NOTES ON CULTURAL MEDIATION

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The sociological dimension of translation, i.e. the use of language as a means of communication is so interwoven with the cultural dimension (culture-bound, *civilisationnelle*, *cnhfyjdtlxtcrbq*) that terms such as source language (SL) and target language (TL) may no longer be appropriate. We could do worse than use Ladmiral' s term *périlangue*, coined in 1979. This term includes both the cultural and the contextual-situational (*le milieu-cible*) aspects of translation.

Moving from a semiotic point of view, though Katan (1996) does not use this term[1] he explains that culture is neither a component nor a factor, but a complex and dynamic system which orients experience, and through which the world is 'seen'. A key concept in his book is the idea of a *frame* through which reality is perceived, re-presented, interpreted and 'distorted'. It is only within the *frame* itself that a speech event can be understood.

The *frame* will change according to type and level of culture. Language is viewed as but one of the systems of signs (and not a primary one) which serves to code and decode message. Other codes are equally if not more involved in production, comprehension and sense reception. Thus, the act of translating is understood as a meta-communicative act or even of double metacommunication, as the translator is required to mediate communication which is already bound to its own culture through experential-cognitive models (*the culture-bound map of the world, cultural orientations*). Accordingly, in Katan's view, the translator/interpreter, as a cultural mediator, should be able to analyse, (re)interpret and (re)create this complex embedding of metacommunicative frames. As he says, *mediators should be able to mindshift between possible frames*.[2]

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1   Two other books worth mentioning have recently been published. Their titles clearly point to their holistic, interdisciplinary, or, following Katan, *globalising* orientation towards language, translation, culture and society: *Total'nyj Perevod* [Total Translation] (1995) by Torop (student of the famous Lotmanian school in Tartu) and *Total Speech: An Integrational Linguistic Approach to Language* (1996) by Michael Toolan (professor of English at the University of Washington).

2   There is no unanimous agreement on the importance of 'culture' in translation. Wilss (1996: 88) believes that [...] *one should not overstress cultural differences. The personal and social impact of terms such as "culture shock"* [title of a chapter

Katan devotes more than half his book to defining what culture actually is and he discusses concepts related to it such as *frame, map, prototype, logical levels, environment, behaviour, capabilities, values, beliefs, identity, imprinting*, and so on. He touches on disciplines such as neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics, artificial intelligence, cultural anthropology, cognitive semantics, the ethnography of speaking and the theory of speech acts - to name but a few of the areas covered. He also introduces a number of theories and conceptual models such as the Triad of Culture, E.T. Hall's Iceberg Theory, Trompenaar's concentric layers, Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, Dilts' Theory of Logical Levels, Bandler and Grinder's Meta Model, Sperber and Wilson' Relevance Theory.

The *contexting theory*[3] is particularly interesting. This is understood as the difference in priority that a culture gives to the text itself (i.e. the quantity of information explicitly given in the text) with respect to the context. If a culture communicates more through the text, i.e. through what is actually said, then it is a *low context culture* (LCC). On the other hand, if it communicates more through the context, i.e. through what is not said but through what is apparent

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of Katan's book], *"culture stress", and "inter-culturality" is not as powerful as some propagators of cultural relativity believe. In addition, the fascination of such terms wears off after a while anyway and gives way to the assimilation of culturally alien texts to one's own culture.*

Curiously enough, while Wilss (1996: 86-87) reports an advertising text (Singapore Airlines) and an instruction-type text (hotel fire regulations) as examples which can be easily translated without cultural complications, Katan (107-109 e 242-245) uses the very same text typologies to demonstrate exactly the opposite.

3   In other cases Katan simply introduces new definitions for concepts already well treated in the literature; for example, the distinction between *local* and *global translating*. This corresponds to the noted, and still controversial, oppositions such as *transcodage/interprétation*, *semantic /communicative translation*, *bottom-up /top-down processing*, and *form-based /meaning-based approach* (see also Kintsch and Van Dijk's macro structures and other theoretical models of interpretation).

Another terminological 'innovation' regards the logical and semantic relations between concepts (identity, contrast, inclusion) and the interpreter's use of semantic and lexical transformations (synonym, hyponym, hyperonym, antonym and metonym). These have been rebaptised with the terms *chunking up* and *chunking down* (179-185). *Lateral chunking* or *chunking sideways*, is linked to lateral thinking (right hemisphere) and includes creativity, intuition, and more importantly, the mental agility of the interpreter. Kussmaul's findings (1995: 50) would support this theory. He reports a number of neurolinguistic studies which show that creative thought is linked to the anterior hypothalamus, which not only houses the libido but also creative 'illumination'.

from or within the context (the metamessage) then culture is a *high context culture* (HCC).

