Registrazione al Tribunale di Terni
n. 11 del 24.09.2007

Direttore Responsabile Agostino Quero
Editore Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding
Anno 2018
ISSN 2035-3111
2035-2948

Policy: double-blind peer review

© Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding srl
via Giuseppe Antonio Landi 13 – 40132 Bologna
CULTUS

the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

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BOLOGNA
the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

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**Introduction**

**Multilingualism and beyond:**

**An endless evolution**

**Alessandra Rizzo**

The growing international interest in multilingualism, which has been marked by the changing political and economic landscape of different nations in the world, is significantly represented in the media and in public discourse. Globalization, transnational population flows and the spread of new technological platforms have given rise to remarkable linguistic, cultural and demographic transformations, still occurring in the globe. The burgeoning research in bilingualism and multilingualism, which covers a broad range of specific domains from linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics to neurolinguistics and clinical linguistics, from education and societal behaviourism to migration studies and computer-mediated communication, has seen the emergence of new strands of investigation which “have incorporated critical and post-structuralist perspectives from social theory and embraced new epistemologies and research methods” (Martin-Jones, Blackledge and Creese, 2012: 1). Besides, a clear shift of focus to empirical work, which has become more interpretative, ethnographic and multimodal in nature, has reinforced, on the one hand, the understanding of the particularities of multilingual settings and practices and, on the other, has begun to provide insights into the nature of the cultural and societal changes taking place in recent times. Multilingual competences and practices—involving bilingual and multilingual speakers who, while crossing existing social and linguistic boundaries, adapt themselves to unfamiliar and overlapping linguistic spaces—are highly relevant to many areas of linguistic and sociolinguistic investigation. New research on multilingualism and multilingual behaviour is shedding light on the dynamics of multilingual realities, such as multiple language acquisition and learning (L3, L4, Lx), psycho- and neurolinguistic components deriving from conditions of forced multilingual spaces subsequent to forced exiles, patterns of translanguaging, early
bilingualism, and heritage language development. Intercultural and globalisation phenomena quite naturally gravitate towards situations involving bilingual and multilingual speakers, where lingua francas are adopted. Clearly, multilingualism is anything but recent, and multilingual scholars from different parts of the world, have been engaged in multilingual practices for centuries, if not millennia, translating Arabic, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and Aramaic, to name those that include the post-Christian era.

In the contemporary world, multilingualism has gone hand in hand with technology-driven globalization and is taking new paths and directions. Multilingual situations potentially involve any combination of languages, but for statistical reasons, will often involve today’s big world languages functioning as lingua francas, such as English, Arabic, Spanish, French and Russian. The number of speakers of the various language combinations is unevenly distributed, meaning that speakers of smaller languages will adopt world languages in both everyday and professional situations. In the current European scenario, considering the fact that many migrants are constantly involved in multilingual and intercultural practices (Katan, 1999/2004; Rudvin and Spinzi, 2015) in all domains of life (work, health, education, justice, home) shuttling between their family language(s) and the host country language, they are constantly performing ‘multilingual identities’. The broad range of both migrant languages and the language of the country of arrival has thus a strong impact on economic growth and social opportunities. Globalising mechanisms, the transnational mobility of people, advances in new technologies and the creation of Internet platforms are highly influential at the level of political, societal, economic and educational contexts. According to Aronin and Singleton (2008), one of the main factors that has contributed to changing views on and approaches to multilingualism, derives from the notion of ‘medium’. In the past, multilingual communication was basically written, but in the 21st century, multilingual communication has been transformed into a multimodal device that is disseminated rapidly and forcefully due to the spread of the Internet.

Useful reflections on multilingualism come from the European Commission (2007), according to which multilingualism refers to the sphere of competences and abilities of societies, groups of people, individuals and institutions to engage on a regular basis with more than one language in everyday life. Wei Li and Melissa G. Moyer define a multilingual individual as “anyone who can communicate in more than one language be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading)” (2008: 4). These two definitions, as pointed out by Jasone Cenoz, are relevant to the debate on the individual dimension in contrast to the social sphere of multilingualism, even though “[i]ndividual and societal multilingualism are not completely separated […] and the individuals who live in a multilingual community speak more than one language than […] individuals who live in a monolingual society” (2013: 5). Nevertheless, the spread of English as a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2004; Canagarajah, 2007; Guido, 2008) and “the high level of linguistic diversity as a result of immigration, particularly in contexts in
which English is the majority language” (Cenoz, 2013: 5), help classify multilingualism “at the same time an individual and social phenomenon” (ibid.). Thus, if plurilingualism, as the Council of Europe website emphasises, is the repertoire of varieties of language used by many individuals, which means that some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual, multilingualism, by contrast, refers to the presence in a geographical area of more than one variety of language (see Council of Europe, Education and Languages, Language Policy).

A brief chronology

The evolution of studies on multilingualism is characterised by three main phases, which include three types of linguistics: a linguistics of community, a linguistics of contact and a linguistics of global societies. A broad shift from a “linguistics of community”, as pointed out by Mary Louise Pratt (1987), to a critical and ethnographic sociolinguistics, has led to a linguistics that is mainly rooted in the phenomenon of globalisation and in the diffusion of migratory processes occurring across the globe today. This transition is, of course, linked to a decisive change across the social sciences towards post-structuralist and post-modern theories and approaches. Recent fields of enquiry on multilingualism have thus extensively turned their attention to globalization and the political, economic, demographic and cultural processes that have somehow participated in the changing global landscape. The multilingual realities of the global age we live in have encouraged, on the one hand, the growth of new perspectives as a result of the rise of ethnographic research and, on the other, the investigation of specific communication modalities. New forms of mobilities (especially through the technology-driven revolution in cyber-communication) have led to a transformation of the dynamics of time and space, reshaping communicative practices in spoken and written language across a variety of media, genres, narratives, semiotic modes, registers and styles.

Changes in perspectives of multilingualism have had a crucial role with regard to the shift from a linguistics of community to a linguistics of contact, which has evolved in the linguistic interface between technology and globalization. Indeed, if, on the one hand, models of linguistics of community are meant to accommodate linguistic diversity, on the other, their main concern has remained the scrutiny of sub-communities classified in terms of social categorization, such as ethnicity, gender and class. The concept of “communities of practice” was introduced in the 1990’s in the social sciences, where mutual engagement between people involved in similar activities and somewhat shifts the focus away from the notion of social categories in terms of ethnicity, class and gender. A new vision of “speech communities”, seen collectively as groups, was born and developed in different linguistic and cultural circumstances. From a bounded notion of speech community, which reinforces the concept of a bounded lexis and syntax (somehow limiting multilingual creativity), scholarly attention has shifted to a dynamic
perception of communities of practice, where individuals can see themselves as engaged in multiple endeavours and tasks. As stated above, a major shift away from a linguistics of community was signalled by Pratt by focusing on the idea of a “linguistics of contact”:

Imagine … a linguistics that decentred community, that placed at its centre the operation of language across lines of social differentiation, a linguistics that focused on modes and zones of contact between dominant and dominated groups, between persons of different and multiple identities, speakers of different languages, that focused on how speakers constitute each other relationally and in difference, how they enact differences in language. Let us call this a linguistics of contact. (1987: 60)

The notion of a “linguistics of contact” has represented a gradual move that has contributed to the decrease and disappearance of a “linguistics of community” and to its replacement with new developments in multilingualism starting from the mid-1980s onwards. These new trends have introduced new perspectives on multilingualism, focusing on advances interfacing disciplinary traditions (Pratt 1987; Woolard 1985; Gal 1989; Heller 1992; 1995a; 1995b). Since the early 1990s, new forms of research have included different cultural and historical contexts, and different social spaces, which have been taken into account by looking at face-to-face interaction and multilingual literacy practices (Arthur 1996; Zentella 1997; Baynham and da Fina 2005; Cincotta-Segi 2011).

