From Didactas to Ecolingua
An Ongoing Research Project on Translation and Corpus Linguistics
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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 “intralingual and interlingual 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 Ciabattoni 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.
Multimodal Concordancing for Online Language Learning: exploring language functions in authentic texts

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0. Introduction

The work presented in this article is the result of what initially were two separate projects: the creation of an online English course using a corpus of original multimedia texts; and an undergraduate dissertation project for the creation of function-based language learning materials based on a corpus of films. The article will initially describe the corpus of multimedia texts created for the development of materials for Learning Links, Padova University Language Centre’s online English course (Ackerley & Cloke, 2005). It will then go on to discuss the dissertation-based project (Coccetta, 2004) with its model for the analysis of language functions in a multimedia corpus through the use of the multimodal concordancing software MCA (Baldry, 2004). Both projects aim to make audio and video materials more easily accessible to researchers, material developers, teachers and students and in particular to allow them to analyse the form of various language functions in use. This article will present the common aims of these projects, subsequent changes made to Coccetta’s initial model to adapt it for use with the Padova Multimedia English Corpus (MEC) potential for future research and development, and practical examples of how the multimodal concordances produced thanks to MCA can be used to create language learning materials.
Multimedia texts are now easy to come by in the form of video and audio files on the Internet. Their use in the production of materials for language learning, however, poses copyright problems. In March 2001 a project was set up at the University of Padova Language Centre to film seminars, conferences and lessons of foreign professors in various faculties (Badoer, Tiozzo and Tonello, 2004). Work on these recordings initially commenced to supply multimedia texts both for research and the creation of materials for online language learning. These recordings are of particular interest for language researchers and for the creation of learning materials set in what the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2002) terms the educational domain, given that the setting and nature of the recordings are predominantly academic. Therefore, since 2001, the recording of lessons and lectures by English-speaking visiting professors, papers at conferences and even student presentations in class and exams, along with the essential collection and archiving of signed consent forms, has become routine at the Language Centre.

New impetus for the gathering of audio and video texts in a wider range of contexts came when work began on the creation of Learning Links, the online general English course for students up to B1 level. A considerable part of the course is based on original multimedia texts. A study of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and Threshold 1990 (van Ek and Trim, 1998) reinforced course developers’ convictions that authentic, copyright-free materials were needed concerning all the four macro-domains (personal, public, occupational and educational), and including examples of the various language functions and notions needed to interact within these domains. To these ends it was necessary to make video and audio recordings to create a corpus of texts that were free from copyright problems (for a more complete discussion of copyright issues and speaker consent see Badoer, Tiozzo and Tonello, 2004).

The Common European Framework of Reference offers clear guidelines about the kinds of oral interactions, text types and task types to be included in language learning materials (Garrido and Beaven, 2002: 35). In keeping with the domains and competences laid out within the publication and in order to provide sufficient variety of linguistic content in terms of topics, linguistic functions, range of interaction types and varieties of English, it became necessary to leave the academic environment and make recordings beyond the lecture theatre or seminar room. Members of staff took Language Centre recording equipment on their travels and consequently the corpus now boasts recordings made as far afield as Australia. Recordings were extended to different kinds of speakers in a variety of environments to provide the range of subject matter and levels (see Castello, Coccetta and Rizzi, in this volume) needed for material creation.

So far the corpus is proving to have multiple functions – its texts are being used in the fields of language testing, language research, multimodal analysis and language learning, areas which often overlap and are necessarily interlinked. This paper examines how the texts are being analysed according to language function for the purpose of online language learning.
1.1. Speakers

Texts in the Padova Multimedia English Corpus (MEC) initially included those produced by English-speaking colleagues at the University of Padova; other English speakers living and working in Italy; British, Irish and American exchange students at the University of Padova; students who speak languages other than English as their L1; and bilingual (English/Italian) students and school children. Subsequent recordings made abroad have led to the inclusion of speakers of various ages and backgrounds living in England, Scotland, Wales, the United States and Australia. The corpus, then, is not limited to the spoken English of specific speech communities but includes examples of English used as a first language by native speakers, by learners of English and by non-native speakers as a lingua franca. This inclusion of interviews and conversations involving both native and non-native speakers of English from different regions and countries offers a number of benefits. One is that students can be exposed to a range of accents and varieties of English as spoken by native speakers. Secondly, the inclusion of texts where English is used as a lingua franca allows the analysis of English as produced by non-native speakers. As will be exemplified later in the article, this will permit comparison with examples of “correct” or “standard” English, as well as error analysis, which can arouse students’ awareness of typical mistakes made by non-native speakers of English. Moreover, such examples of international English, far removed from idealized “textbook language”, may be considered comparable to the kind of English our students will encounter in future interpersonal and professional communication.

1.2. Themes and relevance of texts

The language presented in text books and that used in the classroom are often the only examples of the target language that students come into contact with. One of the aims of the development of online materials based on original texts is to expose the students to more contact with both the target language and its culture. This concept of target language and culture has become extended to the concept of an international English-speaking community. Through the use of these texts, the corpus allows material developers to respond to a wide range of personal interests of students at various levels of proficiency.

As stated above, the topics included in the corpus can be divided into personal, educational, occupational and public domains according to the CEFR. An underlying concept behind the compilation of the corpus is that the texts produced are in some way relevant to our university students’ interests and needs. A large part of the corpus is made up of unscripted video and audio recordings of conversations and interviews with students both in Italy and in English-speaking countries, therefore it is possible to base a considerable amount of the materials on matters that concern students’ lives, interests, experiences, university studies, expectations and future career prospects. The topics covered in the corpus are those that our students may well discuss themselves, and the kind of English is that which the students are likely to come into contact with, whether during their studies or in their working lives. Therefore learning activities in the course may either be set within a university context or linked to events in young students’ lives, thereby enhancing the probability of relevance to their interests. The contents
of the corpus, therefore, should not only allow course developers to deal with the most immediate needs of the learners in terms of the functions, notions, grammar, vocabulary, skills and knowledge described in Threshold 1990, but also stimulate their interest in the contents of the course and give them the motivation necessary to learn online.

1.3. Authenticity of texts

Authenticity can enhance students’ interest in the material and can also increase their motivation to listen. Listening to real people speaking about real-life experiences and interacting with other speakers in a natural way may be considered more stimulating than listening to actors reading scripts elaborated by EFL writers.

A full, uncontroversial definition of authenticity is problematic. According to Widdowson (1979: 165) «authenticity has to do with appropriate response», that is whether the reader or listener responds to the text in the way intended by the producer of the text. Widdowson affirms that authenticity is a quality bestowed on a text by the receiver’s response. On the other hand, Stewart, Bernardini and Aston (2004: 12) state that «authenticity refers to a piece of text that has occurred as part of genuine communicative interactions» and Buck (2001: 85) states that authenticity can mean either «taken from the target-language use situation or [having] the characteristics of target-language use texts». These interpretations of authenticity, rather than Widdowson’s, are applied to the texts in our corpus. Indeed, as Mauranen (2004: 92) points out, when spoken texts are presented in a corpus, the learner is only an «external observer» of a completed communicative act and is not able to respond in the way that was intended by the speaker of the text. Moreover she goes on to explain that

even if the participant response is missing, recordings of spoken interaction which was not originally produced for the purpose of language didactics (and was therefore authentic, or genuine, for the original speakers) have a strong claim to authenticity (2004: 92).

In the Padova MEC, although the texts are largely the result of unscripted video and audio recordings of dialogues and interviews, in most cases they were produced with the aim of developing teaching materials. The texts therefore vary in their degree of authenticity and are classified accordingly. When speech is unscripted, even if the purpose of the recordings is for the development of teaching materials, the language produced may be rich in features of spontaneous, natural discourse (false starts, continuative fillers, etc.). From an early stage in their learning, students following the online English course are exposed to examples of authentic language, including the difficulties posed to comprehension by speed, vocabulary, complexity of sentence structure and so on. However, the pedagogical value of scripted or semi-scripted texts is also taken into account in the development of course materials, and these kinds of texts are also present in the corpus. The Padova MEC is currently subdivided into four kinds of texts ranging from totally scripted to instances of natural, spontaneous discourse. These categories have been labelled scripted, semi-scripted, semi-authentic and authentic.

1.3.1. Scripted texts

Scripted texts have been recorded when it is necessary to have full control over the content of a text and the speed in which it is enounced. These texts may be of
use when clearly articulated speech is preferred, for example for the presentation of new words or language structures, or for the exemplification of the pronunciation of isolated words and expressions, such as those present in the glossary section of Learning Links.

1.3.2. Semi-scripted texts

When a certain amount of control over the content and speed is necessary semi-scripted texts are recorded. The speakers may be given a scenario to act out with indications of the kind of information to include in the dialogue. They may also be asked to include specific vocabulary or language structures in their speech, depending on the aims of any language learning materials to be developed. However, the speakers are not given lines to read, thereby allowing for a certain amount of improvisation and spontaneity. In these cases it is clear to those involved in material production that the speakers may be acting, but the speech should not sound too unnatural. These non-authentic texts should not be considered less valuable for language learning materials on the basis that no such dialogues have ever been uttered in a natural context, for however big the corpus may become, it is unlikely that we will find all instances of the kind of language we want our students to come into contact with. Indeed as Gavioli and Aston (2001: 240) argue:

> the chances of finding a complete corpus text which consistently shows typical usage is minimal, so if we want to propose a model of conversation at the hairdresser’s, we will almost certainly do better to use an invented dialogue than a corpus extract – though we may want to compare it with corpus extracts before proposing it to students.

Another argument in the defence of the use of scripted and semi-scripted materials is that the availability of authentic texts does not automatically mean ideal learning materials can be created. Indeed, as shall be discussed below, the use of authentic texts for language learning often gives rise to criticism and debate.

1.3.3. Semi-authentic and authentic texts

Semi-authentic and authentic texts can be difficult to distinguish. Whilst for the purpose of analysis and material creation they are more interesting than the scripted and semi-scripted texts, the fine line between the two means that they are usually analysed together. It should be considered that although some of our texts provide “genuine” examples of language, in that they were produced for real communicative goals, they may no longer be “authentic” once reproduced in a language learning context. In fact authenticity, itself, is hard to define. However, it is possible to argue that since the speakers know that they are speaking for the video camera or audio recorder, the situation and therefore the speech produced automatically lose authenticity. The recordings may therefore present examples of “simulated authentic discourse” in that the kind of language has a high probability of occurrence in real communication. The speakers are probably not acting: they are being themselves and speaking about their own lives, experiences, needs, plans or hopes. However they might be having a conversation only for the purpose of being recorded. The important thing with the texts recorded is that we are not prescriptive in terms of the language used. If Widdowson’s distinction is to be applied, then the texts in the authentic texts sub-corpus may be termed “genuine” in that the speakers have real communicative goals to accomplish: in some cases the speakers have never met before and are genuinely
interested in finding out about each other; in other cases the speakers are friends engaged in casual conversation about their everyday lives.

Semi-authentic texts, on the other hand, are those where the communicative goal is not genuine – for instance, the case where the mother asks her 12-year-old son to describe what he does for Halloween. The dialogue may be considered interesting both in terms of linguistic and cultural content for the language learner, and both language and content may be considered genuine. However, since the mother knows what her son does for Halloween the communicative goal does not appear to be genuine. Though the situation may not be authentic, the language is natural and authentic-sounding to those do not know the speakers. Because it is difficult to find differences in the kind of language used in these two sub-corpora, analysis using a concordancer is generally carried out on the semi-authentic and authentic texts together. These in turn may be subdivided into instances of native speaker and non-native speaker texts, depending on the purpose of each search. Currently there are around 95,000 words in the authentic and semi-authentic texts sub-corpora.

2. Issues concerning the production and use of authentic spoken texts

Numerous problems of a technical nature arise in the creation of authentic multimedia texts. The first is that of copyright. As has already been mentioned, it is essential to gain written permission to use the voice and image of a speaker, just as permission needs to be gained from writers of texts before reproducing or adapting their work for language learning materials.

Another issue is that of sound quality. The recording of scripted and semi-scripted texts takes place in a recording room at the University Language Centre, guaranteeing a high quality of sound in terms of voice quality, volume and absence of interference from background noise. When recordings are made outside of this environment then quality may often be lost. Though the transcripts may be useful for analysis using a text-based concordancer, unfortunately not all of the texts are reusable in their original multimedia format. It is essential that people making recordings are fully aware of how to use the equipment and the possible pitfalls of recording in various environments.

The occurrence of unpredictable language in our recordings is also a problem and constitutes a valid reason for the scripting of texts in EFL materials. Scripting guarantees that audio texts do not contain instances of “unwanted” language. It also ensures that the texts fit in with the syllabus. However, the presence of unpredictable language may not always be a problem. When an aim of course development is the use of spontaneous, unscripted texts, adjustments may even be introduced to the original syllabus to accommodate instances of naturally occurring language and to allow learners to focus on these as and when they occur (Garrido and Beaven, 2002: 32). Gavioli and Aston (2001: 238) also note that corpora «provide evidence about linguistic performance which can undoubtedly be helpful in deciding what we should teach». It should be noted, however, that a main aim of using authentic texts is to expose learners to naturally occurring
instances of language and promote data-driven learning rather than to attempt to make radical changes to recognized sequences of language acquisition or to well-formed syllabi.

The use of authentic texts with lower level language learners is also a difficult issue. Many examples of the naturally occurring discourse in our corpus are simply too difficult for beginner students to understand. However, in Castello, Coccezza and Rizzi (in this volume), Coccezza discusses how parts of the corpus may be tagged and retrieved according to their level of difficulty.

3. **Use of the MEC**

A key issue has become how to fully exploit the texts in the Padova MEC for the creation of online language learning materials. Use of corpora as a source of authentic texts for data driven learning is by now well-established in current language teaching practice (Ackerley, 2004; Aston, 1997; Castello and Sours, 2003) and the transcripts of the recordings in the Padova MEC can be explored and analysed relatively efficiently using a text-based concordancer such as *Wordsmith Tools*. However, the issue here is how to deal effectively with multimedia data and how to make these texts easily available to a wider public than the teacher/researcher. It is necessary to be able to search for particular features of an audio or video text in a similar way that one can search for a feature of a written text, but with the added benefit of being able to easily access audio-visual concordances for this feature. This would be beneficial for teachers, material developers and language students. Moreover, it is necessary to address not only aspects of language commonly dealt with through the study of corpora, such as the study of collocation, synonymy, frequency, semantic prosody and syntax (see, for example, Partington, 1998), but how to provide students with concordances based on searches for speech acts that could help them develop their socio-pragmatic awareness. Whilst the creation of lexico-grammatical exercises through the use of a text-based concordancer would not prove too great a problem, the issue arose of how to focus on “language in use” in a more communicative context – real language used for real communicative purposes.

Moreover it is important not to neglect the role of different modalities in meaning making. For example, certain speech acts are realised through simultaneous body language which combines with the form of the utterance to give the intended meaning. To understand these speech acts it is also necessary to be able to see the speakers. It is also important to consider the role of different channels of information in text comprehension and language acquisition. It is argued that it is easier to understand both spoken and written texts when the learner has access to various modes of information entering both the visual and aural channels (Jones and Plass, 2002) and when as much information as possible about the context is available. These issues provide a case for a multimodal approach to material development where users of the corpus can also visualise surrounding context and body language. A solution was needed that would allow students to benefit fully from all the features of the texts present in the Padova MEC. These benefits include: exploration of language functions as used in the natural spo-
ken language featured in the Padova MEC, as opposed to those featured in text books; the possibility to examine language in context; and the possibility to visualize the utterances.

At present the Padova MEC is not big in terms of general corpora. However it is necessary to approach the texts in a way that goes beyond watching the videos and selecting interesting clips. This would be too time-consuming, and would not enable material developers or the students to focus on the numerous examples of notions, functions, or grammar present in the corpus. Moreover it would be beneficial if researchers, teachers and students could be provided with as many examples as possible, with the view that exposure to a large number of examples or to a variety of examples, could allow users of the corpus to draw appropriate conclusions about the language.

The following section illustrates how multimedia texts can be exploited to create language awareness exercises. It describes the collection and the analysis of a different corpus of multimodal texts and shows how the corpus was exploited with a multimodal concordancer, MCA (Multimodal Corpus Authoring System)\(^3\), and then used to create English language teaching materials.

4. The film corpus

The corpus compiled for this project is made up of 21 short texts taken from films in their original version. The texts present transactional situations of everyday life, carefully selected on the basis of the domains identified in the Common European Framework of Reference (personal, public, occupational and educational domains) and more specifically on the situations specified in Threshold 1990. These are the situations in which language learners are most likely to find themselves when abroad or in their home country when meeting foreign people. Moreover, these are situations requiring predictable language.

The texts have been divided into seven categories on the basis of the locations in which the situations occur, the events taking place, the tasks carried out by the participants involved and the language functions expressed. The categories are:

1. making arrangements for going out;
2. eating out;
3. private hospitality;
4. applying for a job;
5. contacts with officials;
6. expressions of politeness;
7. shopping.

5. The descriptive tool for the analysis of the texts

The corpus was analyzed on the basis of van Ek and Trim’s functional model, which lists the language functions language learners at the B1 level of proficiency need to be able to express to linguistically survive in transactional situations of everyday life. In addition, the model specifies the recommended exponents that
realize the functions (grammatical structures, fixed formulae, etc.). The functions are divided into six main categories as follows:

1. imparting and seeking factual information;
2. expressing and finding out attitudes;
3. getting things done;
4. socializing;
5. structuring the discourse;
6. communication repair.

Moreover, each main category is sub-categorized and the language functions are hierarchically organized. Table 1 is an example of how language functions are organized in Threshold 1990 (van Ek and Trim, 1998: 28-29) with the exponents that realize each function. The focus is on the asking function.

1 IMPARTING AND SEEKING FACTUAL INFORMATION
1.1 identifying (defining)
1.2 reporting (describing and narrating)
1.3 correcting
1.4 asking
1.4.1 for confirmation
1.4.1.1 interrogative sentences
   Did you see him?
1.4.1.2 declarative sentences with high-rising intonation
   You saw him?
1.4.1.3 statement and question tag
   They lost the match, didn’t they?
1.4.2 for information
1.4.2.1 wh questions
   (time) when?
   When will the guests arrive?
   (place) where?
   Where is my purse?
   (manner) how?
   How do you make an omelette?
   (degree) how far/much/long/hot, etc.?
   How far is it to York?
   (reason) why?
   Why did you say that?
1.4.2.2 please (can you) tell me + subordinate clause/ + NP
   Please can you tell me the way to the station?
1.4.3 seeking identification
   (person) who?
   Who is that?
   (possession) whose + NP?
   Whose gloves are these?
   (thing) what? which + NP?
   What is this?
   Which suit will you wear tonight?
1.5 Answering Questions

Table 1. Example of how language functions are organized in *Threshold 1990* with their recommended exponents.

Since van Ek and Trim’s model is not meant to be exhaustive, it was necessary to add some functions realized in the corpus and not listed in the model: some examples are breaking appointments politely, flattering someone, making appointments for meetings, etc. In addition, a greater specificity in the sub-categorization of the functions was attempted. For example, in *Threshold 1990* the functions *warning others to do something or to refrain from doing something* are presented together. On the contrary, in the model developed they were divided into *warning others to do something* and *warning others to refrain from doing something*. Table 2 compares how this function is treated in *Threshold 1990* and in the model developed for the project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Van Ek and Trim’s Functional Model</th>
<th>Functional Model Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5 warning others to do something or to refrain from doing something</td>
<td>3.28 warning others to do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.28.1 warning others to do something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.28.2 warning others to refrain from doing something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(van Ek and Trim, 1998: 40)*

Table 2. Comparison between van Ek and Trim’s functional model and the one developed for this project.

After its definition, the tagging system was inserted in the *MCA Grammar Definition* tool, the tool that contains the project is descriptive parameters (or grammars). As *MCA* grammars consist of sets within sets and are hierarchically organized, it was possible to exploit van Ek and Trim’s hierarchical organization of the functions. Figure 1 shows how the language functions are organized in the *MCA Grammar Definition* tool.
It is worth noticing that the deeper in the hierarchy you go the more specific the functions are. Therefore, in the MCA Search Page it is possible to carry out either more general searches or more specific searches, according to the users' needs.

6. Exploiting van Ek and Trim’s functional model with MCA

Van Ek and Trim’s functional model was first proposed in 1975 in *The Threshold Level English in a European Unit/Credit System for Modern Language Learning by Adults* and then revised and extended in 1998 in *Threshold 1990*. Though it may be old, with the technologies we have at our disposal nowadays, it can indeed be easily and successfully used in the teaching and learning of English. The following paragraphs exemplify how, thanks to MCA, this long list of functions was turned into a useful source to recover data within the corpus described above and used by language learners to learn English.

6.1 Retrieving a language function in the corpus

Using MCA it is possible to explore the corpus to see whether a specific language function is expressed and analyse the exponents that realize that function. For example, the user can see if the making an offer function is expressed in the corpus and how it is grammatically realized. The Figure 2 shows the list of concordances for the making an offer function retrieved in the film corpus.
Figure 2. Utterances in the film corpus that express the making an offer function

By clicking the Media Player button the users can view the clip where the utterance is uttered.

6.2 Retrieving adjacency pairs in the corpus

Using MCA it is possible to analyse not only single functions, but also sequences of functions (e.g. adjacency pairs and three-move exchanges). For example, the user can retrieve the turns where the making an offer-accepting an offer pair is realized (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Examples in the film corpus where the making an offer-accepting an offer pair is realized

Notice that in the corpus only two of the nine utterances expressing the making an offer function are followed by an utterance expressing the accepting an offer function.
function. Probably, the reason why the offer is not accepted in seven turns out of nine depends on the fact that the offer is not accepted but declined. Using MCA the user can indeed find out if this is the case: Figure 4 shows the examples in the corpus where the making an offer-accepting an offer pair and the making an offer-declining an offer pair are realized.

| Clip 4 Phase 2 Utterance 3 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: We can seat you. |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 1 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: Would you like a cup of tea before you go? |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 2 | Declining an offer (3.10.0.0) | Text: No. |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 3 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: Coffee? |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 4 | Declining an offer (3.10.0.0) | Text: No. |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 5 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: Orange juice... something else cold... coke, water, some disgusting sugary drink pretending to have something to do with fruits of the forest? |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 6 | Declining an offer (3.10.0.0) | Text: No. |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 7 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: Would you like something to eat? Something to nibble... apricots, soaked in honey... they’re yours if you want them. |
| Clip 9 Phase 4 Utterance 8 | Declining an offer (3.10.0.0) | Text: No. |
| Clip 10 Phase 5 Utterance 1 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: You care to join me for a drink? |
| Clip 10 Phase 4 Utterance 2 | Accepting an offer (3.3.0.0) | Text: Uh, sure. |
| Clip 13 Phase 9 Utterance 1 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: Tic Tac, sir? |
| Clip 17 Phase 2 Utterance 1 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: Would you like another tea? |
| Clip 17 Phase 2 Utterance 2 | Accepting an offer (3.3.0.0) | Text: Yes, thank you. |
| Clip 19 Phase 6 Utterance 4 | Making an offer (3.19.0.0) | Text: Do you need some money? |
| Clip 19 Phase 6 Utterance 5 | Declining an offer (3.10.0.0) | Text: No, I do not need any money. Thank you very much. |

Figure 4. Examples in the film corpus where the making an offer-accepting an offer pair (dotted line) and the making an offer-declining an offer pair (solid line) are realized.

Notice that two of the nine utterances expressing the making an offer function are not followed by an utterance expressing either the accepting an offer function or the declining an offer function. To find out the reason why the utterances do not form a complete adjacency pair the context, linguistic and visual, must be analysed: it is probable that the offer is either accepted or declined by other semiotic resources such as gestures.

The first utterance, “We can seat you”, is taken from the film Mrs. Doubtfire. In this sequence Daniel is about to have a business meeting with Mr. Lundy at the Bridges restaurant, but at the same time at the same restaurant his alter ego, Mrs. Doubtfire, is about to have a birthday dinner party with the family she works for. By analysing the linguistic context where the utterance “We can seat you” is uttered (see the transcription of the entire phase below) you notice that Mr. Lundy cannot decide whether to accept or decline the offer because the waiter does not give him the possibility to do this: by asking if Mr. Lundy prefers the smoking
or non-smoking area the waiter takes for granted that the client will accept the offer.

WAITER: Good evening, Mr. Lundy.
MR. LUNDY: I’m meeting someone. Has he arrived yet?
WAITER: No, I’m sorry, he hasn’t arrived yet, but **we can seat you. The smoking or non-smoking?**
MR. LUNDY: Non-smoking, please.
WAITER: Non-smoking. Tanya will seat you. (to Tanya) Table fifteen.
TANYA: This way, please.

As far as the visual context is concerned, the viewer does not know if Mr. Lundy accepts the offer by nodding, as the camera is pointing at Mrs. Doubtfire. The second utterance, “Tic Tac, sir?”, is taken from the film *Dumb & Dumber*. In this sequence Harry and Lloyd are driving very fast on a highway. A state trooper stops them to give them a fine and as he notices some open, full beer bottles hidden in the seat behind them he thinks they are drunk. In reality, what the bottles contain is urine: since they could not stop as a group of bullies were chasing them, Lloyd had urinated inside the bottles some minutes before the trooper stopped them. Even if Harry and Lloyd try to persuade him not to, the state trooper gulps down the liquid inside the bottles and at the end he orders Harry and Lloyd to leave.

LLOYD: **Tic Tac, sir?**
STATE TROOPER: **Get the hell out of here.**

As far as the visual context is concerned, since the camera points at the state trooper the viewer finds out that no gestures are used to either accept or decline the offer (the trooper is too busy showing disgust to pay attention to Lloyd’s offer). Here again, it is by analysing the context that the viewer finds out the reason why the offer is neither accepted nor declined.

### 7. The teaching materials and the experimentation

#### 7.1. The teaching materials

The corpus collected was used as a starting point for the development of teaching materials which show how *MCA* can be easily and successfully used in the field of language learning. For this reason, some sample exercises were created. In general, the exercises can be divided into three categories according to the type of task the learners are to carry out.

1. exploration of the corpus;
2. focus on grammar;
3. reflection on language.

#### 7.1.1 The exploration of the corpus exercises

In the exploration of the corpus exercises the learners are to carry out guided searches within the corpus by using *MCA’S* search engine. These exercises are aimed at checking the different ways in which some language functions are realized
in the corpus (i.e. grammatical structures, fixed formulae, etc.), how frequently some expressions are used, etc. The following (Coccetta, 2004: 155) is an exemplification of this kind of exercises.

Exercise 1: Exploration of the corpus

Which of the expressions included in the chart below (Chart 1) are used in the corpus to express agreement with a statement? Which are the most frequently used? To complete the chart you must:

1. Go to the MCA Search Page.
2. Select the expressing agreement with a statement parameter from the first Select the parameter menu.
3. Write the expression you are looking for in the empty box at the end of the first line. For example, you want to find the expression “Okay”.
4. Click Compact Search and check how many hits you will get.

You will see that as to the expression “Okay” you get four hits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions</th>
<th>Hits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exactly!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeah!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainly!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All right!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okay!</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, indeed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That's right!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 1

7.1.2 The focus on grammar exercises

As stated above, a language function can be realized by different grammatical structures: an example is the expressing intentions function. Table 3 shows the exponents that van Ek and Trim identify for this function in Threshold 1990 (1998: 34).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.25</th>
<th>expressing intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.25.1</td>
<td>NP + be + going to + VP inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>I’m going to buy a new car.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25.2</td>
<td>NP + will + VP inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>I’ll explain later.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25.3</td>
<td>NP + intend(s) to + VP inf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Ann intends to go to America.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25.4</td>
<td>NP + be thinking of + VP gerund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>We are thinking of driving to Turkey.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Recommended exponents for the expressing intentions function
However, the selection of one grammatical form rather than another depends not only on the function the speakers want to express, but also on the meaning they want to convey. For example, even if both the sentences “I’m going to have a coffee” and “I’ll have a coffee” express an intention, they do not convey the same meaning: the former expresses an intention taken before the moment of speaking, while the latter expresses an intention taken at the moment of speaking. To help students understand this, some exercises that closely examine the relationship between a language function and its grammatical realizations were created. The following is an example (Coccetta, 2004: 160):

Exercise 1: Focus on grammar

Match the utterances on the left with their correct meaning on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utterances</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I’ll drive my pickup and meet you there. (Clip 1, Phase 6, Utterance 2)</td>
<td>A. Expressing a future decision, intention or plan made before the moment of speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. She’s running away with me. (Clip 3, Phase 1, Utterance 4)</td>
<td>B. Expressing a decision taken at the moment of speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I’m going to let you go on one condition. (Clip 16, Phase 5, Utterance 1)</td>
<td>C. Expressing a planned future arrangement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To do this exercise the learners are to view the phase where the utterance occurs and decide the meaning it expresses on the basis of the context. For example, by viewing phase 6 taken from the film The Bridges of Madison County (see the transcription below), the learners should understand that the utterance “I’ll drive my pickup and meet you there” expresses an intention taken at the moment of speaking. Notice that before taking her decision, Francesca pauses for a long time, giving the idea that she is thinking it over.

ROBERT: You know, it's just a thought. Maybe you'd like to come along with me.
FRANCESCA: (long pause) Yes, I would like that, but I’ll drive my pickup and meet you there. All right?
ROBERT: All right.
FRANCESCA: What time?
ROBERT: How 'bout six?
FRANCESCA: O... Ok... Okay.
ROBERT: Great. Okay.

However, in case they are not sure about the correct answer, the learners can use MCA to retrieve other examples in the corpus where the expressing intentions function is uttered and analyse the context. Figure 5 shows some of the utterances in the film corpus that express an intention.
The reflection on language exercises

In the reflection on language exercises the learners are to think carefully about the language used in specific situations. For example, in the following exercise (Coccetta, 2004: 156), the learners are given two utterances expressing an agreement with a statement. Here the same word is repeated twice or combined with another word. The learners are asked to say what function the repetition of the same word or the combination of two words performs. By watching the entire phases where each utterance is uttered the learners should draw the conclusion that by using this strategy speakers aim to give emphasis to their agreeing with a statement.

Exercise 2: Reflection on language

As you must have noticed, there are cases in which a word is repeated twice or combined with others. Here are some examples:

1. Okay. All right. (Clip 3, Phase 4, Utterance 2)
2. Right. Right. (Clip 9, Phase 12, Utterance 6)

What function does the repetition of the same word or the combination of two words perform?

The experimentation of the teaching materials

In 2003 some of the teaching materials developed were experimented on a small group of university students of the University of Pavia, who at the time were attending an intensive English course for beginners (A2/B1 levels of the CEFR). The experimentation had 4 main aims: 1) checking whether the texts included in the corpus were suitable for language learners at lower levels of proficiency, 2) improving the exercises in case they turned out to be too easy or too difficult, 3) testing if the instructions given in the exercises were clear and exhaustive.
enough, and 4) checking how profitable the corpus-based approach adopted was. This experimentation turned out to be successful: on the one hand the students seemed satisfied with this approach to language learning and on the other hand their feedback was extremely useful for the improvement of the exercises.

In 2004 and 2005 the teaching materials were experimented with some students of the University of Padova in their first year of the degree course in Mediazione Linguistica e Culturale. Unlike the experimentation in Pavia, where the teacher did the exercises with the students, in Padova the students were briefly instructed in the use of MCA and then the exercises were delivered through the conferencing tool FirstClass: the students could decide to do the exercises either on their own or in pairs. The feedback the students gave was positive. Here are two examples:

“I think it was useful to learn using the MCA program... and I've understood a lot of new think concerning the spoken english and the most used form to express intention!!! I found it very interesting... and I would like to spend more time on it!”

“I think that using MCA is really useful to improve our english because I think is more important to know spoken English instead of just knowing the “rules”! I didn't find any particular difficulty in using the system... except the connection that is quite slow because I'm using it from home! The exercises were right and funny because I had to do searches and discover and find out the correct answer by myself, not just by listening and repeating what somebody else says!”

8. The Padova MEC and MCA

In applying Coccetta’s function-based approach to the Padova MEC it was necessary to adapt the descriptive model developed for the analysis of the film corpus. In doing this both the users and the characteristics of the corpus were taken into consideration. First of all, the number of functions was increased. For example, within the giving information function more specific functions such as giving information (place) and giving information (time) were created (see Table 4 for more details).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Imparting and seeking factual information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>identifying (defining)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>stating and reporting (describing and narrating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1</td>
<td>stating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.1</td>
<td>giving information (degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.2</td>
<td>giving information (event)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.3</td>
<td>giving information (general information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.4</td>
<td>giving information (manner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.5</td>
<td>giving information (place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.6</td>
<td>giving information (quantity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.7</td>
<td>giving information (reason)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.8</td>
<td>giving information (time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1.9</td>
<td>giving information (experience)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Specific functions within the giving information function
If on the one hand the number of functions was increased, on the other hand some restrictions needed to be imposed: too many parameters could make searches too difficult for language learners, give few hits and make the analysis too complicated.

Secondly, some “non-functional elements” were added as parameters. These parameters are:

- levels of difficulty (A1, A2, B1 or B2 of the CEFR);
- nationality of speaker (native, non-native, bilingual);
- number of speakers participating in each recording;
- text type (monologue or dialogue);
- file type (audio or video).

These parameters are very useful not only for teaching materials developers but also for language learners, as they can limit their searches to texts in the corpus tagged for a specific level of difficulty, or to utterances uttered by native speakers. For example, Figure 6 shows the utterances in the corpus where the giving personal info (age) function is expressed by both native and non-native speakers of English.

Figure 6. Utterances in the Padova MEC where the giving personal info (age) function is expressed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text 2 Phase 1 Utterance 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving personal info (age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANKA: I have 20 – I have 21 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text 4 Phase 1 Utterance 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving personal info (age)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIOVE: I’m 24 years old.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that Anka’s utterance, “I have 21 years”, is wrong (to express her age she uses the auxiliary verb to have instead of to be) while Giove’s is perfectly correct.

The use of the auxiliary verb to have to express age is a very common mistake language learners, and Italians in particular, make. The analysis of the two utterances could raise language learners’ awareness of this typical mistake. In addition, by restricting their searches to utterances produced by native speakers of English they could receive the confirmation that to express age the verb to be is used.

As far as the text analysis is concerned, some function/notion overlaps were noticed. In the following text, for example, in the utterance “Sometimes we play in the centre of Padova during festivals. In the summer we play at weddings and at country festivals in the hills. We often play in pubs and restaurants in and around Padova” there is an overlap of the time duration and time frequency notions.

S1: And where do you usually play?
S2: Sometimes we play in the centre of Padova during festivals. In the summer we play at weddings and at country festivals in the hills. We often play in pubs and restaurants in and around Padova.

It is for this reason that it is planned to create some parameters not only for functions, but also for notions. Consequently, future developments will include the development of a model for the specific analysis of notions in the corpus.
9. Conclusions

An objective of both corpus projects described in this paper is the creation of materials which promote data-driven learning. Such materials can come from the analysis of raw texts or texts that have undergone various degrees of selection. A traditional text-based concordancer can help identify frequently occurring items and patterns in a text-based corpus. However, as Coccetta’s dissertation project shows, MCA can help both teacher and students make appropriate selections in a multimedia corpus. As with text-based corpora, through analyses in MCA, users can identify recurrent patterns and find exceptions to those structures presented in language text books and grammar books. In the case of multimedia corpora such as the Padova MEC or the film corpus, MCA also helps identify exactly how these items are expressed as well as revealing further contextual information. Coccetta’s project shows how the use of MCA gives access not only to the co-text of a concordance, but also to its context. This is fundamental in the comprehension of a text for «if communication is to be successful, a relevant context has to be constructed by the discourse participants» (Braun 2005: 52). Indeed if the learner is to have anything like participant knowledge, then more than a text-based concordance is necessary. The full features of a multimedia corpus should be exploited, providing the user with information about the speakers, their mood and the environment: fundamental elements in a text’s meaning that can be gleaned from either a visual representation, a phonic representation, or from a combination of word, sound, image and movement.

It appears that a highly innovative solution to the analysis and use a multimedia corpus has arrived in the form of MCA as it fulfils the need «to access texts in an in vivo form that provides access to the audio and video tracks and maintains their relationship intact. In other words, each text’s dynamic nature must be preserved, since this is part of the way in which the text makes its meaning» (Baldry, 2004: 25).

We are currently in the early stages of our project, which involves the lengthy process of text analysis following the model adapted for the Padova MEC, and insertion in the multimodal concordancer. This work should provide us with a large enough tagged corpus to be able to truly explore the language functions and to find the information that will help us continue the development of language learning materials based on authentic data.
NOTES

1 Thanks to Carol Taylor Torsello for promoting work on corpora, providing the resources for and supporting work on Learning Links and on online language learning at the University of Padova Language Centre and to Anthony Baldry for encouraging our involvement in his pioneering work in multimodal concordancing.

2 The Introduction, sections 1, 2, 3 and Conclusions were written by Katherine Ackerley. Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 were written by Francesca Coccetta.

3 For more information on MCA and how it is being used see Baldry and Beltrami (2005) and Baldry (2005).

4 The Search Page contains a search engine that enables the users to find all the texts that have in common the same characteristics.

5 Among its various functions MCA allows the users to view each single text that makes up the corpus and the phases it was divided into: for this purpose the parameters Film clip: entire clip(s) and Film clip: phase(s) were created.

6 For a detailed report on the experimentation see Coccetta (2004).

7 At the time of the recordings both Anka and Giove were Erasmus-exchange students in Padova: the former is Romanian mother-tongue, while the latter is English mother-tongue.

References


MULTIMODEL CONCORDANCING FOR ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING 33


Castello, Erik / Coccetta, Francesca / Rizzi, Daniela (this volume), “Riflessioni sulla complessità di testi scritti, orali e multimodal scelti per la didattica dell’inglese come L2 e il testing linguistico”.


**FILM SOURCES**


What are concordances for?
Getting multimodal concordances to perform neat tricks in the university teaching and testing cycle

1. Introduction

Developments in multimodal studies of meaning making have given rise in recent years to descriptions and teaching materials relating to printed pages, web pages, film texts and genres (O’Halloran, 2004; Baldry, Thibault, 2006a) in fields as disparate as translation and subtitling (Taylor, 2004), film studies (Ackerley, Coccetta, in press, Dalziel, Metelli, in press) and medicine (Baldry, Guardamagna, in press). But research into testing activities relating to these genres, and multimodal genres in general, has lagged behind. In the belief that the integration of multimodal modules into university syllabuses cannot occur properly without innovative text-based solutions in the teaching-testing cycle, this paper explores multimodal concordancing as an area of research which can potentially make significant contributions to testing procedures in university text-based studies of English. By focusing, in particular, on the concordancing of film texts and genres (Baldry, 2005), the article finds some answers to the question raised in the title. In so doing, it demonstrates how combinations of different types of concordance allow a few neat tricks, some old, some new, to be performed in the university teaching and testing cycle. The study begins by describing multimedia extensions to traditional form-oriented language concordances in relation to multimedia language tests (Section 2) and then illustrates the nature and use of genuine meaning-oriented multimodal concordances (Section 3). Finally, in keeping with its basic tenet of the need for multiple but integrated orientations in concordancing, the paper proposes a hybrid approach to testing in text-based university studies of English (Section 4) using a variety of concordance types.
Within corpus studies, form-oriented language concordancing, in particular in the shape of KWIC [Keyword in context] concordances (Sinclair, 1991), has received most attention in classroom teaching. This type of concordance is instantly recognizable. The example in Figure 1, generated by Laurence Anthony’s AntConc (Anthony, 2005), shows how the rows of individual concordances combine to produce a semi-tabular format with a single central column identified by automatically-created alignments, bold type, colour and gaps, allowing users to perceive patterns in wordings and to relate them to their co-texts (Sinclair, 1991). Concordances of this type greatly assist the phraseological approach (Hunston, 2006:55) to language studies. They are monomodal as they focus on retrieving entextualisations of one specific meaning-making resource from text corpora, namely language. They are also form-oriented. That is, rather than with the meanings made in texts, they are concerned with specifying how words form lexico-grammatical patterns, such as collocations and colligations (Hoey, 2006). A major reason for the widespread use of this type of concordancing is the availability of
lemma-based concordancers such as Word Smith and AntConc (see Figure 1) which identify typical patterns, some predictable, others less so, and the fact that tags, i.e. metatextual descriptions associated to specific forms, are either unnecessary or are efficiently embedded in texts thanks to automatic tagging systems such as CLAWS (Condron, et al., 2000).

In theory, non-linguistic form-oriented corpora and concordances can be produced relating to annotated and searchable sets of sounds with potential uses in language-learning and testing activities, e.g. Write a short description outlining the actions, assumptions and expectations entailed by the sounds you will hear. The sounds could relate to nature (waterfalls), animals (wolves), humans (crying babies), machines (buzzers, phones, car engines) and so on. In practice, with its numerous sub-branches and theoretical characterizations (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001), lemma-based concordancing seems to have eclipsed the possibility of research into other types of concordancing. Two questions thus need to be raised. First, whether approaches exist that can be realistically introduced into university text-based studies of English that are additional and/or complementary to traditional conceptions of lemma-based concordancing and, second, whether this will allow a greater focus on meaning-making processes in specific texts.

Classroom experimentation vis-à-vis films and related film scripts is a good starting point when attempting to provide an answer to these two questions. Figure 2 illustrates three moments in a lesson recorded in the University of Pavia in January 2004, which prepared students for exams leading to B2-level international certification in English. Throughout this preparatory activity, the media-indexed concordancing facilities, which have existed in the online multimodal corpus authoring system, MCA, since its inception (Baldry, Beltrami, 2005), were used by the students to produce concordances which link viewings of scenes in a film to wordings in the relevant part of the film script, consisting of the characters’ names and their lines. The students were asked to fill in a handout summarizing events in various phases in the film (for phase see Baldry, Thibault, 2006a: Chap. 4). They consulted each other, in English, as they reconstructed their understanding of the film on the basis of a single viewing of short fragments.

Part of this activity required the students to provide appropriate subtitles for a sequence of frames (Figure 2.1). To help them, the students were prompted by a series of phrases (Figure 2.2) and given access to computers to carry out keyword searches using MCA (Figure 2.3). This allowed them to establish how individual words, such as work and job, were used in the film script. It also gave them a chance to view and hear the specific film sequence – utterance, subphase or phase – in which these words occurred (Figure 2.3). Concordancing exercises were thus part of an overarching activity exercising various skills – reading, writing, listening, speaking and reflection on the functions of language in context – in an integrated way (Baldry et al, 2005).

In contrast to the traditional pattern-establishing activity of concordancing concerned with word distributions as described above, attempts were also made throughout this activity to base concordancing on the meaning-oriented principle of comparing what might have been said with what was actually said and what might have been done with what was actually done. Concordancing activity of this type stimulates students’ understanding of what is going on in films, thus en-
encouraging discussion about possible interpretations. What, for example, is the meaning of Maggie’s exclamatory: Well, you’ve got to know! (Figure 2.3) in the context of the subsequent unfolding of the film text? The answer to this problem, and similar ones, can be obtained by an MCA search of the type Lines contains “X” where X is a character’s name. More refined searches of the relational type: Lines contains “Brian” AND Lines contains “Steven” narrow down the search by identifying all the phases with lines uttered by both Brian and Steven, the latter being the person addressed by Maggie at this point in the film. This establishes that there are no hits i.e. Brian and Steven never meet up. A relational search of the type: Lines contains “Brian” AND Lines contains “Maggie” establishes, on the contrary, that Brian and Maggie do subsequently meet up, thus suggesting Maggie’s duplicity when she says: You’ve got to know as opposed to We’ve got to know. It is now an easy step to work out that, unlike a fairy story, what is said and what is done in this film are out of step, leading students to form further hunches.

When applied to film or radio scripts, traditional word-distribution concordancing techniques throw up examples of the pattern have to know/have got to know (see Line 6 in Figure 1 and Line 8 in Figure 2.3) from which the meaning must find out can be deduced. However, except by roundabout methods, lemma-based concordancing in itself will not supply the answer as to what will come to be known and how/whether/why/when/where it will it come to be known by the viewer in the context of the subsequent stages of this film. To achieve such a text-exploring function, concordancing must be adapted to the needs of university-level studies of texts by allowing and encouraging teachers and students to apply, critically and systematically, a meaning-oriented grammatical model, such as the one provided by systemic-functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994 [1985]). In the case in point, the concordancing procedure is embedded in classroom teaching and testing ac-
tivity which constitutes a first step in the exploration of the transitivity system in English; it establishes and discusses relationships between participants, their individual personality and their actions, real and potential, without needing to view the whole film first. Subsequent steps (see Section 4) are concerned with a fuller exploration of participant-process-circumstance relationships in terms of their direct embedding in concordances, in keeping with the goal of applying functional grammar through concordancing.

Despite some successes, there was a feeling throughout the classroom experimentation, shared by students and teachers alike, that textual explorations were being constrained by the limitations of traditional KWIC concordancing. Thus, lurking in the background was the constant, nagging question: how could patterns in wordings be better related to patterns of action? As Figure 3 shows, two further types of concordance were incorporated into MCA in July 2006: the tabulated concordance and the captioned concordance respectively associated with MCA’s new Pivot and Captioning facilities. They constitute extensions to KWIC-type lemma-based concordancing and are designed primarily to take the co-presence of visual, verbal and actional resources in multimodal texts into account, encouraging users to speculate about the nature, incidence and functions of wordings in multimodal texts in terms of underlying meaning-making processes. Thus, the focus in the corpus illustrated in Figure 3 is on the way in which resources, visual, linguistic and actional, are used to build up clusters and their parts (for cluster see Baldry, Thibault, 2006a: 31). In this respect, this corpus, derived from a collection of printed posters produced for an Italian supermarket chain, instantiates two types of textual objects: verbal clusters, which function as captions, and visual clusters, which reincarnate foodstuffs as people, animals and inanimate objects and, in so doing, evoke potential actions. To reflect these realities, the corpus in question has been tagged as a multimodal form-oriented corpus. Thus, in keeping with traditional concordancing, searches can still focus on wordings but additionally there are tags for non-linguistic resources, both primary ones, such as colour, size, spatial disposition, and secondary ones such as the clusters that the primary resources instantiate: clothing, foodstuffs, humans, animals and objects. The combined force of the media-indexed concordance, the tabulated concordance and the captioned concordance means that a suitably tagged corpus can now be searched for non-linguistic data in ways that go beyond the wordings-oriented description given of these extensions in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Examples of multimedia extensions to traditional lemma-based concordancing.
Extension 1: The media-indexed or multimedia concordance. By clicking on the Media Player buttons shown in the central panel, students can hear and/or see wordings as they occur in the original film sequence, in the case in point a sequence of digitalized posters. The corpus in question is multilingual and includes annotations in English, Italian and Albanian. As with traditional KWIC concordancing, the concordance shows how a target word – in this case Italian o – forms a recurrent pattern in relation to co-textual words that express ellipted x-or-y questions. In suitably tagged corpora, like the one illustrated, the media-indexed concordance, like traditional lemma-based concordances, can provide answers to such questions as to whether x-or-y questions in ellipted clauses in Italian and English (and maybe other languages) automatically involve a preferred choice that privileges the second of two options over the first. Media-indexed concordances thus help to create an awareness of the actual meanings that a specific pattern of wordings will make in specific contexts and specific textual genres in ways that apply but add to what can be learnt from book-based descriptions of grammatical systems. This is close to what is done in lemma-based concordancing but unlike traditional KWIC concordances, media-indexed concordances extend these possibilities to visually-oriented texts.

Extension 2: The tabulated concordance. The central panel shows this recent MCA extension which is designed to link wordings to the textual properties of specific genres and genres. The tabulated concordance is implemented in MCA through the Pivot function which, as its name suggests, rotates traditional concordances through 90 degrees, presenting them as paradigmatic sets labelled with a classifying Headword (in this case the labels of convenience Des1 and Des2). As befits an approach to concordancing focusing on text types, the row-based, semi-tabular format of traditional concordances, with its emphasis on a single language form and a single column; has given way to a fully tabular display consisting of columns containing sets of words with similar functions, in this case relating to the caption mini-genre. The example shows only two columns, but many more can be presented on a computer screen or printed out. As the central panel shows this extension to wordings encourages the examination of intertexts – in this case parallel subtexts in English and Italian consisting of captions and their translations. This furthers the possibilities for comparative text analysis. Like all expressions of intertextuality, intertexts are a way of looking at texts in intermediate terms, as entities lying half way between system and instance and between potential and actual (see Baldry, Thibault, 2006a:55). Here too, within a very traditional approach to concordancing, a small shift towards the examination of the relationship between meaning potential and action potential is being made.

Extension 3: The captioned concordance is yet a further extension designed to embed concordances into online teaching and testing applications. As exemplified in the right-hand panel, captioned concordances can be presented as subtitles generated in MCA by the combined use of the Search, Pivot and Captioning functions. Like traditional subtitles, they are synchronized with the unfolding visual text; the wordings displayed are, however, the result of user selections from any two columns in a tabulated concordance. They can thus be varied at will to show many wording combinations. Within the lemma-based approach to concordancing, one use is in the early stages of language learning where dual-language subtitling can facilitate the identification and meaning of words in an associated soundtrack.
As we move away from monomodal towards multimodal form-oriented concordancing, the question *What are concordances for?* begins to find answers in ways that are relevant to university text-based studies of English. At the very least, an increased range of text types can now be explored. However, a further and equally substantial consequence is the re-interpretation of the nature and function of co-texts in concordancing. A co-text (Sinclair, 1991) is no longer made up of just the word sets that immediately precede and follow target words as exemplified in Figure 1. As well as traditional co-texts, the concordancing mechanisms described above also generate extended co-texts (the film sequences, the posters etc.) as part of a concordance. In this respect, the co-text is now multimodal rather than monomodal. From another standpoint, however, the redevelopment of lemma-based concordancing may be taken as reconstruing concordances, and, in particular, their co-texts, as subtexts of and points of access to specific parts of digitalized texts (films, audio recordings, photos, printed media etc.). The description of the concordance extensions in Figure 3 characterizes this process in some detail and explains, in particular, how the process of re-interpreting co-text is furthered by MCA’s tabulating and captioning procedures. In keeping with the text-exploring function we have advocated above, concordances now function as contextualizing subtexts (Baldry, 2005: 97) of the texts to which they relate. That is, they directly assist the exploration of thematically-related sets of intertexts, e.g. primary genres such as captions and slogans; phase types such as typical scenes in films involving phoning, introducing oneself, ordering a meal or a drink and so on (Coccetta, 2004). Through this contextualizing function, students are constantly invited to explore texts shifting their focus between actual realizations and the shared intertextual patterns that prototypically lie behind specific instances (Baldry, Thibault, 2006b: 177). Overall, within such intertextual patterns, the approach adopted allows and invites comparison, across languages and across modalities, of mini-genres and genrelets. This is particularly useful in text-based studies of English and motivates the development of tests that explore intertextual patterns (see Section 4).

To summarize, the new concordancing mechanisms introduced through MCA enact a shift from the traditional concern for word patterns in large corpora towards long-heralded computer-based explorations of specific texts and genres (Baldry, 1990; Baldry, Thibault, 2001). Once automatic tagging is put aside there is no reason why corpora and concordancers should not be constructed in a way that highlights recurrent textual patterns in specific texts. A defining feature of this approach to concordancing is the way information about a film can be quickly built up by traditional keyword searches coupled with viewings of short film sequences lasting on average between 15 and 30 seconds. The same principles and techniques can, of course, be applied to corpora of films and scripts that allow specific film genres and/or specific functions in films to be explored (Coccetta, 2004). The research and development work into concordancing carried out in the DIDACTAS and eColingua projects in relation to multimedia language activities and tests (Coccetta, 2004; Baldry et al, 2005, Dalziel, Metelli, in press) has thus led to new forms of lexis-oriented concordancing that have been applied inter alia to adverts, printed posters and as we shall see below (Section 3) to medical animations (Baldry, Guardamagna, in press). MCA’s multimedia extensions could
also be used to explore other types of media, for example, the Harry Lime radio script and soundtrack shown in Figure 1.

3. Multimodal meaning-oriented concordances and concordancing as a text microscope

Though we have made a passing mention of multimodal-form oriented concordancing, all the illustrations given so far relate to lemma-based KWIC concordances – form-oriented monomodal concordances in our terminology – whose co-texts have been extended to embrace multimodal texts relating to printed and dynamic media. Thus, none of the concordances illustrated so far are meaning-oriented and most are only residually multimodal. At the opposite end of the spectrum, separated by an intermediate series of other types of concordance, such as form-oriented multimodal concordances and meaning-oriented monomodal concordances, lie multimodal meaning-oriented concordances whose conception is very different.

The bottom part of Figure 4 gives an example of such a concordance produced by the fragment of an MCA mini-grammar shown in the top part of Figure 4. In keeping with the focus on meaning-making processes in film texts, the concordance explicitly identifies transitivity relations in both the video and soundtracks and, apart from the link to the relevant film clip, little else. Thus, this type of concordance makes no reference to form, whether linguistic or non-linguistic. It focuses exclusively on how soundtrack and videotrack interact by specifying how meaning processes are distributed across the two tracks; thus, the example specifies experiential meaning associated with the visual process of binding and links it to experiential meaning in a labelling function in the soundtrack. Thus, functional grammar is directly embedded in concordances (cf. O’Halloran, Judd’s Systemics software, 2002).

Figure 4: An MCA mini-grammar and a concordance that it produces
The concordance in question is, in fact, part of the exploration of the metatextual level of a corpus of 120 medical animations, designed originally for teaching purposes, that simulate and reconstruct body processes, so-called “mechanisms of action” such as heartbeat, which are affected by degenerative processes or by pathogens (Baldry, Guardamagna, in press). When exploring the medical animation genre, medical students, learning English through text-based studies, can use concordancing to establish how medical animations are organised as texts, in particular, the ways in which the off-screen narration is synchronized with what is happening in the visual. In general, the more complex the pathological processes become, the more complex is their multimodal representation and unfolding in time. This is the case, for example, with the videotrack's metatextual level where visual processes such as captioning, labelling, selecting and/or pointing to organs and body parts are used to isolate and identify specific objects in the videotrack. A similar metatextual level exists in the soundtrack insofar as the off-screen narrator uses resources such as specific voice prosodies and salient intonation patterns in combination with language to carry out a labelling function that signals to the student viewer that a technical term is being used that needs to be remembered.