In the light of this difference, the famous dichotomy between 'explicit' and 'implicit' finds itself part of a wider perspective: not linguistic, but cultural, or rather semiotic. Knowing how each culture verbalises its experience then leads to specific translation procedures to adopt. These are expressed in terms of omission or compensation strategies. According to Katan, in the last thirty years translation theories have moved more towards holistic and analytical thinking. If, in the past, priority was given to the text, to the words, in the SL (an LCC approach), today the tendency is towards the context, the relations between language and other frames (an HCC approach). In neurological (and teaching) terms this change reflects the growing importance given to the right hemisphere (context) over the left (text).[4]

As the title says, Katan's book is written for the translator, interpreter and the cultural mediator, and aims to explain what being a cultural mediator means for those involved in *translating texts or interpreting for people* (ib.: 11). However, no real distinction is made between these three professions and, in particular, between written and oral mediation; no reference is made to the specific interpreting context, i.e. the relationship between the text and its oral presentation; the difference between *meaning of discourse* and *mechanics of discoursing* (Goffman 1981:174); the co-presence (physical presence) of participants; the difference between interpretation and translation with regard to non-linguistic factors such as, for example, gesture, proxemics and prosody, for the interpreter. All of these pragmatic aspects touch not only on the process of

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4   However, the eternal debate between the two ways of analysing and translating (see footnote 3) is still raging. See, for example, the heated discussions between Peter Newmark and Sergio Viaggio in the *Rivista internazionale di tecnica della traduzione*, 1/1995, pp. 11-19. Stephen Pearl (1995: 174) was for many years the head of the United Nations' interpreting booth. According to him, the celebrated Paris school slogan "translate the sense not the words" has been passed on to trainee interpreters as simple dogma. The result, Pearl says, is a dangerous psittacismophobia (the irrational fear of sounding like a parrot and of being perceived as one): [...] *in their anxiety to comply with this doctrine, candidates from institutions of the psittacismophobic tendency waste valuable time effort and attention on wilfully and gratuitiously shying away from simple and straightforward renderings of what the speaker is saying if they are too uncomfortably aware that 'all they are doing' is following the speaker's own vocabulary, grammar, word order and syntax and thus displaying 'no creativity' or 'resourcefulness'. Gratuitous deviations from the 'obvious' often mean that 100% of the interpreter's time, energy and attention is not available at precisely the time it is needed to cope with a real problem.*

mediation but also on the applicability in the classroom of a number of the models Katan suggests.

Moreover, if the interpreter/translator is intrinsically a cultural mediator one might ask how we can differentiate him or her from a cultural mediator who is not actually an interpreter/translator.

These distinctions may seem marginal terminological niceties, but in reality they highlight two important role conflicts. There is conflict between the role of cultural mediator and that of the interpreter, and there is conflict between the interpreter-mediator and other (possible) competing mediators. Katan proposes a new role for the interpreter, one which is more active and more empowering than in the past:

> With the continuing globalisation of English and the use of computers, so the professions will need to change from inefficient walking dictionaries to what is really necessary: facilitators for mutual understanding between people. The proposal is for a new role for the traditional translator and interpreter, that of a 'cultural mediator'. The rest of the book should serve as an introduction for what a mediator will need to know (ib.: 2)

> [...] cultural mediation is much more than translation or interpretation. The role touches that of a mediator in any other field, from arbitrator to therapist (ib.: 11).

> The interpreter's role has long been thought of as a discrete, if not invisible black-box and as a walking generalist translator of words. As a cultural mediator, he or she will need to be a specialist in negotiating understanding between cultures (ib.: 12).

> Ideally, cultural mediators will be both left and right brain oriented to enable them to both analyse and create frames (ib.: 228).

> [...] the mediator must first and foremost take a more assertive role in the negotiations to allow the interlocutors to cooperate and be seen to cooperate, exactly as they wish to do (ib.: 253).

