

Genre In/Exclusion and Recontextualization: Interpreting at the Italian Ministry of Defense

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the nature of interpreting in military/diplomatic contexts at the Italian Ministry of Defense (MoD) and it is particularly interested in the role played by genre in this context. In terms of diplomacy-level military discourse, we offer an overview of some important genres that are part of the job profile of MoD staff and freelance interpreters. Specifically, we focus on the “hyper-genre” (Giltrow & Stein 2009) of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and some related texts, genres and situations, which are combined in various ways to form “genre chains” (Fairclough 2003). Our main hypothesis is that MoD professionals are involved in genre-building and propagation. This hypothesis is premised on the notion that genre and context awareness are crucial to interpreters’ success. On the basis of empirical data taken from semi-structured interviews with current and former MoD Translators/Interpreters, we argue that interpreters in a military-diplomatic situation assume varying degrees of responsibilities in genre dissemination and recontextualization (Boyd & Monacelli 2010).

1. INTRODUCTION

In a fascinating account of the interpreter's role in shaping the diplomatic history of world politics, Roland (1999) highlights how – over time, throughout the world – interpreters have been recruited in different contexts and how they have contributed to shaping diplomacy in those same contexts. We use this reflexive lens to discuss the ways in which interpreters are involved in, and excluded from, building and recontextualizing a number of important genres at the Italian Ministry of Defence (MoD). Furthermore, we analyze how these genres are crucial to their working conditions as interpreters (and translators).

Pursuant to a public competition, the Italian Ministry of Defence hires staff translators to fill different units within the Ministry. These professionals are often transferred to other units internally, and freelance interpreters are also employed. However, it is very difficult for them to be cleared for top secret meetings. The level of clearance these professionals have for work within the Ministry varies and, typically, the confidential nature of their work, for the most part, creates a situation whereby documents are rarely circulated, but freelancers may consult them 'live' *in situ* for purposes of reference before an assignment. It thus goes without saying that texts in this working environment are extremely difficult to obtain for research purposes. A small number of document specimens are available only once they have been cleared for external circulation.

The goal of this chapter, which reflects a fact-finding stage within a wider ranging project, is to describe the nature of interpreting in military/diplomatic contexts at the MoD with a strong focus on the role played by genre. In terms of diplomacy-level military discourse, we offer an overview of some important genres that are part of the job profile of MoD staff and freelance interpreters. Specifically, we will be focusing on what Giltrow and Stein (2009) call the "hyper-genre" of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and some related texts and situations (other genres) at the MoD which form a "genre chain" (Fairclough 2003). Our main hypothesis is that MoD professionals play a specific role in genre-building and propagation. This hypothesis is premised on the notion that genre and context awareness are crucial to interpreters' success. We argue that interpreters in a military-diplomatic situation assume varying degrees of responsibilities in genre dissemination and recontextualization (Boyd & Monacelli 2010).

Our analysis begins with a discussion of the central concepts of genre and recontextualization (§ 2). In § 3 we discuss the role of genre in Interpreting Studies (IS), then refer to empirical data in the form of semi-structured interviews, which are aimed at defining the nature of text and genre in their relative contexts within the MoD. Finally, in § 5, we review the MOU and a few other related genres dealt with in the MoD¹.

1 We would like to thank four MoD staff and freelance interpreters, who acted as infor-

Boyd and Monacelli (2010) propose a model for IS teaching purposes based on the notions of text, context, genre and recontextualization, which are claimed to be fundamental in text/discourse analysis. The present study is also underpinned by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and, specifically, the Discourse-Historical Approach (cf. Reisigl & Wodak 2009). One of our goals is also to provide the groundwork for the application of these claims to interpreter/translator work practices, such as those found in the Italian MoD.

