto che la sua libertà espressiva corrode i nostri pregiudizi. I pregiudizi rassicurano. La satira no.*

translation is a dissident cultural practice because it includes foreign cultures that have been excluded because of their own resistance to dominant values. Both authors knew English well and imported their style from Anglo-American sources, through a variety of cultural transformations that included transcreation, imitation and plagiarism. Both worked as translators as well: Luttazzi has translated three of Woody Allen's books and Tarchetti translated English novels – one of which was Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (Venuti, 1995: 162).

Following Venuti, we can state that the force of their intervention in influencing the Italian canon and culture paradoxically resides in their strategies of imitation, rewriting and plagiarism:

Tarchetti's text deterritorialized the bourgeois fictional discourse that dominated Italian culture precisely because it was a plagiarism in the standard dialect, because it passed itself off not just as an original Gothic tale, but as one written originally in the Italian of Manzonian realism and therefore foreignizing in its impact on the Italian literary scene (Venuti, 1995: 166).

### 3. Dark Humour and Politics

According to Simpson (2003: 85), those without power use humour to resist ideologically insidious discourse; and humour plays a particular function as a social-solidarity mechanism that helps to sustain communities in the face of repression by dominant institutions and individuals. The sub-genre of dark humour often aims to induce its public to reflect on contemporary issues. According to André Breton (1966: 25) Jonathan Swift was the initiator of the genre. As Bucaria (2009) explains, dark humour typically is not included in Italian comedy and, in fact, its presence is often backgrounded and toned down in translation (see also Pavesi & Malinverno, 2000).

Luttazzi's shows presented to a large public a kind of humour that many people had never come across before. Today there are many other minor stand-up comedians in Italy who propose a similar kind of comedy and are clearly inspired by an Anglo-American style, but Luttazzi is the only one who has reached such notoriety with dark humour. The presence of a strong Anglo-American influence on his style has always been evident and transparent to a minority of people familiar with such sources, and his

television shows were declaredly (Sansa, 2010) based on David Letterman's *Late Show*.

What follows is an example of a culturally adapted translation of a joke that was originally conceived by George Carlin<sup>3</sup>:

Religion easily has the greatest bullshit story ever told. Think about it: religion has actually convinced people that there's an invisible man, living in the sky, who watches everything you do every minute of every day, and the invisible man has a special list of ten things he doesn't want you to do and if you do any of these ten things he has a special place full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry forever and ever until the end of time. But he loves you. He loves you. He loves you... and he needs money! He always needs money. He all powerful, all perfect, all-knowing and all wise... somehow just can't handle money! (Carlin, 1999).

Luttazzi's version<sup>4</sup> is clearly based on Carlin's but it is in the conclusion that the Italian comedian inserts his own touch. Rather than translating "he needs money" as in Carlin's version, Luttazzi says God needs your "eight thousandth" which is the percentage of their annual taxes that Italians can choose to donate to the Catholic Church. Hence Luttazzi transforms a joke against religion in general into a joke against the Vatican and their economic interests in Italian tax legislation.

As Venuti explains when discussing the effectiveness of Tarchetti's reformation of the Italian literary canon through plagiarism (1995: 166), if Luttazzi's joke had been presented as the translation/adaptation of a foreign joke, it would have lost its force, while the fact that it is presented as the creation of an Italian artist makes it more effective in its influence on the national canon of satire. It is then possible to state that we can observe two trends: that of foreignization, which has already been

<sup>3</sup> A very well-known American stand-up comedian (1937-2008). His 1973 radio programme became the object of a court case – known as "Seven dirty words" – that was later employed to legally define "indecenty". (Demas, 1998)

<sup>4</sup> *Veramente vorrebbero convincerci che esisterebbe un uomo invisibile nel cielo che vede tutto quello che fai ventiquattro ore su ventiquattro, minuto per minuto, e quest'essere invisibile nel cielo ha una lista speciale di dieci cose che non vuole che tu faccia e lui ha una memoria di ferro e se tu durante la tua vita fai una di queste cose nella sua lista che lui non vuole che tu faccia lui ti manda in un posto pieno di fiamme a ustionarti a bruciarti a carbonizzarti per l'eternità. Ma lui ti ama. Ti ama e ha bisogno del tuo otto per mille.* (Luttazzi, 2002)

discussed, and that of domestication, which Luttazzi employs to transform the final punch-line into something relevant only to an Italian tax-payer.