Citing Taft, he lists the following skills a mediator should have (brackets in the original):
- Knowledge about society: history, folklore, traditions, customs, values, prohibitions, the natural environment, and its importance, neighbouring people, important people in the society [...]
- Communication skills: written, spoken, non verbal [...]
- Technical skills: those required by the mediator's status, eg. computer literacy, appropriate dress [...]

- Social skills: knowledge of rules that govern relations in society and emotional competence, e.g: the appropriate level of self-control (ib.: 11).

Katan takes on the ideas of Richard Brislin and Amelie Knapp-Potthof & Karlfried Knapp who suggest that the interpreter should be a *chair* or *referee* (Brislin); or a *visible third party* (Knapp-Potthof & Knapp) (ib.: 12-13).

As a mediating agent, the interpreter is authorised to take the initiative independently of others, introduce arguments, make comments, give explanations, prepare material for the conference, interrupt a conference in the case of misunderstanding which could obstruct the communication, check the texts for cultural factors prior to the event, and do anything else which requires mediation. The interpreter, in short, sits at the high table.

However, the whole debate on translation behaviour (both written and oral) is still characterized by a number of dichotomies. To quote but a few of these binary oppositions: *ghjatccbjyfkmyjcnm gthtdjlxbrf* [professionalism] vs. *pfvtnyjcnm tuj kbxyjcnb* [visibility] (Uvarov 1981), *liberté vs soumission* (Bertone 1985: 94), *accuracy vs. naturalness* (Baker 1992: 56), *abusive fidelity vs. fluency* (Venuti 1992:12), *translation improvement vs. professional detachment*, *interculturality vs. commercial particularism of task* (Pym 1992: 168 e 171), *scrupulous translator vs. cultural mediator* (Marrone 1993: 38), *self-protection vs. fidelity to the sender* (Gile 1995), *dignity or self-esteem vs. higher duty to give the best possible service to the audience* (Pearl 1995: 173), *domesticating strategy vs. foreignising strategy*.[5]

According to a number of authors, the less an interpreter is noted the better s/he works (low profile). And it is, in fact, easier to keep the illusion that the participants are directly talking to one another when neither side makes any attempt to involve the interpreter: *being ignored can be bliss*.[6]

Even though they do not share the same language, the use of the first person singular does allow the participants to feel as if they are speaking directly to each other. Low profile with uninvolvement is kept when the interpreter refers to him/herself in the third person and to the partecipants in the first.

Sadikov (1981) compares interpretation efficiency with the degree of unconsciousness that clients have of the interpreter's presence. The more 'natural' the interactants' behaviour, the greater the probability of communication

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5   *domesticating strategy: bringing the foreign culture closer to the reader in the target culture, making the text recognisable and familiar compared with foreignising strategy: taking the reader over to the foreign culture, making him or her see the cultural and linguistic differences* (Venuti's definition in Schaffner 1995: 4) [underlining added].

6   Title of a book by Fink reported in Frishberg (1986).

success.[7] Other authors disagree with the 'naturalness principle' and see an instrinsic contradiction in the position of an interpreter.

Uvarov (1981) maintains that the interpreter's paradox is that the more professionally confident an interpreter feels, the more s/he is noticed. The more s/he is noticed the more s/he betrays his/her role.[8]

According to Uvarov (ib.: 13-15), at the level of behaviour, the most important quality of an interpreter is not so much the knowledge of two or more languages, but understanding the role. An interpreter is not so much one who knows languages as one who behaves as an interpreter.[9] An interpreting setting always has a degree of officiality which automatically reduces the level of spontaneity of the event. From this point of view, the interpreter is similar to a public speaker. The speech discourse produced is in the context of a public event, a meeting between two or more people. In all cases the discourse is addressed to a public.

However, the interpreter is faced with more requirements in terms of precision, clarity, and voice compared to an average public speaker. Yet, at the same time as being a public speaker, interpreters and their function should, as far as possible, remain unnoticed.

From a sociolinguistic point of view the communicative situation can be distinguished in terms of *transactional* and *personal*. In transactional the focus is on status and role relations between participants. Interaction involves the objective exchange of material or cultural 'goods'. In personal, the focus is on

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7   Перевод считается х...= тем лучше, чем меньше ощущается присутствие посредника. Это значит, что участники общения должны как можно меньше подозревать обо всех социо-культурно-этно-психо-лингвистических различиях, они должны быть уверены, что чем „естественнее" они себя ведут, тем лучше будут поняты. (Sadikov 1981: 9). See also Bertone (1983: 95): *Mieux il* [l'interpréte] *travaille, moins ses auditeirs perçoivent sa présence et moins ils se rendent compte de la complexité de son travail. Ou comme disait un fonctionnaire des Nations Unies: "Aujourd'hui l'interprétation a été excellente, parce que l'on ne s'est même pas aperçcu qu'il y en avait"*.