We argue that the application of CDA-inspired constructs such as production, reception and access to text and genre to IS can help to facilitate “[the] mediation between language and social structures” (Wodak & Meyer 2009: 21). Such an approach gives prominence to the ways that these factors are revealed in genres and genre chains (Fetzer & Johansson 2008). The latter occur when various genres are interconnected (often in institutional settings), thereby reflecting “systematic transformations from genre to genre” (Fairclough 2003: 216). In CDA, in fact, genres are defined by their social practices, or the conventions, rules and norms that govern certain sets or groups of speakers and hearers (Wodak 2008a: 17). This definition reflects a shift in focus from one that privileged inherent textual characteristics and communicative purpose (cf. Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993) to one that privileges the notion of social purpose in genre recognition and propagation (Wodak 2008b: 17). More specifically, Fairclough (2006: 32) sees genre as a way of (inter)acting linguistically, which is distinguished by genre-specific linguistic forms and/or structures that are closely linked to specific social and institutional contexts. Text, on the other hand, should be seen as the actual use of language in a specific context, such as for example a speech or a letter (Fairclough 2003).

Another important concept we adopt from CDA in our approach is recontextualization, which is the process by which an element is extracted from one context and used in another for some strategic purpose (Chilton & Schäffner 2002: 17)². Such movement necessitates “the suppression of some of the meaning potential of a discourse in the process of classifying discourses, establishing particular insulations between them” (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999: 126). Indeed, recontextualization can be a powerful tool in transforming social or discursive practices and creating new ones (Busch 2006: 613). Furthermore, recontextualization can lead to what Fairclough (2010: 79) calls a ‘re-imagining’ of a field or practice:

mants, for their willingness to be interviewed during this preliminary stage of our project. They have requested to remain anonymous.

2 The term originally comes from Bernstein (1990), who used it in relation to pedagogical discourse.

A discourse decontextualised from its dialectical relationship with other elements of a field or network of social practices becomes an imaginary, very often working in a metaphorical way in the re-imagining of aspects of the field or practices it is recontextualised within (e.g. re-imagining student-academic relations in higher education as consumer-producer relations), and, of course, open to enactment, inculcation and materialisation.

It is particularly fruitful to study how discursive practices are recontextualized through various genres and genre chains used and propagated by social actors both directly and indirectly (Wodak 2008a: 296; cf. Fairclough 2010: 76). One of the premises of this work is that MoD interpreters are actors, albeit indirectly, in a process of recontextualization and re-imagining of genre, as we discuss in § 5.

3. GENRE(S) AND INTERPRETING

Several scholars in Interpreting Studies have adduced findings in relation to the interpreter's role both in managing communication and even constructing identities. For example, Davidson (2009) describes interpreters as 'informational' gatekeepers. He analyzes "the contextually and historically situated nature and role of the interpreters within these socio-medical interactions" (*ibid.*: 217). In terms of interpreters as conversational participants, Davidson stresses that:

[...] interpreters or translators, far from 'merely' converting and conveying the words of others, are centrally employed in the work of mediating the achievement of conversational or interactional goals, and that to a large degree responsibility for the achievement of these goals lies squarely with the interpreter herself. (*ibid.*: 219)

His findings bear out the notion that interpreters which, in his case, deal with medical interviews are partly "informational gatekeepers who keep the interview 'on track' and the physician on schedule" (*ibid.*: 238).

The role of interpreters in identity construction has been discussed by Beaton-Thome (2010: 117-138), whose findings concern simultaneous interpreting at the European Parliament. She suggests that interpreters are prone to strengthen the dominant institutional presence, ideology and identity. Marzocchi also argues that there are particular patterns of interaction within specific institutions, "including prevailing text types and rhetorical purposes [that] affect the interpreting performance" (1998: 51). He highlights that institutions "impact on patterns of communication, on prevailing language functions and text types and in turn on interpreting" and claims that these patterns deserve analysis (*ibid.*: 52). Marzocchi further states that institutional features indeed constrain interpreters because variation in text production is linked to context (see also Boyd &

Monacelli 2010), and because the system of norms and conventions also heavily constrain text output (Marzocchi 1998: 53; also see Maltby 2010).

Similar to Marzocchi's position (1998), Takeda's interesting sociolinguistic study of interpreting (2007) at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE 1946-1948) examines the notions of 'trust, power and control', the historical and political context of the IMTFE and the social and cultural backgrounds of interpreters. The tribunal organized interpreting to include three ethnically and socially different groups of linguists for three different purposes: interpreters, monitors and language arbiters. Takeda applies the concept of "negotiated norms" in her discussion of how interpreting procedures developed over the initial stage of the trial, with a strong emphasis on interpreters' cognitive constraints in that process. Her findings link interpreters' choices, strategies and behaviour to their awareness of where they stand in the power constellation of the interpreted event. The issue of power is taken up in this study and discussed in § 4.