Initially, considerable research on multilingualism was done from the perspective of language ideology in relation to the role of language in nation-building and the construction of citizenship (Fishman, 1972; Anderson, 1983). Genealogical studies on multilingualism have shown that movements of groups of linguistic minorities in the 1960s both in Europe and America, supporting the renewal of language and ethnical revival, turned language into a symbol of mobilization, solidarity and fluidity. As remarked by Monica Heller (1999), the concept of linguistic mobility is useful and relevant if placed in an ideological context where language has nation-building connotations. Studies on revitalization movements challenging discourses of linguistic nationalism have demonstrated that languages are clearly bounded systems supporting their own cause, and that linguistic minorities exist where nationalism attempts to exclude them from public life (Urla, 1993; Heller, 1999). Despite the numerous critiques across the social sciences about the association of monolingualism and nationhood, it has been widely proved that the citizens as members of nation-state buildings should share a common language both in public and political discursive areas. In particular, as shown by Adrian Blackledge (2005), multilingualism has been increasingly debated since the beginning of the 21st century in the UK both in media and political discourses. At the same time, over the last decade or so, the notion of multilingualism as opposed to monolingualism has become politically and
culturally crucial to societal developments and identity formations as a result of the varieties of language repertoires deriving from linguistic minorities of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. The approach to multilingualism proposed by Heller (1988) within an ethnographic framework of research in multilingual settings has often been multilevel and has shown a direct interest in the texture and dynamics of everyday communicative life, as well as in the phenomenon of heteroglossia in spoken language practices and literacies as embedded in wider social, cultural and historical processes. Much of this research has taken inspiration from the ethnographic tradition of communication and interactional sociolinguistics (Hymes 1967; 1974; Gumperz and Hymes 1972). In general, research on multilingualism at the level of interactional and conversation analysis have mainly focused on interactional processes and the crucial role of agency in the local construction of social life and in the extensive circulation of discourses on language occurring in conversational encounters.

In the first decades of the 21st century, transnational migration and new population flows have brought about significant demographic changes, while creating a more varied territory where the number of migrants has also contributed to shifting the attention of multilingualism to globalization and language and, in particular, to new patterns of migration and post-migration that have been identified with the term “super-diversity” (Vertovec 2007a). In the UK (Vertovec 2006), for instance, new models of migration and post-migration have stimulated “a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade” (2007b: 1024). The concept of “super-diversity”, which was initially used to refer to the interweaving of diversity, where not only ethnicity but also other components interacted, has influenced the composition of social location and trajectories of migrants in the 21st century. 2007 was also the year when Makoni and Pennycock (2007) proposed a “reinvention of languages” by means of which heterogeneity could be acknowledged, while maintaining the fact that languages perpetuate social inequities as forms of social constructions. The notion of a language as representative of a singularity, instead, of a plurality, and the concept of uniformity over diversity, have been dismantled by the practice of translanguaging, viewed as a multiple discursive practice in which multilingual speakers are engaged and which includes incorporating phenomena, such as code switching, code mixing and “mistilingualismo” or “enunciazione mistilingue”\(^1\) (Berruto 1987).

\(^1\) Gaetano Berruto describes the linguistic phenomenon known as “mistilingualismo” in relation to the mixing of codes within the same utterance, which he identifies in terms of *mistilingual* utterance or “enunicato mistilingue”. Mistilingualism differs from the phenomenon of code switching, which is to be meant as the mixing of codes not within one utterance but at the end of each utterance (see also Berruto 1990).
The contributions to this Special Issue encompass a wide and varied range of research related to multilingualism. The primary focus has been that of highlighting sociolinguistic and ethnographic research that incorporates critical post-structuralist perspectives. Within this particular strand of research on multilingualism, the contributors aim to testify to the amount of considerable variations in the field of multilingualism research with a range of views and interpretative stances that present new and alternative ways of addressing the theoretical and methodological challenges of research in the present age. The volume contains four contributions where research is undertaken in different cultural and disciplinary contexts, in different sociolinguistic spaces, though addressing similar research themes and locating the topics and work from an empirical perspective. The third development of research on multilingualism – involving globalisation and migration (“linguistics of global societies”) – is where the contributions can be located. The contributors have provided cutting-edge research within theoretical frameworks that stretch the limits of existing descriptive systems for “analysing and understanding multilingualism and the dynamics of language change” (Bloomaert, 2010: 8) in order to extend existing landscapes on multilingualism and expand individual research. The first two papers draw on technical and technological modes of research and communication and address various issues relating to (mis)understanding in multilingual and intercultural contexts; they illustrate how different language conventions, also through ELF, culture-based behaviour affect the communicative event as a whole. The next two contributions examine multilingual situations in media communication and look at how identities are formed in multilingual language contact.

Turning to the richness offered by the four papers related to multilingualism and its innumerable faces, the volume opens with Mette Rudvin’s long essay on the opportunities that the economic model Game Theory can offer as an analytical framework for multilingual settings across mediated multilingual encounters (through cultural brokerage, mediation or interpreting) and non-mediated platforms and modes of intercultural encounters (when using ELF or translanguaging). The paper, entitled Mediated multilingual interactions. Suggestions for a game theoretic framework, investigates how a game theoretic framework can be adopted to comprehend the mechanisms relating to the rational choices that speakers make in multilingual and intercultural settings of interactional contexts of situation. The author provides a rudimentary but useful non-technical introduction to the basics of Game Theory and discussion of the methodology, its opportunities and limitations, including a brief focus on the problem of ‘rationality’. She explains, in non-technical language, terms that have come into common parlance such as non-zero games and “the prisoner’s dilemma” (this volume, p. 28). The non-technical, ‘soft’ introduction softens the impact of a rather complex mathematics-based model for readers not well-versed in mathematics. Rudvin then shows how intercultural encounters can be seen as a ‘game’, where each interlocutor makes decisions that are considered to be rational (in the framework of the model) based
on certain assumptions, on preferences, on what s/he wants out of the ‘game’ as the desired result, on the information s/he has at hand, and on the expectations of what the other person will do. She argues that assumptions and preferences are influenced by culture and embedded in language conventions, illustrating how broad intercultural dimensions and communication modes (e.g. power distance, hierarchy, high and low context) and discourse strategies (e.g. face negotiation, politeness, accommodation) can be seen as moves in a game (not unlike a chess game). Understanding one’s interlocutors and their linguacultural habitus and discourse conventions—leading to certain expectations—becomes crucial because one can thus more easily anticipate their moves based. In a collaborative situation, the more communication channels and information available, the easier it will be to reach a positive outcome. In a competitive situation where communication channels are less open, this may be a bit more complex. The author shows how the situation differs when a mediator (broker, mediator, interpreter, translator) is present and the communication channels and level and quality of information are increased. Thus, the approach to the study of multilingual and intercultural communication from a game theoretic perspective can shed light on the identification of the actions, mechanisms and strategies employed by interlocutors in multilingual computer-mediated or non-mediated platforms of exchange. In addition to an appendix with examples that illustrate how real-life situations can be modelled through games, Rudvin presents original case studies with data from migrant settings (Afghan and Pakistani national) in point where, in a given communicative context, there is a situation of “Imperfect Information” (ibid., 30) because the players’ intentions are situated within specific communicative contexts and belong to different language codes and a differential access to knowledge.