8   Итак, противоречие заключается в том, что лучше, профессионально увереннее играет переводчик свою роль, тем он становится заметнее. Но в случае значительного различия общественного положения переводчика и прочих участников ситуации перевода выход переводчика вперёд будет воспринят как поведение человека „сидяшего не на своем месте." (Uvarov 1981: 13).

9   This will always be culture dependent, as Crevatin's definition underlines (1989: 22): the interpreter is known as 'he who speaks', he safeguards the communicative cultural rules relevant to a particular situation.

interpersonal relations between participants, not according to their status but according to themselves (Berruto 1992: 91).

The interpreter, in the same way as all the other participants, interacts in situations which begin as transactional rather than personal, regulated by precise social norms, and characterized by certain expectations in terms of obligations, duties and reciprocal rights.[10]

The interpreter also has extra, and at times not totally compatible, duties towards the two clients. Anderson (1976) talks, in fact, of *inadequacy of role prescriptions*. The interpreter's role has to be negotiated with the client on each occasion. All this helps to explain how ambiguous the interpreter's role is, and the limits of manoeuvrability.[11]

Neither should it be forgotten that the interpreter not only has a communicative role but also a social role. According to Berruto (1995:88) this is the array of expectations linked to the behaviour of one occupying a position, a social status.[12]

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10 The same interactants can either be in a transactional or personal situation depending on the circumstances. A visit to a doctor, for example, will typically be transactional, but the same people chatting at the bar will be in a personal situation (Berruto 1992: 92, note 55).

11 In television interpreting, for example, the interpreter will be required to oscillate between a speaker and a dubber, so that the interpreter might even have to be a man or a woman according to the sex of the guest. This, clearly, may in some cases be seen as sexual discrimination. In some cases, the criteria for choosing interpreters (both on Italian private and public television) includes pleasantness of the voice and (for appearance on TV) the physical appearance of the interpreter. In other cases, the interpreter may be requested to perform as an entertainer: as the show itself is important, and so the interpreter will need to adapt to the needs of TV rather than to the content or the translation.

12 *Status is the position of a person* [...] *within a social structure, the array of properties attributed to a given position within the general organisation of society* [...]. *The social role is everything that is expected given a certain status, the configuration of behaviours exhibited or at least expected by the members of a community on the basis of their status* (Berruto 1995: 88-89). This apparently banal distinction provides us the opportunity to reflect on the not unusual behaviour towards the interpreter. For a number of engagements (business dinners, small talk in general, short meetings, interviews, and so on) the tendency may be noted to reduce the work of an interpreter to "just a chat" thus diminishing the importance of the interpreter's profession. The interpreter is compared with, or rather confused with, a co-conversationalist.
Many associations are battling this very point: not so much the role as the interpreter's status, which is often assimilated indiscriminately into that of a guide/hostess or even entertainer, whose services are included in the "conference package" along with the real hostesses and those who supply equipment.

According to Goffman's (1978:150 and ss.) categories, the interpreter results as a *non person*[13]: present during interaction without, in many respects, taking the role of actor or that of the public, and even less does s/he expect to be what s/he is not:

> This person is expected to be present in the front region while the host is presenting a performance of hospitality to the guests of the establishment. While in some senses the servant is part of the host's team, in certain ways he is defined by both performers and audience as someone who isn't there like the very young, the very old and the sick.

However, the paradox (yet again) is that while domestic helps, children, the elderly, and the sick are considered 'non persons' because they do not have the right to speak and what they say is not taken seriously, the interpreter is present during the communicative exchange to exercise that most characteristic of human activities, that of speaking. But the interpreter's 'power of speech'[14] is limited and depends on that of the 'actors' who decide the subject, the pace, the speaking turns, the place and the duration of the communication.[15]

Though interpreters are, indeed, *ratified* (see note 22) the very moment they are deprived of their power of speech they cannot intervene directly in the verbal interaction. From this point on, their function becomes auxiliary (or worse ancillary)[16] and their position voyeuristic.[17] Here, an interpreter will maintain a

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13 Pym (1992: 51) speaks of the anonymity of the interpreter: *the translator is 'nobody' in particular*, and reports the case of Matthias Claudius: *Wer übersetzt, der untersetzt, he who translates effaces himself* (ivi: 201) [English translation in the text]. Those who have worked as interpreters will know the vagaries associated with this work, and rarely does the interpreter have his or her name on the booth door.