In our focus on the hyper-genre of the MOU, what emerges in relation to such bi- and multi-lateral texts is the existence of at least two versions drafted in the languages of the parties to the agreement, all versions being considered originals. This is similar to what occurs for the drafting of documents in the European Union where all language versions are claimed to be originals. Several IS studies have pointed out the particular characteristics of documents produced in this manner (e.g. Gagnon 2006). The practice of creating multiple original text documents in different languages is problematic in many contexts (*ibid.*: 125). In our case, a bilateral agreement such as the MOU within the context of the Italian Ministry of Defense actually sees the light owing to that very agreement, thus implying language mediation at the basis of negotiations which, in turn, implies the interpreter's role in text and genre. The following section discusses how we collected our data, describes MoD interpreter profiles (§ 4.1) and interpreters' accounts of professional responsibilities and clearance levels (§ 4.2). This information is then discussed in terms of its relation to genre and genre chains (§ 5).

4. INTERPRETERS AT THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

In § 3 we mentioned that several scholars have often referred to interpreters as gatekeepers and discussed how they construct institutional identities (e.g. Davidson 2009; Beaton-Thome 2010). Although we embrace these views, information gathered in this fact-finding phase has led us to observe patterns of interpreter inclusion and exclusion in relation to the genres dealt with at the MoD. Hardly the image of professionals in control, wielding a certain degree of power. Nonetheless, evidence has emerged to confirm their involvement in some stages of genre recontextualization, propagation and building.

Our initial intent was to contact both staff and freelance interpreters in order to distribute a questionnaire aimed at understanding the nature of their work from within the Ministry. A second phase comprising direct interviews would have ensued. During the initial process of data collection, however, unforeseen difficulties began to arise, primarily due to the necessity to obtain clearance in a lengthy process for the distribution of our questionnaires via email. Secondly, since there is no central MoD interpreting office as such and, as mentioned, staff is often temporarily transferred to other MoD units, targeting respondents in this manner proved to be problematic.

At this point, we, too, began to feel powerless, and excluded. However, following a first one hour, face-to-face semi-structured interview, with one of our informants with whom we have an in-group relationship (I-4, Table 1), it was possible to establish four different professional profiles at the MoD³. We have chosen informants as representative of each of these profiles, and conducted face-to-face interviews and/or telephone interviews with them (two informants were not available locally). This section reports on the empirical data gathered from these interviews.

4.1. Interpreter recruitment and profiles

The MoD held a public competition for staff interpreters (“Translator/Interpreters”) in 2006⁴. Knowing that interpreters were transferred to and from MoD units, our first informant served to clarify the four different professional profiles working within and for the MoD: military staff, civilian staff, freelance civilian interpreters, civilian staff that had transferred elsewhere. Our four informants reflect these profiles, and have been chosen accordingly. We have included the civilian staff interpreter (I-4) who transferred to another institution as a sort of ‘control group’. Having had professional experience elsewhere, she was able to provide information concerning the specificity of work at the MoD, as compared to her current position.

The interpreting staff at the Italian MoD consists of both in-house and freelancers. In-house Translator/Interpreters are hired by public competition. It should be noted, however, that the competition does not include a separate exam to evaluate candidates’ interpreting skills. Furthermore, there is no single linguistic service within the MoD and individual professionals are ‘borrowed’ and ‘lent’ from and to different units within the Ministry. Freelance interpreters are also chosen on the basis of a competition and are evaluated on the basis of their experience and clearance levels held.

3 As per Table 1, informants are referred to as follows: I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4.

4 <http://www.difesa.it/Segretario-SGD-DNA/DG/PERSOCIV/Documents/1__29126__Bando_d_KB.pdf>

PROFILE	STATUS	PLACE OF DUTY – INTERPRETING MODES
I-1	Military staff in-house	Gabinetto Ufficio Cerimoniale [Defense General Staff]: chuchotage, consecutive, simultaneous
I-2	Civilian staff in-house	Stato Maggiore della Difesa [Joint Chiefs of Staff]: chuchotage, consecutive
I-3	Civilian freelance	Ministry of Defense (various units): consecutive, simultaneous
I-4	Civilian staff transferred	SDG/DNA (Segretariato Generale della Difesa – Direzione Nazionale degli Armamenti) [National Defense Secretary Armaments Directorate]: chuchotage, consecutive, simultaneous