Rudvin focuses on how accommodation is adopted as a game strategy in a non-mediated multilingual setting and shows how institutional power asymmetry, governed also by expectations and the desired outcome of the ‘game’; she suggests that in professional transactional multilingual settings, the higher the stakes are, the higher the collaboration and cooperation, but this could be affected by power asymmetries as well as cultural conventions. Game Theory can thus function within multilingual and intercultural settings – which also involve speakers of Lingua Francas – as both a resource and means that provide the instruments to uncover the speakers’ expectations and their linguacultural discourse modalities. While contributing to the production of terminological and conceptual frameworks aimed to evaluate goals and risks, Game Theory helps identify and catalogue behavioural and decision-making processes in the context of multilingual communication within digital and non-mediated platforms.

Technology and communication, conversational contexts of interaction and ELF are also central issues to the second paper entitled Troubled talk in cross-cultural business emails. A digital Conversation Analysis of Interactions, where Marianna Lya Zummo conducts a resourceful analysis of multilingual and cross-cultural communicative processes within the context of online asynchronous interactional
modes by providing the reader with a scrutiny of selected materials taken from business discourse in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The use of ELF becomes crucial to the identification of a variety of non-mutual understanding factors in conversational analyses of social interaction, which Zummo investigates by taking into account Jaanson Kaur’s four main sources of misunderstanding: “pragmatic ambiguity, performance-related misunderstanding (mishearings or slips of tongue), language-related misunderstanding (non-standard use of lexical items) and gaps in world knowledge” (this volume, p. 62). In the cases scrutinised, “language-related, channel-related and cultural-related constraints” (ibid.) produce misunderstanding at different levels in the online exchange via mail between the general manager of an Italian manufacturing company, the general manager’s staff and some Pakistani consultants. Against a theoretical backdrop which includes studies on high and low context culture, as well as on pragmatic perspectives relating to communication across written genres and marked by strategies of politeness (e.g. email correspondence), Zummo foregrounds the relevance of business mails which witness, not simply how the interactional event is per se complicated and dangerous due the channel of communication, but also that intercultural and multilingual interaction between identities having different ethnical, linguistic and cultural identities, and across online interactional platforms, may lead to misinterpretations and misjudgments. From this perspective, digital conversational analyses guarantee strategic tools for studying “intercultural communication in terms of different strategies employed by native and non-native speakers” (ibid.).

The third contribution entitled Empowering the Italo-Australian community through news translation. A case study on Il Globo community newspaper by Gaia Aragrande is rooted in the study of multilingualism in connection with migration and the numerous linguistic, cultural and ethnic shifts that are involved in the migratory process. In globalised spaces affected by human crossings of territories and seas, multilingualism becomes a sort of stage for the exploration of dynamics of micro-community development and growth, highly marked in terms of ethnicity. As pointed out by Aragrande, community newspaper is one of the instruments through which micro-communities can find a voice, where the community expresses meanings belonging to native cultures and traditions. By shedding light on the Italo-Australian newspaper Il Globo, Aragrande scrutinises a corpus of 12 target language articles within procedures of contrastive analysis in order to highlight the several translational features that are representative of the dichotomies between minority communities (Italians) and national groups (Australians). Within a media discourse framework, where news translation is turned into a channel through which to negotiate native culture-specific items, migrants’ communities exist and speak in the countries of arrival thanks to the presence of community newspapers that contribute to the preservation of ethnic identities, languages and cultures, offer “a sense of unity and belonging” (this volume, p. 91) and keep “the heritage language alive” (ibid.). Thus, local media sources, such as Il Globo, have the role of transferring the “fluid linguistic shift of
the contact variety” to public multilingual and intercultural contexts in order to reinforce the multilingual identity constructed, in the case in point, by Italo-Australian citizens.

The fourth and final paper is based on the study of language crossing, a sociolinguistic practice in which social actors renegotiate ethnolinguistic boundaries. The concept of crossing is situated within the linguistics of contact and relates to “polylingual phenomena”, in which it is possible to distinguish “multi-ethnic vernaculars, codeswitching, codemixing and stylization” (Martin-Jones, Blackledge & Creese 2012: 20). Against the backdrop of studies on codeswitching, as one of the most widely researched language-contact phenomena, and on audiovisual translation in relation to languages of minorities (Federici 2011) and difference and linguistic variation in multilingual films (Ellender, 2015), Alessandra Rizzo’s contribution entitled Somers Town. Multilingual settings explored in audiovisual translation contexts aims to provide a framework of analysis where an alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by one or more bilingual speaker(s) does not affect the meaning of each language (basically they do not come into contact); instead, it impacts the socio-cultural contact between the characters. The question that this paper wishes to raise regards the translation choices and strategies employed in the transfer of multilingual dialogues to subtitled versions of a target language. On screen, the presence of more than one language involves issues related to bilingualism and biculturalism (here used synonymously with multilingualism or implying more than one language); naturally, occurring bilingual speech data are important to the characterization of the actors as social beings in the environment where they interact with people sharing their native language and also the language of the country of arrival. The paper thus examines issues of subtitling and interrogates audiovisual translation techniques and strategies in order to understand to what extent multilingual films have to respect audiovisual translation norms, while scarifying multilingualism in their subtitled versions. If creative forms of subtitling could be used in the cases of films where aspects of bilingualism and multilingualism are essential to the transmission of the socio-cultural message (intended from the perspective of Michael Halliday’s experiential or ideational metafunction), then, multilingual films would approximately regain those significant bilingual interactions and switches that are present in the source language films. Interactions and switches are very important in multilingual films, since they redefine situations and functions employed as traits of markedness, or as expressions of unmarked code choices.

The increasing variety and number of studies on multilingualism and related topics testify to the fact that scholarly research evaluates multilingualism as determinant in the building of a multilingual Europe that has the potential for encouraging a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity and promoting the learning of diverse languages in addition to mother tongues. The endless mobility of people due to factors depending on work, learning and leisure, on the one hand, and due to forced exile, war, starvation and poverty, on the other, should stimulate
the creation of a European programme of inclusion and collaboration across
language boundaries, as well as argue for establishing more fluid boundaries
between languages.

References


Mediated Multilingual Interactions.

Suggestions for a game theoretic framework

Mette Rudvin

University of Bologna

Abstract

This paper aims to briefly describe the basic methodology of the economic model Game Theory and suggest how it can be used as a framework for analysing mediated and non-mediated multilingual intercultural encounters. It suggests that a game theoretic framework can be adopted to view, rationalize and understand the (seemingly) rational choices speakers make vis-à-vis their interlocutors in a multilingual intercultural situation. A game theoretic framework can shed light on the choices speakers make. These choices are inevitably built on and constructed through precepts and assumptions but also expectations regarding the interlocutors’ pragmatic and linguacultural discourse patterns. Choices will depend on the information (or lack of it) that is available to speakers regarding the immediate situation and regarding the interlocutor’s knowledge and expectations. The paper focuses on issues such as mutual (non-)comprehension, intercultural dimensions, accommodation, power-negotiation and facework when used in intercultural communication. It suggests that Game Theory can provide an additional terminological and conceptual framework to evaluate and analyse interlocutors’ behaviour, expectations, decisions and desired outcomes, providing opportunities to better understand the underlying behavioural and decision-making dynamics in multilingual communication.

