

*Grammatical meaning is more significant (the 'tone' or 'flavour' of the text, its primary aspect, is perhaps dictated by its syntax), less precise, more general and sometimes more elusive than lexical meaning* (Newmark 1981:26).

Newmark's observation is nowhere more appropriate than in the context of mood usage. That the meaning of the Italian subjunctive is elusive cannot be doubted, and the tone or flavour of a given passage is most certainly affected by the presence or absence of subjunctive verbs. Goffman (1975) discussed the varying verbal repertoire, expressed phonologically, syntactically and lexically, employed in different social contexts, and the translator is accordingly guided by phonological, syntactic and lexical markers which determine register or socially conditioned language. In cases where both subjunctive and indicative may be used with little difference of meaning<sup>3</sup>, the former is often used to introduce or maintain a 'higher', more formal register, and is usually felt to be more 'correct'. Indeed the frequent recurrence of subjunctive forms tends to lend a certain weight to a given passage or dialogue, creating a more solemn, more ponderous tone. Papetti highlights the prolific presence of the subjunctive in the dialogue of Cardinal Federigo in *I promessi sposi*, a fact which assists in creating "un tipo di prosa elevata" (Papetti 1975:71), designed to befit his personality and office. Stefanini affirms that the subjunctive is often adopted "a scopi puramente ornamentali", being "il modo 'difficile', ossia accademicamente più prestigioso" (Stefanini 1974:105).

By contrast, the use of the indicative where one would normally expect the subjunctive can introduce a familiar, informal tone. This is especially true of the spoken word, but it is also true that writers may purposely 'drop' the tone or register in colloquial contexts, even where no conversation is being reported. Cassola, for example, has this tendency: "aveva pensato che era meglio non precipitare le cose" (cited by Moretti & Orvieto 1984:89). However, I feel it is worth reemphasizing that the *raison d'être* of an unexpected indicative may be semantic in origin. One should be especially on one's guard against the

inflexibility of purists such as the above-mentioned Fochi, who expresses his dismay at "l'errore più grave, l'uso più sfacciato di oggi" (Fochi 1968:263), that is, the combination of *credere* (in addition to other verbs and expressions with more or less the same meaning) and the indicative. He attributes this "errore" to southern influence, the 'parlare alla buona' so typical of the Rome-based film production of the fifties. His fury is such that despite the fact that he repeatedly insists upon the fine and delicate nuances which the subjunctive is able to convey (he even goes so far as to promote a view reminiscent of Whorf that if you eliminate the subjunctive "non avrete più, non solo la possibilità di esprimere certe idee, ma le idee stesse" (Fochi 1968:263), he does not entertain the idea that *credere* + indicative might be semantically motivated, i.e., it may characterize a less tentative, more confident belief on the part of the speaker than *credere* + subjunctive. Taking the argument a step further, it could be contended that two different values of *credere* are activated, one (+ subjunctive) meaning 'suspect', and the other (+ indicative) meaning 'know', 'be certain', thus warranting two separate entries in the lexicon. It follows that the translator must not try to 'correct' an unexpected indicative in translation, or gloss over it as if it were an oversight on the part of the writer; on the contrary, he should try to understand the criteria motivating its presence, be they semantic, syntactic or stylistic.

#### 1.4. Summary

Broadly speaking, the mechanism of the Italian subjunctive may thus be summarized as follows. Fundamentally its sphere of employment corresponds to a general distinction made by Vinay & Darbelnet (1969:31) between "servitude" - obligatory usage, corresponding (in the context of the subjunctive) to groups (i), (ii), and (iii) below, e.g., *a condizione che mi restituiscano il libro*, and "option" - optional usage, corresponding to group (iv) below, e.g., *è più vecchio di quanto (non) mi aspettassi* (possible alternatives here are the indicative *mi aspettavo* or the conditional *mi sarei aspettato*). Furthermore, the Italian subjunctive may be adopted for reasons which are:

(i) Almost exclusively semantic<sup>4</sup> - where, as noted

3 For a comprehensive list of such cases see Lepschy & Lepschy, 1979:226-228.

4 One hesitates to postulate that any case of the Italian subjunctive is entirely motivated by either semantic or syntactic factors. A

by Vinay & Darbelnet with reference to analogous cases. In French, the subjunctive is

*libre, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'il n'est pas commandé par une conjonction ou un certain genre de verbes* (Vinay & Darbelnet 1969:144).

In these cases the substitution of the subjunctive with an indicative would change the meaning altogether, e.g.: *Dio ti benedica!*; *Fosse vero!*; *portami una scatola che contenga* ['of such a type that can contain' or 'big enough to contain'] *tutti i cioccolatini che ho comperato* (example cited by Sensini 1990:249).