TABLE 1. MoD interpreter profiles and professional responsibilities

Today there is military in-service staff working for the MoD, on loan from the Army, although not all have had interpreter training. Informant I-4 (Table 1) initially trained with the first interpreter-training course organized for the Italian Army (Monacelli & Punzo 2001). Given the confidential nature of work at the MoD, military personnel has often been employed even long before the 2006 competition. For example Minister Giovanni Spadolini, during his mandate (1983-87), chose a Colonel as his personal interpreter during bilateral and multilateral meetings. Having had no previous professional training in simultaneous interpreting, the Colonel was limited to interpreting in the chuchotage and consecutive modes, with considerable difficulty, but enjoyed the Minister's trust nonetheless. During these bi- and multi-lateral meetings, however, there are often freelance interpreters present and the question of power and hierarchy may arise in relation to status and rank. In other words, in the case of the Colonel assisting Minister Spadolini, a professional interpreter present is constrained in terms of interpersonal relations. One of our informants (I-3) reported that both the military rank and status created a significant power differential that conditioned her work in this specific context.

Civilian interpreters (I-2, I-3, I-4), both in-service and freelance, generally have no military background (with the exception of their professional experience in this field) and their clearance levels vary. The following five levels of clearance have been defined by informants: top secret (equivalent to NOS, *nulla osta di segretezza*)⁵, secret, confidential, restricted, unclassified. NATO also uses levels defined as ATOMAL vs. non-ATOMAL, and ATOMAL CTSA (Cosmic Top Secret Atomal)⁶. Freelance interpreters' level of clearance has to be renewed yearly.

5 For a full account of NOS clearance (in Italian) see, for example, <http://latribuna.corriere.it/dynuni/dyn/allegati/Provvedimenti_news/2005/06_giugno/D.P.C.M.%207%20giugno.pdf>

6 For more about these levels, see <<http://www.marfork.usmc.mil/G2Intranet/Security/NATO%20Briefing.pdf>>

Typically, meetings contemplate Chiefs of Defense (COD in NATO), not Chiefs of armed forces. The nature of their work can be defined as diplomatic interpreting, engaging in the language of diplomacy, where they operate at the level of policy-making, being called upon to deal with military issues that merge with political, diplomatic and commercial interests. Interpreter-mediated encounters often aim at defining common requirements stemming from previously drafted MOUs and lead to their redrafting. MOUs, once cleared, become public documents. When not cleared, freelance interpreters are given access to MOUs only *in situ*.

4.2. Professional responsibilities

Since they are transferred between different units within the MoD, the informants have been involved in the translation and interpreting of many genres. So, for example, I-1 (Table 1), who works for the Defense General Staff, often interprets for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The texts in these genres reflect content from various intersecting spheres such as diplomacy, military, business and policy-making. They may have to translate speeches or PowerPoint presentations, or interpret speeches, statements (such as, e.g. national positions on a current event, courses of action, etc.), and bilateral meetings. The nature of their work depends, on the one hand, on their professional training, or lack thereof, and, on the other, on their status and the clearance level granted.

Interpreters are not present when the MOU is negotiated, drafted or signed, as it is the respective higher-ranking staff members of the governments who are involved. This was confirmed by all respondents. Interpreters know nothing about how the document (and, consequently, the genre) is formulated. However, Translator/Interpreters may have to translate actual MOUs in situations when they have been drafted only in one language (often the case with English documents). Furthermore, they may also have to translate letters of intent, a sort of 'pre-memorandum' preliminary to the MOU. Finally, interpreters are present at redrafting meetings, which are convened to define and update common requirements and MOUs.

Our informant, who has since transferred to another institution (I-4), claims she was involved in a number of different multilateral projects, including Eurofighter (former EFA, European Fighter Aircraft), in the developmental phase, and a Navy frigate project. She worked at SDG/DNA (National Defense Armament Directorate) and estimates that about 80% of her work involved translation and less than 20% interpreting, in both consecutive and simultaneous modes. In her current position, on the other hand, she works more often as an interpreter (40% interpreting, 60% translation).

