

Introduction

The DIDACTAS project, financed by the Italian Ministry for the University and Research, brought together scholars from three universities (Padua, Pavia, Trieste) all concerned with the analysis of texts, whether oral, written or multimodal. Subsequently, with the transition to the project eCoLingua, a team from the Catholic University of Milan joined the original ex-DIDACTAS members in what was in many ways to be a continuation of the previous initiative. Text analysis remained an important anchor, while the major binding factor was the use of corpora of various kinds; electronic data became the source for the carrying out of such analyses. Systemic functional linguistics, the theory and practice of translation, and applications to language teaching were also key elements enveloping all the many strands of research envisaged by the project. The articles included in this volume bear witness to the ground covered and the results achieved by the various teams as they moved from DIDACTAS to eCoLingua.

Katherine Ackerley & Francesca Coccetta's article covers a lot of ground around the basic aim of creating an on-line English course using a corpus of multimodal texts. The writers are involved in Padua Language Centre's on-line course "learning link", and with the Padua Multimedia English Corpus (MEC), and in their work make the important connection with the Pavia unit's important development "MCA".

Starting from the introduction of audio and video materials to the "learning link" programme, and an explanation of the contents of the MEC, the authors discuss the importance of authentic and semi-authentic texts in language teaching, and move on to an explanation of how multimedia texts can be exploited to create language awareness exercises. A corpus of film texts has been adapted

to illustrate various language functions such as “socialising” or “expressing attitude”. By incorporating the MCA system, Ackerley & Coccetta then explain how it is possible to exploit this corpus via a system of multimedial concordances to see whether a specific language function is expressed and analyse the exponents that realise that function.

As a didactic tool, learners are encouraged to carry out guided searches within the corpus by using the MCA engine. Exercises have been devised to exploit the potential of linking the film corpus, the MEC and MCA. The authors’ aim of creating a very large tagged corpus and of developing language learning materials based on authentic data is now underway in the Ecolingua project.

Anthony Baldry, in his contribution, argues in favour of a hybrid test within text-based foreign language learning that at once assesses the students’ ability to analyse multimodal texts and their ability to perform in the foreign language in the basic skills, including speaking and writing. He underlines the impetus this practice would give to the adoption of a multimodal perspective in university-level text-based studies of English. After describing a text-based model for concordancing that integrates different types of concordance and concordancing mechanisms, he focuses on the meaning-oriented multimodal concordances which can be realised using MCA – the Multimodal Corpus Authoring System – and shows how, within the proposed text-based model, these concordances can be used in creating and implementing multimodal tests.

In her paper “Brain-based learning and multimodal text analysis”, Patti Grunther successfully explores the connections between brain-based principles of learning and the use of multimodal text analysis (MTA) in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Starting from four principles grounded in brain research as applied to education, the paper presents the learning outcomes of courses created at the University of Pavia within a project sponsored by the European Social Fund. More specifically, the paper explains how the various components of multimodal text transcription, analysis and concordancing (MCA) can contribute to foreign language development. Learners on the courses are shown to have benefited from being “taught” the multimodal nature of human interaction. In this way they have learnt to exploit the great advantages of perceiving simultaneously along multiple channels when watching and working through audiovisual materials. As human beings naturally organize perceptions into meaningful patterns, students have also benefited from being driven to identify patterns both in verbal language and in the other semiotic codes which co-occur with it. As emotions play a key role both in memory and learning, using short thriller films has also proved an excellent means to foster language learning. It has stimulated students’ predicting capabilities and heightened their level of involvement. Finally students have greatly profited from an approach which has made them shift from single word/language dominance to integrated vision. This approach relies on our ability to perceive and create parts and wholes and strives for integrated access to multimodal input in addition to focus on specific language components.