Keywords: Game Theory; decision-making; multilingual communication; translating/interpreting; accommodation

1 The ideas contained in this paper were first presented in 2005 at the FIT 2005 World Congress in Tampere in the paper “Dead Serious Games. Community interpreting analysed in a game-theoretical perspective” and subsequently at three other conferences. “The ‘I-Centered’ model as a game-theoretical framework for analysing conflict in legal interpreting” in 2012 at the TISP conference on Public Service Interpreting and Translation at the University of Alcalá, with a former student Francesco Marani; again at the University of Alcalá in 2014 at the 5th International Conference on Public Service Interpreting and Translation: Re (visiting) ETHICS and Ideology in situations of conflict in the presentation “Community Interpreting and Game Theory”; and as a poster “Dead Serious Games. Community interpreting analyzed in a game theoretical perspective” at the CL8 Critical LinkS / A New Generation at Heriot Watt University in 2016.
1. The applicability of Game Theory to multilingual communication. From economic theory to Translation Studies and beyond

This paper aims to briefly describe the basic methodology of the economic model Game Theory\(^2\) (henceforth GT) and suggest how it can be used as a framework for analysing mediated and non-mediated multilingual intercultural encounters\(^3\). It suggests that GT can be a useful analytical framework through which to view, rationalize and understand the choices we make vis-à-vis our interlocutors in a multilingual and intercultural communicative situation, helping us understand better how those choices are based on prior precepts and seemingly-rational assumptions, and how they work reciprocally with the interlocutor’s assumptions to form decisions and actions\(^4\). GT provides us with an additional terminological and conceptual framework to evaluate decisions, outcomes and goals, as well as risks. A better understanding of these mechanisms could also help anticipate mis-communication in multilingual situations. The examples in the appendix provide simple applications of GT to everyday situations that could be helpful to better understand the complex dynamic of GT\(^5\).

In a game theoretic framework, the communication event is imagined as a ‘game’ where interlocutors are mutually evaluating each other’s strategies. It could be described as a Utilitarian approach to decision-making, philosophically speaking, where the preferences and outcomes (“utility and payoffs”) are measured numerically and decisions are taken on the basis of what those measurements suggest as being quantitively optimal. Through GT, the concept ‘zero-sum game’ has become widespread in describing a situation in which participants benefit (or do not benefit) from a given situation. GT has been adopted both descriptively and predictively in a vast range of applications by quantifying probable outcomes and making predictions.

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\(^2\) As distinct from ‘games theory’ or ‘gaming’.

\(^3\) A word of caution is necessary here: A game theoretic analysis of complex human behaviour is not without limitations because the data available to the researcher is limited and a researcher’s interpretation of human behaviour and decision-making strategies will necessarily be flawed precisely because it is limited and subjective. Although culture-governed human communication strategies are often described through intercultural models, these should be adopted with caution in order to avoid over-generalizations and an essentialist (non-relativized) perspective. Furthermore, any description, let alone prediction, of human behaviour is susceptible to random variables and to individual idiosyncratic actions and decisions; although economic game theoretic models factor in random variables and individual behaviour, quantifying and modelling human behaviour in this way could become excessively complex. By ‘mediated’ interaction I mean by an interpreter, translator or, as is more common is some countries, a language or cultural mediator.

\(^4\) Boileau 2015:72. He provides a GT framework through which to analyze divorce mediation.

\(^5\) The simple examples include a one- and multiparty game, symmetrical and non-symmetrical preferences, the prisoner’s dilemma, and coordination.
Although decision-theories had been studied in many disciplines (see Benz et al. 2006), it was John von Neumann’s early (1928) publications on games and risk that developed into what became known as GT when, with, Oskar Morgenstern, they published their seminal studies on ‘games’ in 1944 in an attempt to find a more effective way to solve certain kinds of economic problems regarding competition between firms, investment and numerous other issues related to economic activity. Since then, GT has been applied to a vast range of settings and disciplines, such as diplomacy and military strategy, political campaigning, elections, juror selection and even to the evolution of the human race and its language development. In the area of language studies, GT has been applied to communication, pragmatics (especially the Gricean cooperative principle and the notion of implicature) and semantics in a number of sophisticated technical studies.

As early as 1967 Jirij Levý offered an analysis of how GT could be used to examine translation as a cognitive decision-making process (see Osimo 2014 and Baker-Malmkjær 1998). In this essay, contained in the festschrift in honour of Roman Jakobsen, Levý suggests that translation strategies and choices can be seen as a series of decisions where “Each choice, and each decision deriving from it, give birth to a different “game”, which in translation is called “version””; the translation process is a “succession of definitional instructions and selective instructions” to choose among the possible options (in a paradigm) in the semiotic decision-making process (Osimo 2014 citing Levý 1967). Levý’s analysis was in essence a ‘one-person’ game in GT, examining the translator’s decision-making process from a cognitive point of view. Hsieh, in a 2015 paper calls upon translation studies researchers to analyse translation through economic models.

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6 See e.g. Davis 1997; Gintis 2009; Myerson 1991; Osborne 2004. A simple google search will instantly reveal the popularity and continued relevance of GT across disciplines.

7 For a non-technical introduction and mention of various fields of application see Davis 1997, but the list of GT studies is truly applications is vast; Benz, Jäger, and van Rooij 2006 is a good place to start, but also Gintis 2009; Myerson 1991; Osborne 2004; see e.g. Ross 2016 for a description of GT and philosophy. For GT and evolution see Maynard Smith 1982; Maynard Smith and Price 1973; Skyrms 2010.


9 The literature is ample in this field; for example: Ahern and Clarke 2014; Asher et al. 2001; Atlas and Levinson; Benz et al. 2006; Clarke 2012; Clarke and Parikh 2007; Franke 2011, 2014, 2016; Franke and Goodman 2012; Franke and Wagner 2014; Franke and Jäger 2014; Grosz 2014; Jäger 2008, 2012; Jäger and van Rooij 2012; Kamp 1978; Merin 1999; Pietarinen 2006, 2007; Parikh 2007, 2010; Rubenstein 2000; van Rooij and Sevenster 2006; van Rooij 2004; Merin 1999; Rubinstein 2000; Franke, de Jager, & van Rooij, 2012; de Jaegher & van Rooij, 2014; Wagner, 2015. Unsurprisingly, the connection between Sperber and Wilson’s (1995, 2004) relevance theory and pragmatics in a GT perspective has also been studied; see Franke, de Jager and van Rooij 2012. There are of course numerous other models describing negotiation and decision-making, most famously perhaps the BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement) principle in business studies, see Fisher an Ury 1981.
focussing on the translator as a rational human being making rational choice decisions. It is also in this spirit that the present contribution hopes to contribute to encourage scholars to investigate economic models, specifically GT, in order to shed light on multilingual communication, mediated or non-mediated. Hsieh suggests that Levy’s model could be re-worked and turned into a multi-party investigation by including other parties involved in the translation process, apart from the translator, namely the publisher, the reader and the author. Anthony Pym (2010) has also shown how GT can be applied to translator uncertainty. Gheorghita 2013 has also suggested that translation can be seen as a game in a GT framework. This could be a profitable avenue of research in future studies because it is precisely the difficulty of choice and translators’ decisions that is captured in GT modelling. The developments in Translation- and Interpreting studies as well as in multilingual communication since Levy’s publication in 1967 are profound¹⁰, and it could be fruitful to re-examine game theoretic principles and terminology in the light of mediated and non-mediated multilingual communication. This is true of both written translation and interpreting, and nowhere more so than in dialogic interpreting where each interlocutor’s (‘player’s) discourse is deeply embedded in the others’, and the resulting emerging meaning is a complex whole reciprocally constructed (see Rudvin 2006). While Levy’s translation-decision analysis is in essence a ‘one-person game’, a dialogic situation with an interpreter mediating the conversation is a complex ‘multi-party game’ where each person is assessing, evaluating and calculating the other interlocutors’ utterances and behaviour, unfolding in a dynamic interactive process. In a professional setting it is somewhat easier to factor in the data, based on discourse conventions that will broadly lead the dialogue in a particular direction (depending of course on the contextual variables)¹¹. In non-mediated multilingual events, the literature on lingua francas, especially English as a lingua franca¹², has developed enormously since the turn of the millennium, as well as studies on various translanguaging phenomena (e.g. Canagarajah 2011; García and Wei 2014).