Despite being excluded from negotiation meetings involving an MOU dealing with Navy frigates she worked on its translation, since, as stated above,

MOUs can be conceived in one or more languages and translated into the language of the party/parties to the agreement. These documents are generally used for the purpose of sales and licensing or contracting to either parties and there were trade-offs in the negotiation process. One of the things she enjoyed most about the job was her involvement in projects from the ground up, even though, as mentioned, she did not participate directly in the actual negotiating of MOUs, confirming genre exclusion. To this end she considered transferring to Germany where the Eurofighter project was being developed, and even suggested we contact the local units there.

Meetings defining Common Requirements where there were no language specialists present, did nonetheless contain difficulties related to lexis, as reported by this informant (I-4). She cited the example of the term “to waive”, contained in a specific document, which was scrutinized during a meeting, becoming a bone of contention for the parties to the agreement⁷.

The issue of clearance had a vital role in relation to documentation during her work at the MoD. Meetings at both diplomatic and policy levels are held in rooms equipped with simultaneous interpreting booths (e.g. the IEPG Independent European Project Group meeting), and only previously cleared freelance interpreters (from the MoD freelance interpreter registry) had access to these meetings.

All informants confirmed that in-house staff rarely, if ever, work in the simultaneous mode (I-1 and I-4, Table 1, are exceptions). Our freelance informant (I-3) has never seen staff Translator/Interpreters working in the simultaneous mode, as they generally opt for the consecutive mode. She has also noticed that military personnel had little or no interpreter training, even at other ministries⁸. Although she had been granted top-level clearance (NOS, *nulla osta di segretezza*), renewed for other Ministries, but valid for NATO Council meetings, she stated that MoD written translations are generally handled by in-service staff. She too had worked on the Eurofighter project, with Joint Chiefs of Staff, and was always employed for work in the consecutive or simultaneous modes. As confirmed by all other informants, she received texts only *in situ*. This contrasts with in-house staff who may receive documents before a meeting.

The freelance informant (I-3) described the working environment as comfortable and the meeting participants as being cordial, practical and openly appreciative of her work. This said, she clearly expressed that the hierarchy to be respected was a delicate matter to deal with, since she could never interact directly with the person in charge if this person was of high rank.

Our in-service civilian Translator/Interpreter (I-2) won her post in the 2006 competition and was hired for French translation. Her language combination in-

7 It is interesting to note here that, regardless of the fact that interpreters are, it seems, excluded from MOU negotiation meetings, lexical choice still plays a role in the power relations among participants. A full discussion of the factors behind such interaction is beyond the scope of this chapter and merits future analysis.

8 This was also confirmed by our military staff informant I-1.

cludes French and English but she works as an interpreter only for French. Even though she has had no formal interpreter training, over time, given her excellent command of French and the experience gained at the Ministry, she began to interpret in the consecutive and chuchotage modes. She confirmed that at the MoD there is more translation work from English as compared to French. This is in line with information received from other informants who also, more importantly, stated that bilateral meetings without the presence of language specialists are held solely in English. Informant I-2 has worked on the translation of MOUs, Agreements, Treaties, Cooperation Plans, Evaluation Reports (in fact, NATO documents are commonly translated as part of her duties). In terms of preparation for interpreting encounters, it is usually the MoD organizers who send documents beforehand. However, the Translator/Interpreter is often involved in translating the documents in preparation for the interpreted event. I-2 has a high level of clearance (NOS), which gives her access to all documents.

One final point that was stressed by all of the respondents had to do with how interpreters were chosen for events. They all confirmed that it is the Translator/Interpreters who decide, in collaboration with in-house colleagues, whether or not they are to be involved in interpreting at all, and in which modes, depending on the nature of the interpreting assignments and their professional training.

5. DISCUSSION: GENRE AND GENRE CHAINS AT THE MoD

As in all institutional settings there are a number of core genres that are frequently translated and interpreted at the Italian MoD and, as we shall see, these genres can be inter-related to form genre chains. As illustrated in § 4, there are many specific genres mentioned by our informants including the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Speech, Presentation, Policy/Official Statement (such as, e.g. national positions on a current event), Course of Action, Common Requirements, Treaty, Agreement, Evaluation Report, Bi- and Multi-lateral Meetings, and Cooperation Plan. Since all of these genres cannot be discussed here due to space limitations, we will focus primarily on the MOU and its related genres, which appeared to be the most relevant in the interviews (see § 4 above).