- (ii) Almost exclusively syntactic (see note 4), e.g.: *non si è concluso ancora nulla, nonostante che la maggioranza fosse d'accordo* (Zingarelli, 1986: 1244); *mi dispiace che non sia venuto*.
- (iii) Both semantic and syntactic: *speriamo che vinca*; *ho impedito che facesse brutta figura*.
- (iv) Semantic and/or syntactic and/or stylistic - in cases where both subjunctive and indicative are possible with no great difference in meaning between the two. For example, in the sentence *domandai dove andasse*, (a) syntactic factors must be relevant inasmuch as the subjunctive can occur in indirect interrogatives, (b) semantic criteria could be relevant in that *andasse* may introduce a greater degree of uncertainty (or even a sense of surprise - see Lepschy & Lepschy 1979:228) than its indicative counterpart *andava*, and (c) factors of style may ultimately determine the choice of mood, the subjunctive characterizing a more formal, more literary register. Obviously the translator must try as far as possible to account for these various factors.

## 2. The subjunctive in English

### 2.1. General comments

It is well documented that in modern English there exist only a handful of forms generally considered to be subjunctive. Classic examples of these often found in grammars are the verb forms

in exclamative sentences such as *God save the queen!*, *be that as it may*, etc., and in the protasis of conditional sentences, e.g., *if I were rich*. Yet the term 'subjunctive', although justifiable per se, is perhaps misleading in the field of contemporary English grammar, since in the European tradition its presence more often than not presupposes a fairly systematic morphological distinction with at least one other mood category (most commonly the indicative - I shall assume that the indicative may be defined as a mood - see Lyons 1968:307). As Jespersen rightly points out, the term 'mood' is traditionally restricted to a category expressed in verbal morphology; it is thus a "syntactic, not a notional category", which is "shown in the form of the verb" (Jespersen 1924:313). Scholars and grammarians have up to recent times been guilty of trying to impose the time-honoured categories of classical grammar onto languages which were quite alien to them. This approach entailed classifying 'uncooperative' parts of speech as ablative, superlative, subjunctive or whatever, sometimes assigning them zero endings to compensate for the lack of a tangible inflected form. Modern descriptive linguistics has demonstrated the futility of such an approach. Morphological distinction of moods is sporadic in modern English. The usual verb forms occurring in the protasis of conditional sentences, for instance (*if he comes / came / had come*), are undoubtedly hypothetical in the context, but it would be inappropriate to categorize them as subjunctive, because they are not formally distinct from the indicative forms (*I know he comes / came / had come*). However, it is unquestionable that there is a set, albeit extremely limited, of distinct subjunctive forms in English (see (Swan 1980:§ 580), for a good summary of these), notably after verbs such as *insist*, *require*, and *suggest*, where the forms coincide with the infinitive.

### 2.2. The English subjunctive in subordinate clauses

In subordinate clauses, even in cases where a formal distinction is available between subjunctive and indicative, it is very often not exploited. For example:

(a) *The doctor recommended that she take a holiday*

is acceptable but might be avoided for stylistic reasons, in that the juxtaposition of *she* and *take*

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'semantic' instance such as *Fosse vero!* might be construed as a subordinate clause with an understood governing verb (see section 3.2.1.1.), while Moretti & Orvieto suggest that the appearance of *sia* with an apparently 'syntactic' usage in *mi dispiace che non sia venuto*, notwithstanding the fact that it represents "pura realtà obiettiva", is "riconducibile ai valori semantici... di costrutti in cui, all'origine, si intravede il confronto di volontà o di eventi tra la frase reggente e la subordinata..." (Moretti & Orvieto 1984:79).

perhaps jars somewhat, or at least sounds too formal, in certain circumstances. If this is the case, the speaker/writer may choose the indicative *takes* or the modal verb *should (take)*, or even avail himself of some other structure altogether.

A different case is where the mood contrast can be semantically distinctive. In the sentence:

(b) *They insisted that she be taken home at once,*

with the verb of the subordinate clause in the subjunctive, *insist* possesses unequivocally the meaning of *demand / order insistently*, whereas with the indicative, viz.

(c) *They insisted that she was taken home at once,*

the governing verb could either convey the same meaning as in (b) or signify *claim/maintain insistently*.