GT could prove useful not only as a descriptive tool through which to further examine the cognitive decision-making process of oral or written translation, but to describe those extralinguistic factors that impact all multilingual situations. In a multilingual professional or institutional setting which is mediated by an

10 The present author discussed this in a 2006 paper in the light of paradigm shifts in the humanities generally, but there is by now ample literature on this, see Pym 2010 or also Hsieh 2015 for a succinct overview. See e.g. Pöchhacker 2004 for a description of the development of Interpreting Studies.
11 Conversation analysis is precisely the application of a focused analysis of each move in a conversation. In spontaneous conversation, some parameters can be factored in as analysable data in terms of cultural discourse and behavioural preference based on convention (e.g. low/high context, (in)directness, hierarchy, power distance, gender, reaction to face threats, acquiescence, etc.); spontaneous conversation unfolds and is less strictly governed and arguably less predictable. Needless to say, individual behaviour and unique (‘random’) circumstances are very difficult to factor in in any model, let alone a mathematically quantifiable one.
12 See e.g. Seidlhofer 2004 but there is a wealth of literature in this area.
interpreter, the interpreter has a mediating function that may compensate for the disparity in access to information and may further act to align mutual mismatches in players’ expectations and thus have a collaborative effect. For practical and cost-related reasons, however, most human multilingual encounters take place without any form of external mediation, through the use of a lingua franca or multilingual language exchange. All such communication is by definition supported by more or less extensive accommodation (in a broad sense) strategies. I argue that an awareness (and self-awareness) of the underlying processes that each interlocutor intuitively and reciprocally engages in could help to pre-empt communication breakdowns resulting from different language usage and expectations (positive or negative stereotypes) of the other participant(s)’s behaviour.

1.2 Intercultural models

Generally speaking, discourse and communication strategies of participants in a multilingual encounter, that we will here call moves in accordance with GT theory, are enacted on the basis of their expectations of the opponents’ moves and how this may succeed or fail due to (in)congruent expectations in behaviour and discourse models. Multilingual discourse encounters involving highly diverse culture-governed implied meaning and pragmatic discourse features and strategies (alignment issues, politeness, face, silence, humour, conversation management, and turn-taking, topic avoidance, institutional and social power issues) can easily lead to mis- or non-understandings\(^{13}\), confusion, hostility and ultimately communication breakdown if not detected and or repaired/mediated. Not only can intercultural communicative breakdowns be damaging but can also lead to further stereotypical and prejudicial labelling (Lemak 2012) and initiate a negative spiral of prejudice and mis-communication. Multilingual and intercultural interactions have been successfully captured by the sufficiently robust intercultural models of Hall, Hofstede and Hampden-Turner through which we gain insight into human communicative behaviour and through which such behaviour is, at least to some degree, predictable\(^{14}\).

As we will see, intercultural interactions can be seen as a series of actions and moves based on the subject’s assumptions, expectations and evaluation of the interlocutor’s probable decisions, however. The task of applying GT to

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\(^{13}\) Deterding 2013 differentiates between non- and misunderstandings: while a misunderstanding can go undetected, a listener is usually immediately aware of a non-understanding and resulting gap in comprehension (See Boyd and Rudvin 2018, 171-2.). See also Allwood & Abelar 1984 and Kaur 2009 on non-comprehension.

\(^{14}\) These intercultural models adopted in numerous disciplines are undoubtedly valid analytical frameworks despite the danger of over-generalization (and therefore stereotyping): the large data sets on which they are built safeguard a certain degree of representativeness and provide a valid methodological tool. See Dudlik and Gordon 2013. De Jong and Warmelink 2017 apply an adapted version of Hofstede’s dimensions to intercultural simulation games.
intercultural and multilingual communication is not a simple one, as the linguistic, cultural and psychological complexity of multilingual interaction does not lend itself easily to numerical quantification and predictability, nor is it simple to scrutinize the covert thought processes leading to expectations and decision-making in an intercultural multilingual encounter (or indeed any encounter). Furthermore, in professional settings not only are the needs and expectations of the primary interlocutors different (their shared cultural, social, political and linguistic knowledge\textsuperscript{15}) but also their institutionally-governed communication systems, such as the way in which they couch their requests and information, the way in which they perceive and describe events (temporality in narrative) or states of being (illness), appropriate institutional and hierarchical forms of address long/short-term orientation, etc. GT in a narrow sense is a complex analytical system that requires mathematical competence to investigate and evaluate complex data, but it has also been adopted in a more ‘soft’ fashion, employing the basic ideas and framework, strategies, terminology and goals in a non-mathematical manner (a recent example is Boileau 2015). A ‘soft’ approach also makes GT more accessible by using a layman’s description to readers who, like the author, are not versed in economics, statistics, maths, or formal logic. The aim of this paper is thus to provide a terminological-conceptual description of a GT and in this way to help readers exploit the opportunities that GT can provide to better understand the underlying dynamics that lead to decision-making in both mediated and non-mediated multilingual encounters. Following Hsieh (2015) and Gheorghita (2013), respectively, the translator—and more generally the interlocutor in a multilingual communicative event—can indeed be seen as a \textit{homo sapiens oeconomicus} as well as a \textit{homo ludens}.

2. The basic principles and terminology of Game Theory

The game metaphor in general language—as well as in academic domains—is a common one that has little to do with the ludic aspect of playing or entertainment and more to do with the strategic, competitive aspects of a win-lose exchange that involves evaluating the other person(s)’s moves, precisely as in a game of chess or a board- or card-game (if the stakes are financial, as in a poker game, the relevance of the metaphor becomes more evident). The game/play metaphor refers generally

\textsuperscript{15} Norman Fairclough’s 1995 volume is perhaps one of the best-known works on this phenomenon in language studies, also triggering the branch of Critical Discourse Analysis; the underlying principles of CDA was preceded by decades if not centuries of work in anthropology, sociology, psychology and communication studies, and of course later what came to be known as Cultural Studies (see e.g. Jackson 2012). The rise of intercultural studies in the postwar period, especially in the business setting, was also a huge impetus in shedding light on how the human thought process and communication systems functions not just individually but also collectively in conventionalized forms.
to human cognitive processes of decision-making and action, indeed, the corresponding verb ‘to play’ is also a frequent metaphor in everyday language, for example in ‘play it by ear’ or ‘it’s a different ballgame’.16

The way people ‘play out’ strategic decisions could be encapsulated in these broad categories: the desired objective; the information each person has; and how each person believes the other party will react to their own decisions and moves, thus introducing an aspect of prediction and careful evaluation. It is this strategic reflection and calculation of one’s own moves on the basis of how one believes the interlocutor will (re)act that lies at the heart of the ‘game’ metaphor. The a priori assumption underlying this prediction is that the other person will behave according to the same rules17 and according to the same logic, in what economists refer to as rational behaviour. As philosophers and psychologists, from David Hume to Sigmund Freud (challenging the quintessential Enlightenment paradigm, see Boileau 2015 or Hsieh 2015) have long suggested, however, people do not, of course, always behave rationally, and this is one of the difficulties of creating robust economic models of human behaviour that are not just explanatory (looking backward), but predictive (looking forward).