14 Even though the interpreter is the producer of the text, s/he has no semantic autonomy. The interactants, on the other hand, not only have this autonomy but also can change intention during the communicative interaction (See also Kalina 1992).

15 To avoid *role overload*, the interpreter may agree on turn-taking or individual turn length in advance to reduce role strain. This will depend on the formality of the situation. A number of authors, including Frishberg (1986: 27-28) have even called the interpreter *a communication cop, a traffic cop for conversational regulators and turn-taking behaviours.*

16 *Translation is essentially a service activity with a communicaton goal* (Gile 1995: 19). *Translators very often have "weak personality structures", are not adventurous, dynamic, vigorous, in short self-confident. The translating profession enacts such personalities. One reason for this may be that translating and interpreting are "serving" profession, and serving does not go together with a well developed ego* (Kussmaul 1995: 32). *Mediators are servants. They hold the torch so that both parties, who would be in the dark without them, can*

presumed neutrality, a psychological, moral, ideological and political distance from the text and/or the participants.[18] Alternatively, there will be a relationship of complicity with the speaker.[19]

As the man or woman in the middle, the interpreter has to remain faithful to both clients. Pym (1992) speaks of *divided loyalty*, or from another point of view: *no special allegiance* (Anderson 1976). This conflictual role emerges the moment s/he is obliged to be an ally or consultant to one of the interested parties:[20]

> Should the interpreter be a mere echo, or should he be an advisor and ally? Should he inform his client of whispered, off-the-record remarks made by the other party to the interaction, or should he stick to the text? In the second instance, the issue is not what, but how much behavior is expected. In either event, a sociology of interpreter behavior should include propositions about the likely effects of the interpreter's efforts to cope with these ambiguities upon the ongoing interaction (Anderson 1976: 217).

My concern is that if we place cultural mediation at the foreground, as the interpreter's role, we risk leaving the contradictions, the paradoxes and the

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communicate. But they themselves remain in the dark, and their ethos demands it that they are happy about it (Neubert 1989: 12). *Translators are the - visible or invisible - agents for the provision of information service* (Wilss 1996: 143-144). See also *the ethics of service* in Pym 1992.

17 When interpreters hear comments over the microphone, involuntarily (and carelessly) made by the orators their status as participants become that of "hidden hearers" (following Clark's categorisation reported in Bazzanella 1994: 65-66). In Goffman's terms they become *occasional overhearers*. According to Thiéry (1990:42), this is the interpreter's lot: the interpreter is [...] *eavesdropping on a conversation or communication, that does nor concern him and is not addressed to him.*

18 See Gile's *rotating side-taking principle* (1995: 29-30).

19 An actor makes you believe that s/he is or has become another person. An interpreter, on the other hand, pretends to believe what the speaker says, taking his or her part and empathising with the speaker (See Bertone 1983). *The Translator' "represents" the Sender and the Sender's interests, and therefore "does a good job" if the Translation contributes to the success of the Sender's endeavour* (Gile 1995: 59).

20 In a military context, for example, the interpreter is often totally 'sided' with the client (e.g.. The Ministry of Defence). The interpreter may be briefed (and debriefed) regarding negotiating strategies and appropriate behaviour to adopt during inspections of armament reduction.

dichotomies in the background. The term 'cultural mediation' may well serve to put an end to the infinite number of metaphors coined to describe the interpreter: *machine, window, telephone, human link, ferry(wo)man, lawyer, bridge builder, and textually oriented switchboard operator*, to name but a few of the suggestions in the literature. However, we risk being left with a convenient cover term, a magic word meaning everything and nothing.

Neubert (1989: 7), taking this argument to the extreme, suggests that this mediation role derives from the fact that the profession is intrinsically schizophrenic [emphasis in the original]:

> An awareness of the translator's role as a mediator can also explain the often-quoted advice that the translator should step into the original writer's shoes and act out the sender's part on the stage provided by the target language. I think this amounts to asking the impossible. Equally, the translator cannot pretend to be identical with the target language addressee. His sophistication is knowing two languages when the others are quite happy to be conversant with either the one or the other. His lot is an almost schizophrenic language faculty split into two hemispheres. And he can only escape this *di-lemma* by taking up the task of the mediator.