Therefore as regards the meaning *demand insistently*, the subjunctive has the advantage of being semantically unambiguous, and may be preferred for this reason. On the other hand, the combination of *he* and *be* might again be regarded as unnatural by a native speaker, in which case Vinay & Darbelnet's notion of 'modulation' comes into play. If the speaker considers that *he be* "se huerte au génie de LA" (see note 1 below), then either the modal "should", or some appropriate alternative, will take precedence, i.e.:

	that he should be taken home
They insisted	that he was to be taken home on his being taken home

Potential ambiguity can sometimes be dispelled by a change of aspect. In (c) above, the substitution of 'had been' for 'was' would assure the meaning of *claim insistently*.

### 2.3. The English subjunctive in main clauses

The traditional use of the subjunctive, however, remains largely unchallenged, in both English and Italian, in the area of independent clauses. Initially this might be seen as paradoxical, since the subjunctive has in the European tradition been regarded as the typical mood of completive subordinates (it is no coincidence that 'subjunctive' - 'subiunctivus' or 'coniunctivus' in Latin - derives from the Greek 'hypotaktike', meaning 'subordinate'). In reality the declining use of the

subjunctive in subordinate clauses is not particularly surprising, since subordination is often assured by some other formal sentence element (e.g., *che / that*), in which case the subjunctive, if it does not carry any significant semantic variation on the indicative, becomes redundant as a marker of subordination, e.g., in Italian *non sapevo che era francese* can unequivocally replace *non sapevo che fosse francese*. Furthermore the Italian subjunctive in subordinate clauses (and the present or past indicative) can sometimes be omitted in favour of the future indicative or the conditional (*spero che ci aiuti / aiuterà; avevo paura che non volesse / non avrebbe voluto vedermi mai più*). In independent clauses, on the other hand, the indicative cannot replace the subjunctive in either English or Italian without drastic semantic interference: *God forbids / God forbid!; Heaven helps me / Heaven help me!; Era vero / Fosse vero!*

## 3. The translation of the Italian subjunctive into English

### 3.1. Principal problems

The present analysis, like most contributions on the Italian subjunctive, draws most of its examples from narrative works, although one readily acknowledges the justice of remonstrances such as Herczeg's (1972) concerning the scarcity of research into other types of literature. According to Newmark's well-known division between communicative and semantic translation, literary works, like other forms of original expression "where the specific language of the speaker or writer is as important as the content" (Newmark 1981:44), will usually receive a semantic translation. More specifically on the subject of syntax transfer within semantic translation, Newmark observes:

*The syntax in semantic translation which gives the text its stress and rhythm... is as sacred as the words, being basically subject only to the standard transpositions... from one language to another* (Newmark 1981:47).

This remark may only be applied to the Italian subjunctive up to a point. It is true that standard transpositions are often sufficient, but, as I have already noted, the subjunctive is as much, if not more, a matter of semantics than syntax. While a standard transposition suffices for an 'automatic' use such as *volevo che smettesse di fumare*, it is

evident that in connection with examples of epistemic mood usage, where very often both subjunctive and indicative are possible, such as *si dice che gli americani siano / sono già sbarcati*, the translator must be sensitive to why one mood has been preferred to the other; in other words, he must try to assess the degree of commitment that the producer of the sentence feels towards the truth of the proposition *gli americani sono già sbarcati*. Varying degrees of commitment would be suggested by the following renderings: *they say that / word is going around that the Americans have already landed (or the Americans are said to have already landed); the Americans are alleged to have already landed; they seem to think the Americans have already landed*. It is clear that in this context standard shifts are of no great assistance. Indeed the semantic subtleties of mood distinction here are best reproduced in English by means of compensation, a procedure referred to by a number of translation theorists whereby loss of meaning, among other things, in one part of a sentence is counterbalanced in another part. In the above case the element of doubt conveyed by the subjunctive is deflected in translation to the governing verb phrase.

The possibility for the speaker / writer to express commitment or lack of it to the proposition of the subordinate is a feature of many instances of epistemic usage, particularly those introduced by *credere, pensare, ritenere* etc. The situation is summarized by Renzi:

*Se il parlante e la persona denotata dal soggetto della predicazione non sono identici... ne risulta per il primo la possibilità di segnalare, mediante la scelta del modo, se egli condivide o meno la credenza della seconda* (Renzi 1991:434).

Yet the issue is further complicated not only by stylistic criteria but by the fact that the indicative may sometimes be used to underline the conviction or certainty of a third party (often the grammatical subject), e.g.: *c'è gente che crede che la libertà e l'ordine non sono compatibili*. Obviously the translator needs to be aware of such shades of meaning, and in particularly complex or ambiguous instance might be advised to follow the guidelines proposed by Nida in his penetrating analysis of grammatical meaning (1974:47-49), where he recommends splitting surface structures into

separate underlying sentences. This method, which appears to represent an optional constituent of the decoding postulated previously by Nida & Taber (1969:484), is in practice a kind of syntactic version of componential analysis and may assist in removing ambiguity.