Interesting as the analysis of this corpus may be in its establishment of the nature and functions of multimodal meaning-oriented concordances, the fundamental point to be made in this section is that concordancing in MCA is adjustable to actual needs. It is the MCA user who decides the degree to which a particular set of concordances will be monomodal or multimodal and meaning or form-oriented by moving up, down and across the various branches of a mini-grammar tree. Let us illustrate this in relation to the mini-grammar given in Figure 4 and the word “binding”. To obtain a traditional lemma-type concordance, the user selects the Language (form) descriptor (part of the Form/Resource subset of the Soundtrack branch of the mini-grammar) and types in the specific target word, in this case the word “binding”. A search of the form: Language (form) contains “binding” returns concordances containing all the examples of the word “binding” in the soundtrack together with their co-texts. The search can now be modified to include all the instances of the word “binding” that relate specifically to the labelling function. The search takes a relational form: Language (form) contains “binding” AND Labelling (language function) contains “binding”. This search returns a concordance which specifies both the wordings involved and their functions (in terms of transitivity relations). The user can now extend the search once again so as to produce concordances for all of the functions that the word “binding” carries out in the soundtrack. This time, the search form is: Soundtrack (Function/ Meaning) contains “binding”. A further extension produces concordances that include both wordings and functions relating to “binding” in the entire soundtrack. In this case, the search takes one of two forms: either Soundtrack (Function/ Meaning) contains “binding” AND Soundtrack (Form/Resource) contains “binding” or more simply, moving up the mini-grammar tree, Soundtrack contains “binding”.

However, the user can also go beyond the soundtrack to include annotations that describe the binding process in the videotrack. Binding is, after all, a basic visual process in this corpus with many fascinating “science-fiction” animations in which objects move and hook up with each other. Thus, although the word...
“binding” does not appear in the videotrack, thanks to the way the corpus is annotated, a search of the form: Videotrack contains “binding” will produce concordances that identify all the visual processes involving binding. This includes data relating both to the meaning-oriented and form-oriented branches of the videotrack, i.e. both the process itself and the resources – typically movement, colour and shape – used to instantiate it. A more restricted search, one that is either meaning-oriented or form-oriented, will involve a subset that is lower down the tree, namely Videotrack: Function/meaning contains “binding” or, alternatively, Videotrack: Form/Resource contains “binding”. There is a final expansion which produces concordances that include forms and functions of all references to binding – linguistic, visual and actional – in the entire corpus. The search is simply: Corpus contains “binding”.

In this way the user, starting from a low-level subset, has now reached the top of the mini-grammar shown in Figure 4. All this is a powerful illustration of the text microscope function of MCA concordancing. A concordancer now provides a level of focus and definition which can be constantly raised or lowered by the user. The reverse mechanism is also possible, i.e. gradual restriction from searches that involve both the videotrack and the soundtrack to more limited ones. Given that a film sequence is associated to all the concordances mentioned above and that the student is free to use media-indexed, tabulated or captioned concordances in all cases, the range of choice students have in their concordance-based text explorations is now considerable.

This degree of user control over concordance type, is possible because, as the chart in the top part of Figure 4 shows, concordancing in MCA is governed by the specification of a mini-grammar, a level of annotation which defines descriptive parameters and which interacts with a second level of annotation – Sequence Analysis – in which specific data is associated to each descriptive parameter for each film sequence defined by the corpus author. In the case of the film described in Section 1, the mini-grammar is very simple, consisting of a single superordinate category, Lines, which contains a subset of descriptors of the form LineX, where X is a number corresponding to each of the lines uttered in a particular scene. In the case of the medical animation corpus, the mini-grammar in Figure 4 is much more complex, consisting of a series of superordinate categories which contain subsets of descriptors, some of which, in their turn, function as superordinate categories containing further subsets. Thus, searching for binding as a visual process is technically possible because binding is represented in the MCA mini-grammar both in terms of the experiential functions instantiated in the videotrack and in terms of the resources used in their instantiation. As explained above, the details of the functions of the individual binding processes and the resources used to instantiate them are specified for each film sequence through the second level of annotation, namely the Sequence Analysis tool.

To summarize this section, we have described a concordancing procedure that extends traditional concordancing of language-based texts to multimodal texts in terms of a user-controlled sequence of graded stages. The focus has been on a variety of concordances including genuine multimodal concordances that identify basic text processes. Videotacks and soundtracks in the medical animations corpus and, of course, film texts in general, synchronize many meaning-making
processes. In this respect, we may look on sets of multimodal concordances as records of this activity arranged so that similarities and differences are highlighted within and across texts. That is, by rearranging activities so that their patterned nature is made more prominent, multimodal concordances reconstruct, in an ideal form, both patterns of relationships involving mergings between different activities and processes as well as stages in texts involving temporal and/or causal sequencing. Multimodal concordances thus identify similarities and differences in hierarchical terms, i.e. within the same type of activity and within the same text as well as in relational terms, i.e. across classes of activity and across texts. Obviously, but perhaps more significantly, they do so in terms of combinations of both. Though far from exhaustive, the mini-grammar in Figure 4 illustrates the potential for different types of searches: monomodal/multimodal, meaning/form-oriented, relational and/or hierarchical. These options significantly empower the user as regards choice, turning a concordancer into a text microscope. All this constitutes a flexible approach to the analysis of meanings, forms and resources in a film corpus. Section 4 shows why this degree of flexibility is essential when constructing concordance-based tests.

4. Tests based on a variety of concordance types

There is now only a short step to be taken as regards enacting a test that uses inter alia meaning-oriented concordancing in the assessment of students’ awareness of the multimodal organisation of texts. The testing procedures illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 are formative in that they relate to classroom activities. End-of-course, summative tests can also be devised that ascertain students’ individual skills in understanding films based, for example, on the appropriate captioning of a sequence of frames as illustrated in Figure 2.1. Figure 5 gives a checklist of questions used as the basis for such a test which may be considered “valid” for many multimodal genres. Specifically, by virtue of their reference to time-related events, the questions shown in italics could, in most circumstances, only be posed in relation to dynamic multimodal texts, such as film texts, whose meaning making is by definition dependent on the passage of time, while the majority of the other questions could also be put forward in relation to printed texts. In this respect, it may be claimed that, as hinted above, one of the main advantages of using multimodal concordances in relation to multimodal tests is precisely that they assist in the work of encouraging the use of film texts in language learning, something to be considered a big step forward.

1. Who/what are the participants in the text? Who/what are the main participants?
2. Are they human, animal or inanimate?
3. Which participants are active? Which participants are passive?
4. What relationships seem to exist between the participants? How do they interact?
5. What kinds of activities and events are associated to them? What temporal scales are involved?
6. What processes are undertaken and in what circumstances? What namings, highlightings, shadings and linkings exist? What mergings, changes in size and perspective are found?
7. What features – e.g. patterns of movement, action, colour, sound – connect one part of the text to other parts? What changes take place in these patternings?
What is the significance of colour? Do particular colours stand out? What changes in colour as the text unfolds indicate special meanings?

Figure 5: A checklist of questions applicable to multimodal texts

There are various ways in which the questions in Figure 5 can be used to test students' awareness of the multimodal organisation of texts. We may briefly illustrate three.

A first type which has been successfully tested in the University of Pavia with students following lauree specialistiche in medicine and communication studies is for students to create a small MCA corpus of filmed websites usually restricted to two or three home pages and other pages directly linked to the home page that are tagged in such a way as to provide replies to these questions. Students are required in their final exam, to give a PowerPoint presentation that both illustrates and compares the characteristics of the chosen websites. At one level, this is a test of language ability that specifically requires students to integrate written content with an oral presentation. At another level, it is a test of students' awareness of multimodal grammar (Baldry, Thibault, 2006a). Concordances of various types, derived from the students' mini-corpora, provide the basis for tabulated comparisons in the PowerPoint presentation of the various mini-genres in the websites selected for comparison, such as search engines, mastheads, photos, captions and so on. Tabulated, multimodal form-oriented concordances (described in Section 2 in relation to the poster corpus) relating to cluster analysis are popular in the preparation for this kind of presentation. This is partly because they help students to identify the shared, intertextual characteristics and functions that lie behind the many variables, functional and formal, associated with these mini-genres.

A second test involves the medical simulation corpus described in the previous section and is based on the instruction to students enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine to write a summary in English relating to the characteristics of the medical simulations genre, including typical transitivity patterns. This type of test requires students to carry out multimodal meaning-oriented searches in relation to the typical phenomena of this genre: binding, breaking, transforming and so on.

A third test involves the printed poster corpus. This requires students to write a guided summary of the poster genre based on the corpus shown in Figure 3. Though similar to the preceding test, the corpus is tagged in such a way as to provide the students with an important shortcut. As explained in Section 2, the corpus is based on a mini-grammar, part of which incorporates descriptors of the type indicated in Figure 4, but part of which also includes sets of questions like those indicated in Figure 5. Searches thus can be carried out directly in terms of test questions such as those in Figure 5, all part of the process of making the text-exploration function of corpora easy for students to carry out.

To summarise, this section has focused on tests based on a variety of concordance types for the analysis of multimodal genres that this article proposes as being appropriate in a teaching and testing cycle. This includes genuine multimodal tests concerned with explicit demonstrations of students' awareness of grammatical functions in multimodal texts (Baldry, Thibault, 2006a).
5. Conclusions

What are concordances for? One answer to this question, the main one being put forward in this article, is that concordances need not necessarily be concerned merely with the quest for patterns in texts. A different function of concordancers is to pinpoint words and other non-linguistic resources in text-based corpora and to characterise their contextual functions. A further concomitant function is to allow texts to be explored, reconstructed and analysed. We may recall that with the development of computer-based concordancing, a shift occurred as regards the nature and function of concordances as compared with their original incarnation as printed word lists which helped scholars locate words and phrases in literary texts (e.g. concordances to Shakespeare). The MCA project returns to this original conception by pinpointing the occurrence of specific words and other resources in specific texts. But it goes beyond this by making it possible to describe the functions of these words and resources in terms, for example, of the transitivity system in English, by allowing characterisations to be made of the participants, human or otherwise, the processes they enact and undergo and the circumstances in which these processes occur. Classroom experimentation has shown this approach to be a worthwhile venture.

Is it difficult to implement? Since its inception, MCA has been designed to be easy to use. The concordancing activities described above only require the selection of a descriptor from a drop-down menu, a keyword to be typed in and the Search key to be activated. From an author’s point of view, the task is not quite so easy since manual tagging is involved. However, description of the different concordance types and concordancing procedures that this article has provided is an essential step to making the authoring goals clearer to understand and possibly simpler to implement. In keeping with this principle, the article has redefined co-text and suggested that four different types of concordance exist, namely:

1. Monomodal form-oriented concordances (the traditional lemma-based concordance);
2. Monomodal meaning-oriented concordances;
3. Multimodal form-oriented concordances;
4. Multimodal meaning-oriented concordances.

Furthermore, it has associated each of these with three new concordancing procedures namely:

1. The media-indexed concordance;
2. The tabulated concordance;
3. The captioned concordance.

This does not, of course, exhaust the list of possible concordance types or the concordancing procedures associated with them. It is possible, for example, to posit the existence of the scalar-oriented and genre-oriented concordances as significant subcategories of multimodal meaning-making concordances (Baldry, Thibault, forthcoming).

As MCA evolves, it attempts to transcend the possibilities afforded by form-oriented language-only concordance tools essentially concerned with the concordancing of words, their parts and combinations such as: SARA (Aston, Burnard, 1998),

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TACTweb (Rockwell et al., 1997), WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2001) and AntConc (Anthony, 2005) while still retaining and incorporating, where possible, the principles and affordances inspiring them. Once automatic tagging is put aside there is no reason why corpora and concordancers cannot be constructed in such a way as to support all the types of concordancing discussed above. As more experience with the media-indexed, tabulated and captioned varieties of monomodal and multimodal form-oriented concordancing is acquired, the time taken to complete the tagging process for these types of concordancing will constantly be reduced. Faster tagging is expected with the next release of MCA which will include file-uploading tools that extend the possibilities for offline tagging of files based on word processing tools such as Word.

The search for a genuine multimodal approach to concordancing – one that is not simply lemma-based concordancing re-invented with multimedia extensions that produce a multimodal co-text (Section 1) – has been particularly influenced by observations expressed by researchers, teachers and, of course, students about the goals of computer-based concordancing. Thus, the research reported above is breaking new ground not just by promoting new genuinely multimodal forms of concordancing and new concordancing techniques. Rather, within applicative frameworks, it is attempting to define new multimodal goals for concordancing that use concordances to apply functional grammar to multimodal texts. The article has suggested the viability of alternatives, developed and tested within the DIDACTAS and eColingua projects, to traditional lemma-based concordancing, with students taking courses in the fields of foreign languages, communication studies and medicine. All this is part of a constantly evolving process whose developments include: research into new forms of lexis-oriented concordancing appropriate for the classroom analysis of visual genres (Baldry et al, 2005; Ackerley, Coccetta, this volume, in press; Dalziel, Metelli, in press); probabilistic approaches to form-oriented language-only concordances (Tucker, 2006: 90-4); the development of language-based meaning-oriented tagging (Taylor Torsello, 2001, Taylor Torsello, Baldry, 2005); language-based meaning-oriented concordancing as implemented by Systemics (O’Halloran, Judd, 2002); and research into multimodal corpus linguistics (Baldry, Thibault, 2001, 2006b, forthcoming).

To summarize and conclude: a basic tenet that has informed this paper is that a wider vision of the nature and functions of concordancing than has existed in the past is, inter alia, a key to better integration of concordances into the university teaching and testing cycle. Testing, in particular, is an area where corpus studies appear, so far, to have been used only in a limited and experimental way (Barker, 2004). As we have seen in Section 4, new forms of concordancing that use the MCA system can contribute to the goal of underpinning the position of multimodal text analysis in the university teaching and testing cycle by strengthening the range and variety of classroom testing activities based on concordancing. In a nutshell, by advocating a step-by-step approach that blends traditional concordancing with more innovative conceptions, the article has posited a multifaceted answer to the question raised in the title.
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1. Introduction

This paper will explore the potential connections between brain-based principles of learning and the use of multimodal text analysis (MTA) in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. The paper will first briefly outline what brain-based learning is, and then go on to discuss how certain of its principles can be applied to the learning of a foreign language based on a multimodal text studies approach. More specifically, as one of the underlying propositions of brain-based learning is that the human brain learns most optimally by seeking out patterns, the paper will attempt to demonstrate how the use of corpora and of concordancing tools in guided and autonomous language learning activities is particularly suitable to raising language awareness in learners. Thus the goal of tailoring learning activities to brain-based principles implies stimulating language awareness in learners in order to help them comprehend, research, reflect on and remember foreign language with greater ease. The paper is highly speculative and aims primarily to stimulate thought and discussion about ways of building new learning models and of better exploiting innovative technology in foreign language learning.

2. Brain-based learning

In the past decade there has been an explosion of brain research in neuroscience. Technologically advanced equipment and procedures, such as Positron Emis-
Tomography (PET) scanning now permit researchers to not only study brain anatomy, but also to explore the activity and functioning of the brain in real time. The continuously evolving findings of these neurological investigations have enabled people working in a vast range of fields to make significant advances, leading to both theoretical and concrete applications in neurosurgery, endocrinology and psycholinguistics, to name only a few. One of the areas where the results of this research have had extremely interesting developments is that of learning. While it is true that much of the application of brain research has been focused on infants’ and children’s learning and development, it is also true that a clear picture of the learning brain, in all of its various stages and at various ages, has also begun to emerge. A number of talented scholars are working to use the information that brain research is generating in order to shed light on learning practices and to bring their work to the attention of educators. The idea is to first understand how the brain instinctively and optimally learns and then to explore how this knowledge can help to foster approaches to teaching and learning that are more compatible with the natural tendencies of the brain. It emerges that much of what we may naturally take for granted as standard practice in academic environments is, in reality, based on methodological foundations that could actually be working against the brain’s optimal learning inclinations.

Foremost among the group of scholars who are striving to apply cutting-edge brain research to educational models are Renata Nummela Caine and Geoffrey Caine, a husband and wife team working out of the University of San Bernardino in California. Among their numerous publications dedicated to brain research and brain-compatible learning, one in particular stands out. The book, “Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain” (Caine and Caine, 1994), shows how brain research findings can be applied, both theoretically and practically, to the understanding of learning processes. In the book, the Caines identify 12 basic principles which sum up how the human brain learns, and subsequently go on to discuss how teaching practices can be influenced and guided by these principles to create environments and conditions of “brain-compatible learning”. The brain-learning principles, based on an extensive review of the neuroscience literature, worked out by the Caines are presented below:

1. The brain, a complex adaptive system, is a parallel processor
2. The brain is a social brain
3. The search for meaning is innate
4. The search for meaning occurs through patterning
5. Emotions are critical to patterning
6. Every brain simultaneously perceives and creates parts and wholes
7. Learning involves both focused attention and peripheral perception
8. Learning always involves both conscious and unconscious processes
9. We have at least two ways of organizing memory
10. Learning is developmental
11. Complex learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat
12. Every brain is uniquely organized

While each of these principles deserves to be fully explored on its own, as well as in relation to the learning of foreign languages, due to space limitations and a de-
sire to focus on specific subject matter, the present paper will attempt to explore only some of the above principles. Indeed, four of the above 12 principles will be discussed below and an attempt will be made to draw connections between Principles One, Four, Five and Six and the use of MTA in foreign language teaching and learning. However, before these connections can be discussed, it is necessary to outline the approach that uses MTA in English language university courses.

3. Multimodal Text Analysis in English-language courses

3.1. The Multimodal Concordancing Authoring tool

The concepts that form the basis of the teaching and learning model briefly described below were developed in courses created for the University of Pavia, specifically within a foreign language program run jointly by the University of Pavia Language Center and Professor Anthony Baldry, acting as coordinator of a project sponsored by the European Social Fund and the Lombardy Region for the University of Pavia administration. Many of these concepts derive from the work that Anthony Baldry and Paul Thibault have carried out in the field of multimodal text transcription and multimodal text studies (Thibault 2000, Baldry and Thibault 2001, Baldry 2005), though the notions developed by Baldry and Thibault have at times been simplified and adapted to the needs of non-specialized mixed-level learners of English, e.g. university students of medicine, engineering, law, etc. who range between the European-framework levels of B1 and C1. The two most noteworthy aspects of these courses, and certainly those of major interest to the present paper, are that 1) each course is based entirely on a short made-for-television thriller film1 and 2) that the course materials and the film itself are delivered on-line to students in a specially designed teaching and research platform, the Multimodal Concordancing Authoring (MCA) tool. MCA contains a copy of the film, in a Windows Media Video (wmv) format, which has been divided into separate phases, according to Thibault’s definition of phase (2000), and which learners may view by clicking at appropriate moments on a Windows Media Player (MP) icon. Each phase of the film is associated with a unit of teaching materials, also available to be viewed on MCA in either Word or PDF format, or downloaded and printed out if so desired. The courses consist of blended learning with the average course containing approximately 32 hours of classroom teaching/learning together with 10 or more hours of independent study carried out both on- and off-line by students outside the classroom. For a more detailed description of these courses, please see Grunther (2004: 91-106) and/or Baldry (2005: 98-101).

In addition to the film and the course materials, MCA also contains all of the film’s dialog, stored line-by-line for each phase of the film. These lines of dialog can be retrieved by students through MCA’s search engine mechanism which can access a concordance of a single word or a group of words occurring throughout the film. Figure 1 below shows the results of an MCA search for all of the occurrences of the word so in a film used in one of the courses. The results tell the learner which phase of the film the word or words occur in (blue font on the left) and which line of dialog (in black underneath the MP icon) has been retrieved; in addition, the learner may view the film phase and hear the word/s in context by clicking on the Media Player icon in the left-hand column.
A search can be carried out when students are focusing on the comprehension of one of the film’s phases and need to retrieve lines of dialog to check their understanding. Or, alternatively, students may decide to focus on a particular language item and explore its usage throughout an entire film or corpus of films housed in MCA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 3 Unit 2</th>
<th>Line 09</th>
<th>Line 9 Dr. Burke: Uh-huh. So what’s the problem?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Line 01</td>
<td>Line 1 Mrs. Richardson: How’d you get here so fast?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 12 Unit 5</td>
<td>Line 07</td>
<td>Line 7 Dr. Burke: I thought of that too. So I took the liberty of following our Mr. Winters when he left the hospital this afternoon. Need I tell you where he went?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. A concordance of the word so returned by an MCA search in a film used in a B2 course.

3.2. **Analyzing the Film as Text**

As stated above, the entire course is the film and thus the film, and therefore the course itself, is approached as the unravelling of a text. Importantly, the learners are sensitized right from the start to the multimodal nature of the film text. In other words, while students may begin such a course by expecting to focus exclusively on *language*, they are rapidly made aware of how the language of the film text is just one aspect, critical though it may be, of their film viewing experience.

The various semiotic elements that are present in the meaning making of the film text are introduced to learners through relatively simple observation exercises. The students are asked to notice and interpret, in addition to language, the following aspects of each phase: gesture, gaze, facial expression, voice (tone, pitch, intonation, etc.), use of music and ambient sound, posture/proximity, movement and camera positioning. They are then asked to complete tables like the ones shown in Figures 2 and 3 below so as to sharpen their awareness and perception of the meaning-making that goes into each phase. The classroom discussions which arise as a result of drawing learner attention to the use of the various semiotic elements within the text are stimulating and enriching. Students are constantly adding new perceptions and interpretations as they analyze the film text; in this way, not only do they increase their understanding of the text in question, but they use the language itself to state opinions and exchange views with classmates and the teacher. Drawn along by the stimulating thriller plot, they often seem to break through the somewhat artificial barrier of using “real” language in an “artificial”, i.e. classroom setting.
An additional advantage to drawing learners’ attention to varied channels of communication lies in the ample amount of cultural information that can be inferred from a multi-channel interaction analysis; the cultural clues provided by, for example, gesture often extend beyond the surface meaning of the words taken alone. An immediate example can be found in the student table in Figure 3 above, where the student made a note about a character winking at another in the gesture column and then added an interrogative normal? in parentheses underneath the notation. In fact, she was prompted to question whether the typical doctor-patient relationship in the context of the film (in this case, an American setting) included a gesture as intimate and potentially flirtatious as winking; this in turn generated a very interesting class discussion comparing doctor-patient relationships and levels of formality in American versus Italian cultures.

At this point we have seen, albeit briefly, how two different tools, i.e. language-based relational database searching in MCA and annotated multimodal tables for semiotic resource deployment are used in courses based on a multimodal text analysis approach to English-language learning. The next step is to relate the approach to certain principles of brain-based learning (see list p.54).

4. BRAIN-BASED LEARNING PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO MTA

Principle One, which states that the brain is a parallel processor, is perhaps the one that relates most naturally to the use of MTA in language learning. The research shows that the brain actually learns best and retains information better when
perceiving along multiple channels, whether consciously or unconsciously. The brain is always seeking to perceive simultaneous, parallel messages and to weave them together to form an overarching, holistic vision. The tendency in foreign language teaching, however, to “compartmentalize” language, dividing it up neatly into separate categories, e.g. vocabulary versus grammar, listening comprehension versus oral production or present simple versus simple past, is well known. It is often difficult for teachers to overcome this tendency, especially as many textbooks and often the students themselves are conditioned to approach language learning this way, i.e. cutting up language into discrete units, areas and tasks rather than seeking out the overriding connections and systems that comprise meaning making. This “tunnel vision” also encourages both teachers and learners to conceive of language as a more or less isolated phenomenon, rather than placing it firmly within its social and cultural context in the tradition of linguists and educators such as Michael Halliday (bib.).

When the group of teachers working on the courses described in this paper were initially approached about using MTA in the low- or mid-level English language classroom, a number of objections were raised. Some of the teachers said that MTA was too complicated, that students couldn’t pay attention simultaneously to multiple messages and consequently they would understand less language, that students would be confused and frustrated, and so on. What is undeniably true is that many language learners often find film viewing frustrating. Indeed, many of them, particularly those not yet at the B2 level, tend to lose interest after about 10 or 15 minutes and “tune out”. But what we discovered is that many, if not most, language students favor an approach to film viewing that prioritizes listening over seeing. Indeed, some learners will actually close or avert their eyes in an effort to “concentrate” better and thus, in their view, understand more. Conversely, when learners are made explicitly aware of the multimodal nature not only of films, but of human interaction and communication in general, they often seem to “tune in” to a film in a new way: suddenly their understanding of individual words or phrases (or more often their not understanding them) is not their main priority any longer, but rather they learn to observe and perceive more holistically. They become sensitized to the multiple channels being employed in the communication process and begin to notice how language works together with other elements, in particular with gesture, facial expression and voice quality, to create meaning, meaning that is unexpectedly accessible to them in a way that it may not have been when their ability to understand single words was at the center of their attention.

Thus we find that the brain is not only capable of focusing simultaneously on complex and parallel phenomena, but that it actually desires to do so and functions well or even better under such circumstances. Likewise, language is not merely a subject to be studied in the classroom, but rather a real-life participatory social experience for learners, who can and should use their familiar, real-world information to interpret and construct meaning.

Principle Four, the search for meaning occurs through patterning, is one of the most interesting points to emerge from brain research and its application to learning. Indeed, it appears that the brain automatically strives to make sense of what it perceives and it also automatically and constantly works towards organizing perceptions, information and events into meaningful patterns. Therefore,
teachers and students can help the brain to learn by drawing attention to patterns and by making them more conscious and explicit for learners. Both of the tools described above, the use of concordancing tools within the MCA corpora and of multimodal tables for parallel semiotic identification and annotation, are attempts to guide the brain in its innate search for meaningful patterns. MCA’s concordancing tools can ideally help students to perceive how language is used to “mean”, rather than focusing exclusively on what a particular word represents in an isolated, non-contextualized situation (e.g. a dictionary definition). In our experience, we have seen students stimulated to use concordancing searches to explore words and collocations, an exploration that arises spontaneously from stimuli in film dialogs and that is carried out autonomously both inside and outside the classroom.

The simplified multimodal tables also help learners to identify emerging patterns, not only in relation to language, but also in terms of how other elements combine with language to create meanings. We are currently working on extending the corpora in MCA and expanding the language-based relational databases by adding other types and combinations of meaning-making resources. Data based on students’ interpretation of gesture in the 3 films presently in the MCA B1-C1 film teaching corpus is being collected and sorted so as to add a learner-generated gesture-based relational database to the project. For example, researchers and/or learners will be able to access gestures such as “finger pointing”, calling up a concordance of all such cases within the film corpus, each occurrence appearing together with a Media Player icon which, when clicked, will show the piece of film containing the gesture within its context. It will then be possible to compare similar gestures in differing contexts, as well as to see how a particular gesture, for example finger pointing, is used together with other resources, including of course language, in meaning making.

Principle Five, emotions are critical to patterning, is another concept that deserves an entire article, if not more, in terms of potential discussion and further development within the general area of foreign language learning. However, due to the restricted scope of the present paper, the issue will be dealt with relatively succinctly, and specifically in relation to the courses under discussion. We know that emotion is tied to memory in that it is commonly recognized that people remember events connected to strong emotions, whether positive or negative (just think of the fact that the vast majority of people can successfully answer a question like “Where were you when you heard about the attack on the Twin Towers?”). Recent research has shown how the brain tends to not only remember events associated with emotions, but also to create new synapses and fire neurons critical to learning when positive emotions are associated with a situation. This brings us to the choice of basing an English language course on short thriller films. Students are generally positively stimulated by the idea of watching a film and their level of involvement seems to increase when the film is intricately plotted and suspenseful. Learners on these MTA courses are asked to hone their “detective” skills, both in terms of predicting what will happen in the plot of the film, but also of what people will most likely say as the story unfolds. The emotional gratification they feel as they successfully follow a film, but also as they often manage to foresee what is going to happen and what language will be used, is
substantial. MTA applied to the watching of thriller films works towards empowering learners by teaching them strategies to successfully predict what is coming and to identify and define patterns of language use and interaction. These types of emotionally successful and empowering activities seem to offer a worthwhile model for the brain compatible teaching and learning of foreign languages.

Principle Six, every brain simultaneously perceives and creates parts and wholes, is a concept which cries out for an increase in the use of integrated models of learning. Again, rather than cutting up a language into discrete units, teachers should perhaps be directing learner energy towards figuring out how the parts fit together. The multimodal approach to language study in our MTA courses divides a film text into phases (the parts) while simultaneously focusing attention on the task of constructing an evolving meaning for the overall film (the whole). By basing the activities and objectives of the course on one unified text (the film), a sense of wholeness emerges for learners who find a satisfying “logic” in connecting and summing up the parts to follow the thread of the developing plot. A clearly defined context, that of the thriller film, contains all of the language and interaction used and referred to in the course and this gives a further sense of completeness and integration to the learner.

The very act of analyzing a film from a multimodal point of view exemplifies the parts/whole approach to learning promoted by brain-based principles. Students learn to broaden their focus, shifting from a single word/language dominance to an integrated vision that takes into account the multitude of resources deployed in real world communication and interaction.

Furthermore, the concept of exploring language through concordancing tools, as proposed in the MCA film corpus, provides an additional and alternative technique which is grounded in a brain-compatible parts/whole principle of learning. Each occurrence or entry in a concordance is an essential “part” that combines with the other occurrences/entries to form a “whole” concordance in a particular corpus. As a multimodal corpus is integrated into the MCA film/teaching corpus, we will hopefully see a blossoming of ways of exploring and interpreting the various combinations (the parts) of resources that go to make up meaning-making processes (the whole).

5. Conclusions

Innovative brain research has already started to bear fruit in the critical areas of learning and educational practices. Our assumptions about teaching and learning foreign languages should ideally be re-examined so as to keep pace with what solid scientific research is telling us about how the human brain functions best. There are numerous and varied reasons why language teachers are increasingly turning to authentic materials, and specifically to films and videos, for use inside and outside of the foreign-language classroom; hopefully the approach that makes use of multimodal text analysis presented in this paper will provide food for thought about ways of applying brain-based learning principles to foreign-language teaching and learning models. The use of corpora and of concordancing tools clearly needs further exploration and development, but appears to hold
great promise for researchers interested in language use and human meaning making, as well as for applied linguists striving towards new ways of facilitating and even accelerating language learning in a global age. Finally, strongly supported brain-based principles can help us find the courage not to underestimate the capacity of motivated learners for stimulating, complex and multiple-channel input in language learning environments.
Notes

1 According to Italian law (633/194, art. 15 e 70) a film is exonerated from author’s copyright fees if it is: shown for non-profit didactic purposes, not available to the general public, not shown in its entirety, shown for illustrative purposes, and not the cause of economic loss to the authors. In the present case, the film is available on-line, but only to non-paying students who are given a password to the protected website and who are advised on the legal responsibility of not revealing the password to anyone not enrolled in the course. In other words, the film is authorized to be viewed in the classroom (not in its entirety and for didactic, non-profit and illustrative aims), and its password-protected presence on the course’s website constitutes its use in a “virtual” classroom.

References


1. Introduction

Intralingual and interlingual subtitled films or TV programmes are precious tools for foreign language learning purposes because they combine the practice of listening and reading comprehension through entertainment. Consequently, they offer stimuli to which learners respond effectively because the use of this kind of multimedia and communication technology in the classroom offers learning opportunities that enable students to practise the foreign language both at cognitive and communicative levels.

In the 21st century, research into foreign language teaching and learning is gaining ever growing importance because the process of social globalisation requires extended and consolidated linguistic knowledge from all the citizens of the world who are more and more in need of cultural integration and mutual comprehension through dialogue. Language teachers are likely to get positive results if their day by day teaching is supported by extensive psychological and pedagogical research. Scientific guidelines must be adapted to situations and contexts dominated by multimedia technology tools, which respond to the needs of cultural and social progress.

The use of subtitled films for learning purposes triggers new ways of making learners practice the four main language skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Moreover, language courses based on films or multimedia programmes open a window to situated learning processes that facilitate the acquisition of behaviour patterns (Gardner 1985: 146). In fact, when video materials become in-
Instruments for language teaching and learning. Students are exposed not only to the target language but also to the target culture that is characteristic of another community.

The aim of this contribution is to promote the exploitation of subtitling as an educational promotion activity in the field of language learning and teaching methodology, because its intersemiotic potentials enhance all aspects of foreign language education.

2. Pedagogical and psychological insights for multimedia foreign language edutainment

Multimedia subtitled products represent a generalized type of entertainment which bears the unintentional character of naturalness. In order to safeguard the natural aspects against the non-natural context of the learning situation, teaching units based on subtitled audiovisual material should be phased within the framework of a teaching/learning approach where the fundamental idea is that learners must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with other learners.

This approach recalls the fundamental idea underlying engagement theory postulated by Kearsley and Shneiderman at the end of the nineties, according to which technology can facilitate the learners' engagement in ways which are difficult to achieve otherwise. Though this theory emerged from experiences of teaching subjects in electronic and distance education environments, its basic principles can be applied to foreign language learning. The core concept of this theory is that students must be involved in a process of collaborative teaching/learning experience. The principle of collaborative learning matches well with the successful method of Learning by Teaching (Lernen durch Lehren – LdL) created by Jean-Pol Martin to teach French as a foreign language at the University of Eichstätt in Germany. Martin's method spread in the second half of the eighties, when he founded a network of several thousand teachers that employed LdL in many different subjects. This pedagogical approach has had many forerunners such as the American Alan Gartner, who in his book Children teach Children: Learning by Teaching (1971) describes educational programmes in which young people have been tutoring younger students; the programmes are based on the assumption that children learn more from teaching other children. Teaching tasks offer young learners a chance to enact an adult role, thus providing reassurance and confidence for many of them.

Going back in time, we find that the idea of mutual instruction in the domain of teaching/learning methodology had already been carried out at the end of the 18th century by Andrew Bell, an army chaplain of the church of England who was the superintendent of the Madras Male Orphan Asylum, an institution founded by the East India Company. Since the teachers of the asylum were of poor quality, Bell thought that some of the teaching could be done by the pupils themselves. This approach proved successful and Bell taught other students to teach a variety of subjects and called his new system of education mutual instruction. In the early 19th century another British teacher, Joseph Lancaster, opened a small school in
the London borough of Southwark. In this school children could be educated without paying any fees, but it was impossible for Lancaster to employ people to teach the great number of children who attended his school. After reading about Andrew Bell’s mutual instruction method, he decided to adopt the principle of using pupils as helpers for the teacher. He thus created his own monitorial system. Under this system the teacher taught a select group of very good pupils, the monitors, to instruct other pupils. The so-called Bell-Lancaster method, though the two British educators developed their learning by teaching techniques independently, became very popular on a global scale because it proved to be a cheap way for spreading the benefits of education. Nowadays, in Italian universities, the ever growing number of students attending foreign language courses is in inverse proportion to the limited number of foreign language tenured faculty lecturers. The resulting imbalance between a rising demand for language learning and an inadequate supply of teaching staff is giving new impulse to research on teaching/learning methodologies with a view to creating new models to overcome contingent difficulties. Since all problems have historical recurrences, the present research is delving into the sinews of a number of past experiences in order to find teaching strategies and professional advice that might be adapted to the present day teaching/learning situation.

Applied examples taken from Teaching by learning methods were combined with some proposals taken from engagement theory, the approach which matches cooperative learning with the use of multimedia technology. The merger of these useful pedagogical suggestions has created a net of methodological assumptions that have paved the way for the creation of the experimental course, which is still being carried out at Pavia University with a group of fifteen students. Since the goal is to achieve a teaching/learning model based on subtitled multimedia products, the research is also taking into account the process which underlies the acquisition of a foreign language in contexts where information is conveyed by animation and full-motion video, graphics, audio and text.

It has already been stated in the introduction that learning a second language does not only entail the learning of grammar and syntax but, as Gardner suggests (1985: 146), also new behavioural patterns that gradually transform the learner into another social person. Therefore, the layout of the course needed to incorporate psychological insights, in order to understand the process of the learner’s construction of linguistic and cultural meanings in multimedia contexts. Reagan and Osborn write that: «Constructivism has a wide range of implications for language education» (2002: 62), but the cognitive theory of Piaget needed new insights and applications to be implemented by multimedia technology and the technological perspective of Seymour Papert of Massachusetts Institute of Technologies has provided the assumptions that satisfied this need and at this stage the quest for principles and techniques to be experimented during the multimedia course was completed.

Papert worked with Piaget in Geneva between the late 1950s and the early 1960s and his theory called constructionism (Papert 1991) is based on Piaget’s constructivism. While Piaget’s constructivism is mainly interested in the construction of internal stability where knowledge expands according to complex laws of self-organization, Papert’s constructionism, points out Ackermann (2002), is
more interested in the dynamics of change brought about by knowledge grounded in contexts and shaped by tools, media and technologies. The perspective of the comprehensive psychological theory of learning postulated by Papert was perfectly in keeping with the guidelines of Learning by Teaching educational systems which had already been merged with some principles of engagement theory, thus creating a mix of methodological instructions to be experimented during the Pavia course.

3. The setting and pedagogical organization

The setting is a multimedia classroom equipped with personal computers with DVD-ROM drive for individual work and a large screen behind the teacher’s desk, where learners can view the motion picture and read the text of subtitles as if they were sitting in a cinema.

The course was scheduled into two modules: the first module started at the beginning of the first semester of the academic year 2005/06 and the second module was to finish at the end of the second semester in summer 2006. The 15 students who volunteered for the teaching/learning multimedia project were given pedagogical instructions to enable them to play their role. The awareness of how to behave according to the tasks they were assigned was a fundamental pre-requisite that enabled them also to fix a set of goals in collaboration with the teacher. The pedagogical and organizational training required several meetings with the students because they had to take up the responsibility of their individual commitment as teachers and learners at the same time.

After the period of training the learners were given an entry-test with a view to assessing the level of their English competence. The average results were between lower intermediate and intermediate. The students were then divided into five working groups and one member of each group, chosen among the five best students, was assigned the task of coordinating and monitoring the work of the other two members. At the end of each activity the five coordinators exchanged views on the work done by each group and then each coordinator had to write in his electronic register the list of the strong points and the weak points of his/her group mates as well as his/her own. For example, if the skill to be practised was listening comprehension, each coordinator wrote in his/her register the answers of the group mates about the comprehension of the film storyline and then highlighted the strong points and the weak points of each member of the group, including his/her own.

3.1 The phases of the teaching/learning process

The projection of the film was phased as follows:

Original English soundtrack without subtitles

1) The film was projected onto the large screen in the original English soundtrack without subtitles to assess the amount of information gap accumulated by each learner. Learners were asked to be relaxed and not to worry if they didn’t understand during the first screening, yet they had to make an effort because they were starting their experience from the most difficult learn-
In the situation, though they were aware that it was the first step that would take them gradually to full comprehension at the end of the screenings. After the projection the teacher sent a questionnaire based on listening comprehension to each learner’s personal computer, then the coordinator of each group, who sat between the other two members, guided the work of his/her partners while they were answering the teacher’s questions. He/she also had to answer the questions and then compare the answers with the grid of solutions provided by the teacher and send the results of his/her group back to the teacher’s personal computer. The teacher, on the basis of the results obtained by each group, prepared another questionnaire aimed at consolidating the general comprehension of the plot. The students answered the questions in their electronic workbook and the coordinator of each group corrected his/her pupils written exercises, showed them to the teacher and, under the supervision of the teacher, marks were assigned and copied in the electronic register of each coordinator. The weak points of each group were compared and suggestions for improvement were negotiated with group-coordinators and the teacher. During the first activity the learners practised listening, speaking and writing.

**Intralingual subtitled version of the same film**

2) The students were given handouts based on relevant lexical, structural and idiomatic expressions taken from the film soundtrack. The content of the handouts was discussed within each group under the guide of the group coordinator, then the members of the class were allowed to ask questions or exchange comments with the teacher. This was a pre-viewing activity to prepare the learners to enjoy the intralingual subtitled version of the film they had already watched in the original version. At this stage the learners combined listening and reading comprehension in a situation of moderate stress because the effort of keeping up with the speed of subtitles and the film frames as well was reduced by their previous knowledge of the audiovisual product. The plot and some linguistic tricks, especially those hidden in idiomatic expressions, had already been cleared up by the pre-viewing activity based on the handout. After viewing the unilingual subtitled version each coordinator submitted the first questionnaire to his/her group-mates again. The learners wrote their answers in their electronic workbook and sent them to their coordinator. The coordinator compared the first group of answers, after the screening of the film in the original without subtitles, with the answers given after the second screening with unilingual subtitles. At this stage the coordinators examined the differences between the first intake and the second intake of language and storyline and quantified the improvements of their groups of students by giving them marks. After this group activity the teacher sent a series of tests, which enabled the learners to quantify how much they had learnt through listening, reading and viewing, making it possible for the teacher to assess their individual performance and fix data about the amount of intake that the teaching/learning groups had achieved during the lessons. The tests ranged from those based on stems of contextualised keywords taken from the film script, which were given to students for completion, and other key words that had to be defined by synonyms or paraphrases. The second type of test
required a gradual shift from lexical items to sentences and paragraphs. Then
students were asked to tackle a series of written exercises ranging from dia-
logue completion to paraphrasing completion, questions on context, colour/
object association, true/false questions, old/new questions, and yes/no ques-
tions. The final task was a written summary of the film using the language
they had already processed in the oral and written tests. The results of the
work done were then discussed among the five working groups of students
under the guidance of the teacher, then the learners were asked to evaluate
their individual and reciprocal process of memorisation by comparing the
three main activities related to long-term memory: storage, deletion and re-
trieval of information. If students are aware of the phases of their learning
process and are trained to organise information into associative chunks, they
are likely to increase their short-term and long term memory capacity (Caimi
Forth.).

Interlingual subtitled version of the same film

3) The pre-viewing and post-viewing exercises related to the first screening
of the original version and the second screening with unilingual subtitles
were based on language use and usage. The third screening with interlingual
subtitles was meant to focus student’s attention on the cultural and sociologi-
cal aspects conveyed by the storyline. The teacher and the five coordinators,
after singling out any possible misconstruction of meaning from the exer-
cises that the learners were asked to do before and after the two previous
screenings, turned to cultural questions and some based on the context of
the storyline. Such questions include the shooting location, the environment,
the furnishing of the houses where the action takes place, the social class to
which the characters belong, the characteristics of the habits of each character.
A series of additional questions that both the teacher and the students might
ask one another were also considered, to monitor any possible acquisition of
wrong behavioural patterns, which might undermine the success of foreign
language learning education. As far as language is concerned, particular em-
phasis was given to the translation of the text by means of subtitles and the
reductions and omissions operated by the subtitler, which are likely to show
socio-cultural differences too.

4) During the second module of the course, the five groups of learners, under
the guidance of the teacher and the five coordinators, started writing the diary
of the various stages of the multimedia language learning lessons in the form
of hypertext where the pre-viewing and post-viewing activities practised dur-
ing the classes are gradually enriched by changes and additions brought about
by their feedback. In the course of this very important concluding stage of
the teaching/learning experience the learners themselves have started cre-
ating a web-site in which their own language course might be available for
long-distance learners too. Since it is still work in progress the description of
the final layout would be incomplete. Yet it is already possible to assert that
the pivotal aspect of this precious collaborative work is the way the group of
learners have decided to exploit the three versions of the film. Some activi-
ties are based on video-clips which either highlight linguistic peculiarities
or environmental and sociological characteristics. The diary contains also a
guide which explains all the main principles of the pedagogical framework the learners were asked to put into practice during their multimedia learning experience, from learning by teaching techniques to the collaborative technological team work suggested by engagement theory. Moreover, Papert’s concept of learning-through-making is well applied in the last phase of this experiment, where learners are encouraged to build their own multimedia course to motivate in turn other long-distance students to duplicate their experience at home with their personal computer. The objective is to create a net of long-distance interpersonal collaboration based on a teaching/learning experience focused on the viewing and reading of subtitled multimedia products and this makes the learners consciously engaged in constructing a public entity (Papert 1991: 1).

4. Concluding remarks

Whether at home or in a class-room, the real context where learning takes place is offered by the intersemiotic nature of the film, by its setting, its story, its characters and by the language they speak. The function of the motion picture in the multimedia lesson can be compared to the function of the novel in literature lessons. The difference rests with the fact that the story of the film is a live story and visual entertainments are nowadays very appreciated by all kinds of learners because they are familiar with them. Linguistic and socio-cultural messages are better received through live stories than through written descriptions. In fact, when the senses, especially sight and hearing are involved, also the emotions of viewer/learners are stirred in a way that favours the acquisition of different cultural models. The added value of the Pavia experiment is that learners are engaged at a time in a multilayered type of experience, where they play the role of audience when they view the film, actors when they teach and discuss language and cultural issues, educators and computer-experts when they create hypertextual lessons for their web-site.

The evolution of technology is having a tremendous impact on language learning and the Pavia experimental multimedia course is an attempt to exploit the teaching/learning experience of a cooperative group of well trained students to create foreign/language learning self-access opportunities. Under the influence of the work edited by Son and O’Neill (2006) the Pavia experiment is trying to offer a demonstrative teaching/learning model which is intended to be a motivating resource for educators as well as for students who are fond of multimedia technology.
Notes

1 Greg Kearsley is an independent consultant specializing in educational technology; Ben Shneiderman is a Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Head of the Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory at the University of Maryland. Their article: Engagement Theory: A framework for technology-based teaching and learning, is available on the website http://home.sprynet.com/7Egkearsley/engage.htm


4 An interesting article on the two theories, written by Edith Ackermann 2002. Piaget’s Constructivism, Papert’s Constructionism: What’s the difference? can be retrieved from the website: http://learning.media.mit.edu/content/publications/EA.Piaget%20_%20Papert.pdf

References


Captions and Subtitles in EFL Learning: an investigative study in a comprehensive computer environment

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0. Abstract

This study is a broad-range investigation into short- and long-term effects of captioning and subtitling in beginner, intermediate, and advanced Italian adult learners of English. Several issues are taken into consideration including content comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, language-in-use, and semantic match between audio and video inputs. All the variables involved were controlled in a single computerised setting. The current experiment partially supports the findings described in the relevant literature. A few discrepancies emerged with some previous studies, but they are probably explained by the different type of material and testing procedure adopted.

1. Introduction

Ample research has been carried out on captioning (also called “bimodal input” or “L2 subtitled video”), i.e. the display of transcriptions of the utterances of a video, and its effects on L2/FL learning (see for example Baltova, 1999; Chung, 1999; Garza, 1991; Guillory, 1998; Markham, 1989; Neuman & Koskinen, 1992; Price, 1983; Vanderplank, 1988, 1990, 1993). Many of these experiments compared captioned video to audio input only and focused on general comprehension. Price (1983), for example, found that captions significantly improved performance on comprehension regardless of language background. Similar results were obtained also by Markham (1989). The former studied the effects of captioned TV
upon listening comprehension in students of different proficiency levels. The subjects were shown a video with captions and a video with no text aids, then their general comprehension was tested with multiple-choice questions; all the three groups performed significantly better with the captioned video. However, Guillory (1998) noticed that the impact of captioning on learning depends on the gap between student's proficiency level and difficulty of the spoken text: captions cannot compensate for an excessively wide gap.

Captions’ impact on vocabulary learning was assessed by Garza (1991), who found that captions increased comprehension and language memorisation in advanced FL learners. Similar results were reported by Neuman & Koskinen (1992): in an experiment with advanced EFL students, those who were shown captioned video had better results in vocabulary recognition and acquisition exercises. Subsequently, Baltova (1999) reported positive effects of captions on content and vocabulary learning also on relatively inexperienced students (grade-11 core French students in Canada) both at short- and long-term level.

The display of a translation of the utterances of a video in a different language is another widely studied phenomenon that has attracted the attention of researchers from two different perspectives: L1 subtitles of L2 aural input (subtitling) and L2 subtitles of L1 aural input (reversed subtitling). Pioneering experiments were carried out in 1981 by Lambert, Bowler & Sidoti (cited in Holobow, Lambert & Sayegh, 1984, and in Danan, 1992) and in 1984 by Holobow, Lambert & Sayegh. They compared different combinations of audio and video monolingual or bilingual input and found that the most favourable condition was reversed subtitling, followed by captioning, monomodal input, and “ordinary” subtitling (in this order). In both experiments, the subjects were 5-6 grade English-speaking pupils who had taken part in a “French immersion” program starting at kindergarten. The pupils tended to «rate themselves as slightly more English dominant than French in writing, reading and understanding and somewhat more English dominant for speaking» (Holobow, Lambert & Sayegh, 1984: 61). Despite the fact that these two experiments stemmed from «a practical interest in making better use of radio and television in education» (ibid.: 59), the material and procedure adopted included only aural input (a teacher reading a text) and written visual input (a script of the text). These conditions are very far from the use of captions or subtitles in TV programs and movies.

A study in a setting that was closer to actual TV or movie watching, and fairly similar to the setting of our experiment, was carried out by Danan in 1992. In her 3 subsequent experiments, focus was on vocabulary, and the subjects were college students with not very high proficiency in French (30 students in one case, 57 in the second case, and 15 in the third; mixed levels). All experiments used the same 5-minute extract from a French video for learning purposes; in the first experiment the following three conditions were tested: subtitling in English, reversed subtitling, and French audio only; in the second, subtitling was replaced with captioning; in the third, only reversed subtitling and captioning were tested. The video extract was shown twice and the students were tested immediately after the second view on their ability to recall the correct French names of items that were foregrounded by a «clear link with a video image» (Danan 1992: 509) in the video. In the test, the students were guided by the original script with gaps
and an image-only presentation of the video (no sound, and no titles). Before watching the experimental video, however, the students had been given a summary of the scene. In the same study, an attempt was also made to assess long-term effects of bimodal input via translation. However, the interval between the short-term test and the long-term one is not declared in the paper. Their data showed that reversed subtitling, immediately followed by captioning, produced the most favourable results in both short- and long-term measures in beginners as well as higher-level students; however, in the second experiment (the one with the highest number of subjects), the difference between the reversed subtitling condition and the captioning condition was not significant. On the other hand, “ordinary” subtitling (assessed only in experiment 1) seemed to be the least favourable condition, as it lead to results that were slightly lower to those of the L2 audio-video only condition. Contrary to Danan’s (1992) results with respect to “ordinary” subtitling, however, Koolstra & Beentjes (1999) found that children exposed to subtitled video acquired a higher number of new words in the foreign language than those who watched the same video with no text aids. They also noted that older children performed better than younger ones, but this was due to their being more frequently exposed to subtitles when watching TV.

As far as text aids are concerned, therefore, ample evidence exists that captions help comprehension and vocabulary memorisation at all levels of proficiency. “Ordinary” subtitling also seems to play some facilitatory role in language acquisition, but the extent of this role is debated. However, these are not the only variables at play when watching videos. Other fundamental elements are kinesic behaviour in the video and semantic match between image and sound.

Kinesic behaviour and non verbal communication play a fundamental role in listening comprehension. Grimes (1990) found that a high degree of correspondence and semantic match between the audio and video channels favoured attention and memory of video texts in L1 subjects. The absence of said semantic match, however, negatively impacted on both faculties. Baltova’s (1994) study indicates that scenes where dialogues were backed up by action or body language tended to be more easily understood by FL students than scenes with static images and unrelated audio. Duquette and Painchaud (1996) investigated the impact of images on L2 vocabulary learning. Their study was carried out on two groups of L2 students: both groups listened to the same tape, but one of them also watched a video showing the actions of what was being described on the tape (high semantic match). Both groups recorded similar overall vocabulary results, but while the audio-only subjects tended to retain primarily higher-frequency words or words that sounded similar to their original language, the video subjects retained other types of words.

Finally, as Vanderplank’s (1988, 1990, 1993) experiments highlighted, taking advantage of text aids in a tri-channel environment requires some kind of strategic adjustment. Some of the students he worked with, in fact, declared feeling initially disturbed by subtitles, but they eventually managed to develop adequate personal strategies to process the three channels. He also noted that such strategies were more readily present in students coming from countries where subtitling is a common occurrence.

The experiments on text aids reported above were carried out each on a different type of video material, spanning from educational videos, to television in-
formative programmes, real-video, and films, on subjects of different ages, and with very different procedures. If on the one hand this seems to enhance the general validity of the findings, on the other hand it makes it difficult to compare results at a detailed level and almost impossible to analyse trends in terms of image-audio-text relations. Finally, in most cases research has focused on short-term effects of text aids, rather than long-term ones, and in 2004 Danan still advocated the systematic collection of long-term data.

The current study attempted to investigate the role of captioning and subtitling in an experiment where all the different variables involved were controlled in a single setting. The following variables were identified and controlled: short- vs. long-term effects of captioning and subtitling on content comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and language-in-use issues; students’ level of proficiency; semantic match between the audio and video inputs. In particular, this study aimed to provide insight into the following issues: if we consider different types of semantic match between audio and video inputs, which type of text aid proves more useful?, with respect to which type of language feature?, and for which level of proficiency?

2. Method

The experiment was developed at the University of Pavia (Italy) within a course of English for the faculty of psychology and targeted psychology students; participation in the experiment was voluntary, but allowed for a small reduction in the English exam workload.

2.1 Participants

A total of 107 students volunteered for the study. After initial assessment of the subject’s proficiency in English, and in an attempt to create comparable groups whose composition could mirror the distribution of the total population taking part in the experiment, beginner, intermediate and advanced students were separately and randomly assigned to one of three groups: experimental group 1 (EG1), with captions; experimental group 2 (EG2), with subtitles; and a control group (CG), with no text aids. Reversed subtitling was not considered for two main reasons: 1. it is not a usual condition in film watching for autonomous-learning purposes; 2. according to Holobow, Lambert & Sayegh’s (1984) results, this condition was highly comparable to captioning.

Unfortunately, due to either personal or technical problems, some students did not have the chance to complete all the phases of the experiment and their data could not be included in the final database. Therefore, the population for this experiment eventually comprised a total of 85 volunteer adult participants in the 18-45 age range. In terms of knowledge of the English language (assessed at the very beginning of the experiment), 17 subjects could be considered beginners, 45 intermediate learners, and 23 advanced learners. Only 13% of the subjects were males, but their distribution was balanced across language levels (5 beginner, 4 intermediate, and 4 advanced learners of English).
As Table 1 shows, despite the attempts to create perfectly balanced groups, the fact that 22 participants had to be excluded from the final database determined differences in numbers between the three groups, but the composition of each group still mirrored the composition of the total population taking part in the experiment in terms of proficiency in English.

According to the data gathered at the beginning of the experiment, none of the students had watched the film from which the first scene was taken, nor had they read the book that inspired the film; on the other hand the film from which the second scene was taken was known to a few students (N = 12), but they had watched it more that 10 years before.

2.2 Experiment Outline

The experiment was organised along the following three phases:

**Phase One: Pre-test.** A collectively-administered test in written form composed of four tasks. The pre-test aimed to assess the participants’ level of English before the beginning of the experiment, as well as their knowledge of the words, phrases, and linguistic phenomena targeted in Phase Two. The participants were given a maximum time span of one hour to complete the pre-test (four tasks in all). Before distributing the test papers, the researchers briefly explained the general aim of this first phase (assessing student’s proficiency) with reference to the entire experiment, and tried to motivate the subjects towards a correct and honest accomplishment of the tasks.

On the basis of pre-test results, each student was assigned to one of the two experimental groups or to the control group, in an attempt to create balanced and comparable groups.