Annamaria Caimi’s paper on “pedagogical insights...” fits in neatly with the objective of other members of the Didactas/Ecolingua teams in Pavia and Trieste. As she points out in her introduction “intra-lingual and inter-lingual subti-

tled films are...". Caimi stresses the enjoyable side of learning through subtitles by speaking of foreign language edutainment. Matching multimedia technology with cooperative learning techniques, she and her colleagues in Pavia have created an experimental course. The process involves students watching a film initially without subtitles, then with intralingual titles and finally with interlingual titles. Much pre and post viewing work eventually materialises in the form of a diary, and even in the creation of a website on the part of the learners. The intersemiotic nature of the film creates the ideal context for learning, and the available technology provides the motivating resource for both teacher and students.

The article by Francesca Bianchi and Tiziana Ciabattini reports on an experiment testing the short- and long-term effects of the use of captioning (English-language written text) and subtitling (Italian-language written text) on English-language learning from watching films in English on the part of beginner, intermediate, and advanced Italian adults. Division of the learner groups at each of the three levels into subgroups with captions, subtitles or nothing (control group) on two videos, made it possible to check comprehension and acquisition of content, vocabulary, and language-in-use after up to seven days from viewing and again one week later. The results are complex, reflecting the interplay of the various factors involved, and are put in relation to results reported in the literature.

Starting from the observed phenomenon that emotive meaning and interpersonal elements are often the object of reduction in the process of subtitling, Silvia Bruti examines the specific case of compliments in English and how they are translated for subtitles in Italian. Compliments, like other speech acts which can be seen to conform to formulaic patterns in all languages, are prone to sociolinguistic variation between languages and cultures. Interestingly, observations on the use of compliments in general English conversation clash to a certain extent with findings related to film language. The latter point to a more varied repertoire of linguistic expressions, and while in the translation of such expressions, it might be supposed that the reduction strategies alluded to above would come into play, Bruti shows that compliments are generally included in translation, but that discrepancies emerge between English and Italian, due to cultural preferences and idiosyncratic choices. The author uses a wealth of examples to illustrate her findings, and makes some important, if still tenuous conclusions.

Maria Pavesi and Elisa Perego's article on film translation takes a very original turn. The authors gave themselves the task of investigating precisely who translates the films we see at the cinema. This investigation relied heavily on the cooperation of AIDAC (Associazione Italiana dei Doppiatori Attori Cinematografici), the organisation that has managed to bring together practically all the major "dialoghisti" working in Italy. Pavesi and Perego started from a list of more than 3,000 translated films and their first discovery was how the distribution of the translation work tends to be concentrated in few individuals, and that specific training in the translation of screen material was noticeably lacking. From these basically statistical findings, the authors turned their attention to the sociolinguistic aspects of film dubbing, in particular the impact that this activity has (and has had) on the Italian language. They conclude that certain regularities can be observed in dubbed Italian, and that these "regularities" can be traced back to the fact that

a limited number of practitioners are involved in most of the work, that an indirect form of communication exists between them, and that the sociolinguistic implications of this merit further research.

Annalisa Baicchi provides a detailed analysis of “the resultative aspect of motion”, in which she first shows which language resources are used to represent movement “beyond the limit of a bounded space”. Secondly she investigates the translation strategies required to render such movement events in Italian. Her analysis is based on a corpus of English novels and their translations. After a discussion of the notion of “event” and “motion components”, she observes that most English verbs lexicalise or conflate motion and manner of motion e.g., dash, stumble, stride, etc. Dipping into various branches of cognitive linguistics (embodied realism, visual theory, force schemata, etc.) and considering how verbs are used to represent manner of trajectory, Baicchi delves into discourse understanding in terms of “mental spaces”. This leads to the author’s conclusion regarding the process of translation in which she hypothesises a “multi-space model” to take account of the “interplay of textual features”. A series of diagrams accompanies a number of interesting and original observations regarding the act of translation.