The genre most often mentioned in the interviews was the MOU. This, in fact, led us to the hypothesis that the MOU functions as a sort of overarching category, i.e. as a core genre. We follow Giltrow and Stein (2009: 10) in calling this a “hyper-genre” because it appears to “enable” other genres. In addition to serving as the source for other genres, it is also recontextualized in genre chains as we shall see in the discussion below. Before moving on to the discussion of this genre at the MoD, we need to look at some of its general characteristics, as MOUs are commonly used in other institutional (uni-, bi- and multi-lateral) settings.

MOUs can be seen as an example of what Schäffner (1997: 121) calls “diplomatic discourse in multinational institutions” because such documents are generally negotiated and translated bilaterally (or multilaterally depending on the participants). While an MOU is similar in many ways to a contract or treaty (a sort of glorified ‘gentleman’s agreement’), unlike these it is usually not legally binding and, therefore, does not require parliamentary approval. Such factors would most likely explain the widespread use of this genre in many bi- and multi-lateral institutional settings (cf. Homeland Security). Linguistically, texts such as MOUs and other similar genres are distinguished by a high degree of formulaic utterances, fixed structures and standardized expressions. Similar to regulations, decisions, conventions, etc., the MOU begins with a preamble, which consists of the names of the enacting institution(s) and the enacting formula (e.g. “have agreed as follows”), in between which one can find the typical citation formula that provides intertextual reference to the motivations behind the text, already existing treaties, conventions, and laws, etc., all of which combine to give the document a sound legal basis. This is followed by (numbered) articles and, often, an annex or annexes. Syntactically, when these documents are translated, they must exhibit uniformity such that one ST sentence corresponds to one TT sentence “to ensure mutual understanding: or oral or written negotiations that are based on a treaty the negotiators must be able to refer to” (Schäffner 1997: 121). Often, however, as noted by Schäffner (*ibid.*: 122), syntactic rules may be “violated” by “referring practices” during negotiations – a process she sees as “clear evidence of the fact that linguistic aspects of translation are a function of overarching functional and socio-cultural strategies of cross-cultural communication”. Finally, on a lexical level, there is a high concentration of specialized institutional and/or juridical-legal terminology.

With specific reference to the MOU at the MoD there are some specific features that need to be addressed. First of all, as evident in the unclassified *Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Italian Republic and the Government of the United States of America concerning Reciprocal Defense Procurement* (2008)⁹ and the Italian translation¹⁰ – both provided by one of the informants – the syntax is the same, displaying almost identical grammatical structures. Thus, in the preamble (*preambolo*) gerunds are used in both languages (e.g. “BEARING in mind” vs. “CONSIDERANDO”, etc.) after the enacting institutions and before the enacting formula (“HAVE agreed as follows:” vs. “HANNO concordato quanto segue:”). It is interesting to note that the individual grammatical forms in both languages correspond, while this is not necessarily the case in other bi-/multi-

9 This document was given to us by one of our informants. It is also one of the few documents we were able to consult due to clearance issues. The document is available in English in its entirety as <[http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/ Docs/mou-italy.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/Docs/mou-italy.pdf)>

10 Consulted 30 July 2011 at <http://www.difesa.it/Segretario-SGD-DNA/SGD-DNA/Vice_SG_DNA/Reparto_Politica_degli_Armenti/Documents/78470_MOUITUSAReciprocoProcurementperlaDifesa2.pdf>

lateral documents. Generally in EU texts containing a preamble the gerund “having regard to” is used in English, while the past participle “visto” is used in Italian. Thus, it would appear that lexico-syntactic structures in English/Italian MOUs in the MoD are extremely similar, making it almost impossible to determine which text served as the ST.

Secondly, on the basis of our interview data, MoD-specific MOUs are not always drafted bi- or multi-laterally, as they are often translated separately by staff members. It would appear, then, that MoD interpreters are excluded from the actual drafting stage. Yet, staff members often have to translate documents representative of other genres and sub-genres within the MoD that are part of the MOU pre- and post-drafting stage. These include the “letter of intent” in the pre-drafting phase and “amending” or “redrafting” meetings in the post-drafting phase. As far as we could determine from our interviews, the last two terms refer to the same genre, and the two names were different terms adopted by two of our informants. While this makes it more difficult to give the genre a specific name, it demonstrates that the interpreters are well aware of the genres they are working in. The spontaneous use of such names, in fact, would appear to corroborate our underlying assumption that interpreters are included in specific genres and may be part of genre-building.