In order to claim representativeness and predictability, economists thus deal with very large datasets. Although the inability to capture (irrational) human behaviour or random demographic, geographic, political or other more individual behavioural variables may render a model either less robust or much more complex, GT has been successfully used to illustrate situations in which human behaviour is deeply irrational and unpredictable by suggesting that in a particular strategic framework people nevertheless tend to behave predictably in order to reach a particular good or benefit, objective or outcome, just like a game of chess or poker (see Boileau 2015). The more information that the analyst has about past behaviour (iterated experience, habit, convention), the more robust the model becomes because it suggests that the agent (player) will ‘play’ (behave, reason or act) in one way rather than another with a certain amount of probability.

16 The game metaphor has been used broadly with reference to politics (most famously so, the Great Game of the British-Russian contest over Afghanistan in the 19th Century, immortalized through Kipling); in philosophy, the metaphor has been used extensively in the works of scholars such as Gadamer and Wittgenstein; GT has also been studies through philosophy (see Ross 2016).
17 Didactic games such as Baranga are used in intercultural research and training to demonstrate how crucial it is not just to play by the same rules in an interpersonal exchange situation, but to be aware of the sharing of those rules, of a shared communication code (Thiagarahan and Thiagarajan 2006). The issue of predictability is important in the context of games. This is illustrated in the differences between a game such as chess and one such as poker where, in the latter, random variables (the distribution of cards) are much higher (although they can be statistically calculated and human communication signals can be interpreted by other players during the game).
2.1 Rationality, communication and information

A game theoretic analysis helps to uncover and predict how participants or ‘players’ in a ‘game’ make their decisions based on their expectations of the opponents’ decisions. According to the situation, the players may adopt numerous strategies; they may take actions, make decisions, threaten, form coalitions and/or take other actions, the consequence of which is to receive some sort of benefit/reward, punishment or monetary loss or gain. The gain may be more or less tangible.

A number of cognitive as well as communicative features underpin this process, the first of which is rationality and the second being access to information. In its most basic framework, GT assumes (as do many economic models) that participants–players–reason and behave rationally, in their own best interest to maximise their own gain, and also expect their opponents to behave according to rational reasoning (not against their own interests); indeed, ‘rational expectations’ is an important principle in economic theory. The scope of this paper does not allow for a discussion on rationality, a fraught and complex issue; it is important to understand, however, that the GT terminology regarding rationality and reasoning is based on an internal logic rather than an intuitive understanding of rationality (an assumption which philosophers and psychologists, but also many other disciplines in the humanities, have demonstrated is not at all straightforward). Another way of putting this is that a person’s rationality is based on their preferences (they will decide–rationally–based on what they prefer and also what they desire in terms of outcome). The articulation of that preference may be very complex, however; for example, it may be governed by altruism and not (just) straightforward profit or obvious benefit, and this seem counter-intuitive.

The weak point–but also the strength–of this theory lies in its being able to identify, account for, factor in and numerically quantify those preferences and predicted outcomes in a ‘payoff matrix’. At the same time, it is factoring in and quantifying effectively and reliably the complex variables–the data–that seems to be the sticking point.

A player’s assessment of his/her own behaviour as well as that of the opponent’s behaviour is based on the information available; each player must assess how much information the other player has and how s/he will act on the basis of that information. An underlying assumption is that the player will play his/her best,

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18 See Benz et al. 2006, Allott 2006, Jäger 2008 Boileau 2015 to name only three of the numerous studies that tackle this issue.
19 For an excellent discussion of rationality, and problematization of GT terminology, in a Kantian framework, see Ross 2016. See Boileau 2015 for a critique of a simplistic use of rationality but see also Benz et al. 2006 and Jäger 2006 for an explanation of rationality in a GT framework. See also Benz et al. 2006 for an explanation of two broad approaches in GT that are governed precisely by (non)adoption of a straightforward rationalistic approach. See also Weibull 1995 on evolutionary GT.
and that the opponent will play flawlessly (see Davis 1997; Benz et al. 2006, Jäger 2002, Allott 2006). Unequal access to information is thus a prime consideration in GT and the key to being able to predict players’ behaviour and thus the outcome of the situation. Information also has to be credible in order for it to be believed and acted upon by the other party. The notion of ‘cheap talk’ is discussed in GT (Farrell 1993; Jäger et al 2011; Stalnaker 2006) meaning that empty talk such as vain boasting is information easily provided but that does not necessarily affect the evaluation of the person speaking to the same degree as more credible information. Costly talk (such as certain politeness strategies, see Van Rooij and Sevenster 2006) might seem self-defeating and cost much effort, but if they are interpreted correctly, may be more credible.

We can capture the situation (objectives and parameters) simplistically in the following diagram.

![Diagram](image)

Objective/ Result: benefit to A or B or A and B*

Premises:
- Rationality, desire your own benefit;
- Degree of communication between A – B;
- Contingent factors:
  - Random variables
  - Human Psychology
  - Cultural Variation
  - Language

A
- Own preferences, wants, objectives;
- Own expectations of B;
- Own information.

B
- Opponent preferences and objectives - coincide or clash?
- Opponent expectations of A
- Opponent’s information

* A = You, B = Other/ Opponent (A and B can be individual or group)

Figure 1. Objectives, Premises, Information level and contingent factors

Very simply put, each player must assess the extent to which his/her goals coincide or clash with the opponent’s and consequently decide whether to cooperate or compete with him/her; the result will be a blending of players’ mutual and conflicting interests (Davis, 1997: xiv). Chance and randomness clearly render decisions more complex, but then players apply past experience and laws of probability and rationality.
2.2 Players, Zero-sum, Utility

The participants in a GT model are referred to as Players. The classical two-person game is the simplest form of game, even though most games consist of a set of players. A one-person game (called decision theory) is also possible, such as in solitaire or gambling (or translation). The number of players can in theory be infinite (economists deal with very large numbers in macroeconomic models). The Zero-Sum game is the most basic game type in which two players have diametrically opposite interests and no common interests; therefore, the sum of gains is a constant sum. (Two nations trading, however, would be a non-zero sum game since they both gain; Davis, 1997: 14). A zero-sum game is competitive, and one party’s loss is the other party’s gain (as in the prisoner’s dilemma below, or as in a game of chess), but a non-zero sum game is more cooperative, and both parties can gain, the sum being greater than 0. Non-zero sum, games where both players win, are more nebulous and lend themselves less easily to quantification. In real life it would be more realistic to think of two-person games on a continuum with zero-sum on one extreme end (which is extremely rare, see Davis, 1997: 81) and cooperative game on other end of scale.

The classical two-person zero-sum game can be captured in the following manner (from Davis, 1997: 12):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Two-person zero-sum game

Explanation: Player 1, ‘you’ pick a row and player 2, ‘your opponent’ picks a column, neither knowing what the other has picked; the number where the row and column intersect is the amount your opponent pays you in dollars. So, if you pick row A and your opponent picks column III, you will receive a dollar. If your opponent chooses II you would have to pay two dollars to him/her since the number is negative. If you play C you have a chance at your greatest possible gain, 7, but will your opponent cooperate by choosing II? What would you do if you knew your opponent’s strategy in advance? If your choice depends on your opponent’s strategy, what will you do when you don’t know what he or she will do?