Some clarification about the notion of “joke” may prove useful: if we refer to the works of Davies (2005), a sociologist, or Oring (2003), an anthropologist, what they mean by “joke” mainly corresponds to short, amusing and often politically incorrect stories with a punch-line that people tell in order to make their listeners laugh. It could be argued that Luttazzi is a joke-teller, and that jokes have no author (Davies, 2005: 6). Nevertheless the whole debate stirred by the accusation of plagiarism was possible because - according to his detractors - Luttazzi should have written his jokes autonomously and the process of transcreation or the enrichment he brought to Italian comedy with dark humour were not considered as creative, but rather as a series of acts of theft of non-anonymous jokes. However, even if it would certainly be interesting to analyse Luttazzi’s production from that perspective, such analysis goes beyond the scope of this paper.

#### **4. The facts**

Luttazzi’s style of humour is far removed from the expectations of the Italian viewers, as he often uses strong explicit sexual metaphors in his sketches and he jokes about topics that generally considered taboo, at least on mainstream channels, such as religion. He is often presented as a controversial figure for several reasons. In 2001 and in 2007 he anchored two television shows: the former was not confirmed for a second season and the latter was blocked before the sixth instalment. Both shows were very successful and were interrupted for reasons related to politics.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The 2001 show was suspended when Berlusconi declared that Luttazzi was “making criminal use of public television” after Luttazzi had interviewed a journalist – Marco Travaglio – who reported various facts concerning Berlusconi, including the accusations of his links with Mafia. Berlusconi later sued Luttazzi, but Luttazzi won the case in 2005. The 2007 show, which at first was supposed to last ten instalments, was on LA7 and was blocked before the sixth instalment. At that time LA7 was the only important private channel that did not belong to Berlusconi nor broadcast by a pay-TV provider - hence the only real private competitor for Berlusconi. The official explanation was that one of his jokes had offended Giuliano Ferrara, a journalist also working for LA7, but Luttazzi convincingly argues LA7 was not ready to accept the monologue about Pope Joseph Ratzinger he had prepared for the following instalment: the show was transmitted twice before being suspended, the suspension was communicated after LA7 learned about this

The close similarity that some of Luttazzi's jokes bear to sketches by George Carlin, Bill Hicks, Chris Rock, Emo Philips and Robert Schimmel, among others, had already been the object of controversy<sup>6</sup>; but the case exploded in June 2010 when an online video (available on [Torrenthound.com](http://Torrenthound.com)) – showing some passages in English and in Italian which were almost identical – caught the attention of several journalists. In January 2008 an anonymous blogger had started to collect some quotations from Luttazzi's shows and books, which closely echoed jokes from the aforementioned American comedians. Other bloggers started contributing to the collection and the page where they uploaded the passages that they thought had been plagiarised grew to about 59,300 words long in March 2012 (Ntvox, 2012). In 2010 one of the bloggers decided to create a video which was uploaded several times on YouTube and repeatedly removed.<sup>7</sup>

The Italian newspapers *Il Giornale*, *Il Riformista*, *L'Unità*, and *La Repubblica* published articles accusing Luttazzi of plagiarism, while *Il Fatto* was the only newspaper to publish an interview (Sansa, 2010). The video was made available on the peer-to-peer Torrent website and embedded in the newspapers websites. In September 2010 it was broadcast on one of Berlusconi's commercial TV channels. On 15 October 2010 Luttazzi decided to comment on the whole issue on his blog<sup>8</sup>. Luttazzi also seems not to consider “translation” a creative act in itself. In fact, in the interview (Sansa, 2010) published in *Il Fatto*, Luttazzi provided a complex explanation drawing on semiotic theories (for which he was accused of intentionally being too obscure) but the word “translation” was not even mentioned. He talked about “calchi e riscritture” (calques and rewriting) which are not likely to make readers think about translation.

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monologue (Palestini, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Luttazzi reports the various steps of the accusations on the current abridged version of his website: <http://danieleluttazzi.blogspot.it/2011/07/luttazzi-smascherato-10-giugno-2010.html>

<sup>7</sup> The video is currently available for download on [Torrenthound.com](http://Torrenthound.com), and the Ntvox blog provides a link.

<sup>8</sup> Luttazzi's blog was subsequently removed from the Web, the address used to be <http://www.danieleluttazzi.it> The same address now opens his Twitter account. An abridged version of the blog was later made available and this page reports Luttazzi's point of view: <http://danieleluttazzi.blogspot.it/2011/07/luttazzi-copia-ovvero-tecnica-della.html>

## 5. Political issues

Before reporting the reactions of fans and the general public, it is necessary to point out how the whole debate was inextricably influenced by political issues. Both the first newspaper to publish an article about the video (*Il Giornale*) and the television channel on which the video was broadcast are owned by the Berlusconi family. But also Fornario (2010) writing in *L'Unità* – a left-wing newspaper – framed the case as political by stating that at first she did not believe in the accusation of plagiarism and thought it was a case of simple defamation. Interestingly, both the author of the blog and the author of the video who accuse Luttazzi of plagiarism explicitly declare themselves distant from any political exploitation; Ntvox blog declares this in its header above every page (Ntvox) and the video specifies this with a written statement (Torrenthound.com).