Thus, the interpreter is condemned to mediate. His/her dilemma, which is basically the translation dilemma itself, can be explained in the psychoanalytical concept of *double bind*: 'the text' requests and, at the same time, prohibits the translation (Chamberlain 1992, Venuti 1995).

Mediation conflicts with the ethics of behaviour (impartiality, reserve and precision) when, for example, an interpreter has to decide whether or not to retain the ambiguity and opacity of the speaker. As a communication facilitator, the interpreter should render the message as clearly and as comprehensibly as possible. On the other hand, too much explanation of a deliberately vague or ambiguous message risks betraying the real performative intentions of the speaker. If s/he does not reproduce the hesitations, the lapses and slips of the tongue, through continous self-editing, the errors and the incoherence of the speaker will be mediated, or rather 'improved'. If, on the other hand, the interpreter is 'faithful' to the speaker s/he runs the risk of personally sounding insecure, incoherent or plain wrong:

> The clients will have an altogether inconsistent or incorrect notion of what an interpreter's role and function are if the professionals do not hold a firm policy of non-involvement and impartiality (Frishberg 1986: 67).

> The interpreter, like the foreman, is occupationally vulnerable to counter pressures from his two clients. No matter what he does, one of them is apt to be displeased [...] The interpreter's role is characterized by some

> degree of inadequacy of role prescription, role overload, and role conflict resulting from his pivotal position in the interaction network (Anderson 1976: 21-218).

Far from wishing to describe the profession in terms of schizophrenia, the interpreter does, though, take on many roles (including his or her own). One of the differences is that (hopefully) there is no identity crisis. However, if incongruence (or schizoid behaviour) occurs when there is an internal conflict of values or beliefs (Katan 1996: 49), an interpreter's incongruence could surface in the conflict between the values and principles of the two cultures involved in the mediation. In fact, Bohannan (in Anderson 1976: 224) observes that bicultural people are often at a stage of 'secondary ethnocentrism'. He suggests learning a third culture as a means of balancing this tendency and to give a more neutral perspective.

Applying the Attribution Theory (see Katan 1996: 90-91), we note that speakers apply an aspect of their own congruent logical level system to the interpreter's behaviour. The client may well associate particular errors, decisions or reactions to the interpreter, not as a result of linguistic or cultural incompetence but due to personal factors. The client, for example, may use the interpreter as a scapegoat, and hear, in the interpreter's words, what s/he wants to hear.

The speaker may ask how a particular word will be translated (curiosity); may decide that a word is too culture-bound (irony or challenge); and may doubt the translation itself (*Perhaps there's a problem in the translation* ?). The speaker may also suggest a translation (role conflict) or even demand a particular register. All such comments, or rather metacomments, by their very nature, break the *frame,* where the speech event is embedded. Rather than transmitting the text the speaker comments on it, which means a change in the *footing.*[21] The speaker leaves him or her self as author to take on the role of *animator.*[22]

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21   *Footing* is the speaker's position with regard to himself and other speakers in a communicative situation. The different types of *footing* [...] *provide contrast to what the text itself might otherwise generate* (Goffman 1981: 174).

22   Goffman overturns the traditional concepts in communication theory. Instead of the notion of speaker or sender he prefers the idea of *production mode* which includes the function of *animator* (phonic machine), *author* (text formulator) and *principal* (the person who is responsible for what is said and for the content). In the same way, the concept of participant is changed to that of *participation mode.* The participants themselves are divided into *ratified* (authorised and asked to take part in the communication exchange) and *non ratified* (Goffman 1981: 145-146). According to Clark (in Bazzanella 1994: 65-66) there is a distinction between

The *frame* is also changed when the interpreter distances him or herself from the words of the speaker (*these are the speaker's words, I'm repeating the speaker*), almost to remind the listener that these words appear 'by proxy.' The interpreter is neither the *author* nor the *principal* of the ST but rather the *animator*. Authorial disclaimers can not be written, with, for example, commas as in translation, but can only be indicated by word. This distancing takes place when credibility or personal dignity is threatened, and happens through a process of disaffiliation:[23]

> The need for the interpreter to assert himself as a person. The decision to speak up is costantly an assertion of the interpreter's personhood [...] Interpreters are human beings (Frishberg 1986: 27-30).