### 3.2. Untranslatability

The scarcity of instances whereby the Italian subjunctive may be reproduced using an English subjunctive means that we are confronted with what Catford terms "linguistic untranslatability". The author postulates that linguistic untranslatability occurs when there is no precise lexical or syntactic substitute in the target language for the source language item.<sup>5</sup> Others maintain that hardly any element of syntax can be translated with absolute precision. Martinet argues that if two different languages do not possess the same syntactic structure to express a given concept,

*nous ne sommes jamais sûrs d'avoir traduit en même temps la façon (différente de la nôtre) dont le locuteur voit, considère, analyse cette action*" (Martinet 1959:15).

Mounin is rather less despairing, insisting that in spite of "l'hétérogénéité des syntaxes" of the languages of the world, there must exist

*raisons théoriques à cause desquelles on a pu, pendant des siècles, pratiquement, traduire avec une approximation très acceptable, en dépit de ces difficultés* (Mounin 1963:251).

However, the entire issue of untranslatability, whether it be syntactic, lexical or whatever, is a complex one, and a lengthy discussion of it would be incongruous in the present context. Indeed Mounin may be justified in objecting that the amount of attention devoted to the question of untranslatability has hampered progress in the area of the more concrete practical problems that the translator is confronted with.

At any rate one need not be too alarmed by such theoretical positions. Notwithstanding the unquestionable truth of Vinay & Darbelnet's

5 Popovič's (1971) description of linguistic untranslatability is perhaps to be preferred. He defines it as: "A situation in which the linguistic elements of the original cannot be replaced adequately in structural, linear, functional or semantic terms in consequence of a lack of denotation or connotation". (Popovič's 1976)

assertion to the effect that in English "le déclin du subjonctif prive cette langue de certaines nuances" (Vinay & Darbelnet 1969:144), the fact remains that the Italian subjunctive can in fact be rendered by means of a variety of transpositions, and of course in the area of modality English can boast a rich array of modal verbs.

### 3.3. Common cases

The subjunctive in Italian is most commonly rendered by an English verb phrase and for this reason I shall give precedence to this area, although in practice a variety of transpositions may often be employed, e.g., as part of a noun phrase: *Mi sorprende che tuo figlio sia timido* - 'I'm surprised at your son's shyness'. A number of English verbal categories, not necessarily mutually exclusive (i.e., a single case of the subjunctive can often be rendered by more than one verbal structure, e.g.: *vorrei che mio figlio fosse più puntuale* could be rendered *I wish my son was / were / would be more punctua<sup>6</sup>*), may be used, depending on the structure and context. These may be divided into two groups:

(a) Modally marked verb categories - these denote hypothetical, potential, desired, etc., situations:

(i) the subjunctive, e.g.:

- 'C'era del cognac e ordinai che lo *portassero* subito' (cited in Schmitt-Jensen 1970:143) - 'There was some brandy, and I ordered that it *be* brought at once'.

- 'Luigi Clerici si dichiarò disposto ad eseguire la missione affidatagli, ma... chiese che l'articolo *fosse* firmato subito dal cardinale' (*L'Espresso*, 5.2.61, p.5; cited in Schmitt-Jensen 1970:139) - 'Luigi Clerici made it known that he was prepared to carry out the mission he had been assigned, but asked that the article *be* signed at once by the cardinal'.

(ii) the imperative, e.g.:

- '*Tenga* le mani a posto' (Cassola 1960:34) - '*Keep* your hands to yourself'

- '*Se ne vada* immediatamente!' - '*Leave* at once!'

(iii) Modal verbs, e.g.:

- 'si faceva da sé i vestiti e se li faceva così

stretti, che temeva si *squarciassero* se mangiava un intero pasto' (Ginzburg 1972:129) - 'she made her own clothes, and made them so tight that she was afraid they *would* split if she ate a whole meal'.

'Il signore ci *protegga* e *risparmi* questo regno santissimo' (Di Lampedusa 1985:39) - 'May the Lord protect us and spare this sacred kingdom'.

- 'Che *vinca* il migliore' - 'May the best man win'

- 'Claudio ghignò fra sé, forte quel tanto che lo *potessi* udire' (Ottieri 1954:52) - 'Claudio sniggered to himself, just loud enough so that I *could* hear'.