Luttazzi, though, claimed that the attack was made by Berlusconi's supporters and insinuated that it had a political goal. He had, in fact previously, been the object of groundless accusations in the past and had won a court case against Berlusconi. In the post published on his blog on 15 October 2010, Luttazzi foregrounds the conspiracy theory. He recounts the various steps of the case and implies that this *rappresaglia* (retaliation) was a response to his very successful monologue in March 2010 during a programme called *Raipermanotte*<sup>9</sup> “2010: two months after my success in *Raipermanotte*, which was not well digested by many, someone sparked off the **retaliation** posting on *Youtube* a defamatory video showing what the 2008 blog defined “*Luttazzi's plagiarisms*” [my translation].”<sup>10</sup>

The monologue consisted in a very strong criticism of Berlusconi (who was prime minister at the time) and included a detailed description of all the investigations about Berlusconi's objectionable business dealings – of course in a stand-up comedian style – but still well-documented and clearer than most mainstream information circulating in Italy at the time.

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<sup>9</sup> *Raipermanotte* was a show organized on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010 as a protest against the decision to suspend Rai's political talk-shows during the campaign for the regional elections. The show, streamed online in real time and broadcast on Sky television, proved very successful.

<sup>10</sup> 2010: due mesi dopo il mio successo a *Raipermanotte*, che è andato di traverso a molti, qualcuno fa partire la **rappresaglia** postando su *Youtube* un video diffamatorio che mostra quelli che il blog del 2008 definiva “*i plagi di Luttazzi*” [bold type and italics in the original]

## 6. Reactions and Conceptions of Translation

Tarchetti and Luttazzi are separated by one hundred fifty years. Today's audiences have the technical tools and the language skills required to carry out a comparative analysis that used to be in the realm of academia. But, of course, Venuti's academic analysis of Tarchetti's work provides insights into the history of copyright and translation-related issues which cannot be found in the thousands of words fans wrote to criticize or to defend Luttazzi.

Two parallel approaches were followed in order to investigate the point of view of the fansubbers and the people who were commenting on the issue in blogs and social networks. The three main Comedysubs fansubbers and the person who assembled the video were interviewed individually by email, making a total of seven emails. As for the social networks comments, a corpus-based quantitative approach was ruled out as it would have been extremely difficult to guarantee representativeness, given the fleeting nature of comments which were often edited, cancelled or censored and also repeated on different pages, thus posing redundancy-related challenges. Hence the comments were observed through a qualitative approach, with regular monitoring of the ongoing discussions while paying particular attention to the way the notion of translation was (rarely) discussed.

The observation of the comments revealed that the generally held opinion is that there is no difference between copying and translating, that the act of translation and adaptation to the target audience is hardly ever taken into account as a creative act itself. The same happens when jokes are recontextualized, i.e. taken from the original creators and blended together within original text to create a new show. Here are two extracts from the comments to Fornario's article on June 10 2010. They represent the two main attitudes that were observed: "translating" as a synonym of "copying" on the one hand and the notion that everything is copied from something else on the other hand.

"HE COPIED 500 JOKES WHICH CORRESPOND TO 10 HOURS OF SHOWS! How can you be so naïve and keep defending him? Can't you see that Luttazzi not only stole jokes from famous comedians but also cheated all RAI subscribers? [...] There is nothing wrong in copying or



translating a joke but you must declare who the original author is". [my translation]<sup>11</sup>

“does anything exist which is not a quotation, a copy, a rearrangement of something else that was there already? is it not enough to remember that any book ever written is based on one of the 7 possible narrative models? well... I pity you, you point your finger at the copier and call him “crap” when you don’t even know what copying is.” [my translation - lack of capital letters as in the original]<sup>12</sup>

All this could not have happened 15 or 20 years ago: the Internet was the essential medium that allowed Luttazzi’s fans first to discover the comedians from whom he took the jokes and then to distribute the results of their work, whether in the form of subtitled the American comedians’ videos, comparing the jokes or uploading the video about supposed plagiarism. When Luttazzi started working as a comedian (his first significant work is from 1989), the possibilities that his audience would come into contact with American comedians were scarce. The possibility that those few would also recognize the similarities and even get a chance to distribute their observations was even more remote.