**Phase Two: Computerised video test.** This test was carried out on an individual basis, with the aid of a specially developed computer application. On individual computers with headphones, the subjects watched a series of clips from two famous films in English, accompanied by captions, subtitles in Italian, or nothing, according to the group each subject had been assigned to. At the end of each clip, a series of multiple-choice questions was presented to test the subject’s comprehension in terms of content, vocabulary, and use of lexico-grammatical phrases; at the end of each series of questions the subjects had the possibility to watch...
the entire film clip again and then review their answers up to two times. This mechanism allowed maximum freedom to the subjects, who could work at their own pace and view the clips one or more times according to their habits, level of interest, and commitment to the task. This phase, in fact, was intended to simulate a scenario of an adult intentionally watching a film as a means of learning English. In such a scenario some more motivated and systematic learners would go over the same scene more than once if they felt they had not grasped or understood one or more words or utterances; other types of learners, instead, tended to be content with understanding the general meaning of scenes on the basis of a few keywords and the accompanying pictures and would not bother to watch the same scene twice, as this is a time-consuming task that delays the development of the plot. In our application, re-watching a scene was not at all compulsory and was rather time consuming; therefore, subjects who would not go over the same scene in the real scenario would presumably not do it in our simulation. However, it must be noted that this simulated scenario included two features that should facilitate learning: short video segments and criterion-based questions (Canning-Wilson, 2000). Phase Two took place no more that seven days after Phase One.

**Phase Three: Post-test.** A repetition of Phase One. The participants were collectively administered the same written exercises that were given in the pre-test, following the same procedure. This phase took place one week after Phase Two and aimed to assess the long-term effects of captions and subtitles on language learning.

### 2.3 Material

In Phases One and Three, the students were administered four written multiple-choice tasks in pen-and-paper format. Task One was a multiple-choice cloze test on grammar, with items of increasing difficulty focusing on verb tense usage, modal and auxiliary verbs, pronouns, comparatives and superlatives, and prepositions. Each item was composed of a single self-contained sentence in English with a gap, accompanied by four possible solutions for the gap. This test had been developed and used for years as a placement test in a local private school of foreign languages. Task Two aimed to test the students’ general lexical knowledge in English. The students were given a list of words and asked to circle the correct synonym among the four alternatives that appeared to the right of each word. The test, which follows the structure and logic of the PMA 11/17 test (Thurstone & Thurstone, 1981), a standard lexical test, had been originally developed and used by Palladino and Bianchi to assess lexical abilities in adult learners of English (Palladino & Bianchi, forthcoming). The results of Tasks One and Two, taken together, were used to assign each subject to the beginner, intermediate or advanced group (scores <28, 28-43, and >43 respectively).

Tasks Three and Four were structured so that they could be compared to the results obtained by the students at the computer. Task Three targeted vocabulary and resembled Task Two in form, but the words were chosen among those used in the film clips on the basis of their prominence in the dialogues and relevance for the comprehension of the clips. Task Four focused on the pragmatic use of lexico-grammatical phrases taken from the film clips chosen for the experiment.
This task will be referred to as “language-in-use” and was composed of multiple-choice questions referring either to scenes from *Harry Potter* or *Fantasia*. For each item, four possible answers were provided. Some items asked the students to decide on the use of phrases such as “how about a film”, “you’d make a good tennis-player”, either by using the given phrases to complete sentences or by choosing a correct pragmatic description (such as “statement”, “question”, “order”, “exhortation”). The other items asked the meaning of phraseological or idiomatic expressions (“drop the other shoe”, and “what’s going on?”), tested the use of prepositions, or asked about the circumstances for the use of the genitive noun phrase structure. The mixed nature of the exercises was a direct consequence of the dialogues in the chosen film clips, which were fairly simple and repetitive in terms of grammatical features.

Phase Two was entirely computerized. The creation and administration of the material was constrained by a series of needs and considerations. Phase Two intended to simulate a real home-video scenario where a student watches a film on DVD and takes advantage of the text aids provided (captions or subtitles). In a real context, images are displayed full-screen and with high resolution, and the audio and the texts are perfectly synchronised. Furthermore, the student can view the same scene more than once, if s/he wants to. Finally, there was the need to assess the student’s comprehension by means of a high number of questions and quantitative analysis of the answers. To achieve all this on a computer, a program, called V.A.L. (View And Learn), and a dedicated application, called CA.S.T.ing (Caption and Subtitle Test-ing), were created. V.A.L. allows the seamless integration of audio, video, hypertext, and text files. It can be used as a research tool to test, for example, teaching methods, or as a tool for the creation of highly interactive multimedia applications for individual, self-paced learning of a foreign language or any other subject-matter. It includes a multiple-choice and limited-answer testing system, as well as database and statistic analysis functions for an automatic assessment of the students’ performances. CA.S.T.ing is an application of V.A.L. that was created specifically for the current project and offers the following features: full-screen, high-resolution video; synchronised audio; well-visible, and synchronised original text; possibility to select the text (captions, subtitles, or nothing) at the very beginning of the session; audio control commands; possibility to re-play the same scene more than once; alternation of film clips and multiple-choice questions; preliminary window for gathering general information about the students; automatic recording of the students’ answers in a database; automatic recording of the length of each session.

Therefore, CA.S.T.ing included selected clips from two films: *Fantasia* (Walt Disney) and *Harry Potter and the philosopher’s stone* (Warner Bros). The scenes were chosen according to the following criteria: (a) each scene is self-contained and fully understandable even when detached from the rest of the film; (b) the scenes clearly differ in terms of event-word-image relations: while in *Fantasia* the images, although matching the content of the text, do not help one understand what is said, neither at a linguistic nor at a cognitive level, in *Harry Potter* the pictures are almost fundamental to an understanding of the meaning of words (e.g. the names of the different kinds of quidditch balls) and sentences (e.g. the game commentary). The film clips were presented in English, accompanied by captions, subtitles in Italian, or nothing, according to the group each partici-
pant had been assigned to. At the end of each clip a series of multiple-choice questions was automatically displayed to test the subject’s comprehension in terms of content, vocabulary, and use of lexico-grammatical phrases; at the end of each series of questions the subjects had the possibility to watch the entire film clip again and then review their answers up to two times. General information about the participants (such as age and mother tongue), and whether they had watched the two films before, were also automatically collected at the beginning of this phase.

The experiment was carried out at the very beginning of the academic year and stretched over a total of three weeks. Its start coincided with the beginning of English lessons at the faculty of psychology; however, given the scant number of hours of English the students were exposed to during that period (four hours in all) and the specialised content of the course, it is highly improbable that the academic English lessons influenced the results of the experiment. The academic lessons, in fact, focused exclusively on psychology research articles, a written genre characterised, like most other academic types of written texts, by highly specialised lexicon, absence of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, and prevalence of passive and infinitive constructions. Furthermore, the first few lessons were taught in Italian, as they simply aimed to provide the students with basic general information about this particular genre. On the other hand, the experiment tested comprehension and acquisition of general vocabulary, colloquial and idiomatic expressions, and use of phraseology in informal spoken contexts.

3. Results and Discussion

All the analyses were carried out on mean scores, standardised according to the following parameters: number of subjects per group, number of items per task, and subject’s proficiency level. Analysis of immediate comprehension was based on mean results obtained in Phase Two. Long-term acquisition was measured on difference scores (% DELTA) calculated comparing Phase Three mean results with Phase One mean results. A direct comparison between Phase Two and Phase One/Three tasks was impossible, given the different structural and methodological features characterising the three phases (electronic format and the possibility to look for the correct answers by watching the film clips up to two extra times in one case; pen-and-paper format and no reference text for the answers in the other cases).

3.1. Immediate Comprehension

The data gathered in Phase Two made it possible to evaluate the impact of captions and subtitles in the immediate comprehension of content, vocabulary, and use of lexico-grammatical phrases. The findings will be presented according to task, with details regarding students’ proficiency level, and type of film.

3.1.1 Content

As Figure 1 shows, at beginners’ level, EG2 participants (with subtitles) fared better in the comprehension test than EG1 (with captions) and control participants,
in both types of films. However, while the difference between the three groups was rather marked when considering the questions referring to *Fantasia*, in the case of *Harry Potter*, EG1 and CG’s comprehension answers were not significantly worse than EG2’s, with the control subgroup faring slightly better than EG1. Furthermore, comprehension was generally higher when watching *Harry Potter* clips; an indication that the students’ comprehension was greatly helped by the images.

![Beginners' content comprehension](image)

Figure 1. Short-term results: beginners’ mean scores in the content comprehension test.

With regard to intermediate students, it seems that content comprehension (Figure 2) was favoured by Subtitles, and this is particularly evident in the questions regarding *Fantasia*. In the case of the *Harry Potter* clips, the results obtained by EG1 and EG2 intermediate students were almost identical, the EG2 sub-group having fared only 0.4% better than the EG1 sub-group.

![Intermediate content comprehension](image)

Figure 2. Short-term results: intermediate students’ mean scores in the content comprehension test.

Interestingly enough, a direct comparison between EG1 and CG intermediate students shows different results with respect to the two different types of film: the EG1 sub-group fared better than the CG sub-group in the questions on *Harry Potter*, but worse in those on *Fantasia*, with an opposite trend to that of the beginner participants.
Advanced students’ results in content comprehension highlighted the same trend with both types of film, with the EG2 sub-group scoring slightly higher than the EG1 one and significantly better than the CG sub-group (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Short-term results: advanced students’ mean scores in the content comprehension test.](image)

To sum up, in the content comprehension tasks EG2 students (with subtitles) obtained the best results, regardless of their proficiency level, and of the type of film. This result is expected given that subtitling is processed automatically and content comprehension can logically be facilitated by text in the mother tongue. On the other hand, captions proved more useful than no-text input for beginners and advanced students, which is in line with previous literature (Markham, 1989). The same was not true, however, for intermediate students. Finally, when semantic match was high (Harry Potter clips), content comprehension was constantly higher regardless of proficiency level and type of visual aid, and differences between experimental and control groups were less marked. This result is clearly in line with the literature and supports the fundamental role of images in general content comprehension (Baltova, 1994).

3.1.2 Vocabulary

When it comes to vocabulary comprehension (Figure 4), the best results at beginners’ level were obtained by the control group; however, when text was displayed on screen, subtitles were of greater help than captions. The trend was identical for both types of films, with slightly higher scores in the case of Harry Potter.

![Figure 4. Short-term results: beginners’ mean scores in the vocabulary comprehension test.](image)
At intermediate level (Figure 5), both experimental and control groups obtained good results in *Harry Potter*, with a slight advantage for EG1. With regard to *Fantasia*, EG2 emerged as the best group, with a higher score by 8%. Interestingly, the profiles of intermediate students with respect to vocabulary are similar to the intermediate profiles in the comprehension tests, except for a smaller difference in scores between *Harry Potter* and *Fantasia*. The same is not true for the other two proficiency levels.

![Intermediate vocabulary comprehension](image)

Figure 5. Short-term results: intermediate students’ mean scores in the vocabulary comprehension test.

At advanced level, no significant trends can be seen, as the three groups’ results with each film were almost identical (Figure 6).

![Advanced vocabulary comprehension](image)

Figure 6. Short-term results: advanced students’ mean scores in the vocabulary comprehension test.

The profiles of the three proficiency levels have very little in common, except for higher scores when semantic match among the different communication channels was higher (*Harry Potter*). A comparison between EG1 and EG2 students across proficiency levels (Figures 7 and 8) seems to show that captions were less useful for vocabulary comprehension than subtitles, especially when proficiency was lower or images did not particularly assist dialogue and plot comprehension.
This contrasts with Danan’s (1992) results only partially, as she tested vocabulary under conditions of high semantic match only. In our experiment, vocabulary results with *Harry Potter* clips were closer to Danan’s, at least as far as intermediate and advanced students were concerned. Furthermore, different testing techniques were adopted in the two experiments: Danan tested vocabulary by giving the students a gapped version of the script, while in the current experiment the participants were asked to select the correct synonym in a multiple-choice exercise, a testing procedure that was closer to the one adopted by Koolstra & Beentjes (1999).

3.1.3 Language-in-use

Beginners’ results in the language-in-use questions (Figure 9) showed a similar trend to beginners’ vocabulary results, in that EG1 scored worse than EG2, which in turn scored worse than CG, in both types of films. Slightly higher mean scores were recorded with questions on *Harry Potter* in the experimental groups, but not in the control group.
In terms of language-in-use comprehension, the results of the intermediate students showed no significant differences with reference to *Harry Potter* clips, with a slight trend towards an increase from captions to subtitles to no-text-aid. This trend is similar to the beginners’ trend, although less pronounced. Fairly different was the trend with questions on *Fantasia*, where the control group scored slightly higher than EG1, and EG2 came last (Figure 10).

Finally, in the language-in-use tasks, EG1 advanced students obtained the highest scores with both types of film. However, while differences are not significant with *Fantasia* clips, with *Harry Potter* clips the control sub-group scored the worst results (Figure 11).
Figure 11. Short-term results: advanced students’ mean scores in the language-in-use test.

Plotting beginner, intermediate, and advanced student data without taking into consideration the difference between the two types of film highlighted an interesting general trend along the proficiency line, which sees a gradual passage from text aids in general and captions in particular limiting comprehension in lower proficiency groups to the complete opposite with advanced students (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Short-term results in the language-in-use task with reference to text aids.

Finally, a comparison between beginner, intermediate, and advanced student mean results in the language-in-use task in the two types of film regardless of the presence of textual aids offered an unexpected perspective on the role and impact of different types of images (Figure 13). In fact, while beginners obtained generally higher results with *Harry Potter* (+5.3%), intermediate and advanced participants obtained higher scores with *Fantasia* (+6.3 and +13.3 respectively).
3.2. **LONG-TERM ACQUISITION**

Long-term acquisition was measured on mean difference scores (% DELTA) calculated comparing Phase Three mean results with Phase One mean results, task by task. Specific vocabulary (Task Three) and language-in-use (Task Four) results were first analysed comparing EG1, EG2 and CG; then other parameters such as participant’s level and type of film were taken into consideration.

3.2.1 **Vocabulary**

A comparison between EG1, EG2 and CG results regardless of proficiency differences (Figure 14) showed that text aids can be useful to learn vocabulary, a finding that is in line with Paivio’s (1986) dual coding theory and what described in the reported literature on captioning. In particular, and in contrast with Danan’s (1992) results, subtitles seemed to be slightly more fruitful than captions, generally speaking.
est advantage from captions, especially in learning the vocabulary in *Harry Potter*, while subtitles seem to have ‘disturbed’ acquisition, as EG2 beginner students fared worse than CG ones (Figure 15), a result that is in line with the reported research on subtitling (Holobow et al. 1984; Danan 1992).

Figure 15. Long-term results: beginners’ results in vocabulary acquisition.

For intermediate students, subtitles are no longer a problem and EG2 results are slightly higher than those of EG1 (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Long-term results: vocabulary results of intermediate students.

Finally, advanced students seem to have taken the greatest advantage from subtitles; as in the case of beginners, the difference between EG1 and EG2 results is more evident with *Harry Potter* clips (Figure 17).
Interestingly, all students (regardless of proficiency level or text aid) acquired a greater number of words belonging to *Harry Potter* than to *Fantasia* dialogues (Figure 18), in line with the trend observed in the case of short-term vocabulary comprehension, and the number of words acquired grew with proficiency.

![Advanced: Vocabulary](image)

Figure 17. Long-term results: vocabulary results of intermediate students.

![Vocabulary acquisition: HP vs Fantasia](image)

Figure 18. Long-term vocabulary results per film.

### 3.2.2 Language-in-use

With regard to Task Four (Figure 19), deltas were generally very low, rarely reaching a 25% increase (and this task was composed of only 14 items). In the case of beginner students, text aids did not favour acquisition, as both experimental groups fared much worse than the control group. This result reflects the beginners’ trend in language-in-use immediate comprehension. Intermediate and advanced students showed similar trends, with EG2 scoring higher than EG1, which in turn scored higher than CG, a trend that is different from the one highlighted in the case of language-in-use immediate comprehension for these sub-groups.
A comparison between beginner, intermediate, and advanced students deltas in the two types of film regardless of the presence of textual aids showed the following results (Figure 20): beginners and intermediate students obtained generally higher results with *Harry Potter*, while advanced participants obtained higher scores with *Fantasia*. Unexpectedly, while beginner and advanced students showed consistency with language-in-use immediate comprehension results, intermediate students did not.

4. CONCLUSION

When students watch a film in a foreign language and text aids are displayed, three channels compete in catching the students’ attention and in favouring (or hampering) comprehension and learning: one auditory channel, and two visual channels (one verbal and one non-verbal). In this scenario, several different variables are at play, including the following: semantic match between the verbal channels (audio and text) and the non-verbal channel (images); type of text aid (captions, subtitles, no text aid); student level of proficiency; and type of task (content, vocabulary, or language-in-use comprehension or acquisition).
In the current experiment, greater semantic match between audio-video-text inputs helped achieve higher results at all levels of proficiency in short-term comprehension tasks and in both short- and long-term vocabulary tasks, a result that is perfectly in line with previous literature (Baltova, 1994; Duquette & Painchaud, 1996; Grimes, 1990). Comprehension and acquisition of language-in-use, on the other hand, did not consistently benefit from semantic match, especially with higher level students.

As far as text aids are concerned, differences were noticed with respect to type of task and proficiency level. Content comprehension was facilitated by subtitles, immediately followed by captions for beginner and advanced students and by the control situation for intermediate students. In vocabulary comprehension, subtitles proved more useful than captions, especially when proficiency was lower or little or no semantic match existed between verbal and non-verbal channels. The trend was reversed in long-term results, where beginners benefited most from captions, immediately followed by the control situation, while intermediate and advanced students obtained better results with subtitles, immediately followed by captions. Finally, language-in-use comprehension was characterised by a gradual passage from text aids in general and captions in particular limiting comprehension in lower proficiency groups to the complete opposite with advanced students; analogously, language-in-use acquisition was not favoured by text aids when proficiency in English was not very high, but text aids in general and subtitles in particular gradually acquired greater relevance when the proficiency level rose.

In terms of proficiency level, the same proficiency group showed different profiles with respect to the different types of tasks (content comprehension, vocabulary comprehension and memorisation, language-in-use comprehension and memorisation). This may be connected to the intrinsic differences between said activities in terms of nature and cognitive effort. Furthermore, the three proficiency groups benefited to different extents from the various types of text aids: on the whole, beginners were advantaged to a greater degree by subtitles, while more advanced levels gained more advantage from captions. This may partly be due to the fact that subtitles are processed automatically, while captions require a higher level of knowledge of the language before they can be processed without interfering (at least to a minimal extent) with other cognitive processes (listening and taking stock of the video content).

Finally, the different nature of each type of task was made evident by the different profiles across and among proficiency groups. In particular, marked differences emerged between short and long term results for the same type of task. This is probably a consequence of the fact that different processes are involved in short-term and long-term memorisation.

To conclude, the current experiment partially supports the findings described in the relevant literature. A few discrepancies emerged with some previous studies, Danan’s (1992) in particular, but they are probably explained by the different type of material and testing procedure adopted. Comparison with previous studies was only possible for short-term content and vocabulary comprehension, and long-term vocabulary acquisition. The language-in-use category was tentatively introduced in this experiment to shift attention towards other important
linguistic issues that had so far been neglected in the literature on subtitling/captioning. However, given the small number of items and the mixed nature of the exercises about the pragmatic use of lexico-grammatical phrases, the results obtained in this category cannot be considered in any way final and further research is needed in this direction.
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1. Introduction

The present paper is part of a wider project that aims to analyse how socio-linguistic and pragmatic traits are transposed in the two main modes of film translation, dubbing and subtitling. In film translation, where contextualised communicative events have to be transposed, the socio-linguistic and pragmatic aspects of face-to-face interaction depict real cultural scenarios and are meant to represent a wide range of situational variables. Hence, when turning from one language into another, perfect correspondences (i.e. equivalent linguistic signs – comparable socio-cultural meaning) rarely occur. The constraints due to the polysemiotic nature of film texts (Gambier 1994) on the one hand and the customary difficulties of mediating between source- and target language and culture on the other often cause inevitable clashes on the level of social and cultural meanings, if not their complete deletion. As has often been remarked (Kovačić 1996; Blini and Matte Bon 1996; Hatim and Mason 2000), it is especially in inter-linguistic subtitles, which reduce the original of at least 40% of its length, that emotive meanings (e.g. terms of address, discourse markers, politeness formulae, reformulations, dysfluencies, etc.) undergo a severe process of reduction and transformation. This contribution aims to analyse and evaluate the rendering of compliments, ubiquitous and widely researched speech acts, from English soundtracks (either British or American) into Italian subtitles.
Compliments are speech acts that are primarily aimed at maintaining, improving, or supporting the addressee’s face (Goffman 1967). They can in fact be used for a variety of reasons: to express admiration or approval of someone’s work/appearance/taste; to establish/confirm/maintain solidarity; to replace greetings/gratitude/apologies/congratulations; to soften face-threatening acts such as apologies, requests and criticism; to open and sustain conversation; to reinforce desired behaviour.

Compliment-giving and responding behaviour is used to negotiate social identities and relations. As a consequence, inappropriate choice of responses can lead to a loss of face. The preferred sequel to compliments is acceptance, but in American English, for instance, two thirds of the time respondents to compliments do something other than overtly and fully accept them (e.g. mitigate, deflect or reject, request interpretation; Herbert 1990).

On the basis of several socio-pragmatic studies it is evident that speech acts are subject to cultural and socio-linguistic variations (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). Apart from macroscopic cultural and linguistic differences in the giving and accepting of compliments, some interesting changes can also be observed depending on socio-linguistic variables (age, gender, status, etc.).


In Italian, to my knowledge, there are up to now only a few published studies (Frescura 1996; Alfonzetti 2006 and in press). Frescura has examined a corpus consisting of 979 compliment events, 90% of which were annotated by the fieldworker; the remaining 10% has instead been recorded. The main preoccupation of Italian speakers seems to be that of finding a balance between the “agreement” and “modesty” maxims (Leech 1983), whereas, for example, American speakers are mainly concerned with agreement and Chinese speakers with modesty.

2.1. Compliments in discourse

Even though compliments can serve a plurality of functions in different contexts, there is widespread agreement on their nature of «social lubricants» (Wolfson 1983: 89), i.e. strategies that aim to establish or reaffirm common ground, mutuality or social solidarity. Often compliments – or the compliment event if we also mean to include the response to the compliment – are quite independent from the linguistic environment in which they occur, although they are frequently related to the topic of the exchange. This independence makes them suitable tools to use in opening sequences such as greetings or in thanks.

It is however true that like any speech act, compliments are embedded in a larger discourse structure. As Golato (2004) claims, despite their flexibility,
compliments need to have some “hooks”: in fact, when the speaker pays the addressee a compliment, he/she needs to know and recognise the “assessable”, that is the «object/talent/character trait» the compliment is about (Golato 2004: 27). Golato shows how this aspect is closely related to a careful choice of referential expressions. Secondly, a certain degree of “positiveness” also needs to clearly appear in the utterance. This aim can be achieved through semantic and syntactic means, but also – and to a larger extent – through the context in which they are uttered.

In the literature compliments have often been described as flexible speech acts, i.e. speech acts that apart from having a status and function of their own can take on an ancillary function and thus contribute to – or even supplant – other speech acts. Wolfson (1983: 88) states that compliments can «strengthen or even replace other speech-act formulas» such as apologies, thanks and greetings and can downgrade the force of face-threatening acts such as criticisms, reproaches, directives of various types (that is displaying different degrees of strength, e.g. requests and orders; cf. on this Holmes 1986: 488). The picture is however by far more intricate than this, as it often happens that compliments do not differ significantly from general assessments. In fact, there are utterances whose positive meaning is to be gleaned from the context and that pragmatically speaking count as compliments even though they do not look like them. Furthermore, there are also utterances that employ semantically positive material but turn out not to be attending to a praising function (if uttered ironically they may count as reproaches).

2.2. Some features of compliments: syntax and semantics

Research on compliments, no matter in which language, has incontrovertibly shown that they are quite formulaic in nature. The most interesting results for American English are those that emerge from the studies by Manes and Wolfson (Manes and Wolfson 1980; Wolfson and Manes 1980). On the basis of their investigation of a corpus of 686 compliments collected by the authors and their students at the Universities of Virginia and Pennsylvania from a wide range of everyday interactions, Manes and Wolfson recognise the repetitiveness of both lexicon and constructions and identify nine syntactic patterns that account for the majority of the structures in their data. In particular the first three patterns cover 85% of the compliments in their data-base.

The patterns are the following:

1. NP is/looks (really) ADJ
   
2. I (really) like/love NP
   
3. PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP
   
4. You V (a) (really) ADJ NP
   
5. You V NP (really) ADV
   
6. You have (a) (really) ADJ NP
   
7. What (a) ADJ NP!
   
8. ADJ NP!
   
9. Isn’t NP ADJ!

Formulaicity is also to be observed in the limited choice of vocabulary. Manes and Wolfson observed that nice and good, among semantically positive adjectives certainly two that are characterised by low specificity, cover together 42% of ad-
jectival occurrences in compliments. If beautiful, pretty and great are added to the group the percentage increases to reach two thirds of all adjectival compliments. Among verbs, like and love are the most frequent and occur in 90% of verbal compliments`. Semantically positive nouns and adverbs (e.g. genius, well) are very exceptional, showing that compliments are preferentially expressed with a positive adjective or a verb of liking (Manes and Wolfson 1980: 400-401). Intensifiers (really, very, such) often accompany verbs of liking to emphasise the expression of appreciation, whereas the presence of deictics (mainly this and that) helps establish reference to the object of the compliment.

As compliments can occur at any stage of an on-going conversation, quite independently from the choice of the current topic, Wolfson and Manes argue that it is their formulaic quality that allows speakers to understand them as an expression of solidarity and to recognise them in any context (1980: 405; cf. also Herbert 1991: 382). Similar results pointing to the use of a limited number of lexical and syntactic formulae emerge from studies on South African English (Herbert 1989) and Polish (Herbert 1991)

Holmes (1988: 453) proposes a schema based on her analyses of compliments uttered by males and females in New Zealand English with six syntactic patterns.

1.a NP be (INT) ADJ
   That coat is really great
1.b NP be looking (INT) ADJ
   You’re looking terrific!
2. I (INT) like NP
   I simply love that skirt
3.a PRO be a (INT) ADJ NP
   That’s a very nice coat
3.b PRO be (INT) (a) ADJ NP
   That’s really great juice
4. What (a) (ADJ) NP!
   What lovely children!
5. (INT) ADJ (NP)
   Really cool ear-rings
6. Isn’t NP ADJ!
   Isn’t this food wonderful!

Holmes’s corpus was collected with the same methodology used by Manes and Wolfson, i.e. field observation. Type 1 and 3 accommodate however subtypes. The interesting difference that emerges when comparing Holmes’s account with Manes and Wolfson’s findings is the absence of patterns containing full clauses, e.g. types 4, 5, and 6 in Manes and Wolfson’s classification. In these cases the expression of approval is quite homogeneously entrusted to all clause constituents: an adjectival compliment (4 and 6), an adverbial compliment (5), and a semantically positive verb (especially 4 and 5).

The distribution of the syntactic patterns according to sex does not show marked differences for the first three most frequent formulae. A more remarkable difference is instead to be observed when comparing the use of patterns 4 and 5 by women and men. Pattern 4 (What a neat blouse!) is used significantly more by women than men. This can be explained with the rhetorical emphasis attached to its exclamatory word order and intonation. Pattern 5, on the other hand, is syntactically reduced (e.g. Great shoes, no determiner, no verb phrase) and seems therefore to attenuate the addressee-oriented function of the compliment.

It has been noticed that sometimes complex structures may be substituted by very short appreciative sounds like “gustatory” markers (e.g. mmmh) or other sounds that convey appreciation such as ohh, ahh etc. Studies in this direction have pointed out that these tokens are used in some varieties of English (Australian English, cf. Gardner 1997; American English, cf. Wiggins 2002) and in German (Golato 2004: 78-79) in association with drinking and eating.
Studies on compliments point out that even though an ample variety of topics would at least be possible, only a few account for the majority of compliments in the data (cf. Holmes, 1986, 1988). The topics that occur with high frequency are: appearance, ability, skill or performance, possession, personal traits or qualities. Compliments on appearance are the top-rank items but it is of particular significance that they have their highest proportion in female-to-female interactions. In New Zealand English (Holmes 1988), differently from American English, males are often complimented on their appearance. Complimenting on appearance across sexes may yet be perceived as too intimate or containing seductive overtones; therefore, males prefer to compliment females on performance or skills, not only or not always as a sign of their superior social status, but so as not to be perceived as inappropriate or sexually biased.

Correlations between complimenting and gender can be observed. On the whole it appears that women tend to compliment more than men and normally perceive complimenting as affiliative or cooperative, whereas men sometimes see it as competitive and face-threatening. However, if on the one hand women are deemed to be better addressees of compliments because of their lower social status (Wolfson 1984: 243), it is also true that women see compliments as an appropriate strategy to strengthen rapport in a wide variety of contexts. Men, on the contrary, seem to express solidarity and in-group membership in different ways (e.g. the use of slang, swear words, insults; cf. Holmes 1995: 10).

As for the status of complimenters and recipients, Holmes (1986, 1988) points out that 79% of the compliments she collected occur between equals, a result that is confirmed for American English by Wolfson (1983). However, when compliments are exchanged in asymmetrical dyads, they are preferentially addressed to higher status females, probably because they are considered less intimidating than higher status males.

2.4. Some distinctions within the class of compliments

The speech act of complimenting is not only versatile in that it can achieve different perlocutionary effects, but it is also characterised by a variety of sub-types. C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1987) draws some distinctions within this class: first of all she discriminates between direct and indirect compliments, the former concerning the addressee, the latter given to a person who is associated with the addressee and therefore metonymically reverberating on him/her. She also differentiates between explicit and implicit compliments. Explicit compliments may take recourse to performative formulae or to assertions where the judgement is openly expressed; in implicit ones, on the other hand, this judgement is either presupposed (e.g. “Hi, beauty”) or implied (e.g. “Your husband has very good taste”). The categories are not always neatly separated and many combinations are possible. For instance, an indirect explicit compliment like the following also contains a direct presupposed compliment: “Your daughter is very nice. She has the same beautiful eyes her mother has”. In the case of the so-called “cruel compliments” (compliments perfides 1987: 7), an explicit praising content may hide a more implicit anti-compliment: “How can it be that your children are so intelligent?” or “This dress really suits you. It makes you look slimmer”.

TRANSLATING COMPLIMENTS IN SUBTITLES
Another interesting difference is that between solicited and unsolicited compliments. Solicited compliments do not deserve the status of real compliments, as real compliments are expected to be spontaneous and the act of “fishing for compliments” is in fact socially sanctioned. Furthermore, a compliment that somehow responds to a request is a reactive act and not an initial intervention in a sequence.

3. COMPLIMENTS IN FILMS

The most inspiring study on the structure and distribution of compliments and compliment responses in films is that by Rose (2001), whose findings are quite surprising in comparison with those in the various articles published by Manes and Wolfson.

Firstly, Rose establishes the validity of film language in the teaching of pragmatics in language classes. Secondly, he shows that it is undoubtedly representative of naturally-occurring exchanges, especially from a pragma-linguistic perspective (perhaps less so from a socio-pragmatic one, as the scenarios that occur in films can be somewhat idealised and often stereotypically played out). His focus of attention is the compliment event, for which he keeps Manes and Wolfson’s description as a reference model. His findings are however remarkably different from those arrived at for naturally occurring compliments. In fact, he found that the second frequent type in Manes and Wolfson corpus, i.e. the type I (really) like/love NP, is not particularly frequent in the corpus of films that he collected and analysed. Furthermore, he also discovered a certain number of syntactic patterns that are not included in the nine types of Manes and Wolfson’s taxonomy (Rose 2001: 315). In his corpus adjectives also tend to vary a great deal and are therefore not limited to the restricted selection of the five top-most recurrent ones (nice, good, pretty, beautiful, and great). Quite predictably, Rose also found that nice occurs less frequently in films than in the reference database: the adjective is in fact semantically quite vague and therefore scarcely informative in a compliment event.

Another feature that emerges from Rose’s research is that in films the distribution of compliments in relation to gender does not resemble Manes and Wolfson’s findings on casual conversation, for quite a high proportion of compliments are exchanged between males.

Rose’s analysis offers interesting and provoking results for further investigation. My task, however, is not limited to the analysis of compliments in the original English soundtrack of the audiovisual material I have selected, but also involves their translation in the Italian subtitles.

3.1. COMPLIMENTS IN FILMS: ENGLISH SOUNDTRACK VS. ITALIAN SUBTITLES

My interest in analysing socio-pragmatic meanings and pragmatic routines like compliments in subtitles arises from the observation that these are usually the features that tend to be cut due to severe space/time constraints. In fact, in the creation of subtitles three transformations are involved: a translation proper, i.e. from one language into another, a diamesic shift from oral to written and a reduction from longer units to shorter ones. The latter aspect depends on both ob-
jective and subjective constraints: on the one hand factors such as viewing time, good readability, synchronisation but also the audience’s reading skills, which in turn depend on its age and on its linguistic and cultural background, and the balance between length and informative load (cf. Caimi and Perego 2002).

In deciding what to omit, the ideational function (in Hallidayian terms) is well taken care of, whereas the interpersonal and the textual ones are considered less important (Kovačič 1996: 299), despite the loss of important pragmalinguistic meanings that this choice usually involves. The transfer from oral to written seems to be responsible for the quality of the language of subtitles, which is adapted to the conventions of the written language with the inevitable consequence that the natural flavour of speech and the effects of socio-linguistic variation are almost completely obliterated. This is especially important when the portrayal of characters is entrusted to language only (Blini and Matte Bon 1996: 329).

Presumably, therefore, the utterance of compliments should be profoundly affected by the reduction process at work in the creation of subtitles, as they belong to the realm of expressivity and do not provide the viewer with strictly factual information. On the contrary, it is undeniable that the compliment event performs a variety of pragmatic functions, especially in establishing or reaffirming common ground, mutuality or social solidarity, so if compensation strategies are not acted out in the subtitles, the risk of distorting the original message is quite high.

3.2. Examples from the corpus

As this research is part of a larger project, the film material used for the analysis is being constantly extended. However, for the purposes of this paper the following films have been considered: Bend it like Beckham (2001, Gurinder Chadha, UK), Eyes Wide Shut (1999, Stanley Kubrik, UK), Mickey Blue Eyes (1999, Kelly Makin, USA), Philadelphia (1993, Jonathan Demme, USA), Sabrina (1954, Billy Wilder, USA), Shallow Hal (2001, Farrelly Brothers, USA), Sliding Doors (1998, Peter Howitt, UK), There’s Something about Mary (1998, Farrelly Brothers, USA), Tootsie (1982, Sydney Pollack, USA).

3.2.1. Non formulaic language in films

As Rose himself noticed (2001), films seem to use more varied vocabulary and structures geared to the expression of compliments. A brief survey on the choice of adjectives, which due to the limited number of films considered does not aim to provide statistical evidence but just to reveal some trends, shows that adjectives other than nice, good, pretty, beautiful and great occur with remarkable frequency. Among them there are brilliant, cool, cute, terrific, tremendous, yummy. Some of them are most typical in British English (e.g. brilliant), but most of them appear in both varieties. Let us provide a few examples.

(1)* Film: Tootsie

**ENGLISH SOUNDTRACK**

Tootsie: Oh, what a big apartment!

Julie: Yeah.

Tootsie: And what a lovely, lovely room.

**ITALIAN SUBTITLES**

Che casa grande!

Che adorabile soggiorno.
Julie: Is it?
Trovi: Yes, it's yummy.
Julie: I had a decorator do it. Before
the show, no money. Since the show,
no time.

Film: Tootsie

Michael: I was looking at you from over
there. You’ve a terrific face. Are you an
actress? You ARE an actress.
Woman: Sometimes.
Michael: You were in Dame at sea!

Film: Sliding Doors

Anna: Is Gerry excited about being a
daddy?
Helen: I haven’t told him yet. Never
seems to be the right moment somehow.

Anna: Come on, let’s celebrate with a
proper drink.
Helen: Bloody marvellous idea. I really
shouldn’t in my condition, but I’m really
going to.

Film: Bend it like Beckham

Girl: Who’s that gora watching her?
Boy: Come on, Jess! It’s all yours!

Bugli: Hi!
Jess: Hi!
Jules: That was brilliant! Do you play for
any side?
Boy: Yeah, like whose? Southall United
Sari Squad?
Jules: I play for Hounslow Harriers Girls.
It’s closed season at the moment, but
we’ve got a summer tournament coming
up.
You should come and have a trial.
Jess: A trial? Think I’m good enough?
Jules: Yeah. You’re really good. It’s up to
our coach, but we could do with some
new blood.
Examples 1 to 4 above support Rose’s findings about different adjectives that appear with a certain regularity in typical syntactic structures. One can easily expect terrific and marvellous to occur quite regularly in compliments, even though in (3) marvellous is associated with bloody, which in this context works as an intensifier. Another common adjective in compliments, especially in British English, is brilliant. Quite interestingly, in Creese’s study on compliments in British English (1991) adjectives that belong to the core language and are positively connoted like brilliant and terrific do not play any key role. This might be imputed to the limited size of the material she investigated (138 compliment events), where brilliant appears 3 times, terrific never. Brilliant seems to be quite an interesting case: it appears 10 times in the film Bend it like Beckham to express as many compliments, once in Sliding Doors and in Mickey Blue Eyes, which is an American production but whose protagonist, Michael, is an Englishman. The possible reason why the adjective is so pervasive in Bend it like Beckham in a script of approximately 9,000 words is that it is a privileged item in youth language (cf. Stenström, Andersen, Hasund 2002). In (4) the adjective refers deictically to the superb way Jess kicked the ball. The attempt at rendering it with a colloquial expression typical of youth language is shown in the subtitles, where the adverb “fortissimo” has been used. The translation of such vocabulary in Italian subtitles does not pose major problems, apart from the use of taboo language, which, as a rule, is typically neutralised in both dubbing and subtitles (like in ex. 3; cf. Pavesi 2002, 2005).

3.2.2. Discrepancies in the translation of subtitles: different syntactic structures and lexis, different pragmatic effects

An analysis of compliments in the films in the corpus has shown that the syntactic patterns used to perform compliments are more varied than expected. The translation of compliments in subtitles sometimes shows discrepancies across the two languages involved. This may be due to systemic differences between the languages at stake, to the constraints imposed by subtitles, to cultural preferences and to idiosyncratic choices. In many examples the trend seems to be towards the expression of compliment on performance in the English original and on personal traits in the Italian subtitles. In this concern, it is perhaps fruitful to recall the results Creese (1991: 53) obtained in her comparison of British and American English: although she worked with a limited corpus, she came to the conclusion that whereas authors agree that the largest topic category in American English is appearance, for British English it seems to be ability. The number of examples, especially in British films, is too limited to allow us to draw any accurate generalisation on the differences between British and American English. As will be shown, however, it appears that in Italian compliments on appearance or on qualities are preferred to those on performance.

Let us consider some examples.

(5) Film: Philadelphia

English soundtrack
Andy: Anthea, just the paralegal extraordinaire I was hoping to see.
Anthea: I know what that means. The answer is no.

Italian subtitles
Anthea, proprio l’assistente legale che speravo di incontrare.
La risposta è no.
Example (5) illustrates two interesting phenomena. Syntactically, it can be classified as a reduced form of pattern 3 “Anthea, (you are) an extraordinary paralegal”, which is enriched by a relative clause and which subverts the normal order ADJECTIVE + NOUN because the French-derived adjective “extraordinaire” can only be used in post-nominal position, e.g. extraordinary paralegal > paralegal extraordinaire. Furthermore, the vocabulary that has been chosen to express the compliment rests on the combination of adjective + noun, where the adjective is a superlative that is used, often humorously, to describe someone who is very good at doing something, and is reinforced by the verb in the relative clause “I was hoping to see”. The subtitles almost completely obliterate the compliment. In this case the adjective “extraordinaire” is omitted, therefore the compliment is visibly watered down because the expression of praise is entrusted only to the relative clause “I was hoping to see”. The humorous tone conveyed by “extraordinaire” is also lost.

Sometimes the translation changes the topic of the compliment. The results so far are far from statistical precision, but the trend is always the same: a compliment on performance in the English original is usually turned into a compliment on some qualities of the addressee in the subtitles.

(6) Film: Tootsie

**ENGLISH SOUNDTRACK**

Tootsie [the sound is not heard but we can see her lips uttering the word]:

**Perfect.**

*John:* Julie, *that was great.*

*Julie:* Thanks, John.

*Rita [off-screen]:* Lovely job. First rate.

*Woman:* You were wonderful.

*Julie:* Yeah. Thanks to my coach.

**ITALIAN SUBTITLES**

Perfetta.

Sei stata grande.

Grazie.

Buon lavoro. Ottimo.

Sei stata magnifica.

Grazie alla mia maestra.

(7) Film: Shallow Hal

**ENGLISH SOUNDTRACK**

*Hal:* And in summation, I feel that these measures will help JPS and all of our customers. Ok.

*Colleague 1:* Nice job, Hal.

*Hal:* Thank you.

*Colleague 2:* Nicely done.

*Hal:* I appreciate it.

**ITALIAN SUBTITLES**

Insomma, credo che sarebbe positivo sia per la JPS che per i nostri clienti.

Complimenti, Hal.

Grazie.

Bravo.

Grazie molte.
In example (6) both “It’s a good one” and “That was great” are compliments that refer to a scene that has just been performed by Julie, an actress starring as a nurse in the soap *Southwest General*. Reference is therefore quite easily exophorically established. The use of a pronoun is possible because reference is being made to an action or an event that is currently relevant and therefore easily accessible. Deictics are in fact a typical feature of spontaneous conversation, where participants rely on such extra-linguistic cues as facial expressions, mimicry, gesture, posture and, above all, a shared context of situation to make sense of what their partners say. The translation of the second compliment in the subtitles also shifts the focus from the performance, the shooting of the scene, and insists instead on one of the character’s personal qualities. In the subtitled version the compliments uttered by John and Rita have therefore the same syntactic pattern, whereas they differ in the original.

In (7) the topic of the compliment is Hal’s successful presentation of his new proposal to implement business in the company where he works. So he is praised for his well-argumented talk and the brilliant ideas that he has put forward. In the translation, instead, little importance is attached to his performance, for the first compliment (“complimenti”) is very generic. The second, “bravo”, is also quite vague as it refers to people and not to performance, but is an adjective that can be used on an unlimited number of occasions and, unless reinforced otherwise, is weekly informative.

In (8) as well, in the original the second compliment concerns a successful performance, whereas it is turned into a recognition of some stable personal qualities in the subtitles.

### 3.2.3. Omissions and reductions in subtitles

Considering the technical requirements that the medium imposes (length of the subtitle, i.e. not more than 40 characters, readability, different medium of communication, synchronisation with the image, etc.; cf. Kovačič 1996; Caimi and Perego 2002), omissions and reductions (cf. in Gottlieb 2000 condensation, when the expression is reduced but the content of the message is approximately the same, and reduction, where both expression and content are reduced) are very frequently and extensively resorted to. The aspects that are usually elided from the linguistic code pertain to the emotive, conative and phatic functions, but they may be more or less successfully conveyed by the other codes in the film. With the utterance of compliments, it can be hypothesised that both the visual and the auditory code are ancillary to the performance of the speech act. There-
Therefore if the linguistic form of the compliment is somehow reduced, the tone of the voice of the character and his/her attitude can be charged with the expression of the appreciation of the interlocutor. Reductions seem to be more likely than complete omissions, which would drastically subvert the pragmatic texture of an interaction (cf. Hatim and Mason 2000: 438).

(9) Film: There’s Something about Mary

**English soundtrack**

Mary: Tucker, what happened to your crutches?
Tucker: Uh, well, uh yeah. **That’s a very good query, Mary. Well done.**
Healey: Come on! Tell her the truth, pizza boy.

**Italian subtitles**

Tucker... che ne è delle tue stampelle?
Beh, ehm ...
Ottima domanda, Mary.
Forza diglielo, “portapizza”.

(10) Film: Mickey Blue Eyes

**English soundtrack**

Uncle Vito: Now tell me what you think of this one. You like it [= a painting]?
Michael: **Wow. It’s very...intriguing, isn’t it?**
Tell me, why does Jesus have a machine gun?

**Italian subtitles**

Dimmi cosa pensi di questo.
Ti piace?
È molto...
intrigante, no?
Perché...
Gesù ha una mitragliatrice?
È simbolica. Devi chiedere a Johnny.
Dipingere per lui è terapeutico.
Tuo figlio ha un grande talento, Vito.

Frank: You have a very gifted son, Vito. No two ways about it.
Michael: Well, I must say, I like the way...
the blood oozes out of his cranium.

**Italian subtitles**

devo dire che mi piace...
quello sangue che sgorga dal cranio.
È vero.
Ha talento, non credi?

Frank: I like that. He’s very talented, wouldn’t you say that, Michael?
Michael: Yes, I think he certainly has something. Si, ha qualcosa di speciale.

In (9) the original contains two compliments, the first belonging to type 3, and the second, which is a slightly modified version of type 5 (You V NP (really) ADV). They are syntactically different but both of them concern Mary’s behaviour, therefore a performance. They are condensed in the subtitle, where emphasis is placed on Mary’s question, which is qualified as “ottima”.

In (10) the interjection “Wow” is omitted and the adjective “intriguing” is badly translated into Italian. This is in fact a typical example of a false friend. The English adjective shows approval, even though something intriguing may not be fully understood or penetrated (e.g. an intriguing remark). The second compliment paid by Frank is translated with a different syntactic pattern and is certainly less strong in the Italian subtitle: in English the syntactic pattern is type 6 (You have (a) (really) ADJ NP), whereas in Italian the initial pronoun “you” is replaced by a full noun phrase. The focus of the compliment is therefore shifted from “you”, referring to Uncle Vito, to “tuo figlio”, pointing to his son, the author of the painting that is being commented upon. Furthermore, the strength of the compliment is reinforced by Frank, who emphasises the certainty of his assertion with the idiomatic expression “no two ways about it”. The reinforcement of the commitment
to the truth of the compliment is irreparably lost. The remainder of the exchange contains some more compliments which have been quite faithfully and effectively transposed (expectedly, a repetition by the second speaker, i.e. Frank, has been cancelled): in particular, “he’s very talented” becomes “ha talento”, which is certainly more natural than the uncommon and ornate adjectival form talentuoso, but the adjective dotato could also have been used; “something” is made more explicit with an elucidating adjective, “speciale”. The original, however, is purposely ambiguous, as Michael is trying to please Uncle Vito without saying something he does not believe in.

3.2.4. Implicit compliments in subtitles

In the plethora of studies devoted to the compliment event, the majority of scholars agree that compliments are formulaic in nature, with frequently repeated syntactic patterns and lexical material, and that, at least in Western languages, they contain an expression of admiration on the part of the speaker concerning a possession, accomplishment or personal quality of the addressee (cf. Holmes 1988; Herbert 1991). Yet, as Boyle advocates (2000), compliments are not necessarily formulaic and in certain genres there is a marked preference for implicit forms (cf. also Herbert 1991: 383). By implicit compliments Boyle means two different speech acts: one that refers to the addressee’s achievement, whose recognition strongly depends on indexical knowledge; and one that compares the addressee to someone he/she thinks highly of. The latter type also requires a great deal of indexical knowledge and reciprocity of perspective in order for the compliment to be taken as such. The expression of praise rests on a comparison, whose interpretation depends on the addressee’s knowledge of the object of the comparison. Both implicit compliments referring to achievements and involving comparison seem to be able to solve the dilemma posed by compliments (Pomerantz 1978), i.e. reconcile the need to agree with assessments and to avoid self-praise. Furthermore, both types obey to a phatic function not only in the sense that they use small talk to establish rapport, but also because they reach greater affiliation with others.

Lewandoska-Tomaszcyk (1989: 77) also considers non-canonical compliments and contends that the less formulaic, i.e. more indirect, praising and complimenting forms, the better social effects in terms of solidarity they may bring about. In other words, the choice of non-routine language presupposes the special care the speaker takes in uttering a compliment, hence his/her personal involvement and sincerity. It is however also true that less conventional instances of compliments may engender more ambiguity and consequently require more interpreting on the part of the addressee (1989: 82).

On the whole, it can be argued that a higher degree of indirectness in uttering compliments seems preferable for several reasons: on the one hand, the choice of an original wording better supports the sincerity of the locutor and lends more force to his/her utterance. This strategy also involves the addressee by asking him/her to cooperate to construct the implied meaning. On the other hand, implicitness most strategically redresses the balance between positive and negative face thereby reducing the possibility of getting too close to the addressee and invading his/her territory, for example by embarrassing him/her (for a more detailed analysis of implicit compliments cf. Bruti 2006). For these reasons, it
seems important to preserve these aspects in translation, by reconstructing – as far as possible – the role configurations as they are in the original. When the positive evaluation derives from the whole sequence of words, the removal of some elements or the rephrasing of the original wording may downgrade the illocutionary force of the compliment. Let us consider some examples of implicit compliments.

(11) Film: Bend it like Beckham

**English soundtrack**

*Jess:* That was so brilliant the way you came to my house.
You were brave enough to face my mum!
Your dad can’t be as mad as her!

*Joe:* Your mum’s a barrel of laughs compared to me dad!
I don’t need to feel close to my family, Jess.
I don’t need you to feel sorry for me.

**Italian subtitles**

È stato fantastico quando sei venuto a casa mia.
Hai avuto il coraggio di affrontare mia madre.
Tuo padre non può essere peggio di lei.
Tua madre è un agnellino in confronto a mio padre.
Non ho bisogno della mia famiglia e non voglio la tua compassione.

In (11) there are two compliments, one with “brilliant” in a sentence with an extraposed subject, a phenomenon that is typical of the difficult on-line planning of oral discourse, and the second with the adjective “brave”. Apart from a general “watering down” effect (repetition and intensification are in fact almost always wiped out), the subtitles convey the same pragmatic meaning as the original.

Examples (12) to (15) contain a mixture of strategies, i.e. non formulaic vocabulary, some taboo expressions and implicit compliments. (12) describes a conversation between Frank and Michael in which the former is expressing his happiness for the fact that Michael is the right man for his daughter Gina. So the whole sentence “I’m so thrilled that she met someone who knows exactly how she deserves to be treated” acts as an indirect form of praise, which is reinforced in Frank’s following turn, where he specifies the manner, “like a fucking princess”. The Italian subtitles obliterate the taboo word with a heavy loss in the intensity of the compliment and in the characterisation of Frank’s speech, which is quite often interspersed with four letter words.

In (13) there are two instances of compliments the first of which relies on a positive noun, “mouthful”. Interestingly, Antoinette is expressing her admiration for Michael/Mickey Blue Eyes as if he were not present, thereby relegating him to the role of a side-participant in the ongoing conversation. She is in fact more preoccupied of pleasing the two mafia bosses that she already knows and therefore addresses to them. The second instance of compliment is instead implicit. The girl asks Mickey where he comes from and when she learns that he comes from Kansas City, she declares her interest in him by uttering the words “Kansas City here I come”, by which she means that she fancies him a lot. The translation in the subtitles is faithful to the original.

Examples (14) and (15) represent instances of implicit compliments. In both cases the compliment is implicit as no positively denoted item is used in the wording. In (14) Sabrina is explaining to David that she was waiting for her fa-
ther to pick her up at the station and David very gentlemanly remarks that he is happy that her father did not turn up, thus having the chance of meeting her. In (15) Linus is praising his brother for his way with women by recognising him an uncommon talent. Therefore in (14) the compliment obviously refers to Sabrina by way of mentioning her father’s delay and in (15) it refers to David’s achievement but we can read between the lines a note of sarcasm and criticism because David shows a complete disregard for anything but fun, women and cars. In (13) the translation closely reproduces the original and preserves the implicit nature of the compliment, but in (14) the universal of normalisation is applied (Laviosa-Braithwaite 1998: 289) by removing the cultural reference that the Italian audience might not understand, i.e. Vassar, an exclusive college located in the heart of the Hudson Valley. This choice however drives to a loss of the positive connotations attached to the referent.

(12) Film: *Mickey Blue Eyes*

**ENGLISH SOUNDTRACK**

*Frank:* I’m so thrilled that she met someone who knows exactly how she deserves to be treated.

*Michael:* Right.

*Frank:* Like a fucking princess.

**ITALIAN SUBTITLES**

Finalmente ha incontrato qualcuno che sa trattarla come merita.

Come una principessa.

(13) Film: *Mickey Blue Eyes*

**ENGLISH SOUNDTRACK**

*Boss:* You got company while you are in town? Hey, Antoinette! Come here. This here’s a very good friend of us. Kansas City Little Big Mickey Blue Eyes.

*Antoinette:* That’s a mouthful.

*Boss:* Sit down. Say hi to the nice man.

*Antoinette:* Hi.

*Mickey:* Hi.

*Antoinette:* Mickey Blue Eyes. Why do they call you that? So what part of Kansas City?

**ITALIAN SUBTITLES**

Hai compagnia in città?

Ehi, Antoinette!

Vieni qui.

Questo è un nostro caro amico.

Big Mickey Junior Occhi Blu, di Kansas City.

**ACCIDENTI, QUANTA ROBA.**

Siediti e saluta il ragazzo.

Ciao.

*Mickey Occhi Blu.*

Perché ti chiamano così?

Di quale parte di Kansas City sei?

**ITALIAN SUBTITLES**

Kansas City, vengo subito.

(14) Film: *Sabrina*

**ENGLISH SOUNDTRACK**

*David:* Are you stranded?

*Sabrina:* My father was supposed to pick me up but something must have happened.

*David:* Whoever your father is, I’ll be grateful to him.

**ITALIAN SUBTITLES**

È rimasta a piedi?

Papà doveva venirmi a prendere.

Chiunque sia suo padre, gli sarò eternamente grato.
3.2.5. Explicitation in subtitles

Sometimes, more exceptionally though, it may also happen that the speech act in the subtitles is richer than that in the original, not so much quantitatively (cf. Gottlieb 2000 on expansion), but qualitatively, because the expression, and consequently the message that is conveyed, is richer. Let us consider the following case.

In (16) the subtitles are more explicit (cf. on explicitation Perego 2003) than the original, as the sincere, deep admiration for Jess’s outfit is more strongly and effectively conveyed:

(16) Film: Bend it like Beckham

English soundtrack
Jess: I didn’t bring anything for a club. I didn’t know they would take us clubbing. I bet it’s too gloat! [pointing at a T-shirt].
Jules: [dialling Mel’s extension] Mel? We need some help.
Girl 1: Jess!
Girl 2: Oh, wow! You look good!
Mel: [following Jess, who’s wearing a sexy outfit] She looks good?

Italian subtitles
Non ho niente per uscire, non sapevo che ci portassero per locali.
Mel? Ci serve aiuto.
Non è una meraviglia?

Here the subtitle translates more explicitly what is already conveyed by the visual and aural codes, i.e. Mel’s smiling look of approval and admiration and the cheerful tone in her voice.