(b) Modally unmarked verb categories - these can indicate either real or hypothetical situations. They are not markers of modality in themselves, but may assume modal meaning in accordance with the impositions of the governing structure or the context:

(i) The indicative:

- 'tornò in ufficio rimuginando il fatto che il Marchica *avesse* chiamato alle nove spaccate' (Sciascia 1979:63) - 'he went back to his office turning over in his mind the fact that Marchica *had called* at nine o'clock on the dot'.

- 'una sera... non trovai Elena a cena. Seppi verso le nove dove *fosse* e perché ci *fosse* andata' (Ottieri 1954:186) - 'one evening Elena did not turn up for dinner. I found out around nine o'clock where she *was* and why she *had gone* there'.

- 'se *abitasse* in campagna sarebbe più felice' - 'if he *lived* in the country he'd be happier'.

(ii) The infinitive, e.g.:

- 'Sì, lui vorrebbe che *lavorassi* nel cinema' (Moravia 1960:163) - 'Yes, he'd like me to *work* in cinema'.

- 'mi disperavo e pregavo che lo *lasciasse* da noi ancora un poco' (Ginzburg 1972:73) - 'I felt desperate, and begged him to let him *stay* with us a little longer'

- 'seduti fuori del capanno, si godevano il solicello invernale aspettando che *bollisse* l'acqua' (Cassola 1959:125) - 'sitting outside the hut, they enjoyed the pale winter sun as they waited for the water *to boil*'.

(iii) The gerund, e.g.:

- 'Questo non impedì che il Giornale di Trinacria quattro giorni dopo *facesse* sapere ai Palermitani

<sup>6</sup> See again Vinay & Darbelnet for their distinction between 'transposition obligatoire' and 'transposition facultative' (1969:50).

che...' (Lampedusa 1985:134) - 'This did not prevent the *Giornale di Trinacria* informing the people of Palermo four days later that...'.  
- 'Non vale la pena che *torniate* prima di venerdì' - 'It's not worth your *coming* back before Friday'.

- 'senza che noi ce ne *rendessimo* conto' - 'without us / our *realizing* it'

It is clear that there is no immediately recognizable pattern involved in the translation of the Italian subjunctive. All we can say for the present is that 'factual' or 'syntactic' occurrences of the subjunctive in Italian subordinate clauses will necessarily be translated by group (b) above, while hypothetical occurrences will be translated by either group (a) or (b).

### 3.4. Problematic cases

Most of the above structures are reasonably well-documented. There remain, however, a number of problematic cases, most of which, because they fall outside the standard transpositions, are not covered in contrastive analyses of Italian and English (Brownlees & Denton (1988), for example, frequently provide tips on how to reproduce the subjunctive in English, but only in cases where familiar, almost automatic transpositions are required).

#### 3.4.1.

Some occurrences of the subjunctive require the insertion of some other sentence element, as well as the translation of the verb itself:

##### 3.4.1.1. Insertion of a governing verb

Many occurrences of the subjunctive in independent clauses in Italian have been interpreted by grammarians as the natural consequence of the ellipsis of an understood governing verb, e.g., the volitive (*vorrei che fosse vero!*) In this way the subjunctive would remain true to its more usual role as a feature of subordinate or dependent clauses. Yet on a theoretical level it could be argued that, since the notion of volition, doubt, or whatever, is commonly associated with the subjunctive anyway, then it is perhaps superfluous to postulate the ellipsis of a volitive, dubitative, etc., governing verb (indeed the entire question of ellipsis is problematic - see, for example, Joos (1964) and Hall (1976)). Having said that, if on a practical level one is actually required to translate the subjunctive in independent clauses, the

introduction of an appropriate governing verb often seems to be the most satisfactory solution:

(a) the 'congiuntivo dubitativo':

- 'Che non *volessero* quindi sparare? Che *volessero* lasciar finire la messa?' (Fallaci 1979:309) - '*Could it have been* that they didn't want to shoot? *Was it possible* that they wanted to let us finish mass?'

(b) the 'congiuntivo esortativo'. The present tense form can usually be rendered by a structure introduced by *let*, e.g., '*che lo facciano loro*' - '*let them do it*' (one might also include the honorific *Lei* imperative in this category - see 3.3. above). The imperfect, however, (representing a kind of reported imperative) is more problematic:

- 'Era stanca, non stava più in piedi; *pensasse* lui se chiamavano' (Pavese 1960:43) - 'She was tired, and practically falling asleep on her feet. She *told* him to handle it if they called'.

- 'Il capitano Tan... ha guardato l'orologio come a dire che aveva sonno: *facessimo* presto' (Fallaci 1979:69) - 'Captain Tan... had a look at his watch as if to say that he was feeling sleepy: evidently *he was hinting* that we should get a move on'.