Maria Grazia Busà’s article *New Perspectives in Teaching Pronunciation* provides a very thorough review of technology for teaching pronunciation and the new learning possibilities emerging in this field as a result of constant improvements in software. The article carefully distinguishes between programs that are useful in the teaching of English phonetics and phonology and those focusing instead on prosody, highlighting in particular those online software packages which provide real-time visual comparisons of students’ vocalizations with those of native speakers. However, the article is not just a review of online software programs in the light of the new perspectives opened up by new technologies. Rather it is a reconstruction of attitudes towards *pronunciation* and *accent* in language learning syllabuses (English in particular) in the postwar period as well as a critical account of the validity and relevance in contemporary society of investments in pronunciation, including students’ own judgements on the value they attribute to pronunciation modules in the language-learning syllabus and more generally to possessing a good accent. Overall, the paper rejects the traditional view that a foreign accent is inevitable and acts instead as a stimulus to provide further investment in this field whether carried out by software research teams, University teachers who develop and experiment teaching modules concerned with pronunciation or students making a personal self-access commitment in University centres and laboratories and more privately when using pronunciation software in their own homes. In this respect, the paper rightly focuses on such critical questions as the place of pronunciation modules in the overall language-learning and teaching syllabus. Getting the balance right between too little and too much will inevitably require greater co-ordination in the future between learning and teaching activities and research and development into software concerned with pronunciation, something that can only emerge as a result of critical studies such as this.

Erik Castello, Francesca Coccetta and Daniela Rizzi’s paper tackles the issue of complexity in relation to written, spoken and multimodal texts for English language teaching and testing. Following Merlini Barbaresi (2003), the authors

aptly distinguish between text complexity – deriving from the producer’s locutionary and illocutionary planning – and processing difficulty – which is a perlocutionary effect, influenced by situational variables. Text complexity is thus given by intrinsic features such as genre, register and marked language choices, whereas text difficulty depends on the receiver’s individual factors such as familiarity with the topic and general language skills. A third variable, task difficulty, is introduced to account for the actual difficulty experienced by students as a consequence of the tasks they are required to perform on given texts. This theoretical framework is used as a background to analyze various texts selected or created by the Padua team to evaluate their suitability for language learning and language testing in relation to written, oral or mixed modalities. The paper thus offers a wide perspective on how the three complexity/difficulty variables outlined above interact in actual texts, at the same time suggesting ways for creating and improving materials aimed at language learners. In this respect, the authors present and discuss audio and multimodal text corpora especially developed at the Language Centre of Padua University which represent a meaningful and noteworthy effort in the way of original material creation in University Language Centres in Italy.

Sara Gesuato considers some of the patterns of use of the *going to be V-ing* construction. An examination of data collected from the Bank of English reveals that this future is less frequent than other periphrastic constructions and mainly employed in spoken English. Unlike its non-progressive counterpart, it is frequently associated with verbs denoting durative events (but compatible also with punctual, iterative, telic, and habitual ones) and never preceded by modal expressions. Like the *going to V* and *will be V-ing* futures, it can represent events of various types, belonging to a number of semantic fields. Like its non-progressive counterpart, its matrix verb phrase is occasionally rendered in the colloquial *be gonna* variant, may be encoded in the present or past, and conveys the notions of predictability and intentionality. It is suggested that this is a structure-preserving construction, characterized by syntactic harmony, which prototypically encodes dynamic durative events.

Taking as read the need to acquaint translation students, even during the early stages of their training, with the various phenomena associated with “computer mediated communication” (CMC), Giuseppe Palumbo discusses the creation of a number of on-line resources for translator training including a Padua University website known as “Puzzle it out”. After a discussion of the factors to be taken into consideration in the preparation of courseware materials for translation teaching, Palumbo moves into a description of the workings of “Puzzle it out”. The purpose of the site is to pursue a number of methodological, contrastive, textual and professional objectives designed to support the basic notion of translation as a decision-making activity. The author describes these on-line resources as an “activity bank” available to large numbers of students. A large stock of examples, some of which Palumbo has used in this article, are aimed at raising student awareness and understanding of translation procedures.