4. Conclusions

On the whole, most of the findings in Rose (2001) have been confirmed by this study. Compliments in film language seem to exploit a more varied repertoire of linguistic expressions than the few, stereotypical formulae identified in the socio-linguistic studies by Manes and Wolfson (cf. examples 1-4). Some adjectives tend to occur with regularity: brilliant (especially in Br.E., cf. Bend it like Beckham and Mickey Blue Eyes, where Michael/Mickey is an Englishman), cute and terrific (cf. Tootsie, Sliding Doors). Actual frequency of occurrence should be checked in corpora of natural dialogue.

The limited data that has been analysed so far suggests that in the Italian subtitles there appears to be a preference to compliment people on their personal qualities rather than on their performance (examples 6, 7 and 8). This tendency should however be double-checked both in more film subtitles and also in original data in Italian, to see whether this is a feature of subtitles or a general preference of Italian.
Generally speaking, there is a marked preference for omissions and reductions in subtitles (examples 9 and 10), where any small change, if not compensated by the other communicative codes, drastically affects pragmatic meaning. In a few cases, however, more explicit compliments (example 16) show that the translator may decide to reinforce through the subtitle what is expressed by the images (i.e. look, posture, facial expression, etc.) or by the non verbal qualities of the auditory channel (i.e. tone of voice, speed of speech).

Finally, it has been observed that implicit compliments are successful in the Italian subtitles when the original wording is closely reproduced so as to involve the addressee in the co-operative decoding task of contributing meaning to the speaker’s utterance. Otherwise, if something is expunged, the effect might turn out to be scarcely convincing, especially in a language that tends to favour exaggerated forms of approval (cf. on this Bruti 2006). Needless to say, all the above trends should be confirmed by investigation of more data, both from film language and from corpora of spoken Italian.

The compliment can however be an unrelated insertion in a conversation, a sort of aside comment which has no evident link with the current topic.


As some researchers have pointed out, the procedure that Manes and Wolfson used, i.e. field observation, has some limitations, because researchers have to rely on their memory and observational skills with inevitable qualitative and quantitative losses. Redundancies, dysfluences and modalsying elements such as hedges and discourse markers are usually neglected as well as non linguistic cues (Golato 2003: 95). On the whole, though, field observation can be useful especially when the focus of the research is the speech event and the identification of the most recursive syntactic patterns.

«Really stands for any intensifier; look stands for any linking verb other than be; like and love stand for any verb of liking; ADJ stands for any semantically positive adjective; NP stands for a noun phrase that does not include a positive adjective; PRO stands for you, this, that, these or those» (Wolfson and Manes 1980: 408).

Quite interestingly, in German the positive value is very seldom expressed by a verb. As Golato shows (2004: 78), 35% of compliments contain no verb at all, 35% use the verb sein (=“to be”) and another 10% the verb haben (=“to have”), which are semantically neutral verbs. The only exception is the verb freuen (=“to be happy”).

Herbert shows that, differently from English, Polish compliments are practically never expressed with the first person singular. The most frequent formula is in fact Masz (= “you have”) (Herbert 1991: 391). Consequently, it is quite obvious that the largest proportion of compliments in Polish concerns possessions, particularly new possessions.

Compliments are in bold in both the original and in the subtitles. In transcribing the Italian subtitles I have followed the following conventions: a slash (/) indicates the border between two different subtitles and dashes (-) indicate that two turns belong to the same subtitle.

Two readings are viable here, the second of which exploits the sexual meaning of the verb to come.

**References**


Boyle, Ronald (2000). ‘You’ve Worked with Elizabeth Taylor!’: *Phatic Fun-


Introduzione

L’Italia è un paese che per tradizione preferisce la modalità traduttiva del doppiaggio a quella della sottotitolazione, e che negli ultimi cinquanta anni ha assistito alla traduzione di un numero notevolissimo di testi audiovisivi (Baccolini et al., 1994; Bollettieri Bosinelli, 1994; Castellano, 2000a; Taylor, 2000; Caimi, Peregò, 2002; Paolinelli, Di Fortunato, 2005). Tuttavia, al di fuori dei ristretti circoli professionali e fatta eccezione per le poche interviste rilasciate dagli addetti ai lavori (cfr. per esempio quella di Renato Izzo a Carboni in Carboni, 2004), non è ancora chiaro a tutti chi e quanti realmente siano i dialoghisti e come il lavoro sia distribuito tra loro. Si tratta tuttavia di una questione cruciale che necessita di essere approfondita, specialmente se si considera il potente impatto sociolinguistico dei testi tradotti per il doppiaggio sulla lingua degli spettatori.

Per fare chiarezza sull’argomento, abbiamo condotto un’analisi sul numero di film tradotti in Italia fino al 2000 dai membri dell’Associazione Italiana Dialoghisti Adattatori CineTelevisioni (AIDAC). L’analisi affronta due problemi centrali e vuole spiegare 1) quanti dialoghisti siano stati attivi durante il periodo preso in considerazione e 2) in che modo la loro attività sia stata distribuita in termini di film tradotti.

A seguito di tale analisi quantitativa abbiamo somministrato interviste semi strutturate (cfr. Appendice) a otto dialoghisti particolarmente produttivi e influenti. Le interviste si proponevano di raccogliere informazioni sulla loro specifica formazione professionale, sulle esperienze lavorative maturate, sulla loro intera-
zione con i colleghi e sullo sviluppo di regolarità linguistiche o di comportamenti traduttivi condivisi all'interno della comunità professionale cui appartengono.


1.1 L’AIDAC

L’AIDAC (Associazione Italiana Dialoghisti Adattatori Cinetelevisivi) è un’associazione professionale di categoria «unica in Italia (e nel mondo), che dal 1976 riunisce gli autori dei dialoghi adattati in italiano per il doppiaggio e per la produzione audiovisiva» (http://www.aidac.it/ass_001.html). Nasce per ragioni di carattere pratico nel momento in cui l’esigenza di organizzare e di controllare il numero sempre più consistente di dialoghisti, rimasto esiguo fino agli inizi degli anni ’80 e cioè fino all’esplosione delle televisioni libere, si fa più evidente. Non ha scopo di lucro e si muove in ambito sindacale e istituzionale per la tutela dei diritti dei dialoghisti e per la promozione del doppiaggio in Italia e all’estero (cfr. Paolinelli, Di Fortunato, 2000: 106-107).

Titolo sufficiente e necessario per associarsi «è esclusivamente l’esercizio della attività stabile e continuativa di dialoghista adattatore cinetelevisivo» (Art. 2 Statuto AIDAC, http://www.aidac.it/ass_003.html), cui si affianca la necessaria conoscenza e la integrale accettazione dello statuto. Da pochi anni l’ammissione dei nuovi soci, che una volta ammessi possono essere esclusi dall’Associazione per motivi disciplinari o professionali, è regolata per prova d’esame. Il Consiglio Direttivo valuta la preparazione professionale dei candidati che devono dichiarare il proprio titolo di studio (almeno di scuola media superiore), indicare le lingue straniere conosciute, le esperienze professionali e ogni altra notizia utile alla valutazione (Regolamento di esecuzione dello Statuto dell’AIDAC, http://www.aidac.it/ass_004.html).

A oggi il numero dei soci riuniti nell’AIDAC si aggira intorno ai 180, un numero pari a circa il 50% dei dialoghisti italiani. Quelli, come ci segnala il presidente dell’associazione Filippo Ottoni, disposti a pagare annualmente i contributi necessari affinché l’associazione esista, possa ottenere e difendere i privilegi della categoria, garantire servizi – non ultimo quello pensionistico – e assistenza legale ai soci.

2. Il rilevamento statistico


![Figura 1. Distribuzione del lavoro dei dialoghisti maschi (m) e femmine (f) (Elaborazione dati sulla base di: Castellano, 2000b)](image)

Una distribuzione del lavoro così evidentemente diseguale si può spiegare solo considerando diversi fattori. In primo luogo, per i dialoghisti più produttivi la traduzione di opere audiovisive rappresenta un lavoro a tempo pieno. Dialoghisti con una produttività bassa, invece, operano generalmente in settori contigui e lavorano anche come attori, attori doppiatori e di teatro, direttori di doppiaggio, sceneggiatori, registi ecc. Va precisato poi che il grafico riporta i nomi di soci AIDAC appartenenti a generazioni diverse e illustra una situazione che combina due realtà contrastanti, quella presente e quella passata. In passato pochi dialoghisti lavoravano su grandi quantità di materiale audiovisivo (costituito per la maggior parte da film); oggi il carico di lavoro si è allargato e include parecchi prodotti commerciali e per la TV. Dunque, per quanto riguarda il prodotto filmico, un numero più alto di persone si trova a contendersi lo stesso carico di lavoro, la cui distribuzione rispecchia la presenza di un’implicita scala di prestigio tra i dialoghisti.

La situazione numerica e personale per professionista ricavata dai dati raccolti da Castellano (2000b) è esposta nella Tabella 1. I dati a nostra disposizione evidenziano, inoltre, un numero limitato di dialoghisti donne appartenenti a questo circolo professionale tradizionalmente composto da uomini. Un ambito lavorativo in cui le caratteristiche indispensabili per emergere sono la decisione e l’intraprendenza, infatti, è stato a lungo retaggio solo maschile. Tuttavia, la tendenza a scoraggiare le donne nell’intraprendere l’attività di dialoghisti sta svanendo e...
quelle che generalmente provengono da ambiti lavorativi contigui si inseriscono attivamente in campo professionale raggiungendo posizioni di successo.

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Tabella 1. Numero di film tradotti e adattati da ogni dialoghista fino al 2000 (Elaborazione dati sulla base di: Castellano, 2000b)
3. Le interviste

Per la seconda parte di questo lavoro abbiamo sfruttato principalmente documenti e pubblicazioni di varia natura disponibili sul sito AIDAC (www.aidac.it) o redatti dai membri dell’Associazione, e abbiamo condotto interviste semi strutturate di carattere qualitativo (cfr. Appendice) con un numero selezionato di dialoghisti per il cinema particolarmente attivi ed esperti e cioè, in ordine alfabetico, con Elettra Caporello, Marco Bardella, Ruggero Busetti, Eleonora Di Fortunato, Marco Mete, Filippo Ottoni, Mario Paolinelli, Alberto Piferi.

Tra gli aspetti più rilevanti emersi dalle ricerche, ci proponiamo ora di analizzare in primo luogo la formazione e le competenze linguistiche dei dialoghisti, le loro origini e la politica di reclutamento nel mondo del doppiaggio. Intendiamo poi spostare la nostra attenzione sul contesto in cui vivono per analizzarne le dinamiche relazionali e professionali, fattori che influiscono in modo decisivo sulla creazione delle norme linguistiche.

3.1 La formazione e la competenza linguistica

Il tipo di formazione dei dialoghisti intervistati e di quelli di cui si è potuto avere notizia attraverso il sito AIDAC è eterogenea e spazia da studi classici, filosofici e sociologici a studi tecnici e di carattere informatico, passando attraverso casi di professionisti provenienti da scuole artistiche, come l’Accademia delle Belle Arti o la Scuola di cinema londinese.


Il prerequisito riconosciuto unanimemente come necessario per poter intraprendere il lavoro è un’eccellente competenza parlata e soprattutto scritta in italiano e non in una lingua straniera (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato, 2005). A ciò vanno integrate specifiche abilità tecniche (Murri, 1996: 84) e una buona cultura generale. Va messo in evidenza che i dialoghisti non sempre sono in possesso di un diploma di laurea né di diplomi specifici di scuole di traduzione, e che spesso non c’è alcun legame tra il tipo di formazione ricevuta e la professione svolta. Inoltre, il livello di competenza nella lingua e da cui si traduce varia ampiamente e spazia da molto basso a molto alto, e in tutti i casi è raggiunto in situazioni di apprendimento non formali. Alcuni intervistati dichiarano che
alcuni tra i più illustri dialoghisti della “prima scuola” non conoscevano affatto la lingua del film originale su cui lavoravano\(^3\), sottolineando così la lontananza del loro lavoro da quello del traduttore. «Il mestiere del dialoghista è un altro» (Bardella, Paolinelli, Mete), sostengono, tanto che quando chiediamo a Marco Mete da quale/i lingua/e traduce ci risponde senza esitazione «Da nessuna! Io non traduco i miei film!». Il fatto che sia più importante padroneggiare ad alti livelli la propria lingua madre rispetto a una lingua straniera, e il fatto che il dialoghista non si consideri un traduttore sono in parte riconducibili alla natura «artigianale» (Paolinelli, Mete) di questo lavoro, «un lavoro che si impara da bottega» (Bardella), in cui la professionalità si acquisisce on the job (Taronna, 1996: 111, cit. in Benincà, 1999: 107; Whitman-Linsen 1992: 101), a fianco di esperti disponibili ad addestrare il principiante.

Tradurre e adattare sono percepite come procedure di natura molto diversa, come due operazioni (e due mestieri) separati e complementari. «L’adattatore interpreta, non traduce» (Mete), e dunque lavora a un altro livello, che non è solo tecnico (relativo alla sincronizzazione, sia questa qualitativa o quantitativa) ma anche creativo, che richiede un intervento interpretativo che lo vede impegnato a ricreare un testo e a riscriverlo, come se il film fosse stato girato in italiano. «Se la traduzione segue la letteralità, con l’adattamento si sposta il linguaggio parlato in un’altra situazione fisica» (Mete). Tutto ciò ha una ripercussione a livello terminologico (cfr. note 1 e 2), e ci porta a mettere in evidenza la consistente discrepanza tra l’approccio dei professionisti e quello degli studiosi nei confronti della definizione di tale figura. Se per gli addetti ai lavori prevale la dimensione creativa e ritenuta più prestigiosa – che si riflette nelle auto-definizioni riscontrate sia in letteratura, sia nelle interviste (cfr. «dialogue adaptor as scriptwriter» e «co-author» (Paolinelli, 2000b), «author» (Paolinelli, 2000b; Galassi, 2000), «autore dialoghista» (Scarponi, 1996))¹⁴ – per gli studiosi tale dimensione incentrata sulla traduzione intralinguistica o parafrasi (Jakobson 1959) è implicita e questa posizione li porta a usare etichette più tecniche (cfr. «translator/dubbing translator»(Antonini, Chiaro, 2004) «dialogue writer» (Ulrych, 2000; Chaume, 2004)).

In questo lavoro abbiamo deciso di utilizzare i termini “dialoghista” e “tradurre” a favore di un bilanciato compromesso tra le visioni interna ed esterna di questa figura e del suo lavoro, non negando mai il fatto che l’opera messa in atto dai dialoghisti rimanga un procedimento di traduzione, benché creativo e vincolato, cioè di trasmissione di un testo in una lingua naturale in un’altra lingua naturale.

Il dialoghista (o «dialoghista cinetelevisivo», «dialoghista audiovisivo», «traduttore dialoghista per audiovisivi» secondo la terminologia suggerita da Mario Paolinelli) è quella figura che all’interno della catena del doppiaggio si occupa specificamente della traduzione e dell’adattamento dei dialoghi originali. Come specifica Mario Paolinelli, «l’essere dialoghista presuppone l’essere traduttore». Il dialoghista è poi «una figura specializzata, che dovrebbe avere conoscenze di recitazione\(^5\), e che si contrappone a quella del traduttore, una figura che provvede, quando necessario, a fornire una traccia letterale di nessun valore. Traccia che risparmia il lavoro di consultazione del vocabolario». Il traduttore sarebbe...
dunque una figura che entra in gioco nel momento in cui sono richiesti al dialo-
ghista ritmi di lavoro troppo serrati o quando il dialoghista si impegna a tradurre
e adattare in un breve periodo un numero di film più alto rispetto a quello su cui
potrebbe realmente lavorare.

Mario Paolinelli ci spiega per esempio che l’adattamento dei dialoghi di un
film di 150-180 cartelle richiede all’incirca un mese di lavoro. Se la casa di pro-
duzione lo vuole pronto in una settimana, per garantire che questo avvenga il
dialoghista si rivolge a qualcuno che «gli dice che parole ci sono nel copione
originale». Ricorre pertanto a traduttori letterari o tecnici abili e veloci, «che
fanno il lavoro di traduzione in mezza giornata. È a questo punto che interviene
il dialoghista, che lavora davanti al film usando la traduzione come base, come
vocabolario» (Paolinelli).

Un altro caso in cui si rivolge al traduttore è quello in cui «il dialoghista
si prende l’impegno di fare cinque film al mese» (Paolinelli) e per onorarlo si
rivolge a traduttori a basso costo che «forniscono un copione semi adattato su
base del visivo. Il dialoghista, poi, riguarda, ma non sempre, la versione tradotta;
correge, firma, consegna, e ha i diritti d’autore a vita!» (Paolinelli). Situazioni
di questo genere, tuttavia, non costituiscono la norma poiché generalmente il
dialoghista traduce il copione del film davanti al video.

Anche chi traduce da più lingue, infine, lo fa generalmente affidandosi a un
traduttore o a una pre-traduzione (Busetti) fornita dalla casa produttrice. Ciò
avviene principalmente per evitare errori grossolani di comprensione (Barde-
lla). Quando invece il dialoghista adatta da lingue esotiche, lo fa generalmente a
partire dai sottotitoli inglesi che gli sono forniti dalla casa di produzione. Quel-
lo che manca nel sottotitolo, che necessariamente condensa il dialogo originale,
va inventato dopo un’adeguata documentazione. È soprattutto in questi casi che
l’intervento creativo del dialoghista è inevitabilmente significativo e che il dialo-
ghista diventa un vero e proprio mediatore linguistico e culturale (Bardella).

3.2 Dalla Marina al cinema: le (impreviste) origini dei dialoghisti

La peculiarità di questa professione è evidente fin dalle sue origini: se oggi i “leader
naturali” dell’Associazione sono gli anziani del mestiere o i dialoghisti della “secon-
da generazione” (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato, 2005: 19; Ottoni), i veri e propri “padri
fondatori” dei dialoghisti di oggi nascono come comandanti di Marina, persone di
ricche esperienze e di mente aperta ma anche ottimi conoscitori della lingua ingle-
se, competenza acquisita a seguito del contatto diretto con parlanti nativi. Ferdi-
nando Contestabile, ex ufficiale di Marina e noto dialoghista, riferisce che

[n]on è un caso che proprio la Marina abbia fornito le principali leve di adattatori
dell’immediato dopoguerra: Roberto De Leonardis, Maurizio Raimondo, Ruggero Fio-
rini, Leonardo Magnanini ecc., oltre al sottoscritto. Infatti, al di là di un alto livello di
conoscenza dell’inglese, portavamo con noi un’esperienza di vita in paesi diversi, con
situazioni, caratteri, usi e costumi anche molto lontani dai nostri (Biarese, 2000: 103-
104).

Tornati in Italia dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale – gli anni in cui nasce la “prima
scuola” italiana (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato, 2005: 19) – e provvisti di requisiti che
non tutti a quei tempi avevano, in un paese in cui la maggior parte della popo-
laazione non conosceva la lingua inglese, i comandanti di Marina intraprendono
un lavoro precluso agli altri italiani. Sono i soli in grado di intrattenere relazioni
con l’estero, in particolare con le case di produzione americane, in un periodo che vede l’invasione dei film d’oltre oceano in Italia e la conseguente necessità di traduttori esperti e veloci (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato, 2005: 17-19). Furono anche le persone giuste al posto giusto: molte proposte per intraprendere il lavoro di dialoghista provenivano da parenti coinvolti nel mondo del cinema (Biarese, 2000: 103-104). È grazie a uno zio che Ferdinando Contestabile, figura di spicco nella categoria, inizia a lavorare stabilmente come dialoghista nei primi anni ’50 (Biarese, 2000: 103). La stessa sorte tocca ai colleghi dialoghisti della sua generazione:

Con De Leonardis abbiamo vissuto vite parallele. Ci conosciamo dalla seconda ginnasiale, ci siamo ritrovati in Accademia, poi su varie navi, in Cina, nei Campi di prigionia e alla fine anche nel cinema. (Biarese, 2000: 104).

3.3 Il reclutamento

Quanto appena detto fa emergere un aspetto importante del mondo del doppiaggio: in questo più che in altri settori professionali le relazioni famigliari e/o amicali sono centrali e determinanti per entrare a farne parte. A questo proposito è utile ricordare il ruolo giocato in Italia dalla famiglia Izzo nel settore del doppiaggio cinematografico:

Quasi tutti nella sua famiglia – la moglie Liliana, le quattro figlie, otto nipoti, due pronipoti – sono coinvolti nell’impresa. «Siamo – dice con orgoglio affettuoso – come un grande Carro di Tespi, una bottega di alto artigianato dove tutti, anche il più piccolo, sanno fare qualcosa» (Carboni, 2004: 9).

È anche possibile arrivare a lavorare come dialoghista naturalmente, cioè provenendo da aree professionali limitrofe. È cioè possibile, come ci spiega Marco Bardella, distinguere due tipi di dialoghisti: coloro i quali acquisiscono la pratica attraverso la famiglia o gli amici e i “dialoghisti puri”, persone che svolgono e provengono da professioni contigue al mondo del doppiaggio.

Vivere a Roma certamente aiuta poiché qui ha sede l’industria italiana del doppiaggio (Paolinelli, Di Fortunato, 2005) e pertanto è più facile che altrove incontrare persone che possano incoraggiare o anche permettere di intraprendere questa strada difficile e chiusa.

Una situazione di questo tipo ha contribuito alla creazione di una piccola rete sociale chiusa, difficilmente accessibile a esterni. Pochi nuclei familiari molto attivi gestiscono tutto il lavoro che sarà poi suddiviso all’interno della comunità professionale. Tuttavia, la natura di azienda a base familiare del circolo dei dialoghisti era particolarmente palese in passato, quando poche unità familiari dominavano l’intero mercato. Oggi tale chiusura non impedisce anche l’ingresso a esterni, bensì la selezione iniziale non sempre posì su basi meritocratiche.

3.4 Le dinamiche relazionali

A quanto detto si ricollega direttamente l’aspetto relativo ai rapporti che esistono tra professionisti. L’isolamento del dialoghista è una caratteristica saliente e pervasiva, emersa con decisione dalle interviste. La mancanza di contatti e di scambi a livello professionale è stata messa in evidenza da tutti gli intervistati (cfr. anche Benincà, 1999: 69). Tutti assicurano che, fatta eccezione per alcune, rare collaborazioni felici, i dialoghisti tendenzialmente non si consultano e preferiscono risolvere da soli eventuali problemi di traduzione. L’individualismo talvolta
Il dialoghista, così come lo definisce Filippo Ottoni, è da ascriversi in primo luogo alle sue condizioni lavorative. Si tratta di un mestiere che oggi si fa necessariamente in solitudine. Ogni dialoghista è provvisto dell’attrezzatura necessaria e, diversamente da quanto succedeva in passato, quando ci si ritrovava davanti alla moviola e nella stessa stanza con altri colleghi, lavora a casa. In alcuni casi la tendenza a evitare il contatto con altri è da ricondurre in parte a un fatto di orgoglio professionale o di gelosia artistica – come del resto accade in moltissimi ambiti lavorativi (Ottoni) – e in parte allo “stato di terrore per la sopravvivenza” (Paolinelli) in cui i dialoghisti sono costretti a vivere a causa delle poche e conte-sissime ore di doppiaggio.

In Italia, dunque, come succede però anche in altri paesi (cfr. Martínez, 2004: 7 per la Spagna), i dialoghisti tendono a lavorare in isolamento, dando vita a una rete sociale in cui la competizione supera la cooperazione e in cui la mancanza di contatto professionale non permette lo strutturarsi di una comunità coesa: «la coesione, se di coesione si può parlare, si manifesta attraverso l’AIDAC, che difende la categoria, ma poi tutti sono individualisti» (Ottoni).

Esistono però forme di collaborazione esterna. Non è raro che i dialoghisti si rivolgano a specialisti di settore nel caso in cui debbano risolvere problemi legati alla lingua settoriale, o, caso meno comune, siano loro stessi fautori di collaborazioni reciproche. Tendenzialmente, anche se secondo alcuni le tensioni (e la mancanza) di rapporto tra dialoghisti sono un retaggio del passato, sembra emergere dalle interviste il fatto che l’aggiornamento professionale, il confronto con le soluzioni altrui e lo stabilirsi di determinate norme linguistiche avviene in modo indiretto, attraverso l’accesso a materiale tradotto, dunque nel momento in cui il dialoghista è anche spettatore e come tale prende atto delle soluzioni dei colleghi. È dunque per mezzo di prodotti finiti, e non durante il processo di traduzione, che avviene la comunicazione.

Qualunque sia il grado di contatto tra colleghi, l’imitazione stretta delle soluzioni di altri è stigmatizzata anche sulla base della convinzione che ogni opera di adattamento è unica e vada trattata come tale. I migliori dialoghisti sono reticenti anche al riutilizzo delle proprie soluzioni e si sforzano di incrementare la creatività linguistica per evitarne la standardizzazione e l’appiattimento (Scarponi, 1996: 53; Goris, 1993).

3.5 Il lavoro e le gerarchie

Abbiamo già avuto modo di accennare al fatto che i dialoghisti costituiscono un piccolo gruppo elitario. Come sottolinea Mario Paolinelli, «tradurre film costituisce il punto d’arrivo professionale del dialoghista, una meta ambita. Chi non raggiunge tale obiettivo continua a occuparsi della televisione e a lavorare su prodotti più o meno commerciali». Solo i dialoghisti che si occupano di traduzione per il cinema possono talvolta permettersi di scegliere il materiale audiovisivo su cui lavorare e di stabilire il proprio compenso, che generalmente è molto alto. Per capire questo meccanismo è utile ribadire che la maggior parte dei dialoghisti si trova nelle condizioni di accettare sempre e comunque diverse commesse. Solo una ristretta minoranza ha il privilegio di poter porre restrizioni privilegiando determinati generi filmici (d’autore, di cassetta, di avventura, ecc.) o audiovisivi (film, sitcom, documentario, ecc.), o può addirittura porre divieti su singoli film. I film di circuito sono naturalmente i più ambiti. Il mercato è però chiuso, l’accen-
so molto difficile se non nullo, e ottenere prodotti interessanti è difficile perché spesso «qualcuno se li è già conquistati» (Bardella). Se è vero che generalmente non si sceglie, infatti, lo è altrettanto il fatto che sul mercato esistono in una certa misura anche la meritocrazia e il buon nome: per l’adattamento di film di circuito, quelli meglio retribuiti, le società di produzione tendono ad affidare il lavoro a chi conoscono e a chi ha acquisito una certa fama. Prodotti meno prestigiosi, invece, non necessariamente sono affidati a dialoghisti affermati, che rifiuterebbero di lavorare per una retribuzione che non considerano adeguata. Ne segue che la selezione relativa a chi tradurrà cosa è naturale, è una selezione che viene fatta a monte (Ottoni) sulla base di una rigida «cernita economica» (Mete). Alcuni dialoghisti «costano molto» (Caporello, Ottoni) e hanno tariffe che invitano i committenti a escluderli a priori per tradurre prodotti commerciali.

Va però valutato un altro aspetto. L’accettazione della commessa da parte di un dialoghista è determinata anche da un fatto di convenienze relazionali: è fondamentale non perdere i rapporti con i propri clienti. Pertanto, se il dialoghista di fama ha la possibilità di scegliere, è importante che si sappia muovere e che non rifiuti una commessa, pur lontana dai suoi interessi, per una casa di produzione con cui non lavora da tempo e che si rivolge proprio a lui (Busetti, Bardella). Come sottolinea Marco Mete durante l’intervista, infatti, «i datori di lavoro sono le case cinematografiche, che tengono ad ogni film allo stesso modo e vogliono un buon risultato per tutti. Spesso, dunque, il dialoghista non può permettersi di scegliere i prodotti su cui lavorare anche se prodotti audiovisivi diversi sono pagati diversamente».

Sulla base di quanto detto e riscontrato sia nelle interviste, sia nella letteratura esaminata (Castellano, 2000a, 2000b; Benincà, 1999), è possibile affermare che i dialoghisti appartengono a una struttura gerarchica molto complessa. Un piccolo gruppo all’estremità superiore della piramide è costituito da coloro che appartengono al vertice della comunità professionale e cioè dai dialoghisti più autorevoli e ragguardevoli che traducono materiale filmico, spesso a loro discrezione. Si tratta di figure portanti in questo campo, di esperti che hanno avuto l’opportunità di acquisire la propria professionalità di dialoghisti di eccellenza grazie alla scuola di professionisti “storicì”. Tale gruppo comprende pochi dialoghisti piuttosto privilegiati che lavorano su un numero esiguo di film e su prodotti per la TV distinti per qualità, e che hanno la facoltà di scegliere il materiale audiovisivo su cui lavorare, specialmente per quanto riguarda il materiale televisivo. All’interno di questo piccolo gruppo, una percentuale ancora più piccola di dialoghisti lavora esclusivamente su film, situazione, come abbiamo visto, molto particolare e poco comune. La maggioranza invece è costituita da dialoghisti che, privi del privilegio della scelta, hanno limitatissime occasioni di lavorare su film e vivono quotidianamente la competizione del mercato.

4. La lingua

La seconda parte delle interviste era specificamente incentrata sulle scelte linguistiche e sulle strategie usate durante le fasi di traduzione e adattamento dall’inglese all’italiano. Oltre a fare domande relative a questioni lessicali, sintattiche e pragmatiche generalmente caratterizzanti la traduzione dalla lingua inglese a
quella italiana, abbiamo mostrato agli intervistati soluzioni tratte da film doppiati per indurli a considerarne la correttezza, la frequenza e la funzione, anche in relazione al materiale linguistico originale. I dati raccolti si possono analizzare in relazione all'interpretazione dell'italiano doppiato e allo sviluppo delle norme linguistiche. In particolare, le risposte fornite ci hanno permesso di individuare una serie di macro e di micro norme cui tendenzialmente si attengono tutti i dialoghisti e che presenteremo nei prossimi paragrafi.

4.1. Macro-norme

Abbiamo osservato in precedenza che la lingua di riferimento per il dialoghista è l'italiano, o in generale la sua lingua madre (si rimanda al § 3.1 e a Castro Roig, 2001: 268). Gli intervistati hanno dimostrato di sforzarsi con consapevolezza per rendere invisibile il doppiaggio e per evitare qualsiasi interferenza dalla lingua originale del film pur restituendo in italiano le specificità linguistiche dei personaggi (Calabrò, 1996; Paolinelli, 2000a). Una significativa attenzione per il realismo linguistico accomuna sia le case di produzione, sia gli adattatori stessi. Lo si evince dal fatto che talvolta i film sono assegnati ai professionisti in relazione alla loro età e/o alla loro esperienza in un determinato genere filmico39. Gli stessi dialoghisti sanno bene che un giovane sarà il dialoghista ideale di un film per ragazzi mentre un dialoghista più maturo tradurrà in modo più appropriato film d’essai e di nicchia. Quanto poi alla lingua in uso, i dialoghisti sono consapevoli dell’importanza di un aggiornamento costante per rinnovare la propria competenza in italiano e non raramente intervistano persone più giovani per accedere alle strutture gergali.

È stata più volte menzionata dagli intervistati la relazione tra l’AIDAC e l’Accademia della Crusca, uno dei principali punti di riferimento per le ricerche sulla lingua italiana. Ciò evidenzia il forte senso di responsabilità nei confronti degli standard linguisticì cui gli spettatori, in particolare i bambini, sono esposti30. I critici del doppiaggio, figure che contribuirebbero a controllarne la qualità del film tradotto per il doppiaggio in termini linguistici sono un tassello mancante di cui i dialoghisti sentono la necessità31. Come sottolinea Filippo Ottoni, mancano delle linee guida di riferimento anche se si potrebbe redigere un manuale delle buone regole relative a come porsi prima di iniziare l’adattamento, e l’AIDAC si sta muovendo in questa direzione, «anche se per il regresso non è possibile intervenire poiché un manuale prescrittivo non sarebbe accettato dagli anziani del mestiere» (Ottoni). Mettere per iscritto alcuni accorgimenti di base (per esempio, prendere visione del film prima dell’adattamento e farsi un’idea di quali sono i personaggi, quale il loro retroterra linguistico e culturale, ecc.) eviterebbe di dar vita a film «in cui parlano tutti allo stesso modo» (Ottoni) e eviterebbe di rafforzare quello che Raffaelli (1996) definisce «Un italiano per tutte le stagioni».

Naturalmente non è possibile prescrivere strategie di traduzione migliori di altre poiché «ognuno ha il suo metodo vincente» (Busetti). Esistono alcuni accorgimenti seguiti e segnalati da diversi dialoghisti – come per esempio vedere il film prima di procedere con l’adattamento, segnarsi pause, primi piani o posizioni di spalle. Questo aiuterebbe, tra le altre cose, «a scegliere gli aggettivi» (Caporello), o più in generale le parole che meglio si adattano alle consonanti labiali se il personaggio inquadro è in primo piano, e le parole che meglio si adattano alla situazione e alla creatività del dialoghista quando il personaggio
che parla è di spalle e non costituisce un vincolo per le scelte linguistiche. Lo stesso lavoro di traduzione è fatto da alcuni direttamente davanti al video, da altri (è il caso di Elettra Caporello) basandosi semplicemente sul copione originale provvisto dei propri appunti, cui segue una fase finale davanti al video che permette di sistemare labiali e lunghezze. L’approccio all’adattamento descritto da Elettra Caporello richiede parecchio tempo perché è molto accurato, ma spesso è pre-diletto dalle case produttrici che la scelgono e la chiamano perché “lavora bene”, perché i suoi dialoghi fanno risparmiare tempo in sala. Per quanto riguarda il primo assestamento del lavoro, Ruggero Busetti mette in evidenza che, poiché le soluzioni traduttive sono infinite, «segnare quelle immediate, che gli vengono in mente durante la prima visione, quelle istintive». Più tardi le riesamina e «di solito sono quelle le soluzioni vincenti, quelle dell’impatto diretto, di risposta immediata, specialmente per i nomi fantasiosi, le situazioni comiche. Le prime intuizioni sono le più fertili» (Busetti).

Per lingue come l’inglese, la prima importante questione riguarda la distinzione del lavoro del dialoghista in due fasi, quella della traduzione letterale e quella dell’adattamento. Se a livello teorico la distinzione in due fasi sembra rappresentare la norma, nella realtà la situazione è varia. In alcuni casi la suddivisione del lavoro nelle due fasi è rispettata, in altri i meccanismi sono intrecciati. La scelta di una o dell’altra strategia è personale. Per chi distingue concretamente le due fasi, il ricorso a un pre-testo (una semplice traduzione letterale fatta da altri e non pagata come la si pagherebbe a un traduttore professionista) può risolvere problemi legati ai tempi di consegna o rappresenta un utile strumento di lavoro che permette di capire quali sono i registri coinvolti, lo humour, i riferimenti culturali.

È emerso come cruciale l’aspetto recitativo, il modo interpretativo, quello che Alberto Piferi definisce «il culto della dicibilità», la consapevolezza che in fase di doppiaggio il testo da adattare dovrà essere recitato e non semplicemente letto ad alta voce (Galassi, 1996: 13). Dunque l’adattamento migliore sarà «un adattamento più fluido, che fila, che permette di risparmiare costi e tempi» (cfr. Busetti, Caporello), un adattamento che fornisce dialoghi recitabili senza fatica (cfr. anche Castro Roig, 2001; Gilabert et al., 2001). Di fatto, se i dialoghi non necessitano la continua rilettura in sala di doppiaggio e costanti aggiustamenti tecnici per la sincronizzazione, è possibile evitare numerose ripetizioni di battute e facilitare sia il lavoro del direttore di doppiaggio, sia quello degli attori doppiatori. È dunque evidente che la bontà recitativa non è da attribuirsi esclusivamente a direttori di doppiaggio e attori doppiatori (Chaume, 2004: 45): i dialoghisti – se lavorano tenendo a mente l’oralità – possono contribuire in modo decisivo ad agevolare e a velocizzare i tempi in sala di doppiaggio. «Così, l’adattamento migliore sarà migliore su qualche cosa che il pubblico non vedrà e di cui non si renderà mai conto» (Busetti).

4.2. Micro-norme

Le interviste ci hanno permesso di porre ai dialoghisti una serie di domande relative a strutture specifiche dell’italiano parlato che potessero riflettersi in norme traduttive tipiche del doppiaggio. La Tabella 2 illustra brevemente e con alcuni esempi le strutture grammaticali considerate e discusse con i dialoghisti intervistati.
Tabella 2. Micro-norme analizzate

Le risposte e i commenti dei dialoghisti hanno confermato che esistono alcune tendenze linguistiche e traduttive tipiche della traduzione per il doppiaggio (si vedano Pavesi, 1994, 2005; Malinverno, 1999; Brincat, 2000). Si tratterebbe di tendenze che operano sia sul piano lessicale, sia sul piano sintattico, benché l’attenzione dei dialoghisti per la sfera lessicale metta in evidenza una loro minore preoccupazione per i fenomeni di natura sintattica.

Le questioni lessicali più comuni ed emerse con maggiore consapevolezza della traduzione dalla lingua inglese comprendono i giochi di parole, l’umorismo, lo slang, il vocabolario tecnico, gli acronimi e anche il doppiaggese, generalmente identificato con particolari scelte lessicali, e si estendono a quello cui Marco Mete si riferisce con l’espressione inglese *private jokes*, e in generale a espressioni ricorrenti tra gruppi di persone che per diverse ragioni sono a stretto contatto, ossia usi linguistici circoscritti a un piccolo gruppo di parlanti.

Dai commenti degli intervistati si desume che esistono diverse formule ricorrenti che pongono problemi di resa di natura tecnica e culturale, come già osservato da altri (cfr. Pavesi, 2005). Alle espressioni più note per la loro difficoltà traduttiva se ne affiancano altre meno frequentemente trattate in letteratura. Tra le più interessanti, Filippo Ottoni ci segnala come particolarmente problematica l’espressione *do not jump to conclusions*, spesso traslitterata con il calco “non saltare alle conclusioni”, e non con il traducente appropriato “non trarre conclusioni affrettate”. A seguito della forte influenza dell’originale, “scena del crimine” va spesso a sostituire il più corretto “luogo del delitto” quale traducente di *crime scene* (Bardella, Ottoni) mentre l’inglese *coroner* “medico legale” rimane tale anche in
italiano, così come altri termini tecnici legati alla sfera medica, legale e giudiziaria che sono altrimenti necessariamente adattati e addomesticati. L’operazione potrebbe essere resa ancor più difficile dal vincolo della sincronizzazione. Marco Bardella, che si è occupato della traduzione della serie televisiva ER – Medici in Prima Linea, ci spiega che questa presenta un’abbondante terminologia tecnica a noi sconosciuta, costituita per la maggior parte da sigle, acronimi, forme ridotte (cfr. “ematocrito”, crit in inglese). Nella sfera del lessico giudiziario, l’inglese parlour officer “funzionario addetto alla libertà vigilata” non potrà essere reso con il traducente adeguato perché troppo lungo. Ci sono poi casi in cui reati ben co-dificati e puniti nel mondo anglosassone non trovano corrispondente lessicale in italiano. Nasce da questi fenomeni una «koiné legale», una forma linguistica di mediazione, creata per dire cose che non esistono, uno standard non corretto che aiuta a capire la realtà (Bardella). Si tratta di un compromesso tra la fedeltà ai tecnicismi nella lingua di partenza e l’esigenza di farsi capire. Tale compromesso si concretizza in «una lingua strana che viene dall’inglese, che è anche convenzionale, senza la quale certe cose non le potremmo neanche dire, ma il pubblico a casa sa che si sta facendo finta!» (Bardella).

Sono state inoltre segnalate le frequenti interiezioni tipiche dei film americani (es. “giusto?” per i ricorrenti right?, OK), l’abuso delle forme progressive (“cosa stai facendo?” per what are you doing?), l’uso di formule linguistiche non usate in italiano con la stessa frequenza e con lo stesso valore pragmatico (per esempio “dobbiamo parlare”, “ti devo parlare” o “vuoi una birra o cosa?”) (si veda anche Pavesi, 2005). La nostra familiarità con formule di questo tipo va attribuita al loro ingresso e alla loro accoglienza a tutti gli effetti nella nostra lingua (Mete, Ottoni), benché si tratti di formule inesistenti prima del doppiaggio. In alcuni casi si tratta di vere e proprie «aberrazioni linguistiche che diventano linguaggio comune» (Ottoni) e lo deteriorano. Se la lingua doppiata diventa parte della lingua quotidiana la responsabilità è del dialoghista, ma a questa va affiancata la mancanza di controllo dall’alto che contribuisce a mantenere numerose sviste e, nel peggiore dei casi, allo stabilirsi del doppiaggese. Ma l’aderenza eccessiva al testo originale è talvolta favorita dalle imposizioni dei supervisor. Generalmente americano, il supervisor non è una figura fissa ma, se presente, è determinante. È lui che si assicura della letteralità spesso estrema della traduzione dall’originale imponendo scelte a volte poco adeguate (Mete, Ottoni).

abbondanti così come l’eliminazione o la mitigazione del turpiloquio o di frasi che sarebbe assai complesso tradurre.

Sottolineiamo infine che, anche se il sincronismo labiale è secondo alcuni secondario rispetto al messaggio, espressioni quali mall, dad, remember, can, oh, oh my God continuano a rappresentare un problema generale per i dialoghisti.

Rispetto a quello lessicale, il livello sintattico e quello testuale in senso lato non sembrano essere chiaramente identificati come problematici. Un’eccezione interessante è quella esposta da Elettra Caporello, che si definisce attenta a non ricalcare e riproporre in italiano l’ordine aggettivo-sostantivo tipico dell’inglese. Tale gerarchia di attenzione rappresenta un dato inaspettato e un filone di ricerca non approfondito che merita sicuramente ulteriore attenzione.

Tornando alle interviste e agli aspetti linguistici verificati a seguito degli incontri con gli esperti, intendiamo ora prendere in considerazione i singoli casi analizzati attraverso la griglia di domande (cfr. Appendice, § VI).

Sono stati esaminati per primi casi di testi adattati dove si usa il pronome soggetto in una lingua, l’italiano, in cui l’uso del pronome personale è generalmente facoltativo e in molti casi poco probabile (Serianni, 1989: 239). Si osservino gli estratti che seguono, così come sono stati proposti agli intervistati:

- **Lui** è uscito (invece di È uscito)
- **Loro insinuano** (invece di Insinuano)
- **Io non lo so perché mi ha seguito** (invece di Non lo so perché mi ha seguito)
- **Tu sei generosa, però fa attenzione...** (invece di Sei generosa, però fa attenzione...)

Tali strutture sono percepite unanimemente come rafforzative ed enfatizzanti. Il loro impiego è circoscritto a situazioni comunicative che esigono la messa in rilievo del referente. A livello tecnico, il loro impiego può essere legato alla necessità di «coprire» la lunghezza dell’originale, obiettivo professionale del dialoghista (Paolinelli) e dunque «fungere da riempitivi di natura tecnica» (Busetti).

La maggior parte degli intervistati afferma che qui come in altre circostanze è preferibile, se possibile, optare per soluzioni dissociate dalle esigenze di sincronizzazione e cercare di «allungare in un altro modo» (Bardella), specialmente per evitare di produrre frasi difficili da usare in italiano.

Quando l’uso del pronome soggetto è difficilmente spiegabile in termini sia tecnici, sia funzionali, il suo impiego può derivare da una mancanza di attenzione al problema, o meglio, da un caso in cui non è avvenuto l’adattamento, operazione che prevede l’eventuale stravolgimento della battuta finalizzato all’eliminazione della forzatura (Busetti).

Poiché nell’italiano parlato il pronome postverbale è più frequente che nello scritto (cfr. Pavesi, 2005), e poiché tale struttura è stata riscontrata in diversi testi tradotti, ci siamo chiesti se i dialoghisti intervistati facessero uso consapevole nei loro adattamenti di strutture come quelle che riportiamo di seguito:

- Vengo io.
- Lo porti tu?

Ci interessava infatti capire a che tipo di effetti o di intenzioni comunicative fossero legate tali scelte e se fosse possibile sapere quali contesti, nel testo di partenza, spingessero i dialoghisti a scegliere questa costruzione. È emersa una forte attenzione al contesto comunicativo che fa da molla per l’uso, seppure sporadico, della struttura osservata. Questa è scelta anche in base alla sua funzione nell’ori-
ginale, riflessione che evidenzia dunque l’importanza di «stabilire, a suono, se un pronomi in fondo ha un valore» (Bardella).

Una scelta di questo tipo, inoltre, può essere legata all’esigenza di ristabilire in italiano l’enfasi acustica data dall’inglese all’ultima porzione di frase (Mete), operazione che verosimilmente è fatta in sala di doppiaggio, dove spesso si interviste

ne sul testo adattato e al quale si conferisce la forgia finale.

Un terzo problema affrontato riguarda l’uso particolare dei pronomi dimostrativi rafforzati da specificatori posizionali questo/a qua e quello/a là. Per capire se ci sono espressioni inglese che favoriscono questa traduzione, e per avvalorare o avvallare l’ipotesi che tali scelte derivino dalle espressioni originali this one/that one abbiamo mostrato agli intervistati le battute che seguono:

Prendo quel libro li
Ma se è la Turchia che Le interessa, questo qua invece è molto buono
Sono tentata, ma no grazie, prendo questo qua
Tanto quello li non farà niente

Espressioni strutturalmente simili a quelle precedentemente esposte sono considerate unanimemente in modo negativo. L’idea di alcuni intervistati è che si tratti di formulare da utilizzare perché non usate comunemente in italiano (Ottoni) o perché sgradevoli e completamente sgrammaticate (Caporello). Si tratterebbe dunque di formule confinate alla resa della povertà linguistica di un determinato personaggio in contrapposizione alla lingua di un personaggio colto, di formule «cariche di un valore connotativo» (Ottoni) – cosa che giustificherebbe l’affermazione secondo la quale si sentono poco e non sono frequenti nel doppiaggio o sono usate per «dare colore alla lingua» (Mete) 45.

L’ipotesi secondo la quale l’originale this (one) e that (one) siano la causa scatenante della scelta dei corrispondenti pronomi dimostrativi in italiano sembra essere corretta. Ciò nonostante è interessante notare che se l’antipatia per tali espressioni è condivisa da molti, la causa di tale sgradevolezza rimane un fatto poco chiaro. Tali formule sarebbero troppo connotate diatopicamente, ma alcuni dialogisti rimangono divisi rispetto a quale sia l’area geografica di provenienza di tali espressioni, che «sembro più milanesi che romane» ad alcuni (Mete) e che «sembro meridionali» ad altri (Ottoni).

Quanto all’uso nelle traduzioni dei dimostrativi pronominali quello/a riferiti a persone, abbiamo sottoposto agli intervistati gli estratti che seguono:

Hai visto quello?
Hai visto quella?
Mio padre l’ha visto quello della finestra una ventina d’anni fa
Veniva da sopra, dove abita quello

È opinione comune che l’uso di quello/a come pronomi riferiti a persone abbia una connotazione fortemente negativa, al limite dell’offensivo (Mete), che si tratti di una struttura leggermente sgrammaticata per denotare personaggi senza grande cultura o per togliere rilievo alla persona di cui si parla evitando di usarne il nome (Bardella, Ottoni) 46.

L’attenzione con cui si usano queste formule, associate dai dialogisti a un modo non elegante di esprimersi, è legata al timore che siano eliminate in sala di doppiaggio (Bardella) 47. Qui, talvolta, avvengono cambiamenti anche radicali rispetto alla traduzione fatta dal dialoghista. Se in alcuni casi si tratta di cambia-
menti arbitrari imposti dal direttore di doppiaggio o dagli attori doppiatori, in altri la modificazione delle scelte del dialoghista è determinata dalla recitazione. In sala di doppiaggio «si può usare tutto, ma è tutto legato alla recitazione» (Busetti), che spesso determina la scelta finale sulla base dell’assunto che ciò che è scritto per essere recitato non sempre può essere recitato bene o allo stesso modo da tutti gli attori doppiatori.

Spostandoci ora a un’altra delle questioni analizzate, possiamo affermare che l’uso abbondante ma controllato di ordini marcati delle parole nella forma di dislocazioni a destra e a sinistra e di frasi scisse (cfr. Appendice, § VI e VII) sembra essere proprio di tutti gli intervistati. Questa predisposizione rivela la consapevolezza della funzione di tali strutture linguistiche per riprodurre un parlato spontaneo che si adatti anche alla sincronizzazione labiale e sia rispondente alle esigenze di recitabilità.

Da notare però che se le dislocazioni sembrano essere riconosciute e usate da tutti gli intervistati, le frasi scisse rappresentano una punto controverso – e ciò confermerebbe l’ipotesi che durante la traduzione filmica si selezionano intenzionalmente strutture linguistiche specifiche che ben riproducono il parlato spontaneo (Pavesi, 2004). È stata osservata un’interessante discrepanza tra l’uso effettivo delle frasi scisse e quello dichiarato. In particolare, un dialoghista che fa effettivamente uso di tali strutture (si veda Pavesi, 2005) le considera sgrammaticate e «terribili», atteggiamento che dimostra quanto anche i migliori dialoghisti possano essere vittima di norme implicite applicate inconsapevolmente. In linea generale, emerge un quadro dinamico di norme in costante evoluzione, accettate più naturalmente e sfruttate più di frequente da dialoghisti giovani attenti a riprodurre le strutture della lingua parlata.

Si vuole infine ricordare che spesso i dialoghisti fanno affidamento su strutture sintattiche marcate simili a quelle finora illustrate per distinguere in modo esplicito variazioni linguistiche legate al canale e al livello sociale, specialmente nei casi in cui è necessario enfatizzare un parlato di registro basso, o per risolvere al meglio problemi di carattere interlinguistico (come nel caso in cui “è che” fa da traducente all’inglese the fact is). È inoltre evidente che si tratta di strutture scelte appositamente per rendere la lingua colloquiale ed espressiva, e come ottime alternative al doppiaggio, ossia a formule direttamente mediate dall’inglese. Formule come

- È che ci tenevo a farti le mie scuse
- Non è che ti può servire, vero?
- È che non ho più idee
- Non è che verrai qui all’improvviso?
- È che non sono molto brava a costruire frasi

sono una «manna» (Ottoni), ma sono usate con attenzione, e non «messe in bocca a chiunque» (Bardella). Considerate terrificanti da alcuni, sono da altri percepite come formule fisse da evitare appena possibile nell’ottica che l’impiego di moduli fissi rappresenti la soluzione più semplice ma anche la meno gradevole per il dialoghista, che dovrebbe invece calibrare con diligenza, misura e cautela le proprie scelte caso per caso (Mete), con l’accortezza e la serietà del «farmacista» (Busetti).

Per «colorire il linguaggio e rendendolo più quotidiano e parlato possibile,
per riprodurre l’italiano colloquiale moderno» (Ottoni) e per «sporcarlo o renderlo più umile» (Mete) si ricorre anche a strutture del tipo

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Chi è che} infila l’ago? (invece di \textit{Chi infila l’ago}?)
\item \textit{Quand’è che} vieni? (invece di \textit{Quando vieni}?)
\item \textit{Com’è che} non hai risposto? (invece di \textit{Perché non hai risposto}?)
\end{itemize}

generalmente associate al parlato informale e talvolta usate per motivi di sincronismo.

Come accennato precedentemente, tra le diverse strutture dell’italiano parlato che abbiamo deciso di valutare, abbiamo approfondito anche il tipo \textit{a me mi}, un tipo particolare di dislocazione che caratterizza il parlato spontaneo informale e che è invece evitato nel registro scritto formale perché giudicato non grammaticale (Maiden, Robustelli, 2000: 113). Dovendo esprimere un parere su strutture quali

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{E a me non mi saluti?}
\item \textit{A me non mi freghi!}
\end{itemize}

gli adattatori intervistati sostengono di non apprezzare tale struttura e di evitare non appena possibile. L’uso di \textit{a me mi} è infatti confinato a situazioni particolari e ben definite, in cui, per esempio, i parlanti sono bambini (specialmente simpatici) o persone poco colte la cui lingua devia dalla norma standard (Busetti, Mete, Ottoni, Paolinelli). Impiegato specificatamente per rendere lo slang, per riprodurre un registro basso e per conferire naturalezza al parlato, \textit{a me mi} sembra rappresentare a buon diritto una micro-norma, uno strumento usato «per stare aderenti all’originale» (Mete), ossia per mantenere più alto possibile il livello di fedeltà e vicinanza alle intenzioni linguistiche della versione originale.

5. Considerazioni conclusive

Pur non avendo esaurito l’argomento, questo lavoro offre alcuni dati nuovi sulla figura del dialoghista in Italia e fornisce proposte per l’interpretazione di alcune delle regolarità linguistiche dell’italiano doppiato. In particolare, si sostiene l’ipotesi secondo la quale tali regolarità dell’italiano doppiato siano strettamente legate alla particolarità del mondo del doppiaggio. Sarebbero dunque in parte determinate dall’esiguo numero di dialoghisti operativi nel settore strettamente filmico e dall’insolita ripartizione del lavoro. È senza dubbio rilevante osservare che tali norme, comuni a gran parte dell’italiano doppiato, non sono il naturale e consapevole frutto di un lavoro cooperativo, ma il risultato diretto di una comunicazione indiretta, che rappresenta la forma dominante di “scambio” e di aggiornamento professionale.

Le interviste condotte con gli adattatori professionisti hanno chiarito che la sincronizzazione non è il solo vincolo alla creatività e alla ri-creazione linguistica (cfr. anche Chaume, 1998: 17-18), e tale considerazione ha portato la nostra attenzione a due componenti fondamentali nelle scelte linguistiche: il realismo e la recitabilità.

I commenti dei dialoghisti su alcuni estratti di italiano doppiato presentati in forma scritta hanno inoltre messo in evidenza l’uso consapevole di determinate
strutture linguistiche, in particolare dell’ordine marcato delle parole, finalizzato a ricreare una lingua spontanea il più vicina possibile a quella che si userebbe nella situazione comunicativa rappresentata nell’originale.

I dati anche di carattere sociologico qui riportati sulla comunità professionale dei dialoghisti si pongono come informazioni integrative che speriamo possano essere utili per implementare un approccio allo studio del doppiaggio ancora incentrato primariamente sui livelli geo-politici, linguistici e tecnici.

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Desideriamo ringraziare Marco Bardella, Ruggero Busetti, Elettra Caporello, Eleonora Di Fortunato, Marco Mete, Filippo Ottoni, Mario Paolinelli, Alberto Piferi, gli associati che hanno partecipato in modo attivo a questo lavoro dedicandoci il loro tempo per le interviste, che hanno collaborato con utili commenti e suggerimenti, e che continuano a rendersi disponibili e ad assisterci nella ricerca.
1 Nel corso di questo lavoro abbiamo deciso di adottare il termine “dialoghista” – e dunque di attenersi all’etichetta usata dagli addetti ai lavori – per fare riferimento a coloro i quali si occupano della traduzione e dell’adattamento dei dialoghi filmici per la loro distribuzione in Italia nella forma traduttiva del doppiaggio.