If sincerity (in the sense of Austin) is one of the conditions which must be satisfied for a communication to be "happy", the speech acts preferred by the interpreter could be claimed to be based upon a presumption of sincerity. If someone doubts the interpreter's mediation on line then his/her role, or even identity, suffers incongruency. How can the threefold problem of *misperception, misattribution and miscommunication* (Katan 1996: 91) between the interpreter and the client be solved, given the low status of the former with regard to the latter. What type of mediation can an interpreter exercise when s/he has neither the authorship nor the responsability with regard to the text?

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evident (people who are present but cannot take part) and *hidden* (those who follow the conversation but are not seen).

23   There are cases where the interpreter leaves him/her 'self' to become an *animator*, to make a metalinguistic comment, explaining or clarifying the meaning of a particular word. This operation is analogous to the translator's footnote. In theory, this is possible especially during consecutive interpretation, where the interpreter's presence is more physical and the TL production time is not so limited as in simultaneous interpreting. In other cases, the interpreter can intervene with more difficulty with *out-of-frame* expressions such as: *the speaker is too far from the microphone; the microphone is off, the speaker is speaking in a language not covered by this interpreting service; the speaker is translating (repeating) in Italian what he said in English* (code-switching). Alternatively, and according to the situation *the speaker should slow down*. With regard to speaker speed, a fifth maxim could profitably be added to Grice's famous four maxims of cooperation, on the lines of: *The speaker's speed should be appropriate for simultaneous interpretation,* or alternatively *be aware that your words are being interpreted simultaneously*. This would improve cooperation between *author* and *animator/mediator*.

Moving from a (macro) cultural frame to a (micro) interactional frame, many differences between cultures tend to become blurred. For example, Katan (ib.: 231) notes that [highlighting in the original]:

> [...] the Italian term *criminalità organizzata*/organised crime would suggest text based resources in the LCC oriented United States, with clearly drawn communication lines. In Italy, however, the organisation is perceived more HCC, as "the octopus"/*la piovra* whose tentacles reach into the fabric of society.

However, in an actual(ized) speech event the FBI and the DEA perfectly understand the implications and the connotations (*the context of culture*) of organized crime in Italy. They have even coined their own acronym: LCN (*La Cosa Nostra*). Equally, the Italian Ministry for Home Affairs and the DIA (the Mafia Investigation Department) know that the responsabilities (tasks) of the American IRS (*Inland Revenue Service*) correspond to a good three Italian departments: *Guardia di Finanza*, *Polizia Tributaria* and *Fisco* (or *Erario*). A real problem for the interpreter will be, for example, how to decipher an LCN-boss type syntagm (such as *un boss mafioso, della malavita, un padrino*) or to understand that "smurfs" (HCC) are not *i puffi* but *la manovalanza del crimine* (LCC).

Linguistic contact between two cultures takes place within a *concrete* communicative exchange. Linguistic communication is basically a *cooperative enterprise* (Jarvella 1986: 225). The principle of cooperation on the basis of which participants negotiate satisfactory progress of the interaction (Berruto 1995: 89), is a two-way interaction. The interpreter might then be able to count on the fact that his/her clients will cooperate in understanding what s/he is interpreting, applying their shared knowledge. The participants in the speech event also follow the *Accomodation Theory*. According to this theory, the style and the register of speaker B in a particular situation will be the response to a picture made by speaker A; and B will imitate those tracts s/he considers characteristic of A+B's group.[24]

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24 This idea, which has much support, is from Bell's Accommodation Theory. It is reported in Berruto (1995: 91), and explained as follows: Speakers design their style according to their audience. Differences within the speech of a single speaker can be explained as the influence of the second person and some third person, who together make up a speaker's audience. As Berruto (1995: 91 note 54) remarks:

> Accommodation strategies do not only operate in terms of conformity and social identification, but also in terms of cognitive organisation [and] dicourse attuning [...] The final aim, in all cases, is to improve the interpretability of the communicative interaction.

In theory an interpreter has power over the linguistic resources of interaction, being the only participant who knows both (or more) languages. Nevertheless, this advantage may well be shared by others, those politically and socially responsible for the verbal interaction and its outcome. In these cases the interpreter's interlinguistic and intercultural "authority" may be in conflict with the "institutional authority".