A third important characteristic of MoD-specific MOUs is their secrecy and confidentiality, an important part of most MoD-specific genres and something that has already been mentioned above. This is also another example of how genre exclusion can be imposed from above. The secrecy of such documents lies in the fact that they often include information about (top) secret military cooperation activities or the exchange of military equipment. Even though during the actual drafting stage Translator/Interpreters are excluded from the genre, as we have seen above, not all of these documents remain classified, so that at least some of the texts are accessible to – and therefore inclusive of – all professionals working at the MoD regardless of their clearance. This would explain why this genre was mentioned so often in our interviews: unclassified MOUs, in fact, become important reference documents for both in-house and free-lance professionals and can be used for purposes of recontextualization and general genre-building during other stages of the genre chain.

Another important fact to emerge in our study is that staff members are generally involved in both translation and, to a lesser extent, interpreting of genres. In the interviews three of the informants portrayed themselves as being part of a process of translation > interpreting > translation. This chain of activity favours direct involvement in genres, and, therefore, genre-building, from the ground up. Thus, inclusion in the pre-drafting stage genres can prove useful in terms of preparation for interpreting encounters as well as later post-drafting written genres. An example of the latter is the Cooperation Plan, another important MoD genre, as highlighted by one of our informants. She depicted this genre as being much more specific than the MOU, as it focuses on more detailed and concrete

issues regarding bi-/multi-lateral cooperation and policy. This genre, it can be argued, represents a further stage in the MOU genre chain. One of the informants (I-4), who had transferred from the MoD to another institution, stressed that what she missed most about her former job at the MoD was being involved in projects from the beginning planning phases to the implementation end stages. Such awareness would appear to provide further evidence of inclusion in genre chains making the MoD interpreter/translator part and parcel of actual genre-building.

We will now attempt to summarize the notion of genre chain by providing an illustration of how such chains function in the MoD.

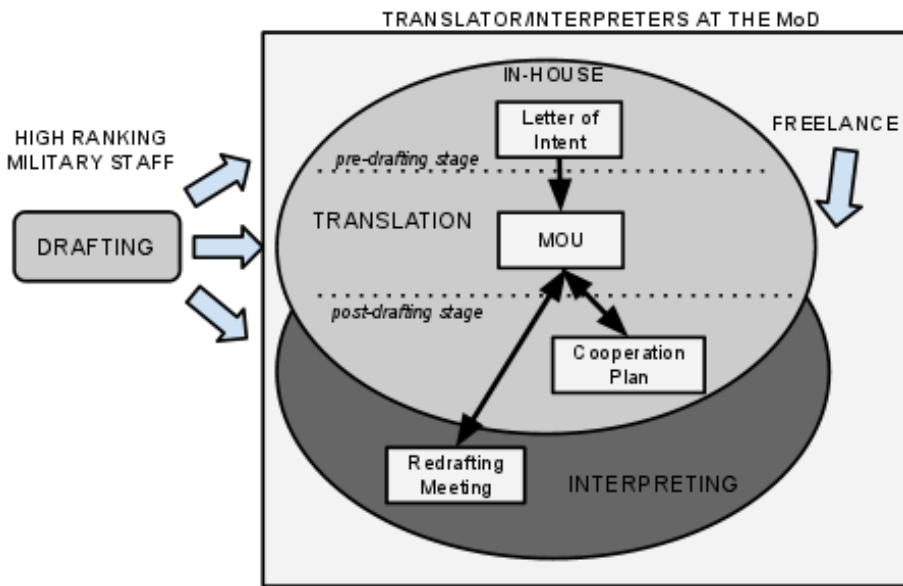


FIGURE 1. MOU genre chain at the Italian MoD

In Figure 1 we provide a simplified proposal for how the specific MOU genre chain is played out within the Italian MoD and how the actors (general military staff, in-house and free-lance interpreters/translators) in this process are included in or excluded from genre-building. The diagram is limited to the genres directly involved in the MOU genre chain as mentioned by our informants and discussed above and, for clarity, other related genres have not been included. The main activities of MoD translators and interpreters are indicated in the box that contains two inter-connected circles: one for translation (light grey), which is superimposed by another for interpreting (dark grey). The arrows (uni- and bi-directional) indicate how the genres are generated and the direction of recontext-