2 Con il termine “traduzione” ci riferiamo qui al complesso processo di traduzione-adattamento dei dialoghi per il doppiaggio. Questa scelta terminologica mette in evidenza il fatto che la traduzione non sia da intendersi necessariamente come processo lineare e letterale (“parola per parola”) ma che questo sia ampiamente riconosciuto nell’ambito della traduttologia quale processo creativo che abbraccia anche rielaborazioni complesse del testo trasposto da una lingua a un’altra.

3 Tra i suoi compiti principali mettiamo in evidenza quello di «tutelare gli interessi economici e morali degli aderenti; promuovere le opportune forme di assistenza e previdenza a favore della categoria e vigilare sulla loro corretta applicazione; assumere ed appoggiare tutte le iniziative che nel campo tecnico, giuridico, amministrativo, culturale e sociale interessino la categoria; svolgere ogni altra attività 
[…]
» ritenuta necessaria o utile al raggiungimento dei propri fini. L’Associazione potrà assumere la veste giuridica meglio idonea alla realizzazione dei compiti che si prefigge, nei limiti consentiti dalla legge o dalla pubblica autorità» (Art.3 Statuto AIDAC, http://www.aidac.it/ass_003.html)

4 Come illustra il paragrafo 2.3 del Regolamento di esecuzione dello Statuto dell’AIDAC, «La prova d’esame consiste nell’elaborazione dell’adattamento sincrono labiale in lingua italiana dei dialoghi di una scena (della durata variabile da 3 a 5 minuti) di un audiovisivo. Il candidato sceglierà casualmente l’audiovisivo su cui operare tra una rosa di tre (nella lingua da lui preselezionata dal Collegio degli Esperti. Avrà anche modo di visionare l’intero audiovisivo prima di procedere all’adattamento della scena indicata dall’esaminatore. I tempi e i modi dello svolgimento della prova d’esame sono stabiliti dal Collegio degli Esperti e comunicati al candidato almeno trenta giorni prima della stessa. Se necessario, il Collegio degli Esperti potrà procedere a un colloquio di approfondimento delle conoscenze del candidato. È richiesta la conoscenza del Contratto Nazionale per i Lavoratori del Doppiaggio in particolare in merito al punto relativo agli autori dei dialoghi e a quello sulle Note tecniche abbreviate […]», la conoscenza dei contratti individuali e la capacità di emettere documenti fiscali per le prestazioni professionali. La verifica avverrà attraverso la consegna da parte del candidato di una relazione scritta su tutti i punti elencati. I soci ammessi attraverso la prova d’esame […] entrano a pieno titolo nell’Associazione. Il parere contrario all’ammissione è insindacabile».

5 In realtà, come ci spiegano alcuni degli intervistati, se è vero che per il buon professionista questo è generalmente un lavoro che impegnina in toto, sono ammesse alcune eccezioni: c’è chi insegna recitazione (come Marco Mete) o «chi può fare anche un turno di doppiaggio» (Paolinelli), ma quello del (buon) dialoghista rimane il lavoro principale. Di fatto, nel momento in cui il lavoro c’è, i tempi stretti e i ritmi intensi non permettono di dedicarsi ad altre attività. Tuttavia, «il lavoro non c’è sempre: a volte troppo, a volte nulla!» (Busetti), anche se «per chi decide di tradurre per la TV c’è più continuità (il lavoro è costante, tutti i giorni si lavora in media 8 ore, vi è maggiore garanzia ma anche un po’ di noia). Per chi si dedica al cinematografico
la continuità non esiste» (Busetti).

Va valutata poi la questione economica: innanzitutto per produrre quanto basta per guadagnare ragionevolmente non è possibile lavorare con lenentezza. In secondo luogo, «il dialoghista ha subito l’effetto eurismo, diversamente da quanto è successo per i commensanti. 5.000.000 di vecchie lire sono diventati oggi 2.500 euro, e spesso si lavora in condizioni non agevoli dal momento che la distribuzione del lavoro è mal organizzata: ti dicono che dovrai adattare un dialogo e non sai mai esattamente quando e per quanto. Devi stare lì, non ti puoi organizzare» (Busetti).

Dunque, come segnala Marco Bardella «quando non c’è lavoro lo si cerca, e si aspetta. Si è bloccati». Questo a sottolineare che talvolta il dialoghista è costretto a rischiare per non rifittare, ma anche ad accettare per cortesia cose che non gli interessano (cfr. anche Busetti).

Elettra Caporello è la prima donna che nel 1984 inizia a lavorare su film di circuito, finché anche le diretrici di doppiaggio non hanno iniziato a scrivere i dialoghi.

Dato, questo, che non sembra coincidere con i risultati di Sandra Benincà, che dimostrano un certo equilibrio tra il numero dei professionisti uomini e donne (Benincà 1999: 119). Va tuttavia sottolineato che il lavoro di Benincà è basato su interviste rivolte a professionisti “più giovani” e che operano in vari settori.

Intendiamo dare qualche indicazione sull’attività di ogni dialoghista intervistato per cercare di inquadrarlo meglio. Marco Bardella ha una laurea in Filosofia e spesso ha prestato le sue conoscenze tecniche e teoriche quale docente in corsi di laurea in traduzione. Oltre a essere attivo come traduttore per il cinema, si occupa e si è occupato di alcune tra le più note serie televisive quali, per esempio, ER – Medici in prima linea e X-files. Filippo Ottoni è il presidente dell’AIDAC, e un dialoghista specializzato nella traduzione di film in costume o tratti da opere letterarie. È lui stesso autore di diverse opere teatrali e si occupa anche di regia e di direzione del doppiaggio. Mario Paolinni, vice-presidente dell’Associazione, dal 1979 si occupa in modo esclusivo e continuo di traduzione e adattamento di dialoghi di film stranieri e di doppiaggio per la TV e la pubblicità. Come dimostrano le sue pubblicazioni, si occupa in modo attivo della polisitica e del mercato del doppiaggio in Italia e in Europa. La sua figura è stata determinante nel cammino della categoria verso l’acquisizione e il riconoscimento dei diritti d’autore sui dialoghi tradotti. Eleonora Di Fortunato è una traduttrice, una giornalista e un’esperta di comunicazione e diritti d’autore. Assieme a Mario Paolinni è seriamente e attivamente coinvolta nella gestione dell’Associazione ed è con lui coautrice di Tradurre per il doppiaggio (2005). Ruggiero Busetti e Marco Mete sono dialoghisti tanto giovani quanto produttivi e dinamici. Busetti, che proviene da un ambito professionale lontano da quello del doppiaggio, inizia a lavorare molto presto come dialoghista cinematografico dopo una stimolante gavetta di un anno e mezzo che lo ha visto coinvolto nella traduzione del famoso cartone animato I puffi. Mete inizia la sua carriera come attore doppiatore, un lavoro che lo impegna per una decina d’anni prima del passaggio definitivo alla traduzione filmica. Si occupa anche di direzione di regia e di doppiaggio ed è particolarmente interessato al teatro. Alberto Piferi, nome illustre della categoria, dialoghista della “prima scuola”, oggi in pensione, è uno dei padri fondatori dell’Associazione e uno dei primi dialoghisti italiani. Elettra Caporello è la sola dialoghista donna che vanta un numero sorprendente di traduzioni per il cinema ed è anche la traduttrice ufficiale in Italia dei film di Woody Allen.

Come sostiene un intervistato, che preferiamo rimangano in questo caso anonimi, «talvolta un inglese scolastico può bastare per produrre adattamenti validi, tanto che alcuni grandi dialoghisti non conoscono affatto l’inglese». In realtà, non sempre la mancanza di competenza adeguata nella lingua di provenienza coinvolge con adattamenti eccellenti. Paolinni e Di Fortunato (2005: 19) mettono in evidenza che spesso, oggi, sono gli addattatori improvvisati e impreparati sul piano linguistico a dare vita alle operazioni di doppiaggio. Va infatti osservato che il conflitto tra qualità degli adattamenti e ed effettive esigenze/interessi di mercato è evidente e talmente radicato che nemmeno lo sforzo dell’AIDAC in questa direzione è sufficiente. Tre sono i fattori che rendono problematico il lavoro di controllo dell’Associazione. In primo luogo la disparità di competenza tra i dialoghisti: a chi supera l’esame per merito si affiancano figure professionali (per esempio direttori di doppiaggio o attori) che si improvvisano dialoghisti («gli usurpatori» (Paolinni), ma cfr. anche Paolinni, Di Fortunato,
2005). In secondo luogo, «il mercato chiama chi è disposto a disobbedire alle regole» (Paolinelli), e per questo «oggi passa la spazzatura» (Paolinelli). Infine, la stessa mole di lavoro degli anni ’80 è oggi contesa da un numero sensibilmente maggiore di persone.

Atteggiamento che però entra in conflitto con il titolo del recente lavoro di Paolinelli e Di Fortunato (2005): Tradurre per il doppiaggio. La trasposizione linguistica dell’audiovisivo: teoria e pratica di un’arte imperfetta.

Questo spiegherebbe il fatto che talvolta diventano buoni dialoghi gli attori teatrali, figure professionali abituate a recitare e, in alcuni casi, anche a tradurre i dialoghi teatrali, ossia testi scritti per essere recitati (sulla recitabilità, “palyability”, “mise en scène” e sulla dicotomia “performability vs. readability” si vedano Bassnett, 1990, 1991, 2000; Espasa 2000; Nicolarea, 2002).

Nei casi in cui è necessario adattare un prodotto audiovisivo con ambientazione particolare (ad esempio in ospedale, in tribunale, ecc.), il traduttore tecnico provvede a fornire al dialoghista il vocabolario specialistico, che altrimenti andrebbe cercato sul vocabolario tecnico, che altrimenti potrebbe esserlo.

È consuetudine per le case di distribuzione doppiare tutti, anche quelli che non avrebbero bisogno di essere doppiati. Per questo, secondo Elettra Capoello e Marco Mete per l’adattamento del film cinese Vivere (Z. Yimou, 1994, Cina, tit. or. Houzhe) trova fruttuoso consultarsi con una traduttrice cinese esperta e in grado di fargli capire il messaggio veicolato da determinate scelte linguistiche che a noi sarebbero risultate incomprensibili (tra le tante, le frequenti reiterazioni), facendo così in modo che l’adattatore potesse mediare in modo adeguato il messaggio originale.

Poiché le società di doppiaggio sono generalmente costituite da attori, e poiché le commesse arrivano alle società di doppiaggio, queste spesso non chiamano il dialoghista ma tengono il lavoro. In questo senso il mercato non bada al merito. La situazione è andata peggiorando negli ultimi anni, e precisamente nel momento in cui il dialoghista è riuscito a conquistare il diritto d’autore, conquista che ha trasformato sensibilmente la comunità dei dialoghisti in positivo e in negativo. Se questo ha permesso a dialoghisti che sono stati produttori di vivere anche di rendita, in una certa misura il diritto d’autore è andato a scapito dei dialoghisti perché tutti hanno iniziato a scrivere dialoghi. Va anche segnalato che sul piano del mercato l’AIDAC non offre vantaggi e nemmeno la garanzia di un lavoro (Ottoni, Di Fortunato). Questo ci fa capire che non è possibile garantire la qualità delle traduzioni cinematografiche a priori. In ogni caso, la mancanza di un possibile lavoro preventivo (Ottoni) è compensata da accorgimenti presi a posteriori: chi si lamenta di un cattivo adattamento lo segnala all’AIDAC, che affronta direttamente l’associato.

Per esempio quella che ha visto felicemente coinvolte Elettra Capoello e Marco Mete per l’adattamento di I colori dell’anima – Modigliani (2005), M. Davis, tit. or. Untitled Modigliani Project.

Questa spiegazione è più che sufficiente a chiarire cosa accade: è stato riconosciuto che il diritto d’autore è andato a scapito dei dialoghisti perché tutti hanno iniziato a scrivere dialoghi, errori e doppiaggese (Ottoni).

Ciò cui Lambert (1990) si riferisce a chi si lamenta di un cattivo adattamento, specialmente quando si estende alle altre figure coinvolte nella catena del doppiaggio, in quanto causa principale di malintesi, incomprensioni, modificazioni apparentemente ingiustificate dei dialoghi, errori e doppiaggese (Ottoni).

La mancanza di interazioni dirette è spesso controproducente, specialmente quando si estende alle altre figure coinvolte nella catena del doppiaggio, in quanto causa principale di malintesi, incomprensioni, modificazioni apparentemente ingiustificate dei dialoghi, errori e doppiaggese (Ottoni).

Ciò che si desidera è che si riconosca la necessità di scrivere a parte dal mercato, «il mercato chiama chi è disposto a disobbedire alle regole!» (Paolinelli) e lasciano questa professione per dedicarsi alla scrittura di opere proprie.

Ruggiero Busetti ci spiega che gli hobby della vela, del basket, del baseball, del football, del golf. Se un collega si trova a dover tradurre terminologia specialistica legata a questi campi si può rivolgere a lui, che fa voluntary e sono generalmente costituite da professionisti abituate a recitare, e, poiché le commesse arrivano alle società di doppiaggio, queste spesso non chiamano il dialoghista ma tengono il lavoro. In questo senso il mercato non bada al merito. La situazione è andata peggiorando negli ultimi anni, e precisamente nel momento in cui il dialoghista è riuscito a conquistare il diritto d’autore, conquista che ha trasformato sensibilmente la comunità dei dialoghisti in positivo e in negativo. Se questo ha permesso a dialoghisti che sono stati produttori di vivere anche di rendita, in una certa misura il diritto d’autore è andato a scapito dei dialoghisti perché tutti hanno iniziato a scrivere dialoghi. Va anche segnalato che sul piano del mercato l’AIDAC non offre vantaggi e nemmeno la garanzia di un lavoro (Ottoni, Di Fortunato). Questo ci fa capire che non è possibile garantire la qualità delle traduzioni cinematografiche a priori. In ogni caso, la mancanza di un possibile lavoro preventivo (Ottoni) è compensata da accorgimenti presi a posteriori: chi si lamenta di un cattivo adattamento lo segnala all’AIDAC, che affronta direttamente l’associato.

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Per citare qualche esempio, Alberto Piferi è unanimemente riconosciuto come dialoghista particolarmente brillante per la commedia, Filippo Ottoni lo è per film adattati da romanzi o opere teatrali, per le commedie inglesi e per i film d’epoca. Elettra Caporello è oggi la dialoghista ufficiale dei film di Woody Allen, per i quali produce anche i sottotitoli. In questo senso, ogni dialoghista «è catalogato, ha un’etichetta» (Ottoni), e talvolta è preso come modello da altri.

Si rimanda a Di Fortunato e Pao- linelli, (1996), e si ricorda che sono state organizzate diverse conferenze sull’argomento.

Solo di recente è nata la rivista in rete di critica e politica del doppiaggio ASINC (www.asinc.it). I presupposti della rivista sono riassunti nelle poche parole introduttive: «E poi è indispensabile - per l’opera, gli autori, gli artisti, i tecnici e l’industria - che qualcuno si impegni a valutarlo, perché se è vero che il doppiaggio degno di nota è quello che non si nota, bisogna pur mettere in grado il pubblico di coglierne armonie e disarmonie».

In realtà anche in questo caso le due fasi distinte esistono, ma solo concettualmente, e il dialoghista traduce alla lettera mentalmente per poi adattare (Bardella).

Non preparare una traduzione letterale del copione può in alcuni casi rallentare la catena del doppiaggio. I direttori di doppiaggio che non sanno l’inglese talvolta chiedono al dialoghista un calcolo così di rallentare i tempi. Tale inquadratura può aiutare per rendere con il traducente “centro commerciale”, decisamente troppo lungo. In casi come questo, il tipo di inquadratura può aiutare permettendo una sostanziale riscrittura del dialogo: “Where are you going?” “To the mall. Può diventare: “Cosa vai? / Cosa vai oggi/dopo/domani?”

Portata all’estremo nel caso, che qui non tratteremo, del doppiaggio (o, meglio, frettoloso e disattento ri-doppiaggio) dei film per le trasmissioni in aereo (Ottoni, Di Fortunato), Altrimenti conosciuti con l’acronimo FIGS, che fa riferimento alle quattro lingue più importanti del mercato cinematografico (French, Italian, German, Spanish), il supervisor generalmente conosce (Mete).

41 American Pie (P. Weitz, 1999), si segnala Marco Mete, è un buon esempio di film stravolto, cui sono state aggiunte numerose battute.

Ruggero Busetti si sofferma sul termine mall “center commerciale” che sebbene tra non molto probabilmente entrerà tra quegli anglicismi accettati nella lingua italiana, il più delle volte è impossibile renderlo con il traducente “center commerciale”, decisamente troppo lungo. In casi come questo, il tipo di inquadratura può aiutare permettendo una sostanziale riscrittura del dialogo:

- Where are you going?
- To the mall.
- Cosa fai oggi/dopo/domani?
- Shopping. (dove /m/ e /p/ sono entrambe labiali: mall-shopping)

«Ci sono parole ed espressioni che compaiono poco nel doppiaggio: è un italiano strano!» (Mete).

44 Bardella ci segnala che nei polizieschi, per esempio, può essere un buon modo per rendere the man/guy.

45 Marco Bardella ci dice chiaramente che dei pochi utilizzati non sa quanti gliene lasciano in salotto. Come ormai appare chiaro, l’aspetto recitativo può gioire di un ruolo fondamentale anche in casi come questi, in cui Decido io la strada può essere difficile da recitare rispetto a La strada la decided io, struttura che permette di mantenere la tensione dell’originale più facilmente (Mete).


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Appendice – Traccia per l’intervista

I. Studi e formazione

Ci può illustrare quale è stata la sua formazione?
1. Quali scuole ha frequentato?
2. Ha frequentato l’università? SÌ/NO
   -Se sì, quale facoltà?

II. Conoscenza della lingua straniera

1. Quante lingue conosce?
2. Da quale/i lingua/e traduce?
3. Dove e come ha studiato la lingua da cui traduce?

III. La professione e l’interazione tra professionisti

1. Da quanti anni lavora come dialoghista?
2. Questo è stato il suo primo lavoro? SÌ/NO
3. Per Lei questa è una professione a tempo pieno o svolge anche altre professioni?
4. Lavora/ha mai lavorato come traduttore non-audiovisivo? SÌ/NO
   -In caso di risposta positiva, in quale campo?
5. Come ha iniziato a lavorare come dialoghista?
6. Qualcuno ha favorito il suo ingresso nella professione? SÌ/NO
   -Se sì, può specificare se si tratta di persone con le quali ha rapporti di amicizia o di pura conoscenza professionale?
7. Si consulta o si è consultato in passato con altri dialoghisti per determinati problemi di traduzione? SÌ/NO
   -Se sì, ci può specificare se con queste persone ha rapporti di amicizia o di pura conoscenza professionale?
8. Quanto le soluzioni di altri dialoghisti influenzano o hanno influenzato il Suo lavoro?
   -Può fare qualche esempio?
9. Le risulta che esistano linee guida o manuali per l’adattamento in italiano? SÌ/NO
   Se sì, può indicarci la provenienza?
10. Lei ha sempre accettato diverse commesse o ha posto restrizioni privilegian- do determinati generi filmici (es. d’autore, di cassetta, di avventura, ecc.) o audiovisivi (film, sitcom, documentario, ecc.)?
11. Ritiene di avere abbastanza tempo per riscrivere in modo soddisfacente i dia- loghi filmici che Le vengono commissionati?

IV. L’associazione

1. Prima della fondazione dell’AIDAC come erano organizzati i dialoghisti italiani?
2. Si può parlare di figure che potrebbero essere definite “leader naturali” dei dialoghisti prima della fondazione dell’Associazione e dopo la sua fondazione? Se sì, chi erano/chi sono, e che formazione o background culturale avevano/hanno?
3. Secondo Lei i dialoghisti adattatori costituiscono una comunità coesa oppure no? Se sì, come si manifesta la coesione?
4. Da quanto tempo è necessario sostenere un esame per diventare socio AIDAC?
5. AL PRESIDENTE: Secondo Lei qual è la quota dei dialoghisti attivi iscritti all’associazione?
6. Secondo lei la comunità dei dialoghisti adattatori ha subito delle trasformazioni rilevanti negli ultimi anni? Se sì, quali?
7. Ritiene che l’AIDAC abbia svolto o svolga una funzione nel garantire la qualità delle traduzioni cinematografiche?

V. LA TRADUZIONE – MACRO-STRATEGIE

1. Per lingue come l’inglese Lei distingue le due fasi della traduzione letterale e dell’adattamento o procede direttamente dal materiale in lingua straniera alla resa in italiano?
2. Quali, a Suo parere, sono gli aspetti più problematici dell’adattamento dalla lingua inglese?
3. Nella traduzione di film ritiene prioritario rendere la colloquialità (o naturalezza, intesa come aderenza al parlato spontaneo) dei dialoghi originali? Sì/NO
4. -Se sì, può indicare alcune soluzioni che utilizza per rendere il parlato colloquiale?
5. Secondo Lei, nell’adattamento è necessario mantenere una struttura grammaticale semplice oppure si può/si deve fornire una traduzione più elaborata rispetto all’originale? In altre parole, secondo Lei il dialoghista si sforza di mantenere le stesse strutture dell’originale (es. ordine delle parole, frasi principali, frasi coordinate o subordinate, frasi interrotte, ecc.)?
6. Di fronte a un testo originale che potrebbe essere poco chiaro per lo spettatore italiano (es. riferimenti culturali legati alla lingua di partenza) applica strategie di chiarificazione a favore degli spettatori? SÌ/NO
7. -Se sì, può indicarci qualche esempio?
8. Quando traduce (dall’inglese), si sente vincolato dalla lingua di partenza? Se sì, in che termini?
9. Quando traduce dall’inglese, ci sono casi in cui deve ricalcare le strutture di partenza, magari apportando qualche piccolo adattamento, ma producendo strutture del cosiddetto doppiaggese?
10. Quando si usa il doppiaggese?
vi. La traduzione di aspetti linguistici specifici – micro-strategie

N.B. I quesiti si riferiscono tutti alla traduzione dall’inglese con un parlato colloquiale

1. In inglese il soggetto è sempre espresso, ma in italiano è facoltativo. Quali sono, secondo Lei, i casi in cui si usano nell’adattamento espressioni del tipo

   Lui è uscito (invece di È uscito)
   Loro insinuano (invece di Insinuano)
   Io non lo so perché mi ha seguito (invece di Non lo so perché mi ha seguito)
   Tu sei generosa, però fa attenzione ... (invece di sei generosa, però fa attenzione)

in cui si lascia espresso il pronomne soggetto in italiano?

2. Nell’italiano parlato si usa talvolta il pronomne dopo il verbo. Le capita di usare strutture come quelle che sono riportate di seguito

   Vengo io
   Lo porti tu?

anche in dialoghi che traduce?

Per quali effetti/scopi?

Le vengono in mente dei contesti nel testo di partenza che La spingono a scegliere questa costruzione?

3. Quando traduce con espressioni strutturalmente simili a quelle che seguono?

   Prendo quel libro lì
   Ma se è la Turchia che Le interessa, questo qua invece è molto buono
   Sono tentata, ma no grazie, prendo questo qua
   Tanto quello lì non farà niente

Ci sono delle espressioni inglesi che favoriscono questa traduzione? (nostra ipotesi: this one/that one)

4. Le capita di usare quello/a come pronomne negli adattamenti riferiti a persone?

   Hai visto quello?
   Hai visto quella?
   Mio padre l’ha visto quello della finestra una ventina d’anni fa.
   Veniva da sopra, dove abita quello.

5. Quando traduce con strutture simili a quelle che seguono?

   E a me non mi saluti?
   A me non mi freghi!

6. Le capita di usare le seguenti strutture dell’italiano parlato?

   Certe parole LE lasci a casa tua (invece di lascia certe parole a casa tua),
   La strada LA decido io (invece di Decido io la strada)
   Il mio nome, sarò io l’ultimo a portarLO (invece di Sarò io l’ultimo a portare il mio nome)

in cui l’oggetto iniziale è ripreso da un pronomne?

In quali contesti o per quali effetti?

7. Le capita di usare le seguenti strutture dell’italiano parlato?

   Chi LE pulisce le finestre (invece di Chi pulisce le finestre)
   Ce L’hai il ragazzo? (invece di Hai il ragazzo?)
   L’hai letto questo? (invece di Hai letto questo?)
   LA vuoi sentire la verità? (invece di Vuoi sentire la verità?)
in cui l’oggetto è anticipato da un pronome?
In quali contesti o per quali effetti?

8. Usa volutamente i moduli è che/non è che, come negli esempi? SÌ/NO

È che ci tenevo a farti le mie scuse
Non è che ti può servire, vero?
È che non ho più idee.
Non è che verrai qui all’improvviso?
È che non sono molto brava a costruire frasi.

In quali contesti o per quali effetti li usa? Le sembra di aggiungere una sfumatura di significato (es. essere più cortese) o c’è qualche struttura dell’inglese che la spinge a scegliere questi moduli?

9. Quando traduce con strutture simili a quelle che seguono?

Chi è che infila l’ago? (invece di Chi infila l’ago?)
Quand’è che vieni? (invece di Quando vieni?)
Com’è che non hai risposto? (invece di Perché non hai risposto?)

In quali contesti o per quali effetti le usa?

10. Evita il passivo nelle traduzioni in italiano? SÌ/NO
-Perché?

11. Ci sono espressioni fisse dell’inglese che trova particolarmente difficili da tradurre (per esempio take it easy, I’ll tell you what, take care)? SÌ/NO
Può indicarci qualche esempio (anche della traduzione)?

12. Ce ne sono altre che invece traduce automaticamente (per esempio “hi!”, “thank you”, ecc.)? SÌ/NO
-Se sì, può indicarci qualche esempio?

13. Nella traduzione delle formule e delle frasi fatte in quali casi è facile/possibile usare un equivalente italiano, per esempio ci mancherebbe per no problem, e in quali casi si ricorre o si è costretti a usare traduzioni letterali come nessun problema per no problem o sai una cosa per you know something?
1. Introduction

This paper aims to investigate the resultative aspect of motion\(^1\) and to put forward an explanatory proposal for the translation of those telic events which occur when the moving entity trespasses the limit of a bounded space. In this respect, I will show that the theoretical framework of Cognitive Semantics and, more specifically, the notion of FORCE Schema provide valid tools for an explanation of such translation output.

A couple of examples may clarify the issue under scrutiny:

(1)
\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] He tiptoed into the house (*Stinger* by Nancy Kress)
  \item[b)] Entrò in casa in punta di piedi
\end{itemize}

(2)
\begin{itemize}
  \item[a)] He dashed into the room (*Love among the Chickens* by P.C. Wodehouse)
  \item[b)] Si precipitò nella stanza
\end{itemize}

Both events represent the case of what I labelled BEYOND events (Baicchi 2005a), that is, events where the moving entity goes *beyond* the limit of a bounded space\(^2\). The Italian versions exemplify two translation outputs of BEYOND events. In event (1) the agent's motion is described through a manner verb (*to tiptoe*), but the Italian translator has to encode the path into the main verb (*entrò*) and to commit the manner of motion to the adverbial (*in punta di piedi*). In event (2) the Italian translator can reproduce the English structure through the use of the verb *precipitarsi* which, comparably to the verb *to dash*, points to the components of speed...
and effort in the act of moving. Despite the difference between the linguistic con-
structions, the two motion events represent the same conceptual construal.

The cross-linguistic analysis of such events triggers at least the following cou-
ples of questions:

- why does the same conceptual representation give rise to two different types of lin-
guistic encoding?
- what allowed the translator to reproduce the English conflation in event (2)?

We can offer an answer to the first question by following Langacker, according
to whom a semantic structure is a specific kind of «conceptual structure that
functions as the semantic pole of a linguistic expression. Hence semantic struc-
tures are regarded as conceptualizations shaped by symbolic purposes according
to the dictates of linguistic convention» (1987:97). Conceptualizations thus in-
clude linguistic and non-linguistic structures, so that, given the same conceptu-
alization, it is possible to impose alternate structurings on it. In other words, the
same conceived situation may be verbalized in a series of semantically distinct
sentences, with each sentence triggering different profiles (i.e. mental images
with different relations between Trajector and Landmark). This relation between
one conceptualization and the wide amount of possible verbalizations is a “one-
to-many correspondence” within the same linguistic code. The issue under scru-
tiny here is the fact that the set of correspondences is exponentially wider when
the verbalization involves the transfer from one language system into another,
from the source text to the target text. And the picture acquires an even higher
degree of complexity when the two languages belong to two different typological
families, as is the case with a satellite-framed language like English and a verb-
framed language like Italian.

The second question points to the fact that when we encode verbal mes-

sages the encoding language strongly influences the process of verbalization,
by facilitating some experiential perspectives, and blocking others. Translation
highlights how languages belonging to typologically different families verbalize
the same cognitive experience by means of different lexical items and syntactic
constructions. As is well known, English and Italian attest two different types
of lexicalization: English encodes both motion and manner of motion into the
main verb, while Italian encodes motion and path of motion in the main verb
and assigns manner of motion to a gerund or an adverb. Exceptions to these lexi-
calization patterns occur in the translation of BEYOND events. I claim that it is
the component of force in the inherent verbal semantics that allows the Italian
translator to reproduce the English lexicalization of motion, as I will show in
some detail in section 5.

Data has been retrieved from a corpus of seventeen English novels – dating
from the middle of the eighteenth century to nowadays – and their Italian trans-
lations. From each English novel, a collection of one hundred motion events has
been identified and a comparison with their corresponding Italian translations
has been evaluated. The chosen novels are Ballantine’s Red Rooney, Baum’s The
Marvellous Land of Oz, Burroughs’s A Princess of Mars, Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in
Wonderland, Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, Crane’s The Red Badge of Courage, Darwin’s
Voyage of the Beagle, Fitzgerald’s May Day, Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, Forster’s
Howards End, Joyce’s Ulysses, Kress’s Stinger, Twain’s The Adventures of Tom Saw-

Before going into detail with the phenomenon of BEYOND events and the Embodied Complexity they show in the translation process, some brief observations about the notions of event and motion may be needed.

2. The notion of event

Talmy defines an event as «a set of conceptual elements and relations that […] are evoked together or co-evoke each other» (1996:238). Events may either describe states, where no change is involved – as is the case with locatedness (*the pen lay on the plank*) – or actions, where change occurs in the unfolding of processes – as is the case with motion. Thus events are recognized as playing a concept-forming function: from the experiential continuum, they encapsulate one bounded entity at a time, which I put under the rubric of *Connected Cognitive Entity* (Baicchi 2004). Nowadays it is common to compare our experience to a continuous and amorphous flow of information in many dimensions, with the two basic ones being space and time. Since experience cannot be represented as a whole, units within the experiential continuum must be selected, which means that some relevant information is separated for current needs – conceptual and communicative – from all other pieces of information, with the consequence that some aspects of experience are conceptually encapsulated into chunks of different granularity. Each chunk, or *Connected Cognitive Entity* (hence CCE), is a basic cognitive phenomenon shared by all human beings, which underlies a wide variety of real-world situations. It is exactly the CCE of motion which represents, in the following pages, the unit of analysis for a discussion of translatability of the same cognitive construal in English and Italian.

3. Motion components

In his comparison between the linguistic representations of motion in French and German, Alfred Malblanc (1944) first introduced the distinction between *sens de l’action* (displacement) and *caractère de l’action* (type of movement), a distinction later analysed in more depth by Tesnière (1959). Following those lines, and offering a more fine-grained description, Talmy (1972) proposes the notion of *motion event* to refer to an instance of motion and to its components. In his seminal works on the lexicalisation patterns of motion (1972; 1975; 1985), Talmy assumes the existence of two domains:

- the domain of meaning, which is composed of four basic internal components: MOTION (the presence per se of motion), FIGURE (the entity moving with respect to a referent object), GROUND (the reference object), PATH (the path followed by the FIGURE with respect to the GROUND);
- the domain of surface expressions, which encompasses the verb, the adposition, the subordinate clause, and satellites.

It is worth underscoring the fact that FIGURE and GROUND represent the physi-
cal objects contributing to the event construal. Their being physical, hence manipulable, makes them easier to be identified and categorised, thus cognitively less complex. MOTION and PATH lack physicality, which makes them cognitively more complex, also because of their co-occurrence with temporal and causal contingency. Following the Langackerian terminology, which seems to be more explanatory, I’ll choose the terms TRAJECTOR and LANDMARK to refer to FIGURE and GROUND respectively.

The four basic internal components of a motion event often co-occur with an external co-event, mainly holding the relations of MANNER or CAUSE to it, which gives more specific indications on how the motion is carried out. Consider event (3) below:

(3)

a) The cat stalked to the door (Ulysses by Joyce)
b) La gatta si avviò sussiegosa verso la porta

Most English verbs lexicalize, or conflate, both motion and manner of motion, while Italian conflates motion and path of motion. As event (3) makes clear, spatial meaning is differently distributed over word classes and constructions across the typological divide (Sinha & Kuteva 1995). On the one hand, the verb stalk is a standard choice in English since the expression of manner of motion is the preferred pattern, thus it is unmarked, and a combinatorial structuring like the cat went to the door proudly, where path is given prominence and manner is backgrounded, would be an unnatural and highly salient choice. On the other hand, Italian needs to foreground the expression of path, and thus it has to encode manner in the adverb. Needless to say, the typological characteristics do not reflect absolute differences but preferences (Ramat 1984; 1993; Croft 1990), often correlated to a specific rhetorical style.

In events (4) and (5) below English conflates both motion and manner in the verb, while Italian has to encode motion in the finite verb and to encode manner in the satellite:

(4)

a) He shuffled athwart (Heart of Darkness by Conrad)
b) Si spostò sul fianco strascicando il passo
(5)

a) They waded waist-deep in the grass (Heart of Darkness by Conrad)
b) Avanzavano faticosamente, immersi nell'erba fino alla cintola

These different types of lexicalization led Talmy (1972) to propose a binary typology taking into account how the path of motion is expressed:

- either in the verb: verb-framed language (e.g. Romance languages),
- or in satellite elements associated to the verb: satellite-framed languages (e.g. Germanic languages).

While verb-framed languages verbalise the motion event with a verb that indicates only the path of motion, satellite-framed languages utilise a manner verb together with an item that specifies the path, thus adding a further piece of dynamic information.

Italian appears to be more complex than English in the expression of motion both structurally, since it requires more linguistic material – i.e. a denser signi-
fier made of a finite verb for the path and a gerund or an adverbial for the manner – and semantically, since the explicit mention of manner enriches the signified, thus describing the motion event at a deeper level of granularity. Consequently, the verbalisation of the same motion construal results in two different types of linguistic constructions: English accumulates path prepositional phrases with one single verb thus attaching more than one ground item per verb, while Italian is bound to render each segment of the path splitting the English sentence into at least a couple of clauses by means of different lexical verbs, either finite or gerund.

4. BEYOND EVENTS

In a discussion of translation the degree of difficulty in transferring motion events from English into Italian, and the other way round, changes according to the type of spatial configuration where the motion event occurs. Consider the events below:

(6)

a) The Beagle sailed from Maldonado ([Voyage of the Beagle by Charles Darwin])
   \[\alpha\] the TRAJECTOR MOVED FROM a point which is of the inside of [an enclosure] WITH-THE-MANNER-OF [it sailed]^{iv}
   b) Il Beagle era salpato da Maldonado
   \[\beta\] the TRAJECTOR had MOVED FROM a point which is of the inside of [an enclosure] WITH-THE-MANNER-OF [era salpato]^{iv}

Event (6) is an instance of atelic motion event (or “WITHIN event”), where the TRAJECTOR moves within an unbounded space, represented by the LANDMARK “sea”. The Italian translator can here package the motion information in the same way as it has been packaged in English, as the notation of decompositional construction of manner may surface and clarify (after the square brackets, a further element indicates the item, either a satellite or a gerund specifying manner or direction, as follows: [item]^{s} for a satellite, and [item]^{v} for a finite verb and [item]^{g} for a gerund).

(7)

a) She hobbled into her room ([The Marvellous Land of Oz by L. Frank Baum])
   \[\alpha\] the TRAJECTOR MOVED to a “point” which is inside the limits of [an “enclosure”=the room] WITH-THE-MANNER-OF [she hobbled]^{v}
   b) Entrò zoppicando nella sua stanza
   \[\beta\] The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION-OF [entrò]^{v} to a “point” which is beyond the limits of [an “enclosure”=la stanza] WITH-THE-MANNER-OF [zoppicando]^{g}

When the TRAJECTOR crosses a bounded extent (“BEYOND event”) as is the case with event (7), the Italian translator has to predicate the change of place in the main verb and to indicate the manner of motion in a subordinate clause by means of a gerund, as the notational decomposition (7\beta) clearly illustrates. This means that, in the instance of a “BEYOND Path Conformation”, Italian cannot express the whole event by means of one single verb, but it has to split the complex motion information into segments.

To put it in a nutshell, English adheres to the typological conflation character-
istic of Germanic languages, which conflate motion and manner into the finite verb; whereas Italian adheres to the typological conflation of Romance languages, which conflate motion and path.

However, there is an interesting exception to this pattern. It is the case of event (8) where the Italian translator has utilized a manner verb, thus replicating the English conflation.

(8)
a) She flung out of the house (The Adventures of Tom Sawyer)
α  The TRAJECTOR MOVES to a “point” which is beyond the limits of [an “enclosure” = house] WITH-THE-MANNER-OF [flung]
b) Si precipitò fuori della casa
β  The TRAJECTOR MOVES to a “point” which is beyond the limits of [an “enclosure” = casa] WITH-THE-MANNER-OF [precipitò]

The explanation I would put forward for this exception refers to a further component which can be envisaged in the verb to fling, that is the feature of FORCE which is in the inherent semantics of the verb (i.e. to move violently in an abrupt or headlong manner).

To illustrate the reasons of my claim, a brief overview of the theoretical apparatus I adhere to is needed, along with the notion of “forceful interaction”, which I offer in the ensuing sections.

5. The Framework of Embodied Realism

In the past fifty years, a strong debate on the nature of meaning has brought to the fore the question whether meaning is a derivative of human experience (Embodied Realism), or is “outside the self” waiting for a mind to grasp it and to store it independent of human experience (Objectivist Realism).

The Objectivist Paradigm, which has permeated the dominant philosophical and linguistic research from Aristotle to Chomsky through Descartes, claims the existence of a mind-independent reality. According to this school of thought, it is the task of an algorithmically computational mind to collect the data of the human experience, to dissect it mechanically, and to store it taxonomically in terms of elemental semantic blocks.

This mathematics-fashioned perspective has been discarded from the eighties by the study of mind in the field of cognitive science (Pollio et al. 1977; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Johnson-Laird 1988; Kelso1995), which has demonstrated that the categorisations of experience are mapped by a process of metaphor onto our mind via perceptual, especially spatial, experience.

Cognitive Linguistics aims to reach a knowledge of our conceptual system on the basis of a detailed and accurate analysis of systematic patterns of linguistic structure. This goal is pursued through the identification of pre-conceptual and conceptual structures on which our mind pivots in its functioning (Gibbs 1996). Cognitive Linguistics is sensitive to the cognitive commitment to the extent that its linguistic descriptions need to derive from – or to be in agreement with – findings in experiential psychology and the brain sciences (Lakoff 1990). Since Cognitive Linguistics is an experiential theory, it looks for the grounding
of linguistic phenomena in our bodily experience and for the motivation of such phenomena in the same or in a similar cognitive principle. The Embodied Paradigm, which is one of the basic tenets of Cognitive Linguistics, sees language and thought as strictly structured and bound to the physical experience of the self, as John Locke had already argued. It means that conceptual knowledge is encoded on the basis of sensory experience, as already pointed out by Merleau-Ponty (1954). In other words, our bodily processes, like for example visual and sensori-motor perception, capture basic signifying processes.

5.1 Sensorial experience

From what has been briefly sketched so far, we can say that our mind turns the phenomena of reality into embodied entities on a par with our own bodies (Sweetser 1990:19). We may thus claim that semantic meaning is derived from the crude experience of our senses, with spatiality being the basic mode of experiencing the world around us. The ontogenetic relevance of space has been widely investigated by 20th-century anthropologists, who put forward the claim that language originated from the hominids’ need of communicating information about the spatial layout of an area. This need resulted in the elaborate elaboration of basic cognitive maps, primarily transmitted as iconic drawings and later verbalised. «Over time, an increase in vocabulary would eventually obviate the need for the externalised map entirely, but the neural substrate would retain the structure of the original mapping function» (O’Keefe 1996:281).

It is in this anthropological and biological sense that spatial knowledge has been claimed to take up a privileged position in cognition (Bowerman 1996). Furthermore, since the perception and the description of space must occur dynamically, motion is the inseparable, correlated notion of spatiality, as a simple consideration may suggest: in order to look at the space surrounding us, we need to rely upon our eye movement.

5.2 Visual Thinking

The perceptual system, which we have just described as being structured on a set of biological notions like space and motion, is based on a number of pre-conceptual image schemata which allow us to interpret the world. Image schemata are thus metaphorical mappings from the physical space into the conceptual space, as demonstrated by Johnson (1987). Image schemata are therefore gestaltic cognitive structures, or Idealized Cognitive Models in Lakoffian terms (1987), whose function is to represent reality from a topological perspective. Visual thinking, as defined by Arnheim (1969), or image-schematic thinking, as it is nowadays generally referred to, is a more basic form of cognition which allows for the conversion of experience into images. It is idealized for the purpose of understanding and reasoning, and it is through these metaphorical mappings that our cognitive system partitions, classifies, organizes, and explains the human experience. Johnson (1987:XIV, 13, 29) defines an image schema as

a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor program that gives coherence and structure to our experience. [...] These patterns are embodied and give coherent, meaningful structure to our physical experience at a pre-conceptual level. [...] These patterns emerge as meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movements through space, or manipulation of objects, and our perceptual interaction.
Image schemata are pre-conceptual in that they are non-linguistic, i.e. not expressed in any underlying language of thought. Rather, they are embodied since they are cognitive constructs that emerge from bodily experience (Merleau-Ponty 1954; Varela et al. 1991). The human capacity for conceptualization allows us to form general categories and complex concepts with recourse to image schemata as structuring devices. Johnson lists a number of recurrent image schemata, including container, path, force, surface, link, balance (see Pauwels & Simon-Vanderbergen 1995; Clausner & Croft 1999). We will see how strictly linked some image schemata are to motion (Turner 1991), and how deeply they are entrenched in a discussion of translatability of telic motion events.

A graphical representation of some image schemata is needed here to illustrate how we convert our experience into images. Consider the examples offered in the Introduction again that I report below for convenience:

(10)

a) He tiptoed into the house (Stinger by Nancy Kress)
b) Entrò in casa in punta di piedi

(11)
c) He dashed into the room (Love among the Chickens by P.C. Wodehouse)
d) Si precipitò nella stanza

Both motion events represent a TRAJECTOR (signalled by a circle) moving into a LANDMARK. The LANDMARK can be graphically represented as a container (CONTAINER schema), and MOTION as an arrow (PATH schema). The agent (He) is the TRAJECTOR moving into a bounded extent (house, room), which is the LANDMARK. The bounded extent is schematized through the image of a container. The event thus comprises two image schemata: the PATH schema, which is basic to motion, and the CONTAINER schema:

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 1. A TRAJECTOR moved into a LANDMARK**

The conceptual image is shared by the two motion events, but, while in (10) motion is carried out with a very low degree of speed, in (11) it is acted very rapidly. We will see that speed is one of the features of the FORCE schema. If we now take into account the Italian translations, we realize that, at the conceptual level, the visual representation remains the same, but at the linguistic level the Italian version of event (10) differs from the original version for the encoding of manner of motion. In event (11), on the contrary, both the conceptual level and the linguistic level coincide. Let us compare some further events and their translations:
(12)  
a) She swung from her course (A Princess of Mars by E.R. Burroughs)  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [swung]\textsuperscript{V} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [from]\textsuperscript{S} her course  
b) Uscì dalla sua rotta  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [usci]\textsuperscript{V} [dalla]\textsuperscript{S} sua rotta

(13)  
a) I dragged him out into the light. (Arizona Nights by Stewart Edward White)  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [dragged]\textsuperscript{V} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [out]\textsuperscript{S}  
b) Lo trascinai fuori alla luce  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [trascinai]\textsuperscript{V} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [fuori]\textsuperscript{S}

(14)  
a) A few minutes later they drifted out on the floor. (May Day by F.S. Fitzgerald)  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [drifted]\textsuperscript{V} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [out]\textsuperscript{S} on the floor  
b) Alcuni minuti dopo uscirono pian piano sul pianerottolo  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [uscirono]\textsuperscript{V} WITH-THE-MANNER OF [pian piano]\textsuperscript{S} sul\textsuperscript{S} pianerottolo

(15)  
a) He flung out of the room in search of Isabella (The Castle of Otranto by Walpole)  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [flung]\textsuperscript{V} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [out]\textsuperscript{S} of the room  
b) Si precipitò fuori dalla stanza in cerca di Isabella  
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [precipitò]\textsuperscript{V} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [fuori]\textsuperscript{S} dalla stanza

What immediately emerges from a close analysis of the above events is that the choice of the English conflation is possible only when there is a component of the FORCE schema at work, as is the case with events (13) and (15). And I would claim that it is the lack of a component of FORCE, either intensity or speed, that prevents the Italian translator from replicating the English conflation, as is the case with events (12) and (14). To clarify my claim, I’ll offer some considerations on the notion of FORCE in the next paragraph.

6. FORCE schemata

To express the concept of FORCE in general terms, we may argue that any type of cognitive construal shows forces in interaction, at least to a low degree. Forceful interaction is an ever-present dimension of our experience upon which we rely to create complex patterns of meaning. According to Talmy (1988), Force Dynamics, or «how entities interact with respect to force», relies upon our basic understanding of physics and influences our understanding of language patterns. Force Dynamics is one of the imaging systems implicit in languages – along with structural schematization, deployment of perspective, and distribution of attention – that is employed for organizing conceptual material. Interacting entities are represented by Talmy through a system of binary oppositional values. Borrowing the terminology from the field of Physiology, he sets out a basic matrix of the interaction between the focal force entity (AGONIST) and the element opposing it (ANTAGONIST):
the interacting entities may be either an AGONIST or an ANTAGONIST. The Agonist is the entity that receives focal attention, while the ANTAGONIST opposes the AGONIST’S force; the force entities are conceptualized as having contrary intrinsic force tendencies, i.e. either towards action or towards rest; they are conceptualized as being relatively strong or weak; the resultant of force interaction can either be action or rest.

Motion events may be analyzed in terms of the exertion of force that the TRAJECTOR applies to or is applied by the LANDMARK. The TRAJECTOR and the LANDMARK may be in turn Agonist or Antagonist, as we will see in the following section.

I suggest that, in the description of BEYOND events, a more fine-grained classification of FORCE is needed. The FORCE schema includes a series of factors, like motion, degree of intensity, path of action, and directionality. And, needless to say, the FORCE schema requires the presence of the PATH schema for its development and understanding. If we now refer to the work by Johnson (1987), we may see that forces display the following features:

- they are always experienced through interaction;
- they tend to describe a single path motion;
- they have origin and may reach a destination;
- they are provided with a vector quality;
- they have degree of intensity;
- they are basic to understand causal sequences.

With the above features in mind, Johnson classified eight basic forces:

- COMPULSION: being moved by external forces;
- BLOCKAGE: obstacles block our force;
- COUNTERFORCE: the head-on collision of opposite forces;
- DIVERSION: two colliding forces with a resultant change in force vectors;
- REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT: removal of a barrier or the absence of some restraint;
- ENABLEMENT: to be able to perform some actions of manipulation and movement;
- ATTRACTION: the force of pulling something toward;
- REPULSION: the opposite process of pushing something away.

I would claim that the FORCE schema and the features of forces described above do occur not only in the depiction of objects and their actions, but also at the level of translatability. By analyzing some motion events, we will see that it is the FORCE schema that allows Romance languages to reproduce the Germanic lexicalization pattern. We will also see that such possibility is strictly linked to the degree of intensity and the effort entailed in motion. In order for Romance languages to reproduce the English pattern, at least one of the following features of FORCE must be present, although others may be added to the list:

- a high degree of intensity;
- a component of resistance;
- immediacy, which describes the sudden act rather than the ongoing activity, either encoded or retrievable from the co-text.

Consider now the events below:

(16)

a) Evie came dashing out of the shrubbery (Howards End by Forster)
   The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [dashing]³ WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [out]⁵ of the shrubbery
b) Evie saltava fuori dai cespugli
(17)

a) I crept on towards the window (The War of the Worlds by Wells)
b) Andai verso la finestra
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [andai]V [verso]S la finestra
(18)

a) He scurried away into the darkness as hard as he could go (Alice by Carroll)
b) Sgambettò via nel buio a tutta velocità
(19)

a) They rushed out of the cavern (Red Rooney by Ballantine)
b) Si precipitarono fuori della caverna

In events (16), (18) and (19) both the original English versions and the Italian translations encode manner in the main verb, as can be easily surfaced by the notation The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [main verb]V WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [satellite]S. The Italian translators could reproduce the English conflation just because those events contain one of the features typical of forceful interaction. In event (17) the component of force is absent, and the Italian translator has to encode the direction into the main verb, and decides not to render manner explicit. Consider a further instance of BEYOND event:

(20)
a) He had drawn her out of the house (Howards End by E.M. Forster)
b) Lui l’aveva trascinata fuori dalla casa

Figure 2. Schematic representation for event (20)
Along with the PATH schema (out of) and the CONTAINER schema (house), this event displays three FORCE schemas, whereby the AGONIST (he) applies a force of ATTRACTION in order to oblige the ANTAGONIST (her) to move out of a place schematized as a CONTAINER. The ANTAGONIST experiences a COMPULSION force. Basic for the internal logic of forces, the ENABLEMENT force (represented by arrows) indicates that the AGONIST has got the power to perform the moving action. The Italian translator could transfer the same schematic structure into the target event by replicating the English conflation.

Event (21) has a similar force structure as the previous event:

(21)

a) Mrs Breen plucked her hastening husband back from under the hoofs of the outriders (Ulysses by Joyce)
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [plucked]\textsuperscript{v} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [from under]\textsuperscript{s}
b) Mrs Breen tirò indietro il marito frettoloso
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [tirò]\textsuperscript{v} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [da sotto]\textsuperscript{s}

Figure 3: Schematic representation for event (21)

Here the AGONIST (Mrs Breen) is able (ENABLEMENT) to apply an ATTRACTION force to the ANTAGONIST (her husband), who perceives a COMPULSION force, which obliges him to withdraw from a space under the hoofs of the outriders. Consider event (22):

(22)

a) They dashed into the little cabin (Heart of Darkness by Conrad)
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [dashed]\textsuperscript{v} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [into]\textsuperscript{s}
b) Sfreciarono nella piccola cabina
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [sfrecciarono]\textsuperscript{v} WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [nella]\textsuperscript{s}

Figure 4. Schematic representation for event (22)
The cognitive construal of event (22) pivots around the immediacy of a sudden motion, as the inherent semantics of the verb *to dash* indicates, i.e. *to run or move hastily with great speed and impetuosity*. The AGONIST possesses the power to perform a sudden motion by means of the ENABLEMENT force so as to cause their displacement into a bounded extent (*cabin*) schematized as a CONTAINER.

From the analysis of these events we may easily understand how useful Cognitive Linguistics’ analytical tools are to capture cross-linguistic similarities and differences systematically.

7. **The Granularity of Manner Descriptiveness**

The translation of manner of motion has highlighted obligatory and optional choices on the part of the Italian translator. We have seen that, on the one hand, obligatory shifts, which are due to systemic reasons, oblige the translator to split the English verb into two Italian verbs, a finite verb to express the path of motion and a gerund or an adverbial to express manner of motion:

(23)

a) *I hobbled into the Central Station (Heart of Darkness by Conrad)*
   The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [hobbled] WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [into]

b) *Entrai zoppicando nella Stazione Centrale*
   The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [entrai] WITH-THE-MANNER OF [zoppicando]

On the other hand, optional shifts may occur when, for no grammatically compelling reasons, the translator simplifies the source text, since, in such cases, manner is not always transferred at the same level of granularity, a case of what I call *Under-Descriptiveness* (see Baicchi 2005a):

(24)

a) *The regiment swung from its position out into a cleared space (The Red Badge of Courage by Crane)*
   The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [swung] WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [from] [out] [into]

b) *Il reggimento uscì dalla sua posizione verso uno spazio scoperto*
   The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [uscì]

Conversely, manner is sometimes specified in the Italian version, as the following case of *Over-Descriptiveness* may clearly illustrate (Baicchi 2005a):

(25)

a) *Such ants as were industrious enough to ascend the pole (Heart of Darkness by Conrad)*
   The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [ascend]

b) *Quelle formiche così volenterose da arrampicarsi su un palo*
   The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [arrampicarsi] WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [su]

Furthermore, there are cases in which manner is so easily inferable from the context, as the example of simile below may suggest, that the Italian translator does not need to make the effort of finding a manner verb comparable to the English one:
(26)
a) One emotion after another crept into her face like objects into a slowly developing picture (The Great Gatsby by Fitzgerald)
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-MANNER OF [crept]\(^v\) WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [into]\(^l\)
b) Le emozioni le passarono sul viso l’una dopo l’altra come le immagini in una pellicola girata al rallentatore
The TRAJECTOR MOVED WITH-THE-DIRECTION OF [passarono]\(^v\)

These differences in the translator’s choices may be explained by considering that the frequency of forms correspond, in the long run of practice, to frequent forms of conceptualization. As a matter of fact, it is the encoding language that directs the language user’s attention to specific ways of filtering and packaging information (Berman & Slobin 1994: 613). The requirements of the encoding language lead the language users toward particular ways of «thinking for speaking/writing/translating». This label, coined by Slobin 1987, expresses the new linguistic relativism which, drawing on the Sapir-Whorfian paradigm, indicates that grammatical and semantic categories have a strong influence on the way in which the language user views reality and speaks about it and writes of it accordingly. To put it with Bernam & Slobin:

> frequent use of forms directs attention to their functions, perhaps even making those functions (semantic and discursive) especially salient on the conceptual level. That is, by assessing a form frequently, one is also directed to the conceptual content expressed by that form (Berman & Slobin 1994: 640).

Even more than this, the translator “thinks for translating” and, despite being an aware reader, he is under the influence of his mother tongue’s requirements, not only in the terms of systemic requirements but also in respect to the different conceptualization of events and their corresponding verbalisation.

### 8. Information Processing and Translation

According to the psychological models put forward, among others, by Lindsay & Norman 1977, Aitkenhead & Slack 1985 and Smyth et al. 1987, Human Information Processing (HIP) unfolds through three distinct but interconnected stages. Below I offer a sketchy report on how HIP functions with the aim of paving the way for the theories of Mental Spaces, which will be those on which I draw to propose a model for Cognitive Translation Studies.