By foregrounding his/her bi- or inter-cultural competence the interpreter may encroach upon the territory occupied by other professionals who s/he will often be in contact with (and under contract to). These other professionals will have the *status* of mediator but not the *role* of the interpreter. For example, in public administration the interpreter could clash with consultants working for the Foreign Ministry, the Protocol expert and the chief advisor.

In the private sector there will be a press secretary, an entire public relations department, the head of human resources, directors of foreign branches, and so on. In television the programme assistant of the day may be a competing mediator or the programme editor him or herself. They may, for example, ask the interpreter to translate literally (*so I know what they are talking about*), and then 'mediate' to their own liking in the post-editing phase.

Cultural mediation means cultural power, both social and economic. In some cases, it means deciding how the SL will be received by the users based on their values, their expectations and TL stereotypes. Venuti (1992, 1995) has clearly described the power a translation has in constructing and representing 'other' cultures; the effects that translated texts have on the target culture and how dependent they are on the decision to translate and publish. The translated texts are, as Venuti notes, read, understood and 'manipulated' according to the social, cultural and institutional context.

Some authors (Mey 1991, 1993, Gee 1990) maintain that the analysis of text production should go far beyond the conditions under which a text is produced to investigate the *implicit* conditions that govern text production and consumption. A text depends, for its creation and use, on the *discourse* that it produces. Since text production functions in a *societal whole*, subject to social control, it is a *social discourse activity.*[25] More specifically, Gee (1990) speaks of *social networks* or *discourse communities,* practicing different *Discourses,* each of which creates identity through participating in a particular *Discourse*:

> A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of socially meaningful group or "social

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25 From this perspective the term "context" is replaced by the term *discoursal space*, i.e. *a space generated by a set of coordinates that comprise, as their main representatives, parameters having to do with social control* (Mey 1991: 400).

network", or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful "role"
(Gee 1990: 143).

The shift from communicative competence to cultural mediation becomes
problematic in some interpreting settings. For example, the present author -
working for a number of *project management* courses held by American
specialists for managers from leading Italian companies - noted the lack of
satisfaction (if not dismay) on the part of the Italians. They perceived both the
content and the presentation as obvious and banal. Even though there was a
complete absence of terminological problems for the interpreter, the perception
was basically that the course was not going well. With this clear example of
cultural incompatibility, the question arises: how can an interpreter, once s/he
has already fulfilled his/her 'translation' role, become a cultural mediator? How
can s/he explain to the speaker (paid 1000 dollars a day) or to the organiser
(director of External Relations) that the course should be structured differently?
And finally, how can s/he explain that there are communication problems,
which are not "to do with language" but rather to do with the cultural *frame*?

During the Media Translation and Interpreting section at the Budapest
conference (5-7 September 1996), it became clear that it was often the *Initiator*
who dictated the translation strategies. Below is an extract from one of the
papers which aroused most interest, from Jettmarova of the Czech Republic:

> The Initiator (the translation/advertising agency/client), together with his
> motive, advertising strategy, intercultural knowledge and beliefs was
> found to be the primary factor predetermining the prevailing global
> translational strategy (Toury's initial norm): literalness or linguistically
> motivated translation [...] which again must be conceived of as a section
> on the adequacy-acceptability scale rather than a fixed point.

Interpreter role identity is consequently trapped between *prescription* (who
s/he should be and what s/he should do) and *proscription* (who s/he should <u>not</u>
be and what s/he should <u>not</u> do). There are no pre-established roles for the
mediator to accomplish. The role (identity) of the interpreter is constructed
moment-by-moment through the social context in which s/he performs. Her/his
behaviour, being largely co-dependent on that of participants, is to be shaped on
a case-by-case basis. As Kondo (1990: 62) notes:

> It is to define the role of interpreters more closely in relation to the roles
> of the sender and receiver, and not to assign them omnipotent roles for the
> mediator to accomplish.

To be able to take on 'a negotiating' (more assertive) role, the interpreter
would do well to first 'negotiate' his/her own status not only as a co-

conversationalist (in terms of interactional power) but rather as a co- or inter-negotiator.

What remains to be seen is how the interpreter's new *role identity* (Katan 1996), his *social responsability* (Robinson 1991, Witte 1994) - whereby the interpreter *may consider necessary to make the client modify his original purpose* (Witte 1994: 72) - fit into the social hierarchy and power relations. In other words, what is needed is not so much an epistemology as a sociology of mediation.

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