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20 This section is based primarily on Davis’s (non-technical) 1997 and Benz et al.’s 2006 introductions to GT, but is also informed by the works of Franke, de Jaegher, Benz, Jäger and van Rooij and other works cited in the references at the end of this article.
How is the outcome of a game quantified? Clearly, it is difficult to quantify ‘gain’ in any precise manner when dealing with human behaviour and communication. Nevertheless, game theorists in various disciplines other than economics (sociologists, business studies scholars, anthropologists, psychologists) do try to assign a quantitative value to these gains or payoffs, however nebulous, by assigning them a **Utility Value** which is measured by the degree of the players’ preferences towards these gains. This could be seen as their ‘want value’ – how much or how little a player wants something; this could be in a tangible form (goods) or something else, such as a service or an action to take place. Clearly people want different things (Davis 1997: 61), so the utility value will have to take into account very complex variables and models. **Utility is thus measured by how much people want something, their preferences for that thing, how they can reach this goal and how satisfied they will be with it.** Based on how much a person wants something, one can measure how much they are willing to pay for it. “A utility function is simply a “quantification” of a person’s preferences with respect to certain objects” (Davis 1997:62). If a player’s preferences are sufficiently consistent, they can be expressed in a utility function (Davis 1997:63-64): in a GT model, individual people maximise wants, not their utility function, but they act as though they were maximising their utility function. Consequently, if a player’s preferences are observed, then a utility function can be established. What happens when preferences change? Game theorists make this model even more complex by quantifying things such as inconsistent personality and preferences, namely **Intransitivity.** Some scholars believe that true intransitivity (inconsistent personality and preferences) rarely arises and that inconsistency is due to indifference towards goals, not changing preferences; inconsistencies can, at least to some degree, be weeded out with large number of tests (ibid). We see here that GT is a utilitarian model, based on measuring people’s satisfaction, as in the utilitarian branch of philosophy. In this brief description, we also see that players’ preferences, wants and objectives form a logical, or rational, process that underlies decision-making.

### 2.3 Strategies, equilibria and solutions

The players perform actions that are called **Moves** which reflect a strategy, in the sense of a ‘plan’. The players, as in chess or as in military strategies, must anticipate other players’ moves in order to optimize the outcome. The player’s **Strategy** is thus his/her plan of action, describing what the player will do. A strategy is **dominant** if the person is always better off playing that particular strategy, it is the best action regardless of what other the player chooses to do. A **pure** strategy is the one which a player will unconditionally choose, but a **mixed** strategy is when a player is using more than one pure strategy. A strategy that leads to a **Minimax** solution consists in minimizing the other party’s...
maximum, i.e. when each participant minimizes the maximum loss the other can impose on him (i.e. defensive). In a Maximin strategy, the player maximizes his/her minimum. In real life it is virtually impossible to describe fully a set of complex strategies, and strategies and solutions operate on an overlapping continuum. Equilibrium points, when there is a payoff to both parties, are reached when equilibrium strategies are employed. A Nash Equilibrium (after the Nobel-prize winning economist John Nash portrayed in the celebrated film *A Beautiful Mind* with Russell Crowe) is achieved when any further move or change will result in a loss for either party, and thus both parties have little room for manoeuvre (see Benz et al. 2006; see Davis 1997 or Boileau 2015 for ‘soft’ introductions). Strategies of cooperation are enacted to achieve a solution that is favourable to both parties.\(^{21}\)

In early models of GT Perfect information was considered to be a basic assumption, yet it quickly became clear that in real life (i.e. not in a game of chess or solitaire) most players have Imperfect information. The players’ gain or profit is called the Payoffs. This is modelled by assigning to the gain(s) a numerical value. As mentioned, in a Zero-sum game the sum of payoffs, no matter what actions chosen by players, is zero (one loses, one gains). Each game then has a value which can be measured in payoffs; optimal strategies will guarantee this value.

2.4 Classical Prisoner’s Dilemma

The ‘Prisoner’s Dilemma’ is a simple, proverbial example in various adaptations that is commonly used to illustrate GT methodology. Consider the following (adapted from Davis 1997):

Two thieves have been apprehended and are being questioned by police officers in two separate rooms; they have no contact and thus no way to exchange information. Each prisoner’s welfare will depend on the other prisoner’s choice, but in order to evaluate the other person’s choice they have no external information but must rely on former information (experience) and (mis)trust. If both thieves do not confess and deny, or stay quiet, they will each be sentenced to 3 months’ imprisonment. If thief 1 informs on thief 2, thief 2 gets a 9 year sentence. If thief 2 informs on thief 1 s/he gets 0 years and thief 2 gets 9 years. If they both inform, they both get 6 years. The police obviously exploit the lack of information exchange and rely on mistrust in order to maximise their own gain.

\(^{21}\) Coalitional strategy forms (societies, groups) take place where the value and worth of the coalition itself replaces the strategy; then we find a tendency to favour common interests.
2.5 Risk propensity

Making a decision will depend to a large extent on information quantity and quality (which captures prior information and knowledge, experience, new information, knowledge of the other player’s thinking, knowledge of statistical probability, etc.) but also on risk-propensity, i.e. how willing you are to take a risk that could go in your favour without having enough information to be sure of the outcome. This is also a basic premise of decision-making theory. Risk-propensity can be both individual (depending on personality, age, circumstances, frame of mind, socialization, family, etc.) and collective (arguably captured in Hofstede’s notion of uncertainty avoidance), depending on cultural characteristics into which each person has, broadly, been socialized.

How much one is willing to invest in terms of money or energy will clearly depend on the person’s prior resources, but may also be quite subtle: for example, a rich person might not gamble for $50 but a poor person might, given that the need is so much higher (see Davis 1997). This depends on factors such as current needs and status quo, and the ratio of payoff to current holdings. Thus, there is a price for security and risk-aversion. People also decide differently when a problem is described differently, so decisions are also based on how the problem (and subsequent risk, gain) is presented (Davis 1997:70ff). Personality also affects decision-making, e.g. “trustworthiness and trustingness”. Unsuccessful attempts have been made to corroborate decision-making to gender, ethnicity and intelligence, but there have been some results linking profession and previous experience; there is also a tendency for players to become less cooperative as the game evolves (Davis 1997:157).
2.6 Competition/Collaboration and Communication

Sometimes monetary payoffs then, are not important, but other more intangible factors are at stake (Davis, 1997: 58). In simple competitive zero-sum games (war, business, sports) the basic premise is a loser/winner and the aim is to hurt the opponent. However, in many situations a player might not want to maximise gains (e.g. a parent playing for coins with their child). In these situations, the game is not competitive, but collaborative (Davis 1997: 80ff). These games allow for information exchange between players and can lead to binding agreements. Clearly, here there is a strong incentive to work together in order to receive the largest total payoff sum. Again, to which degree players have common interests has to be placed on a continuum rather than as a binary set of strategy options. Many games are complex with both competitive and collaborative goals for players. A single player may, furthermore, have mixed motives (in the same way that they may be inconsistent in their preferences). Payoffs must also be high enough to render desirable the effort of collaboration. For example, in competitive game experiments, beating one’s partner can become more important than maximising payoffs (Davis 1997: 158).