#### 8.1 HIP: Human Information Processing in Cognitive Sciences

In the three-stepped elaboration of information, first data is collected from the senses, filtered and stored in the sensory information system (SIS) for initial processing. Among the large amount of chaotic and continuous data that our senses receive, the SIS selects the needed data through a filter whose task is that of rejecting the unnecessary information and of retaining only the one the system is paying attention to at any given time. The SIS – more specifically a sub-system of SIS called “image demon” (Lindsay & Norman 1977) – converts the selected data in the form of an image. The unit of information is now ready for further processing\(^6\).
Secondly, data, now converted into an image, is sent to the short-term memory system (STMS) where it is rehearsed and analysed in its distinctive constituent features, and organized into a pattern which needs to be coherent with the goal being pursued. Finally, data is stored in the long-term memory system (LTMS) and integrated with the existing database of information.

The whole series of processing steps has the task of transforming low-level sensory representations into high-level sensory representations.

8.2 INFORMATION PROCESSING AND THE TRANSLATOR

I would claim that, since translation is a form of communication, it can be subsumed under the more general framework of Human Information Processing.

In his activity of transferring information from the source text to the target text, the translator decodes the source text elaborating a non-language-specific representation of the information. Such elaboration, which takes place in both the short-term and the long-term memory, can be compared to the ways in which a reader and a writer process a text. In text processing, the reader relies on his encyclopaedic knowledge and, by using analytic skills, extracts information from the text. Instead, the writer applies synthetic skills to existing knowledge to organize it as information in the text. For both the reader and the writer, and also for the translator, text processing proceeds in analytic (bottom-up) and synthetic (top-down) ways at the same time. Bottom-up Processing (or data-driven) analyses the continuous and chaotic flow of sensory data into discrete meaningful units of information, and Top-down Processing (concept-driven) makes hypotheses about the nature of the sensory stimuli and seeks confirmation for such hypotheses. The two directions of processing are not carried out separately, but simultaneously since they are combined in an Interactive Processing through an operation where each direction feeds the other with information so as to achieve an agreed conclusion. Thus translation is by far a more complex activity of problem-solving strategy than the simple processing of decoding and encoding meaning.

9. DISCOURSE UNDERSTANDING IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

Within the field of Cognitive Discourse research, linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge frames are represented through the recourse to mental spaces, which are «constructs distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to the guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions» (Fauconnier 1985:16). Mental spaces can be defined as temporary conceptual packets in the working memory where the linguistic expression and the correlated encyclopaedic knowledge are stored for the purpose of performing cognitive operations (Fauconnier 1985, 1994; Fauconnier & Turner 1996). In discourse processing, each structure evokes a mental representation of some event through the activation, or opening, of a series of mental spaces containing the speaker’s perspective (see also Langacker 2001 on «attentional framing»). Discourse management means to store in the working-memory the mental spaces opened while processing information. It is worth underscoring that, «given their rapid occurrences,
these processes are not consciously noticeable or linguistically encoded. Rather, language provides underspecified contextual clues that prompt cognitive configurations and pre-structured backgrounds» (Dirven 2005:26). During the activity of discourse understanding, mental spaces proliferate in the unfolding of discourse, map onto each other in intricate ways, and provide abstract mental structure for shifting of anchoring, viewpoint, and focus, allowing us to direct our attention at any time onto very partial and simple structures, while maintaining an elaborate web of connections in working memory, and in long-term memory (Fauconnier 1998:252).

Mappings between mental spaces are part of the organization of thought and the networks of mental spaces give rise to the operation of Conceptual Integration. In other words, mental spaces map onto each other and blend onto new spaces. It is exactly on these conceptual integration network that the online construction of meaning realizes. According to Fauconnier & Turner, the basic scenario of Conceptual Integration operates on two Input Mental Spaces – roughly corresponding to source and target domains in Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) Metaphor Theory – which map onto each other. The cross-space mapping is constructed in a third space, called the Generic Space, which collects more schematic structure common to the two Input Spaces. The fourth space, called the Blend, arises from the two Inputs through the operation of a selective projection, and develops an Emergent Structure, which contains new elements of its own which are not present in the Input Spaces. Figure 5 below summarizes the basic Conceptual Integration Network: the solid lines represent the cross-space mapping, while the dotted line represent selective projection from Inputs; the square in the Blend represents the Emergent Structure and the Integration.
I would say that mental spaces are fundamental in the study not only of natural language semantics and pragmatics, but also of translation. I will offer some observations on Blending and Translation in the next section.

9.1 Conceptual Integration and Translation

Similarly to Conceptual Integration, where the language user opens a series of mental spaces in his understanding of discourse, the translator opens mental spaces in his on-going activity of decoding the source text and transferring its peculiarities into the target text in a complex process of meaning recreation. Following Fauconnier & Turner’s model, the translation process may be described as a cross-space mapping between the source text and the target text from which the translator selects some common structure that s/he transfers to the Blend.

9.2 The Combined Input Hypothesis

Indeed, the process of translation is so much complex a cognitive operation that its description through Fauconnier & Turner’s Four-Space Model appears to be rather simplistic, since such model seems insufficient to accommodate the many variables that intertwine in the production of the target text. In this respect, a multi-space model is needed to take into account the interplay of the textual features. Ruiz de Mendoza’s (1998) Combined Input Hypothesis offers the necessary tools to describe the translation process in details and to accommodate the discussion about the translator’s meaning recreation under the theoretical standpoint of Cognitive Translation Studies.

With the aim of offering alternative analyses of some well-known Fauconnier & Turner’s examples of metaphor, Ruiz de Mendoza (1996; 1998) puts forward the hypothesis that the understanding of metaphorical expressions entails the activation of multiple source inputs that, once integrated together and projected onto one single Combined Source Input, provides correlations with the elements of the metaphoric target (see Ruiz de Mendoza & Peña 2002 for a detailed account).
8.3 The Translational Projection Hypothesis

Ruiz de Mendoza's insightful proposal of the activation of multiple source inputs may well describe the steps of the translation process.

Following Ruiz de Mendoza's model, I would say that the source text may be conceived as the combination of a series of source input spaces, with each space seen as a temporary container for relevant information belonging to the different levels of the linguistic and textual organizations. In the process of discourse understanding, which is the first step in the transfer of meaning, the translator decomposes the Combined Source Input into its constitutive Source Inputs. Once multiple Source Inputs have been identified, the translator transfers them into a series of corresponding Target Inputs. It goes without saying that these processes of decomposition and re-assembling of Inputs are mostly done unconsciously. Once a working set of Target Inputs has been arranged, the translator projects the reassembled inputs onto the Projection Space, which ultimately contains the Target Text. The content of the Projection Space is the product of an elaboration among various Source Input Spaces mapped onto Target Input Spaces through a process of what I call Elaboration Loop.

However, differently from Ruiz de Mendoza's proposal, I envisage an area of
Emergent Structure within the Projection Space, at least from the translation perspective. The Emergent Structure – which may be more apt to be called Creative Structure – contains those new elements which are absent in the Input Spaces. Thus, the Creative Structure groups those elements of personal creativity that the translator adds to his Target Text any time the linguistic/cultural requirements of the TT’s semiotic system obliges him to create something new and different from the ST. Or simply when the translator feels the need of adding something new to his TT.

I will offer a graphical representation of my model in order to clarify the way in which I conceive the activity of the translator at the cognitive level:

![Figure 7. The Translational Projection Hypothesis](image)

The strategy of “abandoning” the ST in order to feel free of introducing brand-new elements into the TT may also be an individual choice meant to claim the translator’s dignity as a writer rather than that of a mere “porter” of meaning from one side of the river to the other (see, for example, Levine 1991; Paz 1992; Bassnett 1994):
Translators are quintessential writers, whose “derived creativity” (Neubert 1997:17) needs to be sustained by adequate schemata for mapping and remapping meaning across cognitive environments (Cortese 1990); the ability, that is, to recast and remould the same conceptual representation, a textual world or conceptualization made up of textual, intertextual and extratextual information, across social and rhetorical practices. (Cortese 1999:347)

From the perspective of remoulding the same conceptual representation, translation is to be seen as an activity whose basic goal is that of retaining as many ST configurations as possible. In this respect, I conceive translation as an asymptotic process toward equivalence with the ST whereby the *ad infinitum* approach allows the TT to be re-built in such a way as to pursue diagrammaticity with the ST at a maximal extent. To pursue diagrammaticity means that the TT should feature analogous relationships between the sign (*representamen*) and the object (*denotatum*) as the ones offered in the ST (Baicchi 2003).

I would claim that, although pursuing equivalence and diagrammaticity with the ST, as a matter of facts the translator adds traits of his own creative choice to the TT, at least at the extent of «Optimal Innovation». By «Optimal Innovation» I mean that the TT undeniably shows a degree of originality and creativity, but such degree should not overcome the creativity of the ST. Otherwise the effect would be that of a total recreation or rewriting of the source text and not that of translation *sensu stricto*. It goes without saying that «Optimal Innovation» is related to the text types, as the translation of advertisement and poetry may well exemplify.
It is the great merit of Talmy 1985 to have first noticed the resultative aspect of motion. He distinguishes between a path that unfolds within an unbounded extent and a path that crosses the limits of a bounded extent: this path distinction, which is due to extra-lexical constraints, was later labeled “telicity” by Aske 1989, and “boundary crossing” by Slobin & Hoiting 1994.

Similarly, an entity moving within the limit of a bounded extent gives rise to a WITHIN event.

Other languages encode manner and path with equivalent grammatical forms: it is the case of equipollently-framed languages: manner verb+path verb: serial-verb languages (Niger-Congo, Hmong-Mien, Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Mon-Khmer, Austronesian); [manner-path] verb: bipartite verb languages (Algonquian, Athabaskan, Hokan, Klamath-Takelman); manner preverb+path preverb+verb: Jaminjungan languages.

In the Talmian notation system, the GROUND can be schematised as a geometric complex, like “point”, “enclosure” and “volume” (Talmy 2000:54-56). This means that the TRAJEKTOR moves FROM, ALONG or TO a “point” of the LANDMARK, which can be either an unbounded space or a bounded space.

An alternative label for image schema is embodied schema, which actually seems to clarify the type of inextricable link between bodily movement and perception.

Data is transformed into an image independently of the sensory modality from which they derive. Neurolinguistic experiments have shown that our mind, after perceiving a sensorial stimulus from whatever source (visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or gustative) processes such information in a unique neuronal area where all kinds of information are stored (Caramazza 1992).


Toursy, Gideon (1990), *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins.


1. Introduction

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) applications are a useful aid for both language teachers and individual learners. CALL applications offer individualized environments where learners learn at their own pace making autonomous decisions on the order of study topics, lesson reviews, lesson repeats, etc. In other words, CALL applications both promote language learning objectives and overcome traditional language classroom constraints. Some of these applications for the enhancement and practice of oral skills consist in applications for pronunciation teaching. The goal of Computer Assisted Pronunciation Training (CAPT) systems is to provide learners with private, stress-free practice with individualized and instantaneous feedback on pronunciation. The introduction of CALL applications has stimulated a debate on the relationship between pedagogy and technology, and the role of the language teacher in the classroom. Some applications, particularly commercial applications, seem to drive technological advances to the detriment of pedagogical criteria which would be more beneficial to the learner (Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik and Boves 2002). However, these applications are unquestionably making an important contribution to linguistic research and language-teaching practice.

This paper reviews recent technology for teaching pronunciation, and the trends emerging in this field. One particular method for teaching prosody, in particular intonation and pitch patterns, is reviewed in considerable detail. This method uses speech analysis software to provide students with visual data in addition to audio data, and give them feedback on their L2 production. It thus of-
fers visual and audio information on exactly where students’ production differs from native speakers’. The last section reports on a pilot study conducted at the University of Padova designed to implement this pronunciation teaching method in future courses by testing the effectiveness of using these computer-based visual feedback systems to modify non-native speakers’ intonation patterns.

2. Foreign accent, intelligibility and pronunciation teaching

Individuals who start acquiring a second language after early childhood rarely develop native-like speech patterns, even after considerable exposure to a second language. In fact, in most cases, second-language learners speak with a foreign accent. But what exactly is a foreign accent? A foreign accent can span from a barely perceptible accent to strongly accented, unintelligible speech. However, what contributes to native speakers’ judgments of a foreign accent is still not fully understood, nor is the boundary between a foreign accent and unintelligibility well defined. “Heavily-accented” speech does not necessarily correspond to unintelligible speech, and it is possibly the type more than the number of learner’s mistakes that affects L2 speech intelligibility (Munro, forthcoming, Munro and Derwing, 2001). In recent years, the study of foreign accents has attracted the interest of scholars from a variety of fields, from first- and second-language acquisition to speech perception and production, from sociolinguistics to applied linguistics. Studies on foreign accents have inter alia investigated what factors contribute to our perception of foreign accent vs. unintelligible speech and why human beings have difficulties acquiring L2 speech articulatory patterns while no other limitation in their motor-control system is reported that would prevent them from learning any other articulatory behavior.

In applied linguistics, the issue of foreign accents is connected to pronunciation teaching. In L2 instruction, the amount of attention that has been given to pronunciation teaching has changed considerably over the past fifty years as have the opinions regarding the extent to which non-native pronunciation errors should be corrected. In the 50’s and 60’s, during the heyday of the audio-lingual approach, the goal of L2 pronunciation instruction was the attainment of a native-like accent, as modeled by the language teacher. In this period, pronunciation teaching instruction focused on the discrimination and articulation of sounds as a way of improving the perception and production of L2 non-native sounds. This approach brought phonetics and phonology into the language classroom, as it was believed that correct articulation of L2 sounds required a basic understanding of the mechanisms for L2 and L1 sound production (Lambacher, 1996a). In the late 60’s and 70’s, when the cognitive approach was dominant, the belief that native-like pronunciation was impossible to attain for an adult second language learner had the overall effect of decreasing the attention given to pronunciation, as well as the amount of knowledge about L2 phonetics and phonological systems that were deemed necessary for the language learner. In the early 1980’s, communication-oriented approaches to language teaching recognized the key role of pronunciation in improving the learner’s oral skills, and in contributing to ensuring the success of oral communication. Today, language
teachers and researchers generally agree that the ultimate goal of pronunciation teaching should not be to eradicate a foreign accent, but rather to promote pronunciation which is reasonably intelligible, as intelligible pronunciation is considered an essential component of communicative competence (Celce-Murcia, 1987; Anderson-Hsieh, 1989; Morley, 1991; Lambacher, 1996a, 1996b; Stibbard, 1996). The attainment of intelligible pronunciation is considered essential for the learner to increase self-confidence and promote social interactions outside the classroom (Morley, 1991; Cunningham Florez, 1998). Pronunciation accuracy may also help improve a person’s social acceptance, since a foreign accent may be socially stigmatized and contribute to negative stereotyping of some second-language learners, and thus result in social or professional discrimination (Munro, forthcoming; Derwing, Rossiter, and Munro, 2002). Finally, it is believed that, because «the number of professionals who regularly communicate in a foreign language for their work has increased with globalization[,] in order to ensure that these learners are able to efficiently communicate in the L2, it is imperative that language teaching methods include pronunciation training» (Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves, 2002: 442).

3. Prosodic features of second-language speech

Research has investigated what components of a foreign accent play a role in the intelligibility of spoken language. The critical role of prosody in the production and perception of L2 speech has been ascertained, and prosody is believed to have an effect on judgments about foreign accents. For example, the perception of L2 fluency and speech has been found to be affected by differences in speech rate (Munro and Derwing, 2001; Derwing and Munro, 2001; Kormos and Dénes, 2004), pitch prominence, pitch range, length and location of pauses (Pickering, 2002; 2004), intonation contours (Wennerstrom, 2000; 2001), prosodic stress, as characterized by acoustic parameters such as amplitude and duration (Chang, 2002; Silipo and Greenberg, 2000). As for Italian learners of English, the perception of an Italian accent in English decreases significantly, and intelligibility increases significantly, as Italians learn English timing strategies for vowel and syllable production (Busà, 1995).

The finding that prosodic features affect the production and perception of L2 speech comes as no surprise given the fundamental role prosody plays in first language acquisition and, in general, in speech communication. Research into infant speech development has shown that, even before they are born, infants are finely tuned to perceiving prosodic aspects of speech (i.e., variations in duration, tempo, pitch, and intonation patterns), and it is, in fact, through timing and intonation that they learn to understand their caregivers’ emotions and to express their own (Lieberman, 1986, Gerken and Aslin, 2005). Even in adult communication, prosody is what glues sounds in words and words in utterances, and it is through prosody that speakers prioritize information, signal emphasis, disambiguate sentences, make meaning in context, etc. Prosodic features such as stress and intonation contribute an essential part of the linguistic interpretation of an utterance, as they provide overt and, especially, covert information on
the message transmitted, and/or the emotions and attitudes conveyed with it (Wilson and Wharton, forthcoming).

Though suprasegmentals (prosody) represent the basic step in first language acquisition, they seem to be extremely hard for second language learners to acquire. There may be many reasons for this. In general, while speakers are usually able to use and interpret prosody successfully in their everyday communication, they may have no awareness of prosodic patterns in speech, and may have difficulties hearing, recognizing or labeling different prosodic patterns, such as segmental durations, rhythmic or intonation patterns (i.e., rising vs. falling intonation, rising-falling vs. falling-rising intonation, etc.). Prosodic phenomena are difficult even for native speakers to describe and analyze (Bradford, 1992: 1) and to agree on (Brazil, 1994: 6). Moreover, as discussed in Section 4 below, learners may have a hard time acquiring L2 prosodic patterns because traditional in-class explanations, methods and materials may not always be adequate, as they may not enhance comprehension of the differences between the L1 and L2 prosodic systems. For example, learners are more likely to practice with drills for discriminating minimally contrasting word pairs than with drills for discriminating minimally contrasting prosodic pairs. So, suprasegmentals may be difficult to acquire because L2 prosodic patterns may be hard for the learner to perceive and make sense of. It is reasonable to assume that pronunciation instruction could benefit from new methods or applications enhancing students’ comprehension and perception of L2 prosodic features.

4. Approaches to teaching L2 pronunciation and prosody

As seen in Section 2, today’s approaches to second-language teaching generally recognize pronunciation as having a key role in the achievement of successful communication (Cunningham Florez, 1998). However, as reported in the literature, the extent to which pronunciation is taught in the language classroom varies, and «the amount of time and effort devoted to it seems to depend, to a large degree, on the individual teacher. This means that it may or may not form part of regular classroom activities or student self-study» (Macdonald, 2003: 1). Several factors seem to contribute to language teachers’ tendency to avoid teaching pronunciation. Teachers often feel that they are inadequately prepared to teach it. Also, pronunciation instruction is not appropriately emphasized in curricula. And finally, suitable materials for teaching pronunciation are often unavailable (Fraser, 2000; Yates, 2001; Macdonald, 2003 and referenced works). The methods used for teaching pronunciation also vary widely, ranging from «drilling sounds, words, and dialogues, [...] instruction in the phonological rules of English, including stress placement, spelling-to-sound rules, intonation patterns, [...] listening to authentic materials, [or] a mix of these methods» (Fraser, 2000: 29).

Pronunciation instruction also differs widely as regards which aspects of pronunciation get emphasized in the classroom. Many traditional approaches tend to focus more on language segments than on suprasegmentals (Spaai and Hermes, 1993; Chun, 1998; Cunningham Florez, 1998; Yates, 2001). In other words, more emphasis is placed on the production and discrimination of indi-
tional sounds than on how sounds are modified when produced in stretches of speech, i.e., words and utterances, due to the combined effect of stress, language rhythm, connected speech processes, prominence and intonation patterns. The focus on segmentals in pronunciation teaching both reflects and benefits from previous trends in phonetic and phonological research, which have contributed significant descriptions and explanations on sound articulation and acoustics. In addition, a large number of contrastive studies conducted on L1 and L2 phonetic and phonological systems have privileged speech segments over suprasegmentals. Overall, then, teachers may be more prepared to teach segmental as opposed to suprasegmental properties of L2 speech, and may be aware of differences between the L1 and L2 at segmental but not suprasegmental level.

Language pronunciation teaching approaches emphasizing the acquisition of L2 segments over L2 prosody are typically characterized by the extensive use of drills on word minimal pair discrimination and repetition (e.g., /bead/ - /bid/). These drills are based on the idea that perceiving a difference that does not exist in L1 is an essential prerequisite for good pronunciation. For example, Italian speakers’ inability to produce English vowel contrasts such as those existing in words like “bid” and “bead” may be rooted in the inability to discriminate the two vowel sounds perceptually. Repeated listening to the sounds in contrast is considered an effective method to help learners discriminate the sounds auditorily, and consequently help them produce the sounds contrastively.

On the other hand, the fact that, overall, pronunciation instruction has placed less emphasis on suprasegmentals than on segmentals may be due to the fact that, to date, we still have only a partial understanding of language prosody, and that what we know «is split up into a large number of competing approaches» used for different languages (Mixdorff, 2002: 31). Research on suprasegmentals is complex requiring investigations of physical (i.e., acoustic, articulatory and perceptual) properties, as well as communicative functions; prosodic meaning depends on individual, social and contextual factors. Thus, because of its inherent complexity, attempts at describing prosody in ways amenable to instruction have proved elusive, particularly with regard to context-related variation, interdialect and interpersonal variation. If learners are not provided with clear explanations of the rules governing L2 prosodic patterns, they may not be able to make useful generalizations or comparisons with patterns in the native language. As Spaai and Hermes (1993) report, if prosody is taught implicitly, and with no clear explanations, i.e., by means of the “listen and repeat” method, it cannot really be learned.

However, the growing interest in the study of suprasegmentals generated by the recognition of the role of prosody in first and second language speech communication is causing a shift in emphasis in foreign language pronunciation teaching. The new approaches to pronunciation teaching are more balanced in focus, and more emphasis is placed on pitch, stress, rhythm coarticulation and intonation, and how they are used to communicate meaning, the general goal being to achieve comprehensible speech for better overall speech performance (Lambacher, 1996a).

In the past ten years or so, a new impulse to teaching L2 prosody has come from technology, and particularly from speech technology. At the present stage,
the use of technology for pronunciation teaching is still largely experimental in nature, but there are indications that new methods and frameworks may be developing that will be beneficial to the study and acquisition of L2 suprasegmentals. In the following sections, this paper will review some of the new tools for speech and communication research (Section 5), how they have impacted pronunciation teaching technology (Section 6), and, in particular, how they have affected the teaching of prosody (Section 7).

5. New tools in speech and communication research

In the past fifteen years, scientific research has been enhanced by the greater accessibility and lower costs of computer hardware and software, as well as by the huge increase in computers’ data storage capabilities. For speech research, tools have been developed that allow the recording and digitalization of authentic spontaneous speech for storage and analysis in ways that only a few decades ago were not conceivable. These tools have contributed to the advancement of speech and natural language research and have provided the input for pronunciation teaching applications. The speech research tools relevant to the present paper are tools for speech analysis, including prosodic analysis, and multimodal analysis.

5.1 Tools for speech analysis

Hardware and software systems have been used for many decades in experimental phonetics as an aid to study the physical properties of speech sounds, whether acoustic, articulatory, aerodynamic or perceptual. Computerized speech signal analysis and processing have long been the basis for speech technology (speech synthesis and speech perception) applications. However, while in the past highly specialized hardware and software systems for speech analysis were confined to university computer labs, today, reduced costs and the availability of freely accessible or relatively inexpensive software has made it possible to store and analyze speech data from any home or portable computer. There is also a wide variety of signal analysis software with features for quick and accurate extraction of frequency, pitch contours, intensity levels, as well as the on-screen display of speech sound waves and spectrograms, filtering signals and so on. This software may also include tests for listening and discrimination of various types of signals, for signal processing, etc. A widely-used freeware program for speech analysis which is gaining increasing acceptance is Praat, developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink at the Institute of Phonetic Sciences of the University of Amsterdam (NL) and available at http://www.praat.org. Section 8 of this paper reports on a pilot project for teaching prosody to Italian learners of English using Praat.

For prosody, software for computerized signal analysis has favored the creation of conventional systems for transcribing intonation and prosodic structures of spoken utterances. One of the most widely used systems is ToBI, developed at the Ohio State University Department of Linguistics by Mary E. Beckman and her co-workers (e.g., Beckman and Elam, 1997; see also the ToBI website at: http://
www.ling.ohio-state.edu/~tobi/). Conventional systems like ToBI have made an important contribution to the study and description of speech prosody. However, we are far from achieving a “standard model” for prosodic representation, because these systems still require language-specific (or even dialect-specific) adaptation, as well as adaptations to the specific research of different research teams.

5.2 Tools for multimodal analysis

For discourse analysis, conversational analysis, text analysis, pragmatics, anthropology, human-computer interaction, computer animation and many other fields, systems are being developed that allow researchers to integrate linguistic with non-linguistic information. These systems allow simultaneous recording, notation and analysis of visual and audio information to study how meaning is conveyed through language and through other resources as well. The characteristics of each system depend on the individual research team as well as the specific purposes of analysis for which these systems have been developed. For example, in Italy, a research project involving three Italian universities (i.e., Pavia, Trieste and Padova) has developed MCA (Multimodal Corpus Authoring System), a system which allows users to analyze film texts and to study the meaning-making processes and meaning-making structures characterizing them (e.g., Baldry 2004, Baldry and Taylor, 2004; Baldry, 2005; see also the MCA website at: http://mca.unipv.it/). Because it adopts a comparative, corpus-based approach to film analysis and transcription, MCA can, for example, focus on different soundtracks comparing the ways in which similar communicative functions are realized and connected to others in different film texts (Ackerley and Coccetta in press; Dalziel and Metelli, in press); this includes comparative analysis/transcription of native/non-native phonetic and prosodic meaning oppositions in film soundtracks (see Baldry and Thibault, 2006: 51-54). For more general purposes, multimodal systems have been created which serve both theoretical and applied language research. ANVIL is a free video annotation tool, used at research institutes worldwide, providing hierarchical multi-layered annotation driven by user-defined schemes (Kipp, 2004; see also the ANVIL website at: http://www.dfki.de/~kipp/anvil/). Because it can import data from common signal analysis software such as Praat and Xwaves, and can display waveforms and pitch contours, it is also used by teams conducting research on speech. SignStream, developed by the American Sign Language Research Project at Boston University, is a database tool for analysis of data captured on video. Although this system was designed to work with data from American Sign Language, it may be applied to any kind of data captured on video and is useful when studying the gestural component of oral interaction (see the SignStream website at: http://www.bu.edu/asllrp/SignStream/). Another commonly used system is MacVisSTA, designed to perform analyses of multimodal human communication through video, audio, speech transcriptions, and gesture, head, posture, facial expression and gaze orientation data, and is particularly focused on the analysis of the co-temporality of behavior modes (Rose, Quek and Shi, 2004).
6. TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION AND THEIR IMPACT ON PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

As reviewed in Section 5, greater accessibility and lower costs of computer hardware and software, increase in computer data storage capabilities, new tools for speech and interaction analysis have favored the collection of extensive corpora containing natural language data that can be studied at many different levels, i.e., from the acoustic to the discourse level, using a variety of techniques for transcription, labeling and examination. The bulk of language data collected is at the same time furthering our understanding of human communication, and contributing to the creation of new technological applications involving speech. Research on language teaching has investigated ways to make beneficial use of technological advances for improving language learning. Here too, a wide variety of applications are being developed for different purposes and many are yielding favorable results. This section will briefly review the major speech technology applications that have a bearing on pronunciation teaching.

Speech synthesis and automatic speech recognition, two of the most common applications in speech technology, provide the basic technology for the development of applications for pronunciation teaching. Speech synthesis, i.e., computer-generated speech production, is typically used «for rudimentary listening comprehension and for learning sound-symbol (phoneme-grapheme) correspondences» (Chun, 2006: 279). For example, a commercial software package, RealSpeak™ Word by Nuance, uses speech synthesis to convert the words and idioms from a dictionary into speech output, to allow learners to hear how words should be pronounced (see the product website at: http://www.nuance.com/realspeak/word/).

Automatic speech recognition constitutes the basis for a large number of applications for pronunciation improvement, in spite of the fact that speech recognition has not reached the same high level of performance as speech synthesis (speech recognition applications work better when either the number of users or vocabulary items is restricted). Typically, in automatic speech recognition systems, L2 learners’ pronunciation is compared against native speaker models and learners are told their errors and/or corrected accordingly. Speech recognizers are used in the development of automatic (phone) pronunciation error detection as an aid in pronunciation teaching classes or for individual learners (Kim, Franco and Neumeyer, 1997; Truong, Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, 2004; Truong, Neri, de Wet, Cucchiarini, Strik, 2005). In these applications, learners listen to native language samples, repeat and record their productions, and compare these to native speaker models (Wachowicz and Scott, 1999). Fluency, for example, developed by Eskenazi (e.g., 1999a) at the Language Technology Institute at Carnegie Mellon University, in Pennsylvania, is a system that gives the user visual and audio suggestions on how to detect and correct his/her pronunciation mistakes (both segmental and suprasegmentals). Additionally, such systems can also give feedback on the correctness of some learners’ limited reading tasks (Mostow and Aist, 1999).

Paradigms based on speech recognizers are also used for automatic assessment of pronunciation quality and are increasingly used in educational systems...
to assess students’ oral discourse proficiency levels (Bernstein, 1997; Levow and Broman Olsen, 1999; Neumeyer, Franco, Digalakis and Weintraub, 2000; Bernstein, Balogh, Lennig, Rosenfeld, 2005). When assessing learners’ overall proficiency, these systems require complex design architectures, which, in addition to learners’ pronunciation skills, must take other aspects of learners’ language, such as grammar and vocabulary, into account.

Closed-response systems are applications that check the correctness of learners’ vocabulary or spoken conversational skills in certain virtual interactions requiring a limited set of user responses. They also make use of speech synthesis and speech recognition technology (e.g., Egan, 1999; Harless, Zier and Duncan, 1999). Open-response systems check the correctness of learners’ vocabulary or spoken conversational skills without restricting a learner’s utterances. They have more complex architectures and require higher processing capabilities. The development of open-response systems is based on the expansion of the capabilities of so-called Spoken Dialogue Systems, originally developed to support access to online information sources. Open-response systems are meant to provide students with the possibility of practicing spoken dialogue interactions (with a computer), and to give them feedback on the quality of their utterances during the dialogue exchange (Seneff, Wand and Zhang, 2004; Rauz and Eskenazi, 2004).

Finally, an aid to pronunciation teaching classes may come from the development of so-called Talking Heads, i.e., computer-animated heads (conversational agents) which combine speech technology with studies on gestures and head and face movements. These talking heads are designed to appear on the learner’s computer monitor and function as the learner’s virtual tutors to be involved in many aspects of his/her language learning process, from reading to pronunciation to conversation practice. Talking heads are also being developed for children learning their first language and disabled people, the deaf in particular. Researchers believe that, because of their realistic speech and expressions, and their convincing emotions, talking heads will become patient and fun-giving interactive tutors for learners to learn languages with (Massaro, 2006a). Massaro and his team have developed probably the most well-known talking heads: Baldi and his sister Baldette (e.g. Massaro, 2006b), Timo (the interactive children’s tutor, see http://animatedspeech.com), Baldini, the Italian version of Baldi (e.g., Cosi, Cohen and Massaro 2002). Other teams conducting research into talking heads are working with Kalberer and Müller at the Department of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering (Computer Vision Laboratory) in Zürich (http://www.vision.ee.ethz.ch). Granström, at the Centre for Speech Technology in Stockholm, Sweden, is also developing a virtual language tutor (Granström, 2004).

Before concluding this section a word of caution on new technological advances is in order. Even though new technological advances offer exciting perspectives for second-language pronunciation teaching, people are still the best teachers, evaluators and correctors of learners’ performances in L2. Much research and careful evaluation is needed before the new technological advances can offer a valid, unquestionable aid to the pronunciation teacher. While scholars agree that ASR (automatic speech recognition)-enhanced materials can effectively increase students’ learning potential over conventional materials, care needs to be taken to prevent the exploitation of these systems, especially...
if their development is driven by commercial rather than pedagogical purposes (Wachowicz and Scott, 1999; Derwing, Munro and Carbonaro, 2000; Delmonte, 2000; Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik and Boves, 2002).

7. USING SIGNAL ANALYSIS SOFTWARE FOR TEACHING INTONATION IN DISCOURSE

As seen in Sections 3 and 4, prosody should be taught in the language classroom from the beginning and with effective methods. New inputs for new methods for teaching L2 intonation and prosody are emerging from phonetic research, aided by speech analysis software now available. This section will briefly review how speech analysis software has been used in pronunciation teaching classes and what insights into teaching prosody can be gained from this method.

7.1 EXISTING SOFTWARE FOR SPEECH ANALYSIS AND USES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

Section 4 discussed how teaching and learning prosody is more difficult to implement than teaching and learning single sound production. As seen in Section 4, this difficulty may be partly due to the fact that teachers themselves cannot rely on explanations, methods and materials on how to teach intonation effectively. However, a further problem may also be that speakers vary in their ability to hear prosodic patterns in their L1 and in their L2, and thus find themselves at a loss when asked to discriminate or reproduce prosodic patterns in the L2. As suggested by a few researchers (e.g., Spaai and Hermes, 1993; Lambacher, 1996b; Stibbard, 1996; Chun, 1998; Eskenazi, 1999; Wennerstrom, 2000), a combination of audio and visual feedback may have a major impact on learners and enhance their ability to learn both segmental and suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation. On these grounds, speech analysis software has started to be introduced experimentally in L2 pronunciation classes as a source of feedback for students’ productions. The use of speech analysis software allows learners to record and visualize their speech output on their computer monitors to obtain real-time information about the acoustic properties of this output. These visualizations can be used by both learners and teachers to compare and evaluate learners’ productions with those of native speakers. Through these visualizations, learners have an objective measure of the distance or closeness of their pronunciation with respect to the target pronunciation. This method is considered to be highly effective by the researchers who have used it. Visualization of intonation curves would appear to be particularly effective. So, for example, Eskenazi (1999) maintains that the visual display of L2 prosodic patterns may be crucial for correcting students’ inaccurate prosody, because it allows them to visualize where exactly their prosodic patterns differ from native speakers. Similarly, Wennerstrom (2000), argues that the visualization of pitch ranges in speech makes it easier for the learner to increase pitch to signal topic shift, and this has a bearing on learners’ overall intelligibility in L2. Reports of successful teaching experiences using systems developed for phonetic and speech research and on the effectiveness of visual displays for teaching prosody and intonation are also found in De Bot (1983), Spaai and Hermes (1993), Lambacher (1996a, 1996b), Stibbard (1996), Chun (1998).
7.2 How do speech analysis systems work and how can they be used in the language classroom?

Typically, speech analysis systems allow users to record, visualize and analyze speech on their computer screen. Students using these programs can obtain an accurate visualization of their production at both the segmental and the suprasegmental level. In order for students to make sense of the on-screen visualizations of their speech productions, they need to be given a theoretical background on how to read and interpret speech signals, spectrograms and prosodic patterns of pitch, intonation and loudness. Hence, for L2 instruction, it is crucial for students to acquire some notion of L1 and L2 phonology, as well as some elements of acoustic phonetics before they start experimenting with visualizing sound waves and pitch contours. Students should also be made aware of the great variability that may differentiate inter- and intra-speaker productions. However, visualizing speech and comparing students’ own productions with native speakers’ is a rather simple task and does not require much technical or theoretical expertise. The pros of this method largely outweigh its cons. As reported by Lambacher (1996b: 32), «The function of this computerized training system is very appealing and effective as a learning and teaching tool in pronunciation since it allows students to visualize their pronunciation as they learn to associate the patterns on the display with the sounds. The sound analyzer is also very motivating to students because it provides them with a deeper sense of their own articulation by allowing them to visually compare their own pronunciation with their teacher’s [or with the native speaker’s]. Students visualize their pronunciation and learn to interpret the different patterns of sound segmentals and suprasegmentals, by associating the patterns on the screen with the sounds they are producing».

Intonation contours and pitch levels can be easily visualized and analyzed by students who do not have much training in phonetics or speech analysis. The visualization of intonation and pitch patterns enhances the comprehension of intonation contours (e.g., falling, rising intonation, etc.) and pitch levels (i.e., high, medium, low pitch). On the other hand, the visualization and analysis of production details of speech segments requires more practice in acoustic analysis for the identification of vowel and consonant sounds, and for the measurement of phonetic details such as duration, frequency and intensity. Hence, teachers should decide whether visualization of phonetic details of vowels and consonants is worth pursuing given the well-known constraints in instruction times. However, the fact that timing factors (duration of individual sounds, words, and sentences) in L2 can greatly affect a speaker’s intelligibility should not be underestimated and time should be spent emphasizing differences in language timing between the L1 and the L2.

As a result of the findings that speech visualization helps language learning, both commercial and university research teams have shown growing interest in exploring the applications and potentials of speech analysis software for language pronunciation instruction. Various systems have been developed for this purpose, including: WinPitch LTL II by Pitch Instruments Inc. (http://www.winpitch.com), VisiPitch by Kay-Elemetrics developed by Molholt (1998) and VICK, developed at the Speech Lab, Department of Electronics and Signal Processing,
University of Liberec, Czech Republic (Nouza, 1999). They all provide computer-assisted pronunciation instruction with automatic audio and visual feedback. In addition to regular features such as prosodic real time display, variable speed playback, etc., WinPitch LTL II also has capabilities for processing multimedia files and for the automatic alignment of the learner’s imitation of the teachers’ model (Martin, 2004). BetterAccent Tutor (http://www.betteraccent.com/) provides audio-visual feedback of intonation, stress and rhythm in American English based on the assumption that these three factors have the biggest effect on intelligibility. Another product by Kay-Elemetrics, Sona-Match, provides real time representation of the learner’s vowel space with different productions in the vowel space using different fonts. Carey (2004) gives a review of Sona-Match as well as a report of successful results using this system. In addition to the systems mentioned above, many others, both commercial and non-commercial, are available, which try to integrate pedagogy and technology for pronunciation teaching. The reader should refer to Neri, Cucchiarini, Strik, and Boves (2002) and Chun (2006) for more detailed information on this issue.

8. Using signal analysis software to teach intonation in discourse: A pilot study conducted at the University of Padova

8.1 Course and students

In the 2005-06 academic year, a pilot study was conducted to investigate the feasibility and benefits of using speech analysis software as an aid in a pronunciation teaching class. The pilot study was conducted during an English Linguistics course for students of Foreign Languages for International Communication and of Modern EuroAmerican Languages, Literatures and Cultures at the University of Padova. Part of the English Linguistics course was devoted to the study of English phonetics and phonology for the improvement of basic English pronunciation skills. The module on English phonetics and phonology consisted of 20 hours of lessons in the language lab. Each lesson was divided into theory and practice. In the theoretical part, explanations were given of basic sound articulation and acoustics, and of the main differences between the Italian and English phonetic and phonological systems. In the practical part, the students were given exercises – mainly web-based – to improve their discrimination and production of English sounds or non-existent sound patterns in Italian.

About 30 students attended the class regularly, all with little or no previous formal instruction in English pronunciation or English phonetics and phonology. Based on a questionnaire that the students had to fill out at the beginning of the course, all the students considered English pronunciation to be extremely important for their future jobs and for successful communication in general.

8.2 Using a visual display for learning English intonation contours

The role of intonation seems to be particularly critical for L2 speech interpretation (Chun, 1998, 2002; Wennerstrom, 2000; Pickering, 2002, 2004). Italian speakers of English have major difficulties with English rhythm, particularly as it relates to vowel duration and vowel reduction patterns (Busà, 1995), which
are largely determined by the position of the syllable in relation to word and sentence stress, and emphatic stress. Hence, learning how to modulate intonation and assign stress in English could help Italians overcome their problems with English rhythm and thus improve their pronunciation.

The pilot study conducted during the phonetics and phonology module was designed to test whether Italian students can benefit from the visualization of their own productions of English sentences as compared to native speakers’ productions of the same utterances. The public domain software Praat (available from http://www.praat.org) was used for this study. The grammatical functions of intonation in English were first explained to the students, both theoretically and with the aid of visual displays of intonation contours and speech waveforms. The students were asked to practice saying and recording a few English utterances exemplifying different intonation contours with different grammatical functions. With minor modifications, the utterances were the same as those reported in Chun (1998). The students were also given examples of the same utterances as spoken by two native speakers so that they could compare their own productions with those of the native speakers. They were instructed that each speaker may present individual variations but that there is usually a recognizable pattern that they should aim to pursue. For example, in English, falling and rising intonation patterns correspond with virtually no exceptions to statements and yes-no questions respectively. The students were also instructed to pay particular attention to the part of speech which was given prominence by the native speakers, and try to reproduce a similar prominence pattern.

Figures 1 and 2 are some examples of the visualizations obtained during the pilot study. Figure 1 shows the native speaker’s sound wave (upper box) and pitch contour (lower box) of the question “Are you going?” The figure shows that the intonation is rising from the beginning of the utterance to the peak of prominence, corresponding to the vowel /o/, and then has a falling pattern before rising again after the vowel /i/ for the yes-no question.

![Fig. 1. Waveform (upper box) and intonation contour (lower box) of a native speaker’s production of the question “Are you going?”](image)
Figure 2 shows the sound wave and pitch contour of an Italian speaker’s utterance of the question “Are you going?”. Comparing these patterns with the native speaker’s patterns in Figure 1, the differences are clearly visible even to a non-expert speech analyzer. The waveform (upper box) in Figure 2 shows, most noticeably, that the Italian produces the word “are” with much longer duration than the native speaker. As for the intonation contour, the Italian utterance does not have a prominent pitch in the word “going”; intonation is characterized by a single rising contour peaking on the final sound. The comparison of the two visualizations can easily provide students with enough detail to improve their productions and get closer to the target utterance.

Practice with the visualization of students’ own speech utterances and comparison with the native speaker’s was received favorably. The students considered this approach to be valuable and effective for improving their pronunciation in English and claimed that after several repetitions their intonation patterns tended to resemble those of the native speakers more closely. From the instructor’s point of view, the overall experience was positive and will be repeated after adding more structure to the students’ practice drills so as to set up ways to monitor and control the results of the students’ practice. Crucial to this kind of approach is understanding whether the effects of visualizing and comparing speech utterances extend beyond the classroom and actually enhance students’ understanding beyond a superficial level.

9. Conclusions

Many technological tools are being developed that assist learners in achieving communicative competence in L2. This paper has reviewed ways in which computer-assisted instruction can be used to enhance L2 pronunciation teaching and learning. Thanks to advances in research into language and speech, increased computer capabilities and lower computer costs, the number of ap-
Applications available to both the teacher and the individual learner is increasing rapidly. Thus, these are exciting times for second language instruction. However, more research is needed to find teaching methods compatible with the new technology, as well as ways of improving and implementing classroom activities which can effectively and appropriately benefit from the use of technological tools. The last section in this paper has reported on a pilot experiment using a public domain speech analysis tool to help Italian students raise their awareness of English intonation and prosodic patterns. The method does not require students to have an in-depth knowledge of the phonetics and phonology of English and Italian, but does allow them to gain important insights into the differences between Italian and English prosody. Overall, the experience was viewed positively and worth a more thorough investigation to assess the effectiveness of the method proposed.


Fraser, Helen (2000), Literacy vs. Oral Communication Skills for ESL Learners, in: “Literacy Link: Newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy” 19/3, 4-6.


Massaro, Dominic W. (2006b),


0. Introduzione

Il tema affrontato in questo contributo è la complessità di quei testi, in lingua inglese, utilizzati come materiale di input per la realizzazione di test linguistici e di attività didattiche fruibili mediante il computer. Saranno presi in considerazione non solo testi scritti ma anche testi orali (parlati) e multimodali, vista in particolare l’esigenza, sentita presso il Centro Linguistico di Ateneo dell’Università di Padova, di utilizzare tutte queste tipologie di testi per i suddetti scopi.


In linea con Merlini Barbaresi (2003: 23-25), si distinguerà tra la complessità di un testo (text complexity) e la difficoltà che si incontra nell’affrontarlo e nell’elaborarlo nella sua totalità o in alcune sue parti (processing difficulty). Come sottolineato da questa linguista, la complessità di un testo deriva dagli atti locutori e...
Illocutori compiuti dal parlante/scrittore ed è negoziabile durante la creazione e lo sviluppo del testo. La difficoltà può invece essere considerata come un effetto perlocutorio (parzialmente) prevedibile e giustificabile e soggetto a variabili situazionali. Come ulteriore variabile si prenderà in considerazione anche la difficoltà riscontrata da studenti e esaminandi nello svolgimento dei particolari compiti previsti da attività didattiche e da test linguistici e tale tipologia di difficoltà sarà denominata “difficoltà del compito” (task difficulty). Questa variabile è presa in esame assieme alle due precedenti anche nella prospettiva di estendere la riflessione ai compiti da portare a termine nella vita reale che prevedono la lettura o ascolto di testi, e nella speranza che possa aiutare a comprendere anche la complessità della lettura/ ascolto/ visione di testi fruibili in contesti non didattici o valutativi. A tale riguardo, Bachman e Palmer (1996: 61) sostengono che per provare l’utilità (usefulness) di test linguistici, i loro ideatori e sviluppatori devono riuscire a dimostrare che la performance in un dato test è in relazione all’uso linguistico e ambiti diversi da quello della prova stessa.

Tra le varie cause di difficoltà rappresentate da un dato compito (task) per un dato lettore o ascoltatore, menzioniamo la familiarità che egli ha con esso, il suo livello di abilità linguistica nella L2 (se di lingua madre diversa da quella in cui è stato prodotto il testo) e in generale le caratteristiche del contesto di fruizione del testo. La complessità di testi dipende invece dalle loro caratteristiche intrinseche, come ad esempio il genere a cui appartengono, il registro/i utilizzato/i, il modo/i retorico/i seguito/i (per una definizione di modo retorico, registro e genere si veda, ad esempio, Halliday e Hasan 1989: 12, 38-43, 97-116 e Taylor Torsello 2000), da eventuali scelte testuali (o discorsive e lessicali) marcate compiute dall’autore e più in generale dalle caratteristiche del loro contesto di produzione (vedi Merlini Barbaresi 2003: 34). Tra questi ultimi fattori, la variabile marcatezza (markedness), trattata ampiamente in Merlini Barbaresi (1988, 2003) con particolare riferimento al discorso inglese, è stata presa in considerazione anche perché «condivide con la difficoltà [complessità] del testo gli stessi criteri diagnostici regolatori dell’accesso al significato, quali ad esempio la trasparenza» (Merlini Barbaresi 2003: 25).

Urquhart e Weir (1998: 111-115) sostengono che diverse persone possono arrivare a diverse interpretazioni e comprensioni di un testo, dove con interpretazioni intendono tutte le letture (da noi estese agli ascolti e alle visioni) di un testo che non sono generalmente sotto il controllo del lettore/ascoltatore e con comprensioni intendono tutte le variazioni del prodotto della lettura (o dell’ascolto o della visione) che risultano dai diversi scopi per cui un individuo decide di leggere (ascoltare o vedere) un dato testo. Nel loro modello uno dei fattori più importanti che influenzano l’interpretazione di un testo è la cultura del parlante, intesa sia in senso etnico che in senso professionale, mentre come abbiamo detto, la sua comprensione dipende ampiamente dalle motivazioni che spingono una persona ad avvicinarsi ad un testo. Secondo gli autori i diversi scopi per cui si leggono dei testi fanno adottare al lettore differenti strategie di lettura e quindi effettuare diversi tipi di lettura: essi fanno perciò una prima distinzione tra lettura accurata (careful) e spedita (expeditious) e un’altra ancora tra lettura locale (local) e globale (global). Associando tra loro queste tipologie di lettura, Urquhart e Weir (1998: 123) propongono una matrice (vedi Tabella 1) che rappresenta in maniera sintetica i quattro tipi di lettura da loro identificati. Avremo perciò una lettura globale
ma spedita del testo (A), il cui fine è quello di stabilire gli argomenti e le idee principali del discorso (*skimming*) oppure una “*search reading*” che mira a ottenere ulteriori informazioni relative a argomenti specificati in precedenza. Il tipo di lettura denominato “*scanning*” (B) implica una lettura selettiva di un testo atta a localizzare informazioni specifiche quali simboli, nomi, date, parole specifiche, numeri. Ovviamente le parti di testo che non li contengono non vengono prese in considerazione. Un’altra possibile lettura di un testo (C) è caratterizzata dal fatto di essere globale ma accurata (global careful reading): in questo caso la finalità della lettura è comprendere in maniera accurata le idee principali esplicitamente espresse dall’autore, quelle implicitamente espresse nel testo ma che si possono recuperare dal testo stesso tramite inferenze proposizionali oppure inferenze pragmatiche, ovvero inferenze che si basano su schemi mentali e su opinioni del lettore. La tipologia di lettura D è invece locale e accurata e dipendente in gran parte dalle specifiche conoscenze (micro)linguistiche (sintattiche, lessicali, morfologiche…) del lettore.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GLOBAL</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXPEDITIOUS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CAREFUL</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) Skimming quickly to establish discourse topic and main ideas. Search reading to locate quickly and understand information relevant to predetermined needs.</td>
<td>(C) Reading carefully to establish accurate comprehension of the explicitly stated main ideas the author wishes to convey; propositional inferencing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Scanning to locate specific information; symbol or group of symbols; names, dates, figures or words.</td>
<td>(D) Understanding syntactic structures of sentence and clause. Understanding lexis/deducing meaning of lexical items from morphology and context.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Per riepilogare, dunque, in base a quanto illustrato sopra si può affermare che è possibile identificare diversi “tipi di lettura”, qui estesi ed applicati anche all’abilità di ascolto e alla visione di film, compiuti da un soggetto a seconda delle motivazioni che lo spingono ad affrontare un testo. Si può inoltre affermare che lo svolgimento di queste letture, ascolti o visioni richiede diversi processi interpretativi, i quali a loro volta portano ai diversi “prodotti finali” delle letture (ascolti o visioni) svolte, dove per prodotto si intende essenzialmente il raggiungimento dell’obiettivo degli obiettivi del lettore, ascoltatore o fruitore di testi multimodali. Nel nostro caso specifico gli obiettivi corrispondono allo svolgimento dei compiti previsti da test linguistici o da attività didattiche che richiedono diversi tipi di lettura (o di ascolto o visione). Poiché un compito può prevedere processi interpretativi più o meno complessi per essere portato a termine, le variabili *task difficulty* e *processing difficulty* risultano strettamente collegate. Infine, il peso specifico della variabile *text complexity* dipenderà non solo dalla complessità testuale *tout court*, che può risentire tra l’altro di eventuali scelte marcate fatte dall’autore durante il processo di produzione e, nel caso di testi orali e multimodali, delle loro particolari caratteristiche fisiche quali rumori di sottofondo e registrazioni dell’audio poco chiare, ma anche dal task che si è chiamati a svolgere e dai proces-
si interpretativi che esso richiede. Facendo riferimento principalmente a queste tre variabili e al quadro teorico brevemente delineato, nei prossimi paragrafi si illustrerà come si è proceduto con la scelta di alcuni testi di input e con la creazione di task basati su di essi.

1. La complessità di testi scritti

In questo paragrafo si illustrerà una possibile analisi di alcuni fattori che contribuiscono alla complessità di tre testi scritti, partendo dalla difficoltà presentata dai task per cui essi sono stati usati come materiale di input. Il primo testo considerato è intitolato “Canadian” (vedi Appendice, Task 1, in cui ne viene riprodotto l’estratto rilevante), la cui lettura è stata proposta a 93 studenti di inglese del primo anno del corso di laurea in Discipline della Mediazione Linguistica e Culturale presso l’Università di Padova e appartenenti a due diversi gruppi/livelli di abilità linguistica. La consegna presentata agli studenti prevedeva il completamento del testo mediante l’inserimento di otto parole mancanti scegliendo da una lista delle stesse non ordinata in termine di occorrenza assieme a quattro strattori (selective deletion gap filling). In realtà, Urquhart e Weir (1998: 155-156) e Weir (1993) sollevano dei dubbi sull’attendibilità di questo tipo di task per la misurazione indiretta dell’abilità di estrazione di informazioni tramite una lettura spedita di tipo A (search reading o skimming) o dell’abilità di lettura accurata di tipo C, che prevede cioè la comprensione non solo delle idee principali esplicite, ma anche di quelle implicite e dei dettagli. Non hanno invece problemi a riconoscere che questo task possa misurare, direttamente, competenze microlinguistiche, quali la conoscenza di termini lessicali, strutture sintattiche o morfosintattiche e quindi possa fornire informazioni circa l’abilità di effettuare una lettura di tipo D. Dall’analisi statistica dei dati di questo task emerge che quasi tutti gli item sono risultati facili per la popolazione esaminata, in quanto i loro valori di facilità (facility value) oscillano tra il 77% e il 100% a parte un item la cui facilità è del 53%. In particolare, questo item è quello la cui risposta corretta è “so” e nel contesto da cui è stata tolta questa parola ha la funzione di sostituire parte della frase, il Residue, assieme al verbo “do” (vedi Halliday e Hasan 1976: 315-316, 335 e Halliday 1994: 319). “Do so” è quindi una forma sostitutiva, cioè un elemento coesivo che per sua natura costituisce una relazione formale tra due elementi a livello lessicogrammaticale (Halliday 1994: 316). Nel nostro caso la relazione è appunto tra “do so” (usato come place-holding device) e “to experience Canadian beer, food, sports, matches and conversation”, elementi che si trovano all’interno di due proposizioni contigue all’interno dello stesso periodo. Nonostante la vicinanza tra i due elementi molti studenti non hanno riconosciuto la relazione che intercorre tra essi e il 41% di essi ha scelto l’avverbio “only” come soluzione possibile in questo contesto. Questo dato può essere interpretato come un indicatore della difficoltà rappresentata da questa struttura grammaticale sostitutiva, dovuta sicuramente alla non conoscenza della stessa da parte di alcuni lettori, ma probabilmente anche al fatto che molti hanno effettuato solo una lettura accurata e locale (di tipo D), quando invece avrebbero dovuto anche considerare il testo nella sua totalità, oltre che l’immediato contesto. In altre parole, avrebbero dovuto tener conto dei
contenuti sviluppati gradualmente dall’autore anche mediante l’utilizzo di elementi di coesione grammaticale.