tualization. In-house staff is included in all of these genres, although they may be excluded from the actual drafting. Thus, on the left-hand side we can see the (non-interpreter) military staff who are outside of this box, as they are involved in the actual drafting with the large arrows indicating which genres (and texts) they allow Translator/Interpreters to access. Finally, the free-lance interpreters (and translators) are represented in the upper right-hand corner outside the in-house box to stress the fact that they may be included in or excluded from certain translation and interpreting activities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Much of what goes on in the MoD is shrouded in secrecy and confidentiality. Thus, as we have seen, interpreters do not always have access to all genres all the time. In fact, they are often exposed to texts and genres 'on the spot' and expected to understand their inner meaning and workings *in situ*. However, since much of their work involves translation, they do have access to pre-genres, i.e. genres that are used in the creation of new genres, such as the letter of intent. Furthermore, they may be included as interpreters in the post-drafting stage when an MOU is redrafted and documents such as the Cooperation Plan are laid down. Moreover, as revealed during our interviews, MoD Translator/Interpreters often feel that they are personally involved in the specific project they are working on from the ground up, and therefore they are included at the inception, creation and implementation stages. All of this suggests that MoD Translator/Interpreters play an important role in recontextualizing and disseminating genre at the MoD.

Information gathered in this initial fact-finding stage of our project suggests that the interpreting practices at the MoD, on the one hand, reflect interpreting practices at the Italian Ministry of the Interior¹¹ (cf. Monacelli 2002) and, on the other, are quite characteristic of work at the MoD.

From a theoretical perspective, this study hopes to contribute to the understanding of genre in institutional-defense settings for interpreters and translators, thus laying the groundwork for the possible application of the model proposed in Boyd and Monacelli (2010) to professional contexts, such as those represented by the MoD. Namely, a fine-grained discourse analysis during the

11 Through a public competition, the Ministry of the Interior selected Translator/ Interpreters from varying educational backgrounds: three-year training institutes, a university degree in translation and/or interpreting, university degrees in literature and foreign languages. The competition included a translation into at least two foreign languages, no interpreting test but an oral language test. Their duties range from the translation of various documentation and interpreting assignments for investigations, trials and immigration. Those specifically trained (and willing) offer their simultaneous interpreting services for international conferences organized by the Ministry of the Interior (Monacelli 2002: 182).

pre-drafting and translation stages of the MOU – perhaps following re-training, with the help of an increased awareness on the part of the Translator/Interpreters of the constructs described in such an approach – could be useful to improve quality in genre-building, thus eliminating potential difficulties linked to the translation of initial MOU drafts and redrafts.

Specifically, we have argued for the use of CDA-inspired definitions of text, genre, genre chain and recontextualization. These constructs come into play in the mediation between language and the social structure of hierarchical institutions such as the Italian Ministry of Defense. This mediation is enacted not only by ranking staff members but also by the Translator/Interpreter staff at various stages in the realization of texts and genres. While the latter may be excluded from actual drafting, they are participants in the dissemination of genre through recontextualization, since they often translate drafted documents.

The findings provide further evidence for a definition of genre that includes social factors such as power, rank, clearance, inclusion and exclusion. The interpreters' inclusion in and exclusion from certain genres make their profile duties unique, even if only compared with Ministry of the Interior Translator/Interpreters, as mentioned. Although limited in scope, this study clearly addresses the fact that MoD interpreters are systematically excluded from specific genres, such as the MOU in phases of initial negotiation. Yet, they are included in its actual translation.

The final point we would like to make concerns other issues to have emerged in this study that merit further analysis. Future studies could address issues such as power relations played out over linguistic issues where no language specialists are present (see § 4.2) and specific responsibilities of military staff, as opposed to civilian staff, at the MoD. It also remains unclear how the role (and rank) of military staff (I-1) at the MoD impacts on professional responsibilities, as compared to civilian staff (I-2, I-3, I-4), to offset Translator/Interpreters' exclusion from certain genres.

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