(c) The 'congiuntivo desiderativo': this is usually translated by the English indicative or a modal verb, sometimes introduced by *if only*, *I wish*, etc., e.g.,

- 'Avessi il tempo!' - '*I wish* I had the time!'

##### 3.4.1.2. Insertion of some other element

- '*Fosse* il caldo oltremodo afoso... *fosse* la stanchezza... egli si sentiva...' (Moravia 1966:09) - '*Whether* it was the terribly oppressive heat, or *whether* it was the fact that he was tired, he felt...'

- '*Vada* per il caffè' (Brancati 1987:771) - '*All right, I'll have* that coffee'.

- 'Lo faremo *costi* quel che *costi*' - 'We'll do it *whatever* the cost'.

### 3.4.2. The subjunctive in clauses introduced by *perché*:

#### 3.4.2.1. Causal clauses

- usually translated by the indicative: 'Studio, non perché mi *piaccia*, ma perché sono obbligato' Example taken from Moretti & Orvieto 1984:79) - 'I study because I'm obliged to, not because I *enjoy* it'.

#### 3.4.2.2. Indirect interrogatives

- usually translated by the indicative: Non riesco a capire perché *l'abbia* fatto, 'I can't

understand why he's *done* it / he *did* it'.

### 3.4.2.3. Final clauses

- the present subjunctive is generally rendered by the English present indicative or by a modal verb (usually *will*, *can*, or *may*), the past subjunctive by a modal verb (usually *would*, *could*, or *might*):

- 'Sapeva ormai come dovesse disporsi al mattino, quando si faceva la barba dinanzi allo specchio, perché la luce lo *illuminasse* in faccia' (Buzzati 1989:72) - 'By then he had worked out exactly where to stand, when he shaved in front of the mirror each morning, so that his face *would* be in the light'.

In final clauses *perché* is sometimes replaced by *che* (and also, on a more formal level, *affinché*):

- 'Fatelo entrare che si *riscaldi* un poco' (Zingarelli 1986:349) - 'Let him in so (that) he *can* warm up a bit' (note that *so that* with a past tense usually conveys the meaning of *sicché*, *così che*).

### 3.4.2.4. Consecutive clauses

- generally rendered by the infinitive within the structure 'for + object + to + infinitive':

- 'C'è voluto almeno mezz'ora perché Pelou *rintracciasse* il general Loan' (Fallaci 1979:11) - 'It took at least half an hour *for Pelou to find* General Loan'.

- 'Eppure sarebbe bastato che... erompesse una risata dei vecchi tempi perché tutti *trasalissero* di stupore, d'invidia, e infine di vergogna' (Brancati 1987:892-3) - 'And yet a burst of laughter from the good old days would have sufficed *for everyone to jump* in their seats with astonishment, with envy and ultimately with shame'.

- 'Eppure ventidue mesi sono lunghi e possono succedere molte cose: c'è tempo perché si *formino* nuove famiglie, *nascano* bambini e *incomincino* anche a parlare...' (Buzzati 1989:78) - 'Nevertheless twenty-two months is a long time and many things can happen: there is time for new families to begin, for babies to be born and to start speaking as well...'

### 3.4.3. The subjunctive in Italian relative clauses

I have already alluded to the inadequacy of the traditional hypothetical / real distinction between subjunctive and indicative. Relative clauses in Italian also bear out the implausibility of such a distinction. Not infrequently we find the

subjunctive indicating a straightforward fact associated with a specific person, e.g.:

- 'Pure erano amici; fra tutti quanti Lagorio era il solo che istintivamente lo *capisse*' (Buzzati 1989:62);

and the indicative depicting something imagined or 'unreal':

- 'Madama... inveiva e gemeva come una madre baccante che si è mangiate le sue creature' (Vittorini 1970:213).

In these two examples, as in the vast majority of Italian relative clauses (whether subjunctive or indicative), the English indicative is generally adopted in translation. However, particular attention must be paid to subjunctive relative clauses where the verb is associated with some kind of hypothetical situation:

#### 3.4.3.1. Final and non-specific relative clauses

In the following cases a translation simply with the English indicative would clearly be a mistake:

- Pronunciavo parole che *riuscissero* gradite alla mia compagna, in modo da strapparle un sorriso' (Pratolini 1972:152) - 'I made comments that I thought *would / might* appeal to my companion, with a view to forcing a smile out of her'.