Il secondo testo oggetto di analisi è una recensione del film “Beautiful Mind” (vedi Appendice, Task 2, in cui si riproduce l’estratto rilevante), del quale l’autore del task (ancora del tipo selective deletion gap filling) ha richiesto una lettura di tipo D a cinque “expert judges” durante la fase di preparazione di un achievement test. Scegliere la risposta corretta “and” tra quelle della lista fornita è risultato difficile anche a quattro parlanti di inglese come L1 (oltre che a un non madrelingua) e questo ha condotto ad una riflessione sulla struttura grammaticale delle due frasi interessate. In particolare, la frase “but put Russel Crowe in the cinematic equation” svolge la funzione di protasi, costituisce cioè la parte del costrutto ipotetico che contiene la condizione. La frase reggente, l’apodosi, è invece introdotta da “and”, ovvero la congiunzione che il lettore doveva essere in grado di identificare e inserire al posto giusto. Come suggeriscono Merlino Barbaresi (1988: 168) per il discorso inglese e Spanu (2003) per quello italiano, le protasi possono essere realizzate con diversi gradi di trasparenza/opacità e questi valori possono essere determinati da fattori strutturali e/o semantici e/o pragmatici. Nel nostro caso particolare, la costruzione scelta risulta essere dunque strutturalmente più opaca rispetto ad una frase condizionale introdotta, ad esempio, dalla congiunzione “if”. Rappresenta dunque una scelta marcata che può essere considerata la causa delle difficoltà interpretative avute dai cinque lettori nel contesto pragmatico della lettura (principalmente di tipo D) loro richiesta.

Il terzo e ultimo testo scritto sulla cui complessità si propone una riflessione è la recensione apparsa su internet nel 2000 di un libro intitolata “Life’s Matrix – A biography of water” (vedi Appendice, Task 3, in cui ne viene riprodotto l’estratto rilevante). La lettura del testo è stata assegnata ad un gruppo di 91 studenti di vari corsi di laurea non linguistici presso la Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell’Università di Padova e per verificarne la comprensione sono state loro poste quattro domande a scelta multipla (il task è quindi del tipo multiple-choice questions). Per rispondere correttamente alla prima e alla terza domanda il lettore deve compiere una lettura globale ma veloce (search reading, di tipo A), in modo da localizzare le parti di testo in cui si trovano le informazioni necessarie al compimento del task. Per rispondere correttamente alla seconda e alla quarta domanda è invece necessario compiere una lettura globale e accurata del testo (di tipo C dunque), in quanto le informazioni da recuperare si trovano in più frasi. Dall’analisi statistica dei dati la prima e la terza domanda sono risultate difficili, essendo entrambe caratterizzate da un valore di facilità del 46%. Per quanto riguarda la prima, in particolare, quello che ha probabilmente costituito un problema è stata la confusione circa l’identità della persona oggetto della domanda, ovvero tra lo scrittore della recensione e Philip Ball, anch’esso scrittore ed editore. Dal punto di vista linguistico la prima frase del testo, che è quella su cui il lettore si deve focalizzare per rispondere al primo quesito, presenta un gruppo nominale complesso che inizia con “Philip Ball”, ed è elaborato sia da un altro gruppo nominale in apposizione (“a precocious young editor and writer at the British science journal Nature”) che da una frase relativa restrittiva – embedded – (“with whose work I was previously unfamiliar”). È molto probabile che questa struttura particolare, che per certi versi si potrebbe definire marcata, abbia contribuito a rendere difficile il compimento
corretto della prima parte del task. Con l’ultima domanda viene invece chiesto al lettore di indicare quale affermazione non è vera tra quattro alternative. In questo caso il lettore dovrà considerare le quattro alternative proposte, verificare che ognuna di esse corrisponda a quello che viene effettivamente detto nel testo o che può essere inferito da esso o da sue parti, e scartare quella che non è realizzata nel testo. Questo item è risultato il più difficile tra i quattro presentati (40% di valore di facilità) e ciò può essere attribuito con grande probabilità alla difficoltà del processo cognitivo richiesto per il compimento di questa ultima parte del task, ovvero rispondere a una domanda a scelta multipla posta al negativo.

Concludiamo questa prima sezione dedicata alla complessità di testi scritti affermando che in base ai risultati dell’analisi dei casi presentati le variabili textual complexity, processing difficulty e task difficulty sembrano essere strettamente interconnesse e sembrano dipendere, almeno in parte, le une dalle altre. In particolare, in tutti e tre i casi alcune scelte testuali “opache” e marcate compiute degli autori sembrano aver contribuito alla difficoltà del processo di lettura perché i task ne richiedevano, anche se non esplicitamente, il riconoscimento e la comprensione. Per cercare di capire meglio come funzioni tale meccanismo e far luce, in particolare, sulla complessità testuale, per il futuro ci si propone di convalidare questa ipotesi con i dati ottenuti dall’analisi di un corpus più ampio di testi e task per la verifica della comprensione scritta e dai dati statistici provenienti dalla somministrazione di alcuni task accuratamente scelti.

2. La complessità di testi orali

Nella seconda parte di questo articolo si analizzerà il concetto di difficoltà (processing difficulty) in relazione alla selezione e all’utilizzo di input linguistici orali per l’apprendimento delle lingue straniere mediato dal computer. L’indagine prende avvio da uno studio a priori dei possibili fattori che possono concorrere a causare la difficoltà di comprensione di un testo orale e in questo si differenzia da quella condotta nella sezione precedente dedicata ai testi scritti. In una fase successiva dello studio, a verifica dell’attendibilità delle analisi effettuate, si procederà alla sperimentazione diretta e allo studio più approfondito dei risultati ottenuti.

In questa parte verranno descritti innanzitutto i parametri utilizzati per l’analisi dei livelli di complessità testuale. In seguito, si procederà ad illustrate le diverse fasi di lavoro che hanno portato alla realizzazione di un corpus di testi autentici e semi-autentici destinati al potenziamento della comprensione orale, in ultimo inseriti in un sito web destinato a studenti di inglese di livello A2/B1 in riferimento al Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le Lingue (QcER, Council of Europe 2001). Tale lavoro prende avvio dalla volontà di raccogliere materiali didattici destinati a discenti con livelli di competenza linguistica piuttosto bassi, essendo la quasi totalità dei materiali disponibili alla radio, in televisione o su internet prevalentemente rivolta ad un pubblico con una buona padronanza linguistica.

2.1. Comprensione orale e criteri di difficoltà

Il primo passo verso la realizzazione del corpus è stato l’analisi del Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le Lingue, il quale offre indicazioni piuttosto precise sulle tipologie testuali più adatte ai diversi livelli di competenza. Ciò
nonostante, esso non si è dimostrato sufficientemente analitico per definire il livello di difficoltà dei testi, in quanto vi sono ulteriori parametri, oltre a quelli precedentemente menzionati, in grado di incidere in modo determinante sulla percezione del livello di difficoltà di un testo orale e, di conseguenza, sul processo di comprensione stesso.

Prima di procedere alla creazione del corpus, quindi, è stata necessaria una approfondita analisi dei fattori che possono influenzare il processo di comprensione rendendo un input linguistico più o meno difficile per chi lo ascolta. Dopo un primo studio sulla natura dell’ascolto, che ha permesso di evidenziare le principali caratteristiche del processo di ascolto e di comprensione orale⁴, si è passati ad analizzare le diverse modalità di ascolto e cioè “ascolto per gist, main ideas, specific info, detailed understanding, implications” (Buck, 2001) e si è riflettuto sui molteplici fattori che possono influenzare la comprensione orale; tali aspetti, ovviamente, sono peculiari al processo di ascolto, e quindi in parte diversi da quelli elencati nei paragrafi precedenti ed inerenti alla lettura di testi scritti (si veda la Tabella 1 per un confronto con i diversi tipi di lettura). Secondo quanto esposto da Carol Van Duzer (1997) e rielaborato da Rizzi (2002), infatti, il processo di comprensione orale può essere condizionato da fattori appartenenti a quattro macro-aree, ovvero:

- **fattori interni all’individuo**, quali l’interesse, il coinvolgimento, la motivazione, che riguardano l’ascoltatore ed il suo atteggiamento nei confronti dell’input linguistico. È infatti inevitabile che un maggiore o un minore grado d’interesse nei confronti dell’argomento incida significativamente sulla comprensione del messaggio (un ascoltatore che nutre particolare interesse per la comprensione del messaggio enunciato metterà più facilmente in atto tutte le strategie a sua disposizione per facilitare la corretta comprensione del messaggio). È poi indiscutibile che il processo di comprensione possa essere influenzato da fattori quali lo stato emotivo dell’ascoltatore, la sua precedente conoscenza dell’argomento trattato, nonché il grado di interazione esistente tra i partecipanti. Nel corso di una conversazione, ad esempio, l’ascoltatore ha la possibilità di mettere in atto processi di negoziazione dei significati, chiedendo, ad esempio, ulteriori spiegazioni, o riformulando le frasi ascoltate per verificare l’avvenuta comprensione. La possibilità di una tale interazione facilita senza dubbio la comprensione, rendendo la comunicazione più fluida ed efficace.

- **fattori legati all’articolazione del discorso**, quali l’uso di forme contratte o di espressioni colloquiali, che possono rendere la comprensione più o meno difficile; la ridondanza, la velocità di articolazione del discorso, l’organizzazione delle informazioni, la prevalenza di strutture parlatte rispetto a quelle ipotetiche, l’utilizzo di un vocabolario tecnico e così via.

- **fattori legati al contenuto del testo**, quali il livello di conoscenza degli argomenti trattati da parte dell’ascoltatore. È a questo proposito evidente che la condivisione della conoscenza dell’argomento renderà la comprensione più semplice e lineare.

- **fattori legati all’esistenza di un supporto visivo**, quali la presenza fisica degli interlocutori, o la possibilità di associare l’audio ad immagini televisive. Diverse ricerche, infatti, hanno dimostrato che seguire il movimento delle labbra e dei gesti compiuti dal parlante durante l’atto comunicativo possono faci-
litare la comprensione dell’input linguistico orale. Inoltre, associare l’ascolto di un messaggio alla visione di alcune immagini di supporto (nel caso della visione di un video, ad esempio) può senza dubbio facilitare la comprensione, a sola condizione che vi sia coerenza tra input linguistico e input visivo.

Nell’analisi dei testi orali, pertanto, il concetto di difficoltà sembra essere legato in parte alla natura stessa del processo di ascolto – in quanto l’input orale ha delle caratteristiche diverse rispetto a quello scritto – ed in parte alla natura del compito (task) che viene chiesto all’ascoltatore di portare a termine durante o dopo l’ascolto, così come è stato ampiamente spiegato nei paragrafi precedenti.

Sulla base delle osservazioni fatte finora, quindi, si propone di valutare il grado di complessità di un testo orale, e dunque la percezione del suo livello di difficoltà, sulla base dello schema seguente:

![Diagramma di analisi dei testi orali](image)

**Tabella 2. Fattori che possono condizionare la comprensibilità di un testo orale**

Ad integrazione di quanto sostenuto da Van Duzer, risulta di estremo interesse l’analisi dei fattori di difficoltà proposti da Hoven (1991, 1997), i quali offrono aggiornamenti con i tre tipi di difficoltà menzionati precedentemente in relazione all’abilità di comprensione dei testi scritti in particolare (textual complexity, processing difficulty e task difficulty). Secondo quanto sostenuto da Debra Hoven, infatti, la difficoltà di un testo orale può essere misurata in base al:

- **testo** (textual complexity), a seconda di come le informazioni sono organizzate all’interno del testo, del grado di esplicitazione delle informazioni o del tipo di input offerto;
- **contesto** (processing difficulty), a seconda della lunghezza dell’input linguistico, della velocità di enunciazione del discorso, della presenza di un supporto visivo a sostegno dell’input orale, del numero degli interlocutori, fattori questi che incidono in modo significativo sul processo di comprensione e sulla percezione di difficoltà di quanto ascoltato;
- **compito** (task difficulty), a seconda dell’attività/compito che si richiede all’ascoltatore di portare a termine (comprensione globale o dettagliata, compimento di inferenze, formulazione di ipotesi, riassunto...).

Alla luce delle considerazioni fatte finora, è stata elaborata una tabella riassuntiva
di riferimento contenente i fattori che possono determinare la difficoltà di un testo orale; tale strumento è stato adottato con scrupolo nella valutazione dei testi orali raccolti e ha costituito, insieme al QCER, il modello di riferimento prescelto per la realizzazione del corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT FEATURES</th>
<th>(FROM)</th>
<th>(To)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information organisation</td>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>Illogical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of topic</td>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitness</td>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Elaborated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of input</td>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship speaker/listener</td>
<td>Intimate</td>
<td>Formal/Frozen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK FEATURES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deciding fact vs opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending and elaborating</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note taking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferring various language functions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening for specific information</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Predicting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duplicating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rephrasing utterances</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding to commands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Answering</td>
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<th>IDENTIFYING MAIN TOPICS</th>
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<th>CONTEXT FEATURES</th>
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<th>Long</th>
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<td>Fast speech</td>
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<td>Known gestures</td>
<td>Unknown gestures</td>
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<td>Known</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
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<td>Environment-related support</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>Recorded voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visibility of speakers</td>
<td>Collaborative listening</td>
<td>Non collaborative listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Tabella 3. Tabella di riferimento per l’analisi del livello di difficoltà dei testi orali rielaborato in base a Hoven (1997)

2.2. LA RACCOLTA DEI TESTI ORALI E LA CREAZIONE DEGLI ESERCIZI

Sulla base delle riflessioni sopra esposte si è poi proceduto alla registrazione dei testi, cercando di sfruttare al massimo l’autenticità delle situazioni e dei parlanti madrelingua. Per quanto riguarda la strategia utilizzata, si è chiesto a dei parlanti nativi (per lo più studenti in scambio Erasmus) sia di produrre dei testi a partire da strumenti specifici (mappe stradali, annunci, biglietti aerei…) che di seguire delle indicazioni di massima sulle situazioni comunicative; è stato inoltre chiesto loro di utilizzare la stessa lingua che avrebbero utilizzato in presenza di parlanti non nativi. Questa procedura ha probabilmente in parte modificato la spontaneità dei testi, ma non ha impedito ai parlanti nativi di utilizzare tutte le forme.
tipiche del linguaggio orale (espressioni contratte, false partenze, correzioni...) e di produrre forme autentiche di linguaggio, seppur in alcuni tratti semplificate. Gli studenti in scambio Erasmus sono dunque stati istruiti sulle modalità di registrazione dei testi, ed hanno ricevuto istruzioni diverse a seconda della tipologia di testo che veniva chiesto loro di registrare. Si è infine scelto di registrare i testi in ambiente casalingo, diverso da una sala appositamente preparata per la registrazione, in modo da aumentare la sensazione di confort da parte degli studenti coinvolti e di rendere la situazione il meno artificiale possibile.

Il corpus collezionato consta di 25 testi raggruppati nelle seguenti categorie:

- **Istruzioni** (4 testi): indicazioni stradali, ricette.
- **Descrizioni di immagini** (1 testo): le case.
- **Segreterie telefoniche** (4 testi): case private, National Gallery, cinema.
- **Monologhi** (6 testi): esperienze scolastiche, vita personale, lavoro.
- **Conversazioni** (8 testi): al telefono, interviste, in agenzia di viaggi, per la strada.
- **Servizi della BBC** (2 testi): servizi televisivi su argomenti di attualità.

Una volta raccolti i testi, si è proceduto ad analizzarne il possibile utilizzo a livello didattico, e a valutarne il grado di difficoltà, sia come **textual complexity** che come **processing difficulty** e come **task difficulty**. Il passo finale è stato la creazione di un sito web per il potenziamento dell’ascolto. Il lavoro di discriminazione dei livelli di difficoltà dei testi è stato piuttosto laborioso, in quanto gli input linguistici presentavano caratteristiche tra loro diverse e non sempre facilmente valutabili. Per esigenze di brevità, in questo articolo ci si limiterà a fornire solo alcuni esempi delle modalità di discriminazione della difficoltà dei testi e del loro possibile utilizzo didattico, al fine di dimostrare che le variabili analizzate in precedenza sono tra loro interconnesse. In linea generale, i testi raccolti hanno tra loro caratteristiche molto diverse: alcuni di essi, ad esempio, si prestano – sia per l’argomento che per la struttura del testo – ad una comprensione più dettagliata; altri sono invece più adatti al potenziamento di una comprensione globale della situazione comunicativa, in quanto caratterizzati da una articolazione testuale più complessa e da un’organizzazione delle informazioni non sempre lineare. Si osservino, a titolo esemplificativo, le trascrizioni di due dei testi audio collezionati:

TESTO 1: Describing pictures:

Picture 1:

I see a house with a chimney... *it’s made of* brown bricks and... has a brown roof. Outside... ehm... *there are*... there is a tree and also a bush... oh... two bushes... in fact... ehm... which have ... which have leaves on, and *behind the house I can see* trees with no leaves on... so *perhaps it’s winter time*.

Picture 2:

Ehm... ehm... another house... ehm... more like a villa I suppose... *it’s bigger... it’s made of* red brick and it has a white roof with columns coming down in front of the house... ehm... *I can see* just about four windows. Obscuring the house are some beautiful... ehm... flowers... yellow flowers... perhaps they’re sunflowers... ehm... *behind the house I think must be* some fields and I can see some green... ehm... green woods in the background I think... ehm... *it’s a clear sunny day* there.
Picture 3:
Ehm... the third picture shows a house... ehm... it's night time... and perhaps it's near Christmas because I can see... ehm... pretty fairy lights... ehm... adorning the... the... ehm... lower floor of the house. There are three windows and... ehm... and... a... a... slanting roof.

TESTO 2: Conversation on the street
A: Luciana!
B: Oh Anna!
A: How are you? How was your year abroad?
B: Oh it was lovely, really nice!
A: Where did you go again?
B: I was in Parma, so I was quite close to where, you know, where I stayed during the summer. (A: Oh yes) So it was lovely, I was teaching...
A: Teaching... (B: yea) and how old were the children?
B: They were quite young, so I was quite lucky. Some of them were a bit naughty, but apart from that it was a really nice experience... a bit tiring at times, but...
A: Yes, so... did you stay with your family... who live there?
B: No, no, because they live sort of in the mountains, so it's a bit awkward to go from the mountains every day into town. So I was living with some Erasmus students in the centre (A: oh lovely) more or less. How about you? Where... where were you?
A: Yea, I was in Padova... (B: right, yea) studying.
B: Is that quite near... that's quite near Venice, isn't it?
A: Yea, it's only about half an hour away on the train. So we went there quite a few times in the year and it was gorgeous... I was living with... you remember Liz?
B: Yea, of course.
A: I shared a room with her and... living with two Italian men (B: Oh, that's nice!), one was a policeman, the other was a student, and they also had a little dog.
B: Oh I know you are quite into your dogs.
A: Yea, absolutely.
B: What are you doing now that you are back? Where are you living?
A: I'm living in a Ray House?
B: Oh God, I'm living in Saint German's, it's just opposite!
A: Do you want to go for a drink tonight?
B: Oh, it would be lovely!
A: At the Ram?
B: At the Ram! 8:30?
A: Lovely. Meet you on the steps?
B: Definitely... ok... see you later.
A: Bye!

Da una prima lettura risulta subito evidente che i due testi hanno un livello di complessità differente; dall’analisi dei fattori elencati precedentemente, è facilmente evidenziabile che il primo testo è più lineare, scandito con velocità regolare, caratterizzato dalla ripresa delle stesse strutture testuali (there is...; it’s made of...; behind the house...), nonché supportato da alcune immagini. Il secondo testo, invece, risulta più dinamico e veloce. Il fatto che si tratti di una conversazione tra due parlanti influisce di per sé sull’organizzazione testuale, che risulta meno lineare e ricca di false partenze, riformulazioni, e sovrapposizioni di battute, strutture riprese con elisioni, ed espressioni colloquiali. I due testi, dunque, risultano avere una complessità testuale (textual complexity) molto diversa e ciascuno richiede all’ascoltatore attività di processo differenti. Per ogni testo, dunque, sono state create attività
specifiche (task), le quali richiedono all’ascoltatore di mettere in atto strategie di comprensione adeguate al compito (cioè specifici processi di ascolto). La difficoltà di un testo può dunque essere bilanciata dalla natura del compito assegnato (task difficulty): nel caso del testo più complesso si richiede infatti una comprensione meno dettagliata (global listening), nel caso del testo più lineare, invece, una estremamente dettagliata (local listening). Nello specifico, nel primo caso viene chiesto all’ascoltatore di individuare le figure descritte tra diverse alternative proposte, talora molto simili; il compito, dunque, richiede una comprensione attenta dei dettagli, che permetta di discriminare i particolari:

Figura 1. Esempio di task per la comprensione dettagliata di un input orale (dal sito http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/home/students/drizzi/listening__section__p4.htm)

Nel caso del secondo testo, invece, di più difficile comprensione, il compito assegnato richiede una comprensione globale della situazione comunicativa, dell’argomento trattato, verificata attraverso domande a scelta multipla:

Figura 2. Esempio di task per la comprensione generale di un input orale (dal sito http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/home/students/drizzi/listening__section__p12.htm)
Concludendo possiamo affermare che anche nel caso dei materiali creati per il potenziamento dell’abilità di comprensione orale la valutazione del livello di difficoltà di un testo ed il suo successivo utilizzo a livello didattico dipendono da variabili diverse, in parte di natura testuale (textual complexity), in parte di natura processuale (processing difficulty) – a seconda delle strategie messe in atto per compiere un efficace processo di comprensione – ed in parte di natura operativa (task difficulty). In quest’ottica, dunque, un medesimo testo orale può risultare idoneo per più livelli di difficoltà, a seconda dei processi che esso stimola nell’ascoltatore e delle strategie richieste per la realizzazione del compito assegnato.

3. La complessità di testi multimodali

Nell’ultima parte di questo articolo si affronterà il tema della complessità testuale in riferimento ad un corpus di testi multimodali destinato, come per la precedente sezione, all’apprendimento della lingua inglese mediato dal computer. I testi sono stati analizzati per identificare le funzioni comunicative realizzate dai parlanti negli enunciati. Questi sono stati poi inseriti nel software MCA (Multimodal Corpus Authoring System), un multimodal concordancer che permette agli utenti di analizzare un corpus di testi multimodali e di identificarne le sequenze che hanno in comune una o più caratteristiche.

L’indagine sulla complessità dei testi nasce dalla necessità di permettere a chi usufruisce del corpus (studente o insegnante che sia) di selezionare dei testi in base alla competenza linguistica necessaria per la loro fruizione. L’ipotesi è che possa essere prezioso a livello didattico l’uso di MCA in situazioni di Data Driven Learning (DDL) al fine di circonscrivere le indagini a determinati testi scelti sulla base della loro complessità testuale. A tal proposito è importante sottolineare che il lavoro presentato in questa sezione è un work in progress e necessita di una sperimentazione che avvalori tale ipotesi.

3.1. Il Padova Multimedia English Corpus (MEC)

Il corpus analizzato per questo articolo rappresenta un campione significativo del Padova Multimedia English Corpus (MEC), un corpus di testi multimodali creati dal Centro Linguistico di Ateneo di Padova. Lo scopo iniziale del Padova MEC era quello di essere utilizzato come supporto per il corso online di lingua inglese del Centro Linguistico di Ateneo dell’Università di Padova Learning Links (vedi, per esempio, Ackerley e Cloke, 2005, Chrisam e Raggi, 2006), e per la creazione di altri materiali didattici multimediali. Il corpus, che attualmente raggiunge le 106.180 parole, è costituito da testi audio e video autentici, semi-autentici, scripted e semi-scripted (vedi Tabella 4), i cui attori protagonisti sono parlanti nativi inglese provenienti da diversi paesi anglofonni (Gran Bretagna, Irlanda, America, Australia), parlanti non nativi inglese di diverse nazionalità (italiana, tedesca, romena, ecc.) e, infine, parlanti bilingui italiano-inglese/italiano-americano (vedi Tabella 5 per un riepilogo del numero di parole pronunciate per ciascuna categoria di parlanti). I parlanti sono stati “reclutati” tra gli studenti in scambio presso l’Università di Padova, gli insegnati di lingua inglese del CLA e i relativi parenti e amici.
Tabella 4. Dimensioni (in numero di parole) del Padova MEC (aggiornato al 15.05.2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testi scripted</th>
<th>Testi semi-scripted</th>
<th>Testi semi-autentici</th>
<th>Testi autentici</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>audio</td>
<td>video</td>
<td>audio</td>
<td>video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.342</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.245</td>
<td>1.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.259</td>
<td>7.694</td>
<td>43.281</td>
<td>28.483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parlanti nativi</th>
<th>Parlanti non nativi</th>
<th>Parlanti bilingui</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Testi scripted</td>
<td>4.342</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testi semi-scripted</td>
<td>6.622</td>
<td>749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testi semi-autentici</td>
<td>20.748</td>
<td>1.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testi autentici</td>
<td>62.909</td>
<td>1.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totale</td>
<td>94.621</td>
<td>3.581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tabella 5. Riepilogo del numero di parole pronunciate per ciascuna categoria di parlanti (aggiornato al 15.05.2006)

I testi, costituiti sia da monologhi che da dialoghi, sono ritenuti adatti ai 6 livelli di competenza linguistica del Quadro Comune Europeo di Riferimento per le Lingue e le situazioni comunicative rappresentate coprono i quattro domini descritti nel Quadro:

- dominio personale;
- dominio pubblico;
- dominio occupazionale;
- dominio educativo.

3.2. **Critéri di difficoltà**


**TESTO 1: Where do you live?**

Timothy: Where do you live?
Giove: I live very close to the Basilica – il Santo.
Timothy: Okay. I live...
Giove: ... the centre of the city.
Timothy: I know exactly where that is. You know where via Mazzolo is?
Giove: No.
Timothy: Oh, you know where the mensa is Fusi – Fusinato?
Giove: Oh, close to there?
Timothy: It’s exactly right there to it.
Giove: Oh.
Timothy: It’s just next door.
Giove: So that comes in handy. You go next door to eat.
Timothy: Yeah. Not that it’s very good, but it’s, uh… yeah.

Nonostante l’argomento trattato sia appropriato ad un livello di competenza linguistic A2 e le strutture grammaticali siano relativamente semplici, la velocità con cui Timothy pronuncia i suoi turni è tale da renderlo inadeguato ad apprendenti ad un basso livello di competenza linguistica; il testo, complessivamente, sembra essere adatto ad apprendenti ad un livello di competenza linguistica B2.

Per capire meglio, però, il valore pratico dell’assegnazione di un livello ad un testo, bisogna considerare come questo è utilizzato nella pratica didattica. Spesso, uno dei compiti richiesti allo studente che usufruisce del corpus consiste nell’indagare le strutture grammaticali utilizzate per la realizzazione di una determinata funzione comunicativa. Di conseguenza, l’attenzione del fruitore è in questi casi rivolta principalmente ai singoli enunciati piuttosto che al testo considerato nella sua totalità. In realtà, alla luce di questo tipo di utilizzo, il livello di difficoltà attribuito al testo nella sua totalità potrebbe non essere lo stesso di quello dei singoli enunciati che lo costituiscono. Per quanto riguarda il testo “Where do you live?” per esempio, Giove parla molto più lentamente di Timothy cosicché i suoi enunciati risultano comprensibili anche ad apprendenti ad un basso livello di competenza linguistica.

La scelta del software MCA ci permette di sperimentare a livello didattico quanto qui esposto nei modi che verranno illustrati nel paragrafo successivo.

3.3 Utilizzo di MCA per l’esplorazione del Padova MEC

Originariamente il software MCA è stato concepito nell’ambito della linguistica dei corpora come strumento per lo studio di testi multimodali, ovvero testi in cui diverse risorse semiotiche quali gesti, linguaggio, musica, ecc. concorrono a creare il significato. Nello specifico, il software «permette ai ricercatori, per quanto in maniera imperfetta, di vedere brevi sequenze di filmato e simultaneamente farne una trascrizione multimodale sulla base di diversi parametri quali, per esempio, quelli riguardanti l’organizzazione metafunzionale e fasale» (Baldry, 2004: 96).

Successivamente, il software è stato utilizzato anche nell’ambito dell’apprendimento della lingua inglese mediato dal computer. Coccetta (2004), ad esempio, descrive la raccolta di un corpus di testi multimodali presi da film famosi in lingua originale inglese in cui vengono rappresentate situazioni comunicative di vita quotidiana. Tali sequenze sono state poi analizzate per identificare le funzioni comunicative che vengono in esse espresse e in base ai risultati ottenuti sono state scelte le funzioni che dal punto di vista lessico-grammaticale sembravano più interessanti nella loro realizzazione (per esempio, expressing agreement with a statement ed expressing intentions). Infine, si è passati alla creazione di materiali didattici in cui il corpus viene indagato mediante il software MCA.

Il lavoro sul Padova MEC riprende gran parte del lavoro condotto da Coccetta (2004): anche in questo caso, l’utente può identificare le sequenze del corpus in cui vengono realizzate una o più funzioni linguistiche, vedere/ascoltare i singoli testi e le fasi in cui questi sono stati suddivisi e leggerne le trascrizioni. La Tabella 6 identifica i “parametri descrittivi” che permettono all’utente di compiere le ricerche appena descritte all’interno di Padova MEC e ne riassume le funzioni.
Parametri Funzioni

Language function(s) → analizzare le funzioni linguistiche
Film clip: entire clip(s) → vedere/ascoltare i singoli testi
Film clip: phase(s) → vedere/ascoltare le fasi
Tapescript → leggere le trascrizioni dei testi

Tabella 6. Parametri “base” del progetto Padova MEC e relative funzioni

Sulla base delle caratteristiche dei testi (nazionalità dei parlanti, tipologia di testo, livello di difficoltà linguistica, ecc.) sono stati creati ulteriori parametri descrittivi – parametri cosiddetti “avanztati” – che permettono di raffinare le ricerche all’interno del corpus (Figura 3). I parametri che appartengono alla testa (head) File Type permettono di selezionare il tipo di file desiderato (file audio o file video); i parametri che appartengono alla testa Number of speaker(s) permettono di selezionare il numero di partecipanti coinvolti nelle conversazioni; i parametri che appartengono alla testa Speaker(s) permettono di selezionare un gruppo di parlanti (nativi, non nativi o bilingui) specificandone anche la nazionalità; i parametri che appartengono alla testa Text Type permettono di selezionare il tipo di testo (monologo o dialogo); infine, i parametri che appartengono alla testa Level of difficulty permettono di selezionare il livello di difficoltà del testo (livelli A1-B2).

Figura 3. Grammar definition con mini-grammatiche relative ai parametri “avanztati” del Progetto Padova MEC
Da un punto di vista didattico, i parametri relativi al livello di complessità linguistica (Level of difficulty) del testo possono risultare estremamente utili non solo per coloro i quali usufruiscono del corpus come supporto per l’apprendimento della lingua inglese, ma anche per coloro i quali intendono utilizzare il corpus come punto di partenza per la creazione di materiali didattici: in entrambi i casi, infatti, i fruitori del corpus hanno l’opportunità da un lato di decidere di esplorare l’intero corpus, o dall’altro di limitare le loro ricerche ai soli testi che hanno una determinata complessità testuale.

Come indicato sopra, però, è possibile segnalare il livello di complessità non soltanto per l’intero testo, ma anche per i singoli enunciati. Conseguentemente anche gli enunciati che hanno una complessità più bassa rispetto a quella del testo integrale possono essere recuperati nel momento in cui le ricerche all’interno del corpus vengono condotte a livello di singoli enunciati. Nel caso del testo “Where do you live?”, per esempio, limitando la ricerca agli enunciati di complessità A2, gli enunciati pronunciati da Giove vengono recuperati nonostante al testo sia stata attribuita una complessità a livello B2.

Per capire meglio il funzionamento di MCA in relazione a quanto spiegato si riportano alcuni esempi presi dal Padova MEC. Se si prende in considerazione la funzione enquiring about likes and dislikes e si compie una ricerca all’interno dell’intero corpus si scopre che tale funzione viene realizzata nove volte (Figura 4); limitando la ricerca agli enunciati di complessità A1 (si veda la Figura 5 per l’impostazione della ricerca) si ottengono quattro risultati (Figura 6), mentre due sono gli enunciati di complessità B1 in cui la funzione enquiring about likes and dislikes viene realizzata (Figura 7).

![Figura 4](image-url)

Figura 4. Elenco degli enunciati del Padova MEC in cui viene espressa la funzione enquiring about likes and dislikes
Concludiamo questa sezione sulla complessità di testi multimodali dicendo che, come è stato per i testi scritti ed orali, anche nel caso di testi multimodali la complessità testuale dipende da diversi fattori interconnessi; inoltre, nonostante la sua elevata complessità testuale, con i mezzi adeguati un testo può essere affrontato anche da discenti con un basso livello di competenza linguistica purché si tenga conto sia della sua processing difficulty che della difficoltà del task proposto. Si ritiene che tali osservazioni potranno risultare utili a chi crea materiali didattici multimediali, sia che utilizzi il corpus Padova MEC, sia che si serva di altri corpora.
Il lavoro è stato svolto in gruppo dai tre autori, ma la responsabilità per l’introduzione e la parte sulla complessità di testi scritti è di Erik Castello, per la parte sulla complessità di testi orali di Daniela Rizzi e per quella sulla complessità di testi multimodali di Francesca Coccetta.

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1 http://claweb.cla.unipd.it


3 Autrice del task è la dott.ssa Francesca Helm, che ne ha gentilmente permesso la riproduzione in questo articolo.

4 Si tratta in effetti di un processo estremamente complesso, che non si riduce a mera decodifica del significato delle singole parole pronunciate, ma che richiede piuttosto all’ascoltatore una continua formulazione e verificazione di ipotesi e inferenze, affinché le informazioni ascoltate vengano processate e interpretate in modo coerente con le ipotesi formulate e con la conoscenza del mondo del soggetto che ascolta.

5 Per informazioni più dettagliate sul sito web si rimanda a Rizzi (2004) e al sito web: http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/home/students/drizzi.

6 Vedi http://mca.unipv.it/.

7 Per una distinzione tra testi autentic, semi-autentic, scripted e semi-scripted vedi Ackerley e Coccetta in questo volume.

8 Il termine “fase” si riferisce alle diverse unità che compongono un testo multimodale, caratterizzate da una certa omogeneità tra le varie risorse semiotiche (gesti, movimenti del corpo, musica, linguaggio, ecc.) (Thibault, 2000: 320-321). Nel caso del Padova MEC, oltre alle risorse semiotiche, nella suddivisione dei due testi in fasi sono stati presi in considerazione anche gli argomenti trattati nei dialoghi/monologhi e il numero di partecipanti coinvolti nelle conversazioni: per esempio, l’entrata in scena di un nuovo parlante generalmente segna l’inizio di una nuova fase.

9 La traduzione è dell’autore.

10 Il termine “fase” si riferisce alle diverse unità che compongono un testo multimodale, caratterizzate da una certa omogeneità tra le varie risorse semiotiche (gesti, movimenti del corpo, musica, linguaggio, ecc.) (Thibault, 2000: 320-321). Nel caso del Padova MEC, oltre alle risorse semiotiche, nella suddivisione dei due testi in fasi sono stati presi in considerazione anche gli argomenti trattati nei dialoghi/monologhi e il numero di partecipanti coinvolti nelle conversazioni: per esempio, l’entrata in scena di un nuovo parlante generalmente segna l’inizio di una nuova fase.

11 Per una descrizione di come utilizzare MCA per vedere/ascoltare i testi e le fasi in cui questi sono stati suddivisi e leggerne le trascrizioni, si veda Coccetta (2004: 32-33) e la presentazione “Basics: Italian” disponibile nel sito di MCA (http://mca.uniipa.it) in About MCA e poi Overview.

12 La Grammar definition è la pagina di MCA in cui vengono inseriti i parametri per descrivere i filmati.

13 Per quanto l’enunciato “What do you enjoy doing” sia da un punto di vista grammaticale realizzabile anche da un apprendente ad un livello di competenza linguistica A1, gli è stato attribuito un livello di complessità B2 a causa dell’elevata velocità con cui Timothy pronuncia l’enunciato.


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**Appendice**

**Task 1:**

Canadians

*Fill in the gaps using some of the following words. Do not use any word more than once. Some of the words are not needed.*

- they, so, which, in, only, Canadian, who, also, day, too, other, on.

There are estimated to be 3,000 Canadians in London. They are not the most conspicuous of London’s minorities but, if you want to experience Canadian beer, food, sports matches and conversation you can do so at the Maple Leaf at 41 Maiden Lane in Covent Garden...

(estratto da *London’s new voices* in: "Speak Up", maggio 2001)

**Task 2:**


*Hey everybody, let’s go see a film about maths!* As Saturday night propositions go, the pitch for “A Beautiful Mind” is also about as enticing as playing Happy Families with Fred West.

But put Russel Crowe in the cinematic equation and Ron Howard’s latest portion of Academy-friendly fare becomes a good deal more appetising...


**Task 3:**

**Life’s Matrix – A biography of water**

www.amazon.com – Customer Review

Philip Ball, a precocious young editor and writer at the British science journal Nature, with whose work I was previously unfamiliar, is apparently the hot new thing among popular science writers. Based on the evidence of this book, it’s easy to see why folks like him so much...


**Domande 1-4:**

1. From the text we learn that the writer of this book review...
was already a fan of Philip Ball's books.
is a science writer.
is editor of the journal Nature.
had not previously read any of Philip Ball's books.

2. From the review, we understand that Life's Matrix is ...
a history book for specialists.
an academic text for university students.
a non-specialist book on a scientific topic.
a science-fiction novel.

3. In text, the reviewer expresses admiration for Philip Ball's ...
knowledge of a variety of subjects.
drawing skills and use of colour.
emphasis on theory.
dramatic conclusion

4. On the basis of the text, which of the following statements is NOT true?
The reviewer generally liked the book.
The reviewer found the book too technical in parts.
The reviewer found the concluding part of the book unconvincing.
The reviewer found the title of the book misleading.
The Progressive Form of the *be going to* future: a preliminary report

SARA GESUATO

0. Abstract

This paper 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.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a work in progress on the progressive form of the going to future, that is, the *going to be* V-ing future. This periphrastic construction has received limited attention in the literature on tense and aspect, and is only occasionally mentioned in grammars of English (but see section 2.). However, English speakers do employ it, and corpus data attests to its lively usage.
I have repeatedly noticed the going to be V-ing future used at linguistics conferences, when presenters are being introduced (e.g. Our next speaker is going to be talking about X) or when they want to inform the audience of what they are about to do (e.g. I am not going to be listing all the examples of Y; rather, I am going to be focusing on Y). A cursory examination of such occurrences of the going to be V-ing future, that is, a consideration of their syntactic structure (i.e. a combination of the going to and be V-ing components) and of the types of events encoded through their verbs, suggests that this future conveys the meaning of “intentionality (about the future)” – typically associated with be going – and that of “action in progress” – typically associated with be V-ing, which encodes progressive aspect. The former semantic notion can be justified if the events being represented are actions consciously and deliberately performed by human agents. The latter notion can be justified if those actions are characterized by some form of duration. Both conditions indeed hold in the above made-up examples.

However, the above-mentioned interpretive hypothesis is not totally satisfactory, given that the going to be V-ing future can also be used with punctual verbs encoding events of no or irrelevant duration (see sections 2. and 5.). A relevant example that I have encountered in my readings comes from a dialogic section of Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire by J. K. Rowling (2000: 246):

“The first task is designed to test your daring,” he told Harry, Cedric, Fleur and Krum, so we are not going to be telling you what it is. Courage in the face of the unknown is an important quality in a wizard... very important... (my emphasis).

In this excerpt, the verb tell means “to inform, to say, to reveal” rather than “to narrate,” and thus refers to an instantaneous event.

In addition, it is possible that the going to be V-ing future is also used to convey the notion of “inevitable consequence” (or “predictability”) and not only that “intentionality”, but that I have failed to notice – or not been in a position to be exposed to – occurrences of this type. A relevant example would be an expression such as Look at those clouds. It’s going to be raining soon.

Only an analysis of corpus data can make it possible to more objectively observe the context(s) of use, and thus to identify the meaning(s), of the going to be V-ing future. In this paper, I aim to do so by comparing some of the patterns of use of the going to be V-ing future with those of two other periphrastic futures used in English, namely the simple going to future (i.e. the going to V future) and the progressive will future (i.e. the will be V-ing future). My aim is to check whether the going to be V-ing future is characterized by distinctive patterns of use, which set it apart from the other two periphrastic constructions.

In the following sections, I present a brief review of what scholars have said about the going to be V-ing future. Next, I describe the data collected from a general corpus of English, namely the 56,000,000-word Bank of English (henceforth BoE) relevant to the three above-mentioned periphrastic English futures. After comparing their global frequencies of occurrence, I examine some of their patterns of use by looking at representative samples of concordances: among other things, I consider the number and types of lexemes they are associated with, their distribution across the spoken and written registers, and the inherent temporal dimension of the events encoded in the verbs used in these constructions. With regard to the going to futures only, I also show how frequently they instantiate
the notions of “intentionality” vs. “predictability”, how often their matrix verb phrases are realized in the past and how often in the informal be gonna variant, and whether they are premodified by modal verbs. In the end, I summarize the characteristics that appear to be typical of the going to be V-ing future and offer a possible interpretation of its role in the encoding of future in English.

2. Mini-review of literature

There are several works on the going to V future, as well as on the English future in general, which also discuss the going to V future. These include: Binnick (1971), who compares and contrasts the will and going to futures; Bishop (1973), who deals with the similarities and differences between English and Spanish main expressions of futurity; Wekker (1976), who describes the semantic conditions governing the use of, and compares and contrasts the implications carried by, the will/shall and the going to futures; Haegeman (1983), who discusses the notion of “current relevance” in relation to the going to future (and futures in other languages similarly based on verbs of movement); Haegeman (1989), who analyzes the different context-appropriateness of (i.e. the pragmatic contrasts between) the will and going to futures; Nicolle (1997), who compares and contrasts the meanings and uses of going to V within the framework of relevance theory; Brisard (2001), who describes the semantics of going to V within a cognitive grammar framework. However, only occasional reference is made to the progressive counterpart of the going to V construction.

As far as I know, the earliest reference made to the going to be V-ing future is to be found in Whyte (1944). The author discusses a few of the possible English equivalents of the German (a) Spielen Sie morgen? Werden Sie morgen spielen? and (b) Ich spiele morgen. Ich werde morgen spielen. Among the various English translations of (a) and (b), he includes Are you going to be playing tomorrow? and I am going to be playing tomorrow, respectively. However, he does not comment on them at all. Instead, the author talks about the «implications and subtle nuances» that the English future carries «that are not contained» in the «pure-future German sentences» (p. 334). Also, using corpus data (collected through a questionnaire sent to 139 college professors and students), he comments on the frequency of occurrence and nuances of meaning of various English future forms (but without including the going to be V-ing future among them); he comes to the conclusion that the going to V form is the only unambiguous pure future in English. He does not state, however, whether the going to be V-ing form, like its non-progressive counterpart, is also not characterized by any modal coloring.

Binnick (1971) discusses the semantic differences between the will and going to futures. He does not consider their progressive forms except once, when he compares the following sentences: “He is going to still be working on it at noon” and “He will still be working on it at noon”(p. 46). He says that both are predictions, and thus very similar in meaning. However, he also adds that the former «can also be a kind of command with an implied veiled threat in case of failure to carry it out: he is going to be there at noon, working on it, or else!», which is not, apparently, the preferred reading of the latter. His discussion of these sen-
tences, as well as the two that follow them, shows that the author is interested in examining the different semantic nuances of will vs. going to, not those possibly attributable to the verbs in the V-ing form. Thus, although he exemplifies the going to be V-ing future, he does not, actually discuss it.

Declerck (1991: 158, note 1) briefly comments on the going to be V-ing construction. He observes that its basic meaning is that of «future seen from the point of view of the present» and adds that «the construction cannot express the other meanings which the future continuous can have». Declerck, therefore, appears to suggest that the going to be V-ing form is a variant of going to V, which is grounded in the present, rather than a variant of will be V-ing, which is completely set in and relevant to the future. The three examples given to illustrate this future encode durative events (e.g. “If you don’t stop teasing the children, you’re going to be dealing with me!”).

Nicolle (1997: 363) discusses the variable scope of the operator be going to (i.e. the ways it interacts with mood, tense, and time). He states that be going to is a conceptual information operator that is part of the situation represented in the verb phrase in which it occurs. He observes that, for this reason, it can be preceded by modal or tense operators, as in I will be going to speak to the boss or I am going to speak to the boss, respectively. He adds that, in turn, the operator be going to can have scope over an embedded situation representation which may be marked for aspect, as in I’m going to be speaking to the boss, or for both tense and aspect, as in Mary is going to have been working. Nicolle’s account of be going to thus allows for the fact that verb phrases may occur that are marked for progressive aspect twice, once in the be going to operator, and once in the infinitival complement that follows it. His examples are perfectly compatible with the notion of progressive aspect, as they refer to types of events that are both non-stative and durative.

Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 172), while commenting on the semantic difference between the simple and progressive form of the will future, also briefly refer to the going to be V-ing future. They write that in its non-aspectual meaning, the will be V-ing future indicates that a given matter «has already been settled rather than being subject to decision now», as in Will you be going to the shops this afternoon? (p. 171). They add that this use «is particularly common with will, but it is also found with, for example, the idiom be going, as in Are you going to be helping them again this year?» (p. 172). However, the authors do not further discuss the going to be V-ing future. They only implicitly suggest that the progressive forms of the will and going to futures are virtually identical in meaning.

In his book on progressive and non-progressive aspect in English, Williams (2002) also analyzes the going to V future and briefly comments on the progressive variant of this future. Williams observes that the going to be V-ing form is a variant of the going to V future, whose progressive form strongly underlines the continuous aspect of the activity in question (p. 201). His relevant example, quoted from Declerck (1991: 158), is “I’m going to be studying all afternoon, so I won’t have time to watch TV”, in which the verb in the progressive form encodes a dynamic, durative event.

However, the author points out that the going to be V-ing future can also be used with non-durative verbs. The examples he gives in this case are “I’m going to be
arriving in India tomorrow afternoon” and “We’re going to be meeting Karen’s parents this weekend” (p. 202). He aptly observes that these sentences refer to «punctual situations» that are «carried out in their entirety at some moment in the future» (p. 202). He does not state, however, what the progressive form would be signaling in this case, that is, he does not explain what the semantic or stylistic difference would be, if any, between a going to V and a going to be V-ing future applied to verbs denoting punctual events. In addition, Williams specifies that the going to be V-ing future is almost identical in meaning to the will be V-ing future. He explains that the only difference between the two is to be attributed to their going to and will components, respectively: the former conveys the notion of “predictability” and/or “intentionality”, and the latter that of «something happening as a matter of course»(p. 202). Finally, Williams observes that the going to be V-ing future may refer to a present situation represented as being in progress (p. 54, note 24; p. 201), in which case it can be replaced by epistemic will. His examples are “They’re going to be watching television at this time” and “He’s going to be having lunch at this time, isn’t he?”. He does not explain, however, whether such expressions are identical in meaning to their epistemic will counterparts.

In their ICAME25 conference presentation on the semantic ambiguities of the going to future, Berglund and Williams (2004) briefly referred to the progressive form of this syntactic structure. The relevant examples appearing in their hand-out (collected from the BNC) were “I mean, you’re not gonna be it’s not as though you’re gonna be having people staying or […]” and “Did you hear Christopher saying that he was going to be getting erm a new Cavalier?”. Of the former they said that it is not clear whether it represents a stylistic (i.e. less formal) variant of its non-progressive counterpart or whether it is semantically different from it. If the former interpretation is chosen, it is worth pointing out that the relative informality of the structure may be ascribed not only to its V-ing component but also to the colloquial gonna; if the latter interpretation is chosen, it is not clear, however, what the difference exactly consists in. Of the latter example, which is a progressive form of a periphrastic past, the presenters said that it does signal a semantic difference in comparison with the non-progressive form, namely that it implies that the decision being referred to had already been taken well before announcing it. However, they did not explain on what basis they were offering this interpretation.

It appears from the above review of previous studies on the English going to future, that only limited information is currently available on the going to be V-ing construction and that this is not sufficient to determine whether and to what extent this periphrastic form differs from others available in English. Plausible, complementary accounts of this future have been offered, but their validity has to be checked against (more systematic) corpus data. In the following sections, I report on the data collected from the BoE for the purpose of identifying possible patterns of use specific to this periphrastic future.
3. Data collection

To examine the usage of *going to be V-ing*, I looked for instances of this future in a general corpus of English, namely the BoE, which consists of 56,000,000 words. At first, I considered all instances of the three futures in the corpus (see section 4.) in order to compare the data about their frequencies of occurrence. Then, however, I examined only 100 randomly selected concordances of the *going to be V-ing* form, and compared them with as many randomly selected instances of the *going to be V* and the *will be V-ing* forms*. In both cases, the purpose was to check what patterns of use, if any, are common to the three periphrastic futures.

4. Preliminary findings

Before considering the possible semantic peculiarities of the *going to be V-ing* future, it is important to determine how well-established the construction is, namely whether it frequently recurs in the language and whether it is employed in both oral and written interaction.

4.1 Frequency

The frequency of occurrence of a given word, word combination or structure in a general corpus is a sign – however imperfect – of how well-established that expression is in the language that that corpus represents*. A word or expression occurring only once or a few times is more likely to reveal an aspect of the idiolect of a given language user than to show a characteristic of the linguistic behavior of a group of people sharing a common language.

In the BoE, I found 500 occurrences of the *going to be V-ing* future, 17,451 of the *going to V* future, and 3,977 of the *will be V-ing* future*. This means that, on average, there are about 8 occurrences of the first one, 311 of the second one, and 70 of the third one, every million words. The data are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>WILL BE V-ING</th>
<th>GOING TO V</th>
<th>GOING TO BE V-ING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total tokens</td>
<td>3,977</td>
<td>17,451</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tokens per million words</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>311.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Frequency of three periphrastic futures in BoE

The rate of occurrence of the *going to be V-ing* future is not marginal in the BoE. However, it is the least frequent of the three periphrastic futures examined: it is about 8 times less frequent than the *will be V-ing* future, and about 35 times less frequent than the *going to V* future.

The high frequency of occurrence of the *going to V* future may be due to the fact that this future is appropriate in a wide range of circumstances; it is often said not to be colored by modalizing nuances or to be the most neutral type of future (unlike the *will/shall* future; see, e.g., Whyte (1944: 337), Brisard (2001: 254), Wekker (1976: 123); but see also Haegeman (1989) on the contextual constraints of the *going to* future); as a result, it may constitute the default structure for expressing future in English.
The *will be V-ing* future is appropriate in two main types of situations: when reference is being made to future events in progress (in which case it is compatible with verbs denoting dynamic events characterized by some duration) or when events are being represented that are expected to happen as a matter of course (as a result of previous arrangements). The specific meanings associated with the *will be V-ing* future necessarily restrict its range of applicability.

However, it is not immediately clear why the *going to be V-ing* future is quite infrequent. This could be a future form that has appeared in the English language relatively recently (see note 1); if this were the case, one could thus argue that its use is not widespread yet precisely because it is an innovation. Alternatively, it could be a well-established future form, but characterized by a distinctive context of use, whose distribution is limited to only certain registers or genres (see section 4.2).

### 4.2 Spoken vs. written register

According to Berglund and Williams (2004), the *going to be V-ing* future may be a stylistic, less formal variant of the *going to V* form. If this is true, it is then possible that the *going to be V-ing* future occurs in oral communication more frequently than its non-progressive counterpart. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 211) note that the *going to* future is itself «characteristic of relatively informal style, whereas *will* is entirely neutral» (original emphasis). If this is true too, then one can expect to find instances of the *will be V-ing* future more equally distributed across the spoken and written registers.

The BoE contains two types of oral corpus components: transcripts from British and US radio broadcasts, and transcripts of a variety of British spoken data (e.g. informal conversations, phone calls, service encounters, lectures, radio phone-ins) on a wide range of topics. The former are likely to be scripted, planned, and thus more formal. The latter are likely to be spontaneously produced. At the same time, the BoE also, and mainly, contains written corpus components, which do not contain extemporaneously produced material, but texts resulting from probably careful planning (e.g. (excerpts from) books, newspapers, leaflets). The oral and written components of the BoE thus roughly represent a relatively more informal and a relatively less informal register, respectively. By considering the distribution of the three periphrastic futures examined across the oral and written components of the BoE, it is possible to approximately establish which one, if any, is typical of informal interaction. The data is summarized in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th><em>will be V-ing</em></th>
<th><em>going to V</em></th>
<th><em>going to be V-ing</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written sources</td>
<td>3,523 = 81.8%</td>
<td>7,523 = 43.1%</td>
<td>151 = 30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken sources</td>
<td>724 = 18.2%</td>
<td>9,928 = 56.9%</td>
<td>349 = 69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,977 = 100%</td>
<td>17,451 = 100%</td>
<td>500 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Distribution of three periphrastic futures in the spoken and written components of BoE

Table 2 shows that the *will be V-ing* future is much more frequently used in written than oral communication. The *going to V* future, instead, is fairly equally distributed across the spoken and the written data, although more frequently found in the former than the latter. Finally, the *going to be V-ing* future appears to be
much more typical of oral than written communication. The will be V-ing future thus appears to stand out because its distribution patterns markedly contrast with those of the other two futures: in over 8 out of 10 cases, it is employed in written texts. The going to V and going to be V-ing futures, instead, display a common preference for the oral register; also, their distribution patterns are fairly similar, in the sense that the percentage values reported differ by about 13 points. At the same time, the going to be V-ing future’s frequency of occurrence in oral texts is higher than that of its non-progressive counterpart.

From the above data, it is possible to conclude that the going to be V-ing future is typically associated with the oral register, in a way that is similar to, but more marked than, that of the going to V future. These similar distributional preferences contrast with those of the will be V-ing future, which, instead, is very often employed in written texts (and more frequently than the going to be V-ing future is used in oral ones). The recurrent association of the going to be V-ing future with oral texts suggests, although it does not definitively prove, that this construction is characteristic of informal contexts of communication.

4.3 The form gonna

A complementary indication of the possible degree of informality of the going to be V-ing form may come from an examination of the distribution of the form gonna in the corpus. Gonna is known to be a contracted, colloquial variant of the going to followed by a verb, which qualifies the expression it is part of as informal. If the going to be V-ing form has an informal gonna variant, as the going to V does, and if the former, progressive future is more informal than the latter, non-progressive one, it is to be expected that gonna expressions will be more frequent a) in spoken than written texts and b) in combination with progressive than non-progressive infinitives.

The BoE contains instances of the form gonna followed by either a progressive or a non-progressive infinitive in both its oral and written corpus components. Examples:
1. “I’m gonna be borrowing thirty-five thousand” (spoken: S 0000000448)
2. “Are you gonna be going?” (spoken: S 0000000467)
3. “I would expect that the Clinton team is gonna be scrutinizing these numbers” (spoken: S 2000930203)
4. “Reverend Gates ain’t gonna be holding up his sermon” (written: B 9000001423)
5. “Only one team is gonna win it now” (written: N 9119980623)
6. “Who am I gonna tell, huh?” (written: B 9000000463)
7. “No one’s gonna rein you in” (spoken: S 2000930526)
8. “I don’t think it’s gonna make any difference at all” (spoken: S 0000000256).