The online medium did not only allow those who recognized the similarities to report their findings, but it also allowed them to meet online and work together, while remaining anonymous. Of course, nowadays it is also easier for researchers to interview people and record their point of view, in this case by exchanging emails with three members of the fansubbers community Comedysubs and with the author of the video.

The fansubbers declared that their goal had nothing to do with Luttazzi. Their website, ComedySubs, was in fact created after the Ntvox blog, although they recognized that their work helped the bloggers. Roberto Ragone, the founder of ComedySubs, in a private email pointed out that access to their website had “quadrupled” after the “scandal”, in part because their website was credited at the end of the video. When

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<sup>11</sup>HA COPIATO 500 BATTUTE CHE CORRISPONDONO A 10 ORE DI SPETTACOLO! Ma siete tanto ingenui da difenderlo ancora? Ma vi rendete conto che Luttazzi non solo ha rubato le battute di comici famosi ma ha truffato anche tutti gli abbonati RAI. [...] Non c'è niente di male a copiare o tradurre una battuta ma bisogna dire almeno di chi è.

<sup>12</sup> ma esiste davvero qualcosa che non sia una citazione, una copia, un rimpasto di qualcos'altro che esisteva già? non basta ricordare che qualsiasi libro mai scritto alla fine si rifà ad uno dei 7 modelli narrativi possibili? boh. mi fate pena a indicare come "cacca" colui che copia, quando non sapete neppure cosa sia copiare.

asked if he thought that Luttazzi's plagiarism had brought Italian audiences closer to the American comedians, his answer was that "the discovery of Luttazzi's plagiarism has brought people closer to foreign satire, not the plagiarism in itself" implying that the Italian audience should not thank Luttazzi for importing foreign satire, but the ones to thank are those who denounced his plagiarism.

The second point that deserves attention is the ability of the fansubbers to create good quality subtitling (see also Massidda, 2012 and Vellar, 2011). Of course, the fact that fans of a specific genre become amateur translators is nothing new but, thanks to the Internet, the fansubbers are able to distribute their work on a different scale, compared to the past. For example, Fruttero and Lucentini – Italian writers, translators and editors – used to publish and comment on the amateur translations of science-fiction stories which were sent to them by readers of their magazine *Urania*. (Fruttero & Lucentini, 2003: 31-60).

However, in general, translations done by the fansubber community reach the public without the filter of any professional revision, and most viewers might infer that the subtitling was done by professionals, unless they make the effort to visit the Comedysubs website and read the disclaimer. From the point of view of the translation scholar this aspect is relevant because of the way in which it blurs the boundary between professional and non-professional translation (see also Pym, 2012).

Importantly, the opinions these amateurs express in the email interviews clash with the general attitude of considering translation a mere copy and paste operation: in their view the result of their work is often described as hard to achieve and superior to professional translation. Adrien – one of the fansubber's interviewed – answered the question about how he had learnt his English so well by stating [which I have translated following his flexible use of capitalisation and punctuation]:<sup>13</sup> "i've learnt English because of a personal crusade of mine against dubbing, in the last 4-5 years I've been watching films and TV series only in English, so I've learnt it a little. when I can't do it there's always the dictionary: it is more important to know Italian than the source language to make a good translation. and then there's passion, and with passion no university can compete. the comedian giardina was telling me last night

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<sup>13</sup> Adrien also wrote *perché* with a grave accent, which I believe is something a professional translator would hardly do, even in a private email.

[...] that one of his friends – a professional translator – could not translate the jokes as well as we do because she lacks the secret ingredient: love”.<sup>14</sup>

The third translation-related aspect is the heated debate the issue generated online. On the one hand, this can be ascribed to the usual attachment between a satirical author and his/her fans (Simpson, 2003: 87) but, on the other hand, in this specific case, the heated debates are likely to be a consequence of the censorship Luttazzi has suffered in the past. In the eyes of the public, Luttazzi himself was playing two roles at the same time. One is that of the hero/star, described by Dwyer (2009: 49), who fights against censorship and risks his own career to make sure his public gets to see a certain kind of comedy and gets to know more about certain lesser-known issues. The other role is that of the artist who is only interested in his own economic gain.

To my knowledge, the American authors from whom Luttazzi took his jokes have not started any legal action against him<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, most of the criticism coming from one-time fans is based on copyright-related issues, since they argue that Luttazzi has built his economic fortune on other people’s work. On the other hand, many of the fans who wanted to protect Luttazzi often answered the accusations by saying that every author copies, hence it is not a problem.