- 'Vedi, Guglielmo, nella disgrazia hai avuto almeno questa fortuna, una sorella che si *occupasse* delle bimbe' (Cassola 1959:96) - 'Remember, Guglielmo, even in such tragic circumstances you had at least one thing in your favour: a sister *who could* look after the children'.

- 'io la portai non lontano, dove<sup>7</sup> *avessimo* potuto sentire anche una mezza voce del padrone' (Fenoglio 1970:212) - 'I took her to a place nearby, where even a whisper from the proprietor *would* be audible'.

An apparently similar type is the following:

- *Devo trovare / voglio / cerco / ho bisogno di* etc. *una segretaria che sappia il tedesco e l'inglese.*

This type is usually regarded as a subjunctive of purpose in a final clause, but such a categorization is misleading. The sense of purpose is in reality provided by the governing verb, not by the subjunctive. In this type the subjunctive's most vital role is to assure that the subject of the

<sup>7</sup> The temporal adverb *dove* does not strictly speaking introduce a relative clause. In this example, however, it obviously possesses the same force as a relative, viz, *la portai in un luogo nel quale...*

relative is interpreted as non-specific, i.e., that the speaker has no particular individual in mind. Compare the case cited from Cassola above (*una sorella che si occupasse*), where the sister's existence is not in doubt - the question was whether she would be available or willing to look after the children; in this case it is thus the action of the verb which is in some way hypothetical, whereas in *cerco una segretaria...*, the hypothesis concerns principally the status of the subject of the verb. Naturally subjunctive relatives with non-specific noun heads do not need to be introduced by a verb such as *cercare*, or indeed by any verb at all, e.g.:

- 'Nel linguaggio comune, si dice 'dantesco', per esempio, un paesaggio che non *sorrída*, non *ammetta* chi lo contempla a confidenze o riposo... Così, 'dantesco' è chiamato comunemente il carattere d'un uomo tutto d'un pezzo, che non *scenda* mai a compromessi, che non conosca debolezze' (Bosco 1966:145).

In these cases the English indicative is the usual translation (but see 3.4.3.2. below), although ambiguity may remain between a specific and non-specific reading, particularly where the governing verb is *look for*, *need* etc. - ambiguity which will be resolved, if necessary, in some other way. A customer in a bookshop, for example, with no specific book in mind, might wish to avoid the ambiguous *I need a book which deals with Indian law* in favour of an alternative such as *Have you got any books which deal with Indian law?*

### 3.4.3.2. Another non-specific type: past tense relative clauses involving a comparison

The types of relative clause referred to here are those involving a comparison of the type ...*come / pareva / dava l'impressione di un ubriaco che cantasse alla luna*, where the subject of the relative is once again non-specific. The Italian indicative sometimes appears in this type of structure, though the subjunctive tends to emphasize the hypothetical nature of the comparison. In general, the more far-fetched the comparison, the more likely we are to find the subjunctive. The difficulty in such structures centres above all around the translation of the Italian imperfect, in that the use of the English simple past or past progressive can create the impression that the subject of the relative is specific and that the predicate has an

eventive<sup>8</sup> interpretation. In such cases it would seem more satisfactory to use either a present tense or, if possible, the appropriate (present) participial form, e.g.:

- 'il suo pensiero cercava affannosamente il cervello, come un pulcino, non ancora fatto, il quale *cercasse* l'uovo donde l'avessero strappato' (Brancati 1987:711) - 'like a chick... *looking for* the egg from which it had been snatched'.

- 'Da una parte la notte nera, vellosa, traversata da un ronfo infinito e leggero, come d'animale che *dormisse* a occhi aperti' (Brancati, *Il vecchio con gli stivali*) - 'like that of an animal *sleeping / which is sleeping* with its eyes open'.

- 'Mi pareva simile ad un industriale che corresse per il mondo gridando l'eccellenza dei suoi prodotti' (Svevo 1969:830) - 'He gave me the impression of an industrialist *dashing / who dashes* all over the world...'.  
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## 4. Conclusion

The present survey, while acknowledging theories of syntactic untranslatability, has been conducted on the assumption that syntax can be translated successfully, in order to focus upon questions of a more practical nature within the framework of contrastive linguistics.

The problem of translating the subjunctive into English is exacerbated by two factors: (i) the scarcity of English subjunctive forms - and the fact that these forms are often avoided even when they are available, and (ii) the ambivalent semantic status of the subjunctive in Italian, in that it may represent real as well as hypothetical situations. The English translation must thus take into account the possible semantic, syntactic and stylistic implications of any given instance of the Italian subjunctive, above all in 'optional' cases, where the subjunctive may be replaced by the indicative and/or conditional with no radical alteration of meaning.