As Table 3 shows, gonna is indeed more frequently represented in the spoken than the written corpus components of the BoE. However, it is much more frequently followed by a non-progressive than a progressive infinitive (i.e. gonna V is about 33 times as frequent as gonna be V-ing). So, while going to be V-ing may be typically used in relatively informal contexts (as can be inferred from the fact that it is more frequently used in oral than written communication), it is not, however, used the most frequently in its more informal variant, i.e. with the matrix expression to be gonna.
Table 3: Distribution of *gonna* followed by progressive and non-progressive infinitives in the written and spoken components of BoE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BoE corpus components</th>
<th>gonna V</th>
<th>gonna be V-ing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>488 = 56.61%</td>
<td>8 = 30.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken</td>
<td>374 = 43.39%</td>
<td>18 = 69.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>862 = 100%</td>
<td>26 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Modality

The matrix verb phrase of the *going to (be) V(-ing)* forms contains the verb to be, which, at least in theory, can be encoded in a variety of tenses and modes (see note 11) and thus also be pre-modified by auxiliaries. I checked whether, and how often, the non-progressive and progressive forms of the *going to* construction are qualified by modal expressions when their matrix verb phrases occur in the infinitival form. I found that only the matrix phrase of the *going to V* form can occur in its infinitival form, and that except in three cases, it is modified by some modal expression. The results are summarized in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal expression</th>
<th>may</th>
<th>might</th>
<th>should</th>
<th>supposed</th>
<th>wanna</th>
<th>will, ‘ll</th>
<th>won’t</th>
<th>would, ‘d</th>
<th>Tot.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>going to V</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>going to be V-ing</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Modal expressions pre-modifying *going to V* and *going to be V-ing* in BoE

Table 4 shows that such infinitives can be preceded by any of seven types of modal expressions, the most frequent one being *will* (or its variants ‘ll and won’t). Examples:

9. “[...] they may be going to find it difficult” (S 9000000779)
10. “[...] and I think that perhaps you have a deeper degree of communication with people around you on an emotional romantic level and perhaps because you yourself’d have a much clearer vision of where your own future might be going to take you” (S 9000001539)
11. “By which time you should really be going to sleep” (S 0000000277)
12. “Oh and we’re supposed to be going to see the Bridges of Madison County” (S 9000001413)
13. “You don’t wanna be going to work on New Year’s Day” (S 0000000340)
14. “He will be going to watch it in Paris” (N 9119980610)
15. “I’ll just be going to say a goodnight to my sister” (B 0000000906)
16. “I won’t be going to see Elton John again” (N 9119980605)
17. “So that’s where she would be going to work” (S 0000000750)
18. “And he said it would be very unwise and it probably would not be too wise from the point of view of the friend I’d be going to see”. (S 0000000812)

The occasional modalization of *going to V* seems to distinguish this construction from its progressive counterpart, which never occurs qualified this way. However, given its low frequency of occurrence (i.e. about 1.5 cases every 1,000 instances of *going to V*), it cannot be considered a typical characteristic of this construction that sets it apart from the *going to be V-ing* form.
5. Analysis of representative samples of data

From a preliminary consideration of general patterns of use of three periphrastic futures, it appears that the only distinctive trait of the going to be V-ing future is its remarkably frequent occurrence in oral texts. However, there may well be other (co-textual) elements that contribute to revealing the usage of this future. For example, specific notions may be conveyed through its matrix verb phrase (i.e. the to be going part) or its infinitival complement (i.e. the to be V-ing part).

In the following sections I consider a few of the semantic properties of the verbs employed in the going to be V-ing future, in particular in its infinitival complement, by examining a sample of 100 randomly selected concordances. To identify possible specificities of this construction, I also examine the same properties in a representative sample of 100 concordances of the going to V construction, and where applicable, also in a comparable set of concordances of the will be V-ing future.

5.1 Types and tokens of verbs

A given syntactic structure may be characterized by its frequent association with a limited range of lexemes (or word forms of given lexemes) or, alternatively, by its co-occurrence with a series of lexemes belonging to a common semantic field. Co-patterning of lexis (or semantics as encoded through lexis) and grammar is not at all unusual (see Hunston and Francis 2000). Thus it is worth investigating whether the going to be V-ing future is characterized by this type of co-patterning.

To this end, one could consider, for example, the noun groups preceding instances of the going to be V-ing future, the prepositional groups or adverbials following them and/or the adverbs possibly modifying the verbs in the futurate constructions. I decided to consider only the verbs employed in the V-ing form, that is the lexical material that is part of the periphrastic construction itself. My goal was to determine whether the going to be V-ing future is in complementary distribution with respect to the other two periphrastic futures, that is, whether it is used with different verbs, or maybe with (some of) the same verbs common to the other two futures, but with a markedly different rate of frequency.

I counted the types of verbs employed in the sample concordance sets of the three futures, and the number of tokens that exemplify them. The data are given in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of tokens exemplifying verb types</th>
<th>Verb types in will be V-ing set</th>
<th>Verb types in going to V set</th>
<th>Verb types in going to be V-ing set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>53 = 73.61%</td>
<td>50 = 76.92%</td>
<td>49 = 81.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>11 = 15.28%</td>
<td>8 = 12.30%</td>
<td>3 = 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>7 = 9.72%</td>
<td>2 = 3.08%</td>
<td>3 = 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>1 = 1.39%</td>
<td>2 = 3.08%</td>
<td>2 = 3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>0 = 0%</td>
<td>1 = 1.54%</td>
<td>1 = 1.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six or more</td>
<td>0 = 0%</td>
<td>2 = 3.08%</td>
<td>2 = 3.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total verb types</td>
<td>72 = 100%</td>
<td>65 = 100%</td>
<td>60 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Tokens of verb types in three periphrastic futures in BoE
It appears from Table 5 that all three periphrastic futures are characterized by a high number of verbs, and thus that most verb types are exemplified by a single token. This patterning is more marked in the going to futures, and especially in the progressive one, than the progressive will future. Indeed, while the will be V-ing future has about 73% of the verbs exemplified by I token, the going to V future has over 76%, and the going to be V-ing future has over 81%.

In addition, there are only a few verbs that are exemplified in over 5 concordances. The will be V-ing future has none, while the going to futures have 2 each. These are go (10 occurrences) and take (six occurrences) for the simple future, and talk (11 occurrences) and do (12 occurrences) for the progressive one. However, none of these verbs is frequent enough that it can be said to distinctively characterize the usage of the going to futures. Finally, all these verbs are among the most commonly used in the English language, and so they are bound to frequently show up in various types of verb constructions.

In conclusion, an examination of the verb types instantiated in the three concordance sets shows that the going to be V-ing future is very much like the other two periphrastic constructions: it is employed with a high number of verbs, most of which are exemplified just once; from the complementary point of view, there is no single verb that can be identified as a reliable predictor of its occurrence. Both of these characteristics, which hold for the the three concordance sets, are simply more marked in relation to the going to be V-ing construction. Therefore it appears that, when considering the number of verb types instantiated in the concordance sets examined, it is not possible to describe the going to be V-ing future as distinctively different from the other two periphrastic futures.

5.2 Lexemes

As briefly hinted at above, a given syntactic structure may be associated not (only) with a given lexeme or word-form, but (also) with a set of lexemes relevant to a shared semantic field. This means that it may be possible to characterize it on the basis of semantic, rather than lexical, considerations. Put differently, even if a given pattern cannot be said to frequently co-occur with a given word (or with a restricted set of given words), it may still be the case that the pattern is often associated with a given meaning (or a limited set of related meanings).

An examination of the lexemes employed with the going to be V-ing future (i.e. the verbs in the V-ing form; see section 5.1) showed that not a single one co-occurred with the construction so frequently as to contribute to forming a distinctive lexico-grammatical pattern. However, the variable lexical realization of the future forms may obscure an underlying conceptual (i.e. semantic) tie among the lexemes employed. For example, it is possible that the going to be V-ing future forms in the sample considered exemplify verbs not used with the other two periphrastic futures and/or expressing very similar content.

Tables 6 and 7 show the number of lexemes shared by the periphrastic futures. It appears that most lexemes employed with one future do not occur with the others, but also that the number of lexemes that are shared is not marginal, namely around 20%, on average. This is particularly evident in the case of the going to be V-ing future, which shares 25% of its lexemes with the will be V-ing future, and as many with the going to V future. In addition, Table 7 shows that the verb types shared by all three futures make up about 10% of their lexemes, on average.
Collectively, this data is not enough to determine whether the verbs used with the three futures belong to the same general semantic category or not, or whether those that are used with only one or two types of futures share semantic traits. The data is merely compatible with such an interpretation. But it is necessary to look at the lexemes themselves in order to check whether they belong to the same semantic area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb types shared</th>
<th>WILL BE V-ING</th>
<th>GOING TO V</th>
<th>GOING TO BE V-ING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by pairs of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>periphrastic futures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will be V-ing</td>
<td>72/72 = 100%</td>
<td>13 = 18.05%</td>
<td>15 = 20.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to V</td>
<td>13 = 20%</td>
<td>65/65 = 100%</td>
<td>15 = 23.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to be V-ing</td>
<td>15 = 25%</td>
<td>15 = 25%</td>
<td>60/60 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Lexemes common to pairs of periphrastic futures in BoE

| Lexemes shared by       | WILL BE V-ING | GOING TO V | GOING TO BE V-ING |
| three periphrastic      |               |            |                   |
| futures                 |               |            |                   |
| Lexemes common          | 7/72 = 9.72%  | 7/65 = 10.76%| 7/60 = 11.66%    |
| to other two            |               |            |                   |
| periphrastic futures    |               |            |                   |

Table 7: Lexemes shared by three periphrastic futures in BoE

The 7 verbs shared by the three futures (i.e. discuss, do, get, go, sit, take and watch) are very common English words encoding very different (and sometimes general) notions. They do not form a semantically homogeneous set. The same is true of the verbs common to the going to V and going to be V-ing futures (i.e. ask, discuss, do, get, give, go, happen, hit, put, shoot, sit, take, talk, watch and work), of those shared by going to V and will be V-ing (i.e. discuss, do, fly, get, go, look at, make, save, sit, take, tell, try and watch), and of those occurring with the going to be V-ing and will be V-ing futures (i.e. deal with, discuss, do, fall, get, go, have, hear, listen, look at, look, sit, study, take and watch). Thus, from a semantic point of view, it appears that no specific unitary concept can be said to characterize the lexemes common to any two of the three periphrastic futures taken into examination, let alone to the three futures taken together. The verbs that are shared encode a variety of notions, not classifiable as belonging to a definite (or limited set of) semantic field(s).

Furthermore, the same is also true of the verbs specific to each future, that is, the verbs that are not shared. Thus, for example, the concordance set relevant to the going to be V-ing future includes verbs of saying (like answer), movement (like come), physical action (like batter), physical sensation (like hurt), and cognitive attitude (like give up). The set relevant to the going to V future includes verbs of physical action (like beat), emotional experience (like feel), relation (like cost), exchange (like hand), cognition (like remember), and movement (like tear round). Finally, the set relevant to the will be V-ing future includes verbs relevant to such notions as movement (like drive, push, swim, step down, tour), saying (like announce, broadcast, write), cognition (like consider, hope, expect), relation (like have, extend), posture (like lie), beginning (like start), perception (like see, hear), fighting (like battle out, compete, challenge), interaction (like invite, negotiate), money (like save, spend), and attempting (like seek, try).
In conclusion, the verbs that are not common to the sets of concordances do not reveal any distinctive semantic pattern associable with any of the futures in question. Each group of verbs exemplifies a variety of general concepts; in addition, several of these notions are shared by the three sets of concordances. In particular, the going to be V-ing future does not differ from the other two either positively or negatively: that is, there is no specific (set of) semantic notion(s) that is frequently associated with it and that is much less frequently employed with the other two futures; and conversely, there is no limited set of semantic notions that are relevant to the other two futures and that are untypical of the going to be V-ing future.

5.3 Past and present

I have been referring to the three periphrastic structures under examination as futures; however, this is not totally accurate. Indeed, the verb in the matrix phrase of the going constructions, namely be, may be encoded in the present (i.e. as are or is) or in the past (i.e. as were or was); that is, it may be used to signal the projected fulfillment of either a present or a past circumstance (whether a cause or an intention, as in I was going to do it and It was going to happen, respectively).

The sets of concordances of progressive and non-progressive going to forms examined do contain instances of matrix verb phrases encoded in the past (i.e. of going to preceded was or were). Examples:

19. “I was going to ask you something” (S 9000000526)  
20. “I knew that he was going to die” (S 9000001437)  
21. “We were going to discuss the Traveller” (S 0000001226)  
22. “[...] your mother started to decide what she was going to do” (S 9000001341)  
23. “I thought for a moment we were going to hit a tree, then a fence” (N 6000940827)  
24. “What was I going to say then?” (S 9000000534)  
25. “[...] it sounded like a conversation that was going to take a little while” (B 9000000909)  
26. “[...] he didn’t tell me at the end of last term that this was going to be happening” (S 9000001327)  
27. “We weren’t ever going to be doing that again” (N 6000940926)  
28. “The big boys were always going to be doing the weekend shows” (N 9119980612)  
29. “There is no way he was going to be getting legless on champagne” (N 9119980417)  
30. “Now he was going to be giving up a fellow American” (B 9000001447)  
31. “And in the vision of John Wimber the dam had to be broken and the water had to go out of the out of the lake out of the pool into the troughs that we were going to be irrigating the seed” (S 9000001352)  
32. “We want it clear that he was going to be looking into it” (S 9000001509).

The frequency of occurrence of past forms is almost identical in the two concordance sets. The going to V set has 15 (i.e. 15%), while the going to be V-ing one has 14 (i.e. 14%). Therefore, the encoding of tense (at least with regard to the distinction between present and past) does not appear to be a useful predictor of the occurrence of the progressive or non-progressive form of the periphrastic going to construction. In the sample data considered, both forms are much more frequently used in the present than the past tense.
5.4 Intentionality and predictability

The *going to V* future is known to encode in its matrix verb phrase the general meaning of “future fulfillment of the present”, which comprises the more specific notions of “future fulfillment of a present intention” and “future fulfillment of a present cause” (Leech 1971: 54). For short, I will refer to the former as intentionality and to the latter as predictability. The notion of “intentionality” is instantiated in clauses whose predicates refer to actions requiring the conscious exercise of the will and whose subjects refer to people, to whom the ability to plan deliberate actions can be ascribed (e.g. *Are you going to apply for the job?*; *We are going to redecorate our house in the summer*). The notion of “predictability” is instead compatible with both personal and non-personal subjects; it can be employed with verbs that encode either acts consciously performed by agents or other events, processes or states affecting or characterizing given entities (e.g. *It’s going to fall; He’s going to feel sick*).12

The *going to be V-ing* construction too contains the *be going* component, through which the general notion of “future fulfillment of the present” is encoded. It is therefore possible to check whether the *going to V* and the *going to be V-ing* constructions differ with regard to how frequently they instantiate the more specific notions of “intentionality” and “predictability”.

The sample sets of concordances of the *going to V* and *going to be V-ing* constructions contain expressions which are unambiguously classifiable as instantiations of the notion of “intentionality”. Examples:

33. “We’re going to check the venue” (S 9000001489)
34. “Mother, don’t mind, we’re going to give you a little hypodermic” (B 9000001423)
35. “How were you going to implement it?” (S 9000000801)
36. “And I’m going to be coming around afterward to try and get an idea of the number of people who might be interested and badgering them to come along” (S 0000000015)
37. “What about relationships? Are you going to be coupling up. [sic]” (S 2000901206)
38. “[...] what was it you’re going to be looking to do with the money?” (S 9000001317)

Similarly, there are others that are clear instantiations of the notion of “predictability”. Examples:

39. “It is going to cost some individuals money” (N 6000950915)
40. “Our result isn’t going to depend on more info on Brazil” (N 91119980424)
41. “So I don’t think I’m going to feel confined or restrained” (S 2000901206)
42. “[...] if you’re three weeks’ pregnant and you mention it at a junket, you’re going to be answering questions about it” (N 5000950205)
43. “er I’ve just got a newborn son who’s going to be breathing dirty air” (S 9000000603)
44. “And when is that going to be taking place?” (S 9000000414)

At the same time there are also cases which are harder to interpret as they are compatible with both the notion of “intentionality” and that of “predictability”. This tends to occur especially – but not only – with third-person and first-person plural subjects. In the former case it is not clear whether the speaker/writer is informing the addressee about the subject’s plans or whether she is signaling what she expects to take place as a result of a current state of affairs. In the latter case, it is not clear whether the speaker/writer is speaking on behalf of a group so as to reveal their shared, current intentions, or whether instead she is revealing her
own plans to an individual or group who is supposed to be involved with her in a future event, but who is not in a position to make decisions. Examples:

45. “Now, Jimmy’s going to make up for my loss” (N 6000920924)
46. “They’re going to vote in a larger police budget” (B 0000000345)
47. “The other one’s going to be coming” (B 9000000447)
48. “We’re going to be going talking about conspiracy theories” (S 0000001660)
49. “The girls you’re going to be working with are going to be like you” (S 9000000524)

Table 8 shows how frequently the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” are instantiated in the concordances of the non-progressive and progressive forms of the going to construction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notions conveyed in two periphrastic futures</th>
<th>Intentionality</th>
<th>Predictability</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>going to V</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>going to be V-ing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Distribution of the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” in two periphrastic future data sets in BoE

The data in Table 8 show both similarities and differences between the concordance sets of the going to V and going to be V-ing forms. On the one hand, the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” appear to be represented in both sets; the latter notion is more frequently instantiated in both. In addition, in both sets there are unclear cases, which are interpretable as conveying either the notion of “intentionality” or that of “predictability” or both. On the other hand, the frequencies of occurrence of these semantic categories differ. In the going to V group, the notions of “predictability”, “intentionality” and “unclear” occur 54% vs. 38% vs. 16% of the time, respectively; in the going to be V-ing set, they occur 41% vs. 25% vs. 34% of the time, respectively. This means that the second most frequently represented notion with the going to V construction is “intentionality”, while the most frequent one in the going to be V-ing set is “unclear”.

The data thus reveals only partially similar distribution patterns of the semantic notions considered: in the going to V concordance set, the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” are much more frequently represented than that of “unclear”. In the going to be V-ing group, all three notions are frequently instantiated. At the same time, it appears that neither of the two going to forms is typically associated with only one of the notions examined. So it is not possible to conclude that one of these notions distinctively characterizes the semantics of either periphrastic form.

5.5 Types of events: duration

The infinitival complement of the going to be V-ing construction is encoded in the progressive form, which represents events as on-going processes, and thus as characterized by (or perceived as being endowed with) some internal duration (constancy or repetitiveness). As a result, one could expect this progressive future to be used with verbs encoding events evolving over or lasting for some time, or occurring several times over a given period of time. On the other hand, the other two periphrastic futures are not restricted by such a requirement: the
infinitival complement of the going to V construction is not encoded in the progressive form, while the will be V-ing future is not only used to represent future events in progress (and thus characterized by some internal duration), but also to signal that a given event (of whatever duration) is conceived of as pre-arranged.

To test whether the going to be V-ing construction is distinctively associated with events characterized by some type of duration, I classified the events encoded in the concordance sets of the three periphrastic constructions according to five temporal dimensions and compared their frequencies of occurrence. The dimensions taken into consideration are: durativity, habituality, iterativity, punctuality, and telicity. They are relevant in part to the notion of aspect (habituality) and in part to that of Aktionsart (durativity, iterativity, punctuality, and telicity), and thus are not taxonomically homogeneous\textsuperscript{16}. However, they are similar in that they all characterize aspects of the duration of events\textsuperscript{17}.

To identify different types of events on the basis of their dimensions of duration, I applied some of the criteria outlined in Frawley (1992: ch. 7) for classifying types of aspect; in addition, where necessary. I took into consideration the context of the verb phrases examined (i.e. typically whole clauses)\textsuperscript{18}.

Durative events happen once and last for some time; that is, they are characterized by duration on a given, single occasion. Of such events one can ask: “For how long?” or “How long did/does/will it last?”. The clauses in which they are represented may include adverbial complements encoded as for-headed prepositional phrases indicating duration. Examples:

50. “Rousset has signed for sunsport and will be writing exclusively for us” (N 9119980523)
51. “And then they'll stop, and then the lagoon will be laying calm for 10 minutes” (S 2000921207)
52. “If you're a job and you are going to watch your team against Manchester” (N 6000950428)
53. “I just wasn’t going to sit there and look at him all miserable and sick and sad! I just wasn’t!” (B 9000001423)
54. “[...] he was going to be working with Disney Studios” (B 9000001237)
55. “I’m going to be reading and studying the entire plane ride home” (N 2000960203).

Telic events are both durative and punctual; they refer to combinations of a process of some duration and the instantaneous result that the event reaches once it has been completely carried out. Of these events, one can ask: “For how long?” (or “How long did/does/will it last?”) and “How long did/does/will it take to complete it?”. Like durative events, they can take adverbials of time signaling duration (e.g. for six hours), but, in addition, they can also be modified by adverbials denoting intervals of time (e.g. in two days). Examples:

56. “Bergkamp will be driving to the World Cup in France” (N 9119980519)
57. “This fall, the city will be conducting a comprehensive study of school commute routes in north Palo Alto” (E 9000000677)
58. “I thought erm if I’m going to write a play about mothers […]” (S 0000000354)
59. “We’re going to fly back to Chicago together” (B 0000001320)
60. “[...] this Doctor is a dolphin expert and he's going to be giving us a talk on dolphins” (S 0000000025)
61. “[…] you're going to be doing a top-up degree for yourself” (S 9000000665).

Habitual events are sequences of single events, that is, multiple events; they take
place repeatedly and so are distributed over a period of time (i.e. they are relevant to a set of occasions). Of such events one can thus ask: “How often over a period of time?” or “How many times did/does/will it happen?” Examples:

62. “The Roman Catholics will be using it at least occasionally” (S 9000001515)
63. “[...] he’s going to go backwards and forwards into Leeds” (S 9000001463)
64. “The big boys were always going to be doing the weekend shows” (N 9119980612)
65. “I’m going to be hitting 20 or 30 aces every match” (N 5000950630).

Iterative events are single events consisting of multiple, cyclical sub-events. Therefore, they consist of subparts, but unlike habitual events, they occur on single occasions. Of an iterative event one can ask: “How many times (on a single occasion)?”. Iterative events may be so inherently (e.g. vibrating, shaking) or as a result of the aspectual encoding of the verbs that represent them: when appearing in the progressive form, verbs technically denoting punctual events (see below) end up representing iterative events, that is a plurality of events occurring on a single occasion (e.g. to be hitting, to be winking). Examples:

66. “I’m sure Sean’s ex-wife Melanie Hill will be rubbing her hands in glee too” (N 9119980528)
67. “If you were not in a relationship at all and didn’t want to be in a relationship someone’s going to be battering your door quite hard before summer’s end before year’s end” (S 9000001504).

Punctual events are those that are not temporally extended at all, that is, they are instantaneous and thus have no or irrelevant duration. They are conceptualized as occurring on a single occasion and, more importantly, as occupying a single (exact) moment in time. Of these events one can ask: “At what point in time did/will it happen?” Examples:

68. “We will be finding out whether children are eating sandwiches or cooked dinners or just opting for a packet of crisps in the playground” (N 6000920826)
69. “[...] you probably will be leaving very shortly” (S 9000001328)
70. “Mr Sevan will be arriving from the Pakistani capital” (S 1000910801)
71. “Retin-A is available by prescription only. Therefore, at least for the time being, you’re not going to find it in any cosmetic skin care product” (B 9000000434)
72. “I thought for a moment we were going to hit a tree, then a fence” (N 6000940827)
73. “Do you need a silencer if you are going to shoot a mime?” (E 9000000020)
74. “Now she realizes she was too optimistic. defabio: I knew I was going to be getting laid off in September, but I never thought that I would be laid off this long” (S 2000901227)
75. “Environmental Information Service. Yeah. Yeah. Which is a computerized information service that we’re going to be launching erm around the middle of this year actually” (S 9000001294).

The above exemplification shows that the verbs in the infinitival complements of the three periphrastic constructions denote events characterized by different types of duration. Table 9 reveals how frequently these notions are instantiated in the data sets. It shows that there are both similarities and differences in the distribution patterns of the notions of duration considered: on the one hand, these notions are fairly similarly distributed across concordance sets, but on the other hand, they are not equally represented within the same concordance set.

First, four notions (i.e. durativity, telicity, habituality, and punctuality) are
instantiated with the three periphrastic constructions under examination. Second, one notion, that of iterativity, is not instantiated at all only with the *going to V* construction; however, its presence is marginal in the concordance sets for the *will be V-ing* and *going to be V-ing* future, making up 1% and 2% of the data, respectively. Third, the two notions most frequently instantiated in the three sets are durativity and punctuality; the former is more prominently represented with the *will be V-ing* and the *going to be V-ing* constructions, and the latter with the *going to V* construction; they represent the two extremes of the continuum of the dimension of duration. Fourth, in each of the three sets, the most frequently represented notion makes up about 50% of the data, while the second most frequent makes up about 20-25% of the data. Fifth, in each concordance set, three notions of duration (i.e. habituality, telicity, and iterativity) are infrequently instantiated, each making up 10% or less of the data. Sixth, the three sets comprise groups of concordances that are not easily classifiable with regard to the notions of duration, and that make up around 13% of the data. Finally, the three concordance sets are characterized by similar rates of occurrence of the various notions of duration: durativity and punctuality are the most frequent notions, followed by habituality, telicity, and iterativity. This can be represented in the form of a frequency hierarchy: durativity|punctuality > habituality > telicity > iterative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>will be V-ing</em></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>going to V</em></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>going to be V-ing</em></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Dur., Tel., Hab., Iter., and Punc. mean, respectively, “durative”, “telic”, “habitual”, “iterative”, and “punctual”.

Table 9: Frequencies of five notions of duration in three periphrastic future data sets in BoE

The above data reveals that the three periphrastic constructions can be employed in the representation of events characterized by different types of duration, but also that they show a preference for the notions of durativity and punctuality, which are the extremes of the continuum of duration. The two periphrastic constructions comprising a progressive (bare) infinitive are fairly frequently associated with the notion of durativity; this is to be expected, given that durativity is compatible with – although not a predictor of – the idea of “action in progress”, which in English is typically encoded in the progressive form. Neither future, however, is exclusively associated with the notion of durativity; in the case of the *will be V-ing* future, this can be accounted for when considering that this construction is also employed to refer to events expected to take place as a matter of course (e.g. as a result of a previous plan or arrangement), independently of their duration; in the case of the *going to be V-ing* future, this merely suggests that the progressive infinitive may be prototypically used to represent events as being in progress, but also that its use is extendable to other types of events. The non-progressive construction differs from the other two periphrastic futures in that the notion it is the most frequently associated with is punctuality; on the other
hand, it is comparable to them because it is fairly often associated with the notion of punctuality and because it is not frequently associated with the notions of habituality, telicity or iterativity. I do not know how to account for the going to V future’s preference for punctual events and dislike for habitual, telic, and iterative events, as the notions conveyed by the matrix verb phrase of the construction (i.e. “intentionality” and “predictability”) are compatible with events of various types of duration.

In conclusion, the data reveal that the going to be V-ing future: a) is compatible with five different notions of duration, b) is typically associated with the notion of durativity, c) is also fairly frequently associated with the opposite notion of punctuality, and d) has distribution patterns of the various notions of duration that distinguish it from the going to V future, but that render it similar to the will be V-ing future.

6. Conclusion

The examination of patterns of use of the three periphrastic constructions will be V-ing, going to V and going to be V-ing in (sample) concordance sets from the BoE has shown that there are only a few traits distinguishing going to be V-ing from the other two futures.

First of all, the going to be V-ing construction is less frequent than the other two, the ratios being around 1 to 8 for the will be V-ing future and around 1 to 35 for the going to V future. When considering their gonna variants, the going to V and going to be V-ing constructions display comparable rates of occurrence, the former being about 33 times as frequent as the latter.

Second, the going to be V-ing construction appears to be instantiated mostly (i.e. about 70% of the time) in oral texts, unlike going to V, which is fairly equally distributed between the spoken and the written register (i.e. around 43% and 57% of the time, respectively), and also unlike will be V-ing, which is typically (i.e. about 80% of the time) found in written texts.

Third, going to V may occasionally (i.e. about once every 645 times) have the verb in its matrix verb phrase encoded as an infinitive preceded by modal operators. The going to be V-ing construction, instead, never occurs qualified in this way.

The other patterns examined (i.e. the number and types of lexemes employed in the three periphrastic futures, the notions of duration attributable to the events encoded in the three futures, the rate of occurrence of past forms in the matrix verb phrases of the going to constructions, and the encoding of the notions of “intentionality” and “predictability” in the same futures) have not revealed a semantic pattern distinctively characterizing the going to be V-ing future. The only partial exception to this has to do with the notions of duration: the going to be V-ing future differs from its non-progressive counterpart because it is preferably associated with the notion of durativity, rather than punctuality; however, its preference for the notion of durativity as well the distribution patterns of the other notions of duration make it very similar to the will be V-ing future.

The data presented here suggests the following tentative conclusions: going to be V-ing is a variant of the going to V future, although it is far less frequently in-
stantiated than its non-progressive counterpart. It is mostly employed in spoken English, which suggests that it is typically employed in informal interactional contexts. Its matrix verb phrase (i.e. be going) encodes the same meanings as the matrix verb phrase of its non-progressive counterpart, namely “intentionality” and/or “predictability”, and may occasionally be replaced by the colloquial be gonna variant; however, it is not pre-modifiable by modal expressions, unlike its non-progressive counterpart. Its infinitival complement does not appear to convey a specific (range of) notion(s): it can represent events of various types, belonging to a number of semantic fields, as is the case with the going to V and will be V-ing futures. Being encoded in the progressive form, it prototypically represents an on-going, dynamic event characterized by internal temporal expansion. The construction, however, is also compatible with other types of events: durative events that are stative (i.e. not in-progress), as well as habitual, telic, iterative, and punctual events. When the progressive infinitive represents an event that can be viewed as on-going, it can be said to encode the notion of “progressive aspect”. However, it is not clear what other notion the same infinitival complement encodes, when the event being represented is a punctual (or anyway, not an on-going) one. One can speculate that it could signal higher subjectivity (cf. Killie 2004) or underline the notion of pre-arrangement (Berglund and Williams 2004), but this is not directly determinable through an examination of concordances.

To conclude, I would like to put forward a tentative, alternative two-part interpretive hypothesis regarding the progressive form of the going to future. First, the use of the going to be V-ing future may be one (recent?) manifestation of the increasing spread (and grammaticalization) of the progressive in English, which appears to be subject to weaker and weaker co-textual constraints (Gavis 1998; Hundt 2004); that is, the going to be V-ing construction may be an additional type of co-text that the progressive form is being extended to, rather than (merely) an additional syntactic pattern conveying the notion of progressive aspect. Second, as the going to be V-ing construction appears to be semantically very similar to its non-progressive counterpart, it is possible that the former constitutes a formal structure-preserving variant of the latter, rather than a combination of two constructions (i.e. be going + to be V-ing), each contributing its meaning to the construction as a whole. If this were the case, the going to be V-ing future could then be said to instantiate a form of syntactic harmony: the infinitival complement might be interpreted as preserving and reproducing the aspectual encoding of the matrix verb phrase, not as adding new meaning to the syntactic pattern.

The analysis of the going to be V-ing construction offered here is far from exhaustive. More data needs to be collected and examined so as to check whether the patterns identified so far are accurate. More importantly, additional patterns of use are worth exploring, for example, the association of the three periphrastic futures with different types of subjects (i.e. first-, second-, and third-person ones; nominal vs. pronominal ones), semantic roles in subject position (e.g. agents, experiencers, patients), types of events encoded in verbs (e.g. material, verbal, mental), types of adverbs pre-modifying the verbs; their occurrence in main vs. subordinate vs. embedded clauses; and the frequency with which they are encoded in declarative, interrogative, and imperative types of clauses, both affirmative and negative. In addition, questionnaires can be prepared to submit to native
speakers to ask for their opinions on the understandability and acceptability of various contexts of use of the *going to be V-ing* future. It is likely that the combinations of different research tools will help reveal the specific usage of the *going to be V-ing* future.
I did not try to determine when the *going to be V-ing* was first recorded, something certainly worth doing. We know from Wekker (1976: 29) that the *going to V* construction dates back to Middle English.

This is to be intended as the future that refers to an event or situation that is known or expected to happen as a matter of course, not one that is presented as being in progress at some time in the future.

Williams (2002: 201) says the same of the non-progressive form of the *going to* future.

Not all native speakers would agree with Williams’s claim, though. Five informants I have consulted found only the sentence containing epistemic *will* acceptable.

Their presentation was not, specifically, on the *going to be V-ing* form, though.

The reduced size of these samples made the data analysis more manageable.

Of course, given patterns may be over- or under-represented according to what kinds of texts make up the corpus consulted.

The figures reported here and repeated in Table 1 correspond exactly to the counting given by the concordancing program as output of my queries I carried out in 2004. I did not check how accurate the counting was. While selecting the 300 concordances needed for the analysis presented in section 5. (i.e. 100 concordances out of 105 randomly selected ones per each periphrastic future), I noticed that irrelevant examples did turn up (e.g. “Today isn’t going to be gardening weather”; “I’m off to see my Mum for lunch which will be trying I expect”). In addition, the counting of the *will be V-ing* future is a bit conservative, as I only looked for strings of *will be V-ing*, not of *’ll be V-ing*, *won’t be V-ing*, *Will... be V-ing* or *Won’t... be V-ing*.

As is well known, there is no clear-cut distinction between oral and written communication, let alone a direct correspondence between formality and written communication, on the one hand, and informality and oral communication, on the other. However, most oral communication is dialogic, co-constructed, spontaneous, unplanned and thus likely to be more informal than written communication.

I excluded from the count the infinitival matrix verb phrases of *6 going to V* constructions preceded not by modal expressions, but by present tense forms of the verb to be. The co-occurrence of *is/are* and *be* in such concordances is probably due to performance errors.

Haegeman (1989: 315) states that the *going to V* construction is a kind of aspectual marker which «is found with all tense forms» as in the following examples: *He is going to leave, He was going to leave, He will be going to leave, He has been going to leave, He had been going to leave*. Brisard (2001: 279, footnote 1) points out that it «can be used in combination with *will* and retain its futurate meaning». Nicolle (1997: 362) observes that *be going to* is an operator encoding conceptual information that is part of the situation representation encoded in the verb phrase it is part of, and adds that this explains why it can be pre-modified by the modal operator *will*.

Brisard (2001) distinguishes five categories of uses of *going to*, namely intention, assumption, inevitability, imminence, conditional-protasis, and conditional-apodosis. Nicolle (1997) considers three, namely prior intention, inevitability and imminence, but she adds that sometimes no such overtones are detectable in utterances containing a *going to V* future, which suggests that a further possible meaning of *going to* is that of pure future.

Brisard (2001: 378-383) explains how this notion is likely to have developed.
Berglund and Williams (2004) made a similar observation about the data collected from the BNC-baby. Haegeman (1989: 293-294) observes that when «be going to» can be given «two interpretations, “intention” and “cause”», it is not «“ambiguous” in a truth-conditional sense»; rather, it «is vague between» different interpretations. Brisard (2001: 265) noted that certain going to V expressions may hover «on the borderline between the category of imminence and that of intention».

However, Williams (2002: 202) points out that the going to be V-ing construction is compatible also with punctual events.

Aspect is «the non-temporal, internal contour of an event» (Frawley 1992: 294) as determined by the speaker’s perspective on that event, and as encoded in the grammar of the language (e.g. through verb forms, adverbs, function words). Aktionsart classifies types of events or situations on the basis of their intrinsic characteristics. The former makes grammatical distinctions, the latter identifies semantic distinctions. The two notions provide complementary descriptions of events and situations, and help reveal how the same type of event may be represented from different viewpoints. Thus, for example, “writing a letter” is an inherently telic event, which may be encoded in the progressive aspect (e.g. I was writing a letter) or in the perfective form (e.g. I have written a letter).

I did not take into consideration aspectual distinctions like “(im)perfectivity, (non-)stativity” or “(non-)progressive” because not directly focused on the notion of duration, although revealing of other important facets of the internal contour of events; in addition, the third would be relevant only to two of the periphrastic constructions examined (see also below about iterative events).

It is important to take co-text into consideration, for instance, when the Aktionsart and aspect of a given event do not seem to match. A clause like I write a letter every day depicts a habitual (telic) event, as every day signals the repetitive occurrence of a series of events over a given period of time, while a letter signals the end-point of each of these events.

In fact, in the data examined, durativity is also a characteristic of stative, non-evolving events, which are not characterized by susceptibility to change.

I borrow the expression structure preservation from Kiparsky (1985).

Thus, the infrequent gonna be V-ing form would be less syntactically harmonious than the going to be V-ing one.
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Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has come to play a prominent role in translator-training curricula, although mainly in the more advanced stages of training. In the earlier stages, i.e. when students are still being introduced to the basics of translation methodology and to contrastive aspects of the languages they learn, the use of CMC resources is much more limited. After a brief overview of some problems and issues involved in the creation of CMC resources for the initial training of translators, the paper reports on work carried out at the University of Padua for the creation of a website (called Puzzle it Out) intended to support the English-Italian translation modules offered within the degree course in Cultural and Linguistic Mediation.

1. Introduction

There are many ways in which computers have come to play a fundamental role in translation. Today no professional translator could ever think of doing without them: computers are used to write and edit texts, to archive and retrieve translations and, through the WWW, to conduct searches for reference materials and resources on an unprecedented scale. The advent of computers and the Internet has quickly changed the translation profession as regards both the object and the tools of the translators’ work. Virtually all texts to be translated reach the translator in electronic format and a large share of these texts is actually never going to the press. Most manuals, especially those of software applications, are today only...
provided as pdf files, while web pages and interface files are a classic example of “virtual texts”, i.e. texts that never get printed and that are specifically written and presented to be read on a computer monitor. Even texts destined to publication in print, however, are today processed by dedicated software tools, and translators are often required to use these tools.

In short, the set of basic skills required of a translator at the beginning of the Third Millennium looks very different from what it was only fifteen years ago. In the past, what was required from a translator was essentially a good bilingual linguistic competence, which included some knowledge of the foreign country’s “culture” (read “literature”). No experience in editing was necessary – agencies or publishers dealt with copyediting, proofing and formatting. Today the picture is completely different: a professional translator has to add literacy in computer technology to the set of skills necessary to tackle most modern-day translation jobs. Dedicated software applications such as translation memory systems and term banks are the bread and butter of many translators and the use of such systems is no longer restricted to specialized sectors such as software localization.

As far as the training of translators is concerned, research on the nature and development of translation competence has shown how part of this competence (what some scholars have referred to as translator competence) consists of procedural skills, many of which have to do with the way translators (learn to) interact with computers and digital resources. Leaving aside the question whether this is a realistic model of translation competence and the way it develops (see Pym 2002 on this regard), it is a fact that most translator training institutions have rushed to include computer literacy and specific training on CAT tools in their curricula. Dedicated teaching materials for such training have also been developed, such as those created by the eCoLoRe project. As regards the training of translators on professional skills, then, computers and digital resources can today be said to play a major role. But what happens to the use of digital resources, online environments and computer-mediated communication (CMC) in general at earlier stages of the curriculum, i.e. when the focus is still largely on the development of a “transfer” competence that relies essentially on linguistic and cultural knowledge? Is there anything similar in translator training to the resources that have been developed in the context of computer-assisted language learning (CALL)? The rest of this paper will discuss problems related to the creation of on-line resources for translator training in the early stages of the curriculum, with reference to some proposed models and to work carried out for the creation of a web site (called Puzzle it Out) which is addressed to students of translation at the University of Padua in Italy.

2. COMPUTER-MEDIATED TRANSLATION TEACHING MATERIALS – A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS

Trainers engaged in the creation of translation teaching materials based on digital resources have soon realized how problematic it is to adapt didactic approaches based on classroom interaction to the new digital environment. Neunzig (2002) notes a tendency to simply “copy” methods and systems used in more traditional educational settings to the new medium, whose potential is therefore often left
unexploited. This difficulty in devising effective didactic models is especially evident in the creation of digital courseware materials (both on- and offline) aimed at favouring self study. Some scholars (see, for instance, Nord [1996: 326] quoted in Reinke [2005: 12]) even believe that the fundamentally argumentative nature of translation teaching is ill-suited to accommodate self-study in whatever form. In other words, whereas language learning can, at least to a certain extent, rely on feedback of the closed-class type (“right/wrong” at its simplest), feedback on translation tasks is rarely suited to accommodate concise and black-or-white responses. Translation has a lot of “grey” areas and needs lots of qualifications – it is probably no coincidence that the most frequent reaction of trainers to inadequate translation solutions is some variant or other of the type “It’s correct, but...”. Anthony Pym has even built a theory of translation competence on that “but” (see, again, Pym 2002). Therefore, while CALL has a long tradition of research and applications, computer-assisted translator training, especially as far as the training of beginners is concerned, is still in its infancy. Research on the topic is not extensive and the resources that have been developed at various translator training institutions are often guarded as well-kept secrets (not least, probably, because of the copyright issues related to the authentic materials that these resources employ in the translation tasks they propose for practice).

Already towards the end of last decade, Neunzig (1998: 566-567) identified some factors to be taken into consideration when preparing CMC courseware materials for translation teaching:

a) the theoretical framework or approach the materials refer to: approaches that focus on textual equivalence will find it harder to devise appropriate computer-based tasks; computers lend themselves better to tasks centred on smaller units such as sentences or phrases;
b) the type of texts used for the translation tasks: texts where stylistic features (such as irony, hyperbole or ellipsis) are of primary importance are more difficult to adapt to computer-based tasks, as they are usually more difficult to segment in smaller units; informative texts seem to be better suited for the requirements of computer-based activities;
c) the need for documentation: texts used for computer-based translation tasks should be about topics that require a minimum of documentation; therefore, specialized texts won’t do for such tasks;
d) the aim of the tasks: computers can be used to propose tasks to students at different stages of the learning process; the particular nature of translation tasks, however, makes it difficult to conceive of computer-based practice as completely autonomous and student-centred – computer based tasks, in other words, will remain part of a wider pedagogical process, or a complement to classroom activities where the text to be translated is discussed in more detail.

Most of the factors identified by Neunzig remain relevant even after technological advances and the scant methodological/conceptual progress in the creation of CMC translation teaching environments are taken into account. The one aspect that has perhaps been partly superseded by advances in technology is the requirement that the texts used for translation tasks be very general so that no documentation is needed. In Web-based environments, users have today avail-
able to them a virtually unlimited supply of reference materials – by searching the Web they can find information, both encyclopaedic and linguistic, on any topic. Apart from the methodological considerations, Neunzig’s paper is also interesting as an attempt at measuring the effectiveness of CMC resources on an empirical basis – effectiveness being a crucial issue when trying to establish the viability of a didactic approach that relies (partially or not) on digital resources.

More recently, some ideas for developing courseware materials based on CMC are discussed in Reinke (2005) who, however, only presents a list of desiderata and makes no reference to already available resources. Different scenarios for integrating CMC methods into translation courses are described and the corresponding need to change teaching (and learning) habits is acknowledged. One particular point stressed by Reinke is the need for CMC resources used at all levels to establish a “feedback loop”. Following Nord (1996), critical feedback is considered to be an essential element of any form of translator training. Reinke (2005: 12) also points out, however, that when self-study allows access to a tutor, then self-study exercises may constitute a useful supplement to classroom activities.

A description of available CMC resources for the teaching of general translation is provided in Espunya (2005). Following Bou et al. (2004), Espunya identifies two modes for translation learning: “e-learning” and “self access”. E-learning is a form of distance learning which requires a model of the learning process and the design of a dedicated infrastructure to implement the model. It is self-paced, self-directed, capable of accommodating multiple learning styles and aimed at fostering contact either between students and instructors or between students themselves (e.g. through discussion forums). Self access, on the other hand, is more of a complement to classroom activities and can rely both on digital platforms and traditional paper-based resources in a library. Once they have gone digital, however, self-access resources can serve «a double role in traditional as well as in e-learning settings» (Espunya 2005: 4). The materials Espunya presents, collected in an environment called ED@T, are characterized not as an e-learning system but as «an activity bank with resources for e-learning». Espunya does not give practical details of the courses that use ED@T. In particular, she gives no indication of the number of potential users of the resources – a factor, as will be seen later, that can be decisive in devising a suitable model for the creation of online resources.

Some advantages and disadvantages of distance teaching/learning in translation are discussed by Scarpa (2006). Advantages, especially in online environments, derive from the possibility to enhance knowledge-mining skills and to train the students in group work, an aspect that has become essential in today’s translation profession. Disadvantages can be summed up as follows: a) preparation of online materials is time-consuming; b) groups of learners can be of mixed levels and abilities; c) it is difficult to keep in contact with students via e-mail or forums; d) giving feedback, particularly on individual basis is, again, very time-consuming.
3. **The Puzzle it Out (henceforth abbreviated to PIO) web site**

The *Puzzle it Out* web site is part of CLAWEB, a portal that gives access to the resources created by the teaching staff at the Language Centre of the University of Padua. The materials created for CLAWEB fall within two broad categories: general-purpose language-learning resources and (for the most part) materials especially developed to support specific courses. The PIO web site supports the English-Italian Translation Module of the 3rd-year English-language exam of the degree course in “Discipline della mediazione linguistica e culturale” (“Disciplines of Cultural and Linguistic mediation”; from now on abbreviated to MLC). This is one of the many degree courses in “linguistic mediation” and the like that Italian universities have started to offer after the major overhaul conducted on the country’s university system towards the end of the 1990s. Whereas previously the only Italian schools for translators at university level were based in Trieste and Forlì (the latter as part of the University of Bologna), in the post-reform period courses have sprung up all over the country offering training in foreign languages with a more or less pronounced focus on translation. The demand (and supply) for translator training has consequently boomed, as these courses are generally attended by large crowds of students – a factor, as will be seen below, that has no small effects on devising e-learning materials and resources.

Students who have reached the 3rd year of the MLC course have only had limited exposition to translation practice. Their experience is still largely that of translation as a language-learning activity (there is some practice on translation into English in the second year). The very first opportunity for them to look at translation “in its own terms” is the Translation Theory module offered in the first semester of the third year (again as part of the English Language exam). The English-Italian translation module comes in the second semester and the PIO web site supports the classroom activities carried out for this module. Links with what students have been presented with in the Theory module, however, should be obvious (and indeed the teacher responsible for that module has contributed some materials to the site).

The aims of the PIO web site as regards learning objectives can be characterised in terms of the four general objectives of a translation course as identified by Hurtado Albir (1999: 53), i.e. the methodological, the contrastive, the textual and the professional. The focus of the site materials is clearly on the first two (methodological, contrastive) as students are only really being introduced to an approach to translation as a communicative event. References to the other objectives (the textual and the professional) are of course present, but their role is mainly that of clarifying matters pertaining to the methodology of translation or of providing support to a view of translation as a decision-making activity. More specifically, as regards the methodology of translation the site seeks to raise the students’ awareness of the factors that are likely to influence translation decisions (communicative context, addressees, text types) and the importance of the target language. Space is also devoted to an illustration of, and practice on, translation procedures. From the contrastive viewpoint, the site concentrates on aspects such as the difference in writing conventions between the two languages, the importance of collocation and a comparison between cohesion mechanisms.
Other factors which have influenced the creation of the PIO web site are not related to the learning objectives but have to do with a series of diverse aspects that nonetheless end up playing a decisive role in the way the materials are being developed. Among such aspects, the following two are worth mentioning:

- **number of potential users**: students attending the 3rd-year English language modules of the MLS degree can literally be counted by the hundred. This constitutes a major problem in terms of the feedback to be given to them when they use the site. All researchers and teachers engaged in the creation of CMC resources agree in acknowledging the need for a “feedback loop” to be established between students and the teacher responsible for the site, in his/her different guises as tutor, facilitator or moderator. When numbers are high, however, this feedback loop has to be conceived of very carefully if teachers do not want to end up inundated with materials sent in by students.

- **usability**: materials need to be concise, have a degree of interactivity and guarantee sufficiently broad coverage of topics. Conciseness follows from the unwillingness of readers of online materials to spend too much time on a page⁴. A certain degree of interactivity is necessary, so that students do not limit themselves to passively reading the materials but are actively engaged in tasks. Feedback in this case is problematic because of the large number of potential users. Finally, coverage has to be broad so that students are not put off and teachers can combine different classroom tasks with what they have available online.

To sum up, the PIO web site is not a resource for autonomous learning but is rather an online self-access platform offering an activity bank. The web site supports classroom practice but can also be used by students for reviewing purposes. The site is intended to reach the largest possible number of students, offering them opportunities for reflection and practice on actual translation tasks. The potential number of users being extremely high, however, opportunities for critical feedback to be delivered on an individual basis are limited, which is why the site only remains a complement to classroom activity. The rest of this section will present some features of the PIO web site in more detail and hint at possible ways of improving it in the future.

### 3.1 A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SITE: ON-LINE TRANSLATION TASKS

As noted earlier, the materials developed for the PIO web site mainly aim raising the students’ awareness of a) some methodological aspects of translation in general and b) some particular aspects of English-Italian translation, discussed contrastively. As regards the methodology of translation, a whole section is devoted to translation procedures (i.e. transfer procedures at the linguistic level; cf. the definition in Delisle et al. [1999]). A wealth of examples (all taken from authentic materials) is provided and students are invited to try their hands on employing the procedures (see Figures 1 and 2).
AMPLIFICAZIONE (1)


a) 85% of Americans are concerned about pornography being too available to young people through the Internet

L’85% degli americani ha paura che i giovani che navigano su Internet possano accedere a materiale di carattere pornografico.

b) In a world of rapid technological change, the EU is increasingly active in helping European research to achieve scientific excellence.

In un mondo di rapidi cambiamenti tecnologici, l’UE è sempre più attiva nell’alimentare la ricerca europea a raggiungere un livello scientifico di eccellenza.

c) In most of the EU you can travel without carrying a passport and without being stopped for checks at the borders.

I cittadini dell’UE possono viaggiare nella maggior parte del suo territorio senza passaporto e senza doversi fermare per controlli alle frontiere.

Figure 1. Illustrating translation procedures – page on “amplification” from the Puzzle it Out web site

Provate a tradurre le seguenti frasi ricorrendo ad un’amplificazione, ossia introducendo elementi che non trovano diretto riscontro nella frase di partenza, e confrontate le vostre soluzioni con altre possibili traduzioni facendo clic su "Confronta".

1. The European Central Bank is in charge of the single currency, the euro.
2. Some new member states may accept Schengen visas or residence permits of Schengen countries, so check with their consulates.
3. Do not forget your travel, health and car insurance documents. See below for further details.
4. When people are educated to the links between environment and government, they can improve both.

CONFRONTA >>

Figure 2. Tasking users – practice on “amplification”

The task illustrated in Figure 2 provides a good example of the difficulty in giving critical feedback immediately and automatically from within the site. When clicking on “Confronta”, students are only presented with a possible translation using amplification for each of the four sentences. They can then compare these sentences with their own renditions, which, even if different from the model translations, may still be perfectly adequate. A comparison between the model translations and their own solutions is left entirely to their own judgement or possibly to later discussion in class.

Another example of a task that students can carry out on their own without immediate feedback is the guided-translation exercise (similar to that presented
in Espunya [2005: 6]). Here, a text or an extract is presented where possible problematic spots are highlighted, and a hint is given as to the nature of the problem and to possible ways of solving it (see Figure 3). The choice not to provide a model translation is deliberate, as students of translation in general, and especially at this stage, tend to see model texts as the only possible correct translations.

Figure 3. Guided-translation exercise: some possibly problematic spots are only highlighted; others are discussed in short notes at the end of the text

An area where the tasks proposed to students are followed by immediate, on-line feedback is the discussion of contrastive aspects relating to English and Italian. The site covers aspects such as register and collocation, where tasks can sometimes resemble language-learning exercises (as in the task requiring students to provide collocates for given lexical elements in Italian). As noted earlier, insistence on the target language is intended to raise the students' awareness of the need to conform to writing conventions while accurately transferring meaning.

Apart from the tasks focussing on the target language, however, the site materials are generally based on a view of translation as selection whose criteria are governed by factors linked to the context of situation and to considerations of relevance. The problem in adapting this view to a computer-based environment is that selection draws from open-ended classes. This conflicts with the fact that computers can only give feedback from pre-established classes. A common way to get round this problem is to turn online environments into communication
channels, either one-to-one (teacher-student or student-student) or one-to-many (as in forum discussions). Considering the large number of potential users, a site such as Puzzle it Out cannot resort to one-to-one communication, especially between teacher and students – as much as this would be desirable, the workload for whomever was in charge of keeping in touch with users to provide individual feedback would be overwhelming. The site could, however, be made to accommodate opportunities for peer communication between students, by providing, for instance, an online forum or some other means for them to exchange ideas and discuss problems. It is felt, in other words, that a better balance could be achieved as regards the two conflicting needs of catering for a very large number of students and providing them with opportunities for guided practice.

4. Conclusion

Online didactic materials are certainly an effective way of reaching a large audience of students. They can make practice more meaningful and thus complement classroom activity. If devised appropriately, they can provide opportunities for autonomous learning. The creation of such materials, in whatever discipline or topic, also has a role in enhancing the prestige of an academic institution in a variety of directions: towards other members of the academic world (both other departments within the institution and other universities) and towards the general public, which includes future students and other interlocutors of the institution (among them the potential sources of funding which might take the creation of online materials as a sign of the academic institution’s dynamism). These we may call the “institutional function” of CMC teaching resources: although in theory it has nothing to do with the content (and the effectiveness) of the resources, in practice it can be as powerful a guiding principle for their development as are disciplinary and methodological considerations.

Given its essentially argumentative nature, translation teaching is sometimes ill-suited to accommodate self-study, whether it is based on online digital resources or on traditional paper-based materials. Self-study, however, is only one possible form of distance learning and online environments can be made to accommodate varying degrees of interaction between teachers and learners. The Puzzle it Out web site is, in this sense, still work in progress. It is a first attempt at making practice more meaningful for a large group of students: the materials created so far are able to reach a large audience, but they can certainly still be improved as far as interaction with, or among, users is concerned. Further work on the site will be aimed at ensuring that this second aim is achieved more effectively.


1 See http://ecolore.leeds.ac.uk

2 See http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/

3 As pointed out by Espunya (2005: 4), traditional approaches to translation teaching, and more specifically those centred on textual analysis, run the risk of downplaying the problems inherent in the target-text generation phase. In a website for students of translation, part of the tasks can consist in practice on the target language, with or without reference to a source text. This can help in raising the students’ awareness of a possible lack of competence in their own native language, one of the “classic” findings for those who are approaching translation in a communicative perspective.

4 Research on reading habits of Web surfers has shown that users tend to scan pages rather than read them in full (for references, see the various reports quoted in the “Readability Research” web page of the Society for Technical Communication, to be found at http://www.stcsig.org/usability/topics/readability.html).