Whether we believe Luttazzi’s view that the whole attack was part of a political defamation campaign from Berlusconi’s supporters or we think it was a genuine reaction from one part of his previously affectionate audience who felt disillusioned, what is interesting from our perspective is that the debate did not include the point that translation was a creative act itself. Luttazzi himself decided not to use this argument to defend his work. It would seem that the general opinion was that transcreating covertly is wrong because copyright laws say so, then some decided to stop being fans while some others decided to “pardon” Luttazzi. Hence

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<sup>14</sup> *ho imparato l'inglese per via di una mia personale crociata contro il doppiaggio, è da 4-5 anni che guardo solo film e telefilm in inglese, quindi un po' l'ho imparato. dove non arrivo io c'è sempre il vocabolario: è più importante sapere l'italiano che non la lingua di partenza per fare una traduzione per bene. e poi c'è la passione, e di fronte a quella non c'è università che tenga: mi diceva il comico giardina ieri sera [...] che una sua amica traduttrice professionista non riusciva a rendere bene come noi le battute che le capitò di tradurre perchè era manchevole dell'ingrediente segreto: l'amore.* (private email)

<sup>15</sup> As the case was reported abroad, the stand-up comedians involved (or their heirs) are likely to be aware of the issue. In Britain it could be found on the Chortle website – described as “a guide to comedy in Britain” – and in the USA Luttazzi was included among the “World’s worst” in Keith Olbermann’s *Countdown* show on Msnbc. Emo Philips (one of the ‘plagiarized’ comedians) commented the story on his Facebook page.

this event appears as a case in point in how copyright laws contribute to keep the practice of translation and transcreation on the margins; as Venuti (1998: 50) explains, according to copyright laws “a translation can never be more than a second-order representation, [...] forever imitative, not genuine, or simply false.”

Moreover, those who attacked Luttazzi argued that “he always complains if another Italian comedian uses his jokes” and, in particular, Luttazzi criticized Bonolis, a television anchorman, for having repeated on television a joke from his show which then turned out to have been taken from Carlin, as shown in the Torrenthound video. But as Venuti (1998: 64) points out, “[a] translation, insofar as it is written in a different language for a different culture, does not limit the potential market for the foreign text in its own language and culture.” Luttazzi did not damage Carlin’s potential market, but Bonolis did damage Luttazzi’s potential market by repeating Luttazzi’s joke on television. Moreover Bonolis had access to a much wider Italian public compared to Luttazzi, who was by then only working in theatres.

According to Jenkins’ analysis (2006) of the positive effects of unauthorized copying of Japanese animation, piracy and fan communities can prove a profitable way to “publicize their releases, recruit new talent, and monitor shifts in audience tastes”. The comment posted on Facebook by the author of the video, (21/09/2010) the day after *Le Iene* talked about the Luttazzi scandal, seems to confirm Venuti’s and Jenkins’ observations:

The greatest satisfaction was not seeing Luttazzi run away, but watching during prime time – on one of the most important Italian networks – George Carlin, Bill Hicks and Robert Schimmel. [my translation]<sup>16</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

I would argue that Luttazzi’s case offers an interesting source for translation scholars to see how audiences often do not consider translation a creative activity but a mere ‘copy and paste’ practice. This opinion seems to change when one translates without earning money, as in the case of

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<sup>16</sup> *La più grande soddisfazione non è stato vedere Luttazzi scappare, ma vedere in prima serata – su una delle più importanti reti nazionali – George Carlin, Bill Hicks e Robert Schimmel.*

fansubbers, who appear to believe translators need a quasi-devotional vocation in addition to creative abilities, as they underlined in their email interviews. It also reconfirms the contradictions highlighted by Venuti (1998: 65) concerning the way in which copyright laws assume that the authors of derivative works, like translations, are not envisaged as professionals who can aspire to commercial success like other authors.

Moreover, Luttazzi's production is an example of the way in which the transcreation of foreign authors can be employed as a tool to criticize and question certain attitudes and positions held in the target culture and to influence the domestic canon. As Venuti analysed Tarchetti's work in a different place and in a different time, he was free to look at the positive and negative consequences of Tarchetti's transcreating practices without being influenced by the Italian political issues of the 1860s. Analysing the case of Luttazzi is, of course, different: this is why a parallel between a contemporary author and another one distant in time can prove very useful to reflect on current issues in a more balanced way. Moreover it reveals the relevant implications for culture, politics, translation and copyright laws that this case raises.

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Books referred to in part – Varantola, K. 2003. “Translators and disposable corpora”. In F. Zanettin, S. Bernardini, & D. Stewart (Eds.), *Corpora and Translator Education*, Manchester: St. Jerome, pp. 57-70.

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