An overview of the various ways in which the subjunctive may be translated into English reveals predictably that there is no observable pattern to the various types of solution afforded by the target language. Broadly speaking we can simply conclude,

<sup>8</sup> In linguistics the term 'eventive' has been subject to varying interpretations. My meaning is that defined by (among others) Puglielli & Castelfranchi: "La lettura eventiva... si ha quando il predicato viene asserito come un unico, localizzato evento" (1976: 97).

where the translation is effected by means of a verb phrase, that (i) 'real' or 'syntactic' cases of the subjunctive (necessarily occurring in subordinate clauses only) will be rendered by one of the modally unmarked English verb categories, and that therefore (ii) main clause subjunctive verbs (necessarily hypothetical) and hypothetical instances of subordinate subjunctives will be expressed by modally marked or unmarked English verb categories.

I have noted that some cases of the Italian subjunctive require in translation the insertion of a further element in addition to the verbal phrase. This is especially common among main clause subjunctives which might be interpreted as being in effect subordinate, dependent upon an understood governing verb.

The translation of *perché* + subjunctive rests upon the correct identification of the type of subordinate clause in which it appears.

Final (subjunctive) relative clauses are perforce

hypothetical and generally require a modal verb in English. In other relative clauses where the subjunctive serves primarily to indicate that the noun head is non-specific, the English indicative is generally employed, though this may create ambiguity, since the English indicative can be accompanied by both specific and non-specific noun heads. However, in certain types of past tense relative clause with non-specific noun heads and involving a comparison, e.g., *pareva un x che...*, the English past tense can sound too 'concrete' and tends to be avoided in favour of a present participle or the present indicative.

With the present study I hope to have gone a little way towards filling a gap not only in Romance syntax, and more specifically Italian syntax, which has yet to come up with a coherent description of the role and meaning of the subjunctive in Italian, but also in the area of translation theory, which has been oddly taciturn in this regard considering the complex nature of the subject.

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# The Communicative Intent of Text as a Problem of Translation

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In any information addressed to some recipient, there is always a *communicative intent*, something that determines the communicative structure of the sentence and may necessitate a restructuring of text in translation.

The subject of this paper is comparison between the *communicative structure* (CS) of sentences in the Russian and Italian languages, in order to see what kind of text transformations result from the differences found, and to identify the more common restructuring patterns, primarily when translating from Russian into Italian. The study is based on works by Anton Chekhov, Konstantin Paustovsky and Mikhail Sholokhov, translated into Italian, and a story by the modern Italian writer Beppe Fenoglio, translated into Russian.

I will not go deeply into the history and theory of the issue which is covered by ample literature. I will only quote this statement by V. Mathesius, one of the earlier students of the subject who underscored the linguistic nature of CS and linked it to word order as its basic means of expression:

*The relationship between the communicative and formal sentence structures is one of the most characteristic phenomena of every language. (Mathesius 1967)*

The subject of CS caught the attention of more scholars with the development of text linguistics. The presuppositions theory has delineated new categories of utterance meaning analysis: presupposition vs. assertion, and presupposition vs. introduction. Some conclude that the "theme/rheme" opposition is a typical syntactic manifestation of the deeper "presupposition / assertion" opposition, which also depends on

various pragmatic factors (van Dijk 1978). Others do not see communicative structure as a language phenomenon and reject any "parallel two-way analysis of the sentence in terms of the so-called grammatical and communicative structures" (Kolshansky 1975), suggesting that the syntactical structure of a sentence should be viewed as the structure formed by the subject and the predicate.

We distinguish among three levels in the utterance (Daneš 1966; Gak 1975; Alisova 1971): grammatical / syntactic, semantic and communicative, the latter forming the sentence's CS. All the three interact with one another closely. The two common terms, *theme* (T) and *rheme* (R), will be used here for the two parts of CS.

CS is expressed through intonational, syntactical and lexical means.

Intonation, including accent in the first place, is used to stress R in both Russian and Italian. Accent can be made on any part of a sentence to emphasize it.

In stylistically neutral speech both in Russian and in Italian, there is an ascending tone at the beginning of a sentence to mark T, while the sentence's intonational centre (its phrasal, or logical, stress) is with R and accompanied by a descending tone. T comes before R.

Apart from the word order and the intonation associated with it (being the main devices of CS), certain lexical means are also employed: determiners and particles.

The direct word order where T is the subject (S) and R is the predicate (P) is predominant in both Russian and Italian sentences (Gruppo di Padova 1974:150). Here are some statistics on sentences with the direct word order in the two languages: in K. Paustovsky's short novel *The*