The issue of communication between players is also crucial in GT and profoundly affects the players’ strategies, incentive, motivation and the resulting payoffs. GT shows also, contrary perhaps to common sense logic, that communication between players is not always an advantage (Davis 1997: 90ff). Paradoxically, not only is withholding information from your opponent often an advantage, but sometimes not having access to information yourself (i.e. the inability to communicate) may be an advantage. For example, experiments have shown that communication between players sometimes degenerates into threats: “The inability to communicate may well work to one player’s advantage, and this advantage is lost if there is a way to communicate, even though no actual communication occurs” (Davis, 1997: 91-92). The “effect of allowing communication depends on the attitudes of the players and, in turn, the attitudes of the players may be affected by the ability to communicate” (Davis, 1997: 158). Tacit guessing and information based on reading other person’s expressions, behaviour and moves can, furthermore, be easily misunderstood (Davis, 1997: 94). Complex psychological models are proposed to account for these issues, and clearly, the spectrum is wide: from no communication to freely flowing communication. It is important to remember that repetitive (iterated) playing leads to accumulated experience and increased predictability, for example, by playing bridge or poker with the same participants repeatedly. In zero-sum competition, communication has less significance, but in completely cooperative games, the problem of communication becomes crucial (see Boileau 2015).

Recapitulating in very broad brushstrokes, the sequencing of a decision-making process could be portrayed in the following manner:
• having a preference (measurable as a utility according to how much you want it);
• having (or not) information about the situation;
• having (or not) information about the interlocutor’s preferences (leading to expectations regarding their behaviour and decision);
• evaluating past experience in past ‘games’;
• deciding.

3. Intercultural and multilingual communication through a game-theoretic lens

What seems to be a straightforward communicative event or a ‘game’ in a mono-lingual situation is rendered increasingly complex in a multilingual22 situation in which language discrepancies also reflect differing communicative norms, expectations and cultural values. Furthermore, a multilingual encounter through a lingua franca23 could be mediated through an external mediator (culture broker, interpreter), or it could be self-mediated through various accommodation strategies.

This brief description of GT has hopefully made clear the relevance of GT to illustrate the dynamics involved when interlocutors in a multilingual (self-mediated or externally mediated) situation select communication strategies through which to communicate and reach a desired goal. There is much common ground both in the premises for this game and the terminology used: two or more players in a communicative situation where each is trying to interpret the other(s)’ intentions through a given communication code where there is imperfect information (because the language codes differ and the access to shared knowledge differs); a constant decision-making process of interpretation and (possible) collaborative accommodation24; a strategic decision-making framework through language-specific and field-specific discourse strategies; the desire to use those communication forms to reach a desired goal. This shared ground and common terminology is even more evident when a mediator (either in the strong sense as a culture broker or in the weak sense as an interpreter) is involved.

22 Where two or more languages are involved. These languages would typically represent different ethnic origins, but could also represent multilingual situations with people from the same country, such as India, South Africa, Nigeria or Switzerland.
23 For the purposes of this paper we will be using English as an example of a lingua franca, but it could of course be Arabic, Hindi/Urdu, French, Spanish or some other world language.
24 See e.g. Cogo 2009; Cogo and Dewey 2012; Seidelhofer 2004, to name only a few, for studies on accommodation, a crucial feature of ELF; see these same studies on misunderstanding and repair.
A multilingual encounter that takes place in an institutional professional setting could indeed be seen as a game where strategic communicative decisions are taken on the basis of each player’s expectations of the other’s moves, within the parameters of an institutional bureaucratic framework, for example police questioning, a trial, a refugee hearing, a job interview, a doctor-patient consultation, an interview seeking social security benefits. Each person could be seen as a ‘player’ engaging in verbal and non-verbal communicative activity in order to achieve a specific objective, and evaluating and anticipating each other’s strategies. However, in multilingual settings, the players may not be/have:

- playing by the same communicative rules;
- similar expectations and ‘wants’;
- aware that they are playing by different rules;
- approve of each other’s rules;
- have the same immediate or long-term agenda or objective.

In an institutional setting, although the immediate objective may be the same or similar (treatment, cure, a verdict, completing an asylum application, etc.), the more long-term objectives\(^{25}\) may not be congruent and the underlying covert strategic moves of the various players may be leading the encounter in opposite directions and creating mistrust. People who have been socialized into the same deep cultural values arguably base their decisions on similar unspoken assumptions, but this is not necessarily the case in multilingual intercultural settings. Although in other professional business settings it may lean more in the direction of competitive than cooperative, in institutional settings, the objective is seldom a minimax zero-sum game but a more cooperative one, and may contain a set of mixed communication strategies. The need to reach a positive outcome and the incentive for collaboration and cooperation (non-zero sum game) is arguably higher in a transactional multilingual setting in a professional domain.

3.1. Mixed strategies

Players will negotiate their moves in whatever discoursal channel is appropriate at that particular moment to further their immediate or long-term goals, through a story/narrative (e.g. patient, defendant, asylum-seeker), through a vast range of discoursal strategies, such as question-answer pair, request, topic or speech avoidance, silence, face negotiation, hedging, gap-filling and the use of phatic speech, foregrounding, turn-taking management/interruption, acquiescence,

\(^{25}\) For example, the patient may desire a holistic treatment plan aiming at psychological and emotional well-being, not just treatment of symptoms; a defendant might be devising strategies to achieve an acquittal or light sentence while the arbitrator is assessing factual information; an asylum seeker might be hoping to leave the country but is hampered by the Dublin agreement, and may or may not wish to provide factual information.
isagreement, etc. However, strategies may lead to communication breakdown rather than goal fulfilment when they are not misunderstood\textsuperscript{26}.

3.1.1 Access to information and communication

As in any game with a concrete objective in mind, access to information is crucial. Unequal access in an intercultural institutional multilingual setting could be related to many factors, but these three parameters could help organize the various (overlapping) contexts involved:

\textit{Immediate (situational) context} – the institution’s access to expert information vs the layperson’s access to that same information will lead to asymmetry; the degree of information available to the layperson will also depend on the institution’s willingness to share and divulgate—in comprehensible language—that information or to keep it as covert as possible, thus self-regulating access to services; i.e. withheld information, as a strategic move in order to enhance an existing power distance and display of authority. For reasons of time a doctor will not explain all the medical technicalities to a patient; a cross-examining lawyer or judge may deliberately withhold his/her questioning techniques and possibly the workings of the legal system - from the interlocutor. The police officer or guilty suspect who is withholding information are both playing win-lose minimax game strategies. Patient-doctor communication may seem intrinsically collaborative, but this is not always so, for example when a patient is suspected of withholding information about a health situation (e.g. to claim benefits, prescription or sick-leave, or deny drug-habits).

\textit{Linguistic context} – the knowledge of the interlocutor’s language specific features (for example pragmatic features in the use of silence or indirect relationship-building communication) mentioned above.

\textit{Cultural context} – the knowledge of the interlocutor’s culture-specific features (for example Hofstede’s 2004 power distance, or any other dimension, in that specific institutional setting, doctor-patient, judge-defendant).

In a zero-sum competitive game, communication is sometimes withheld among players, as mentioned. In a non-zero-sum collaborative game, however, there is no reason for which communication should not be shared and “sometimes communication can move the game from a competitive dynamic to a cooperative

\textsuperscript{26} Huth and Teleghani-Nikazm (in Lemak 2012:16) show how pragmatic errors are more likely than lexical or grammatical errors to be seen as due to speaker personality rather than lack of pragmatic competence. Thus, culture-governed pragmatic strategies, especially as relating to face and politeness, are potentially sites of communication breakdown and hostility. Van Rooij and Sevenster 2006 illustrate how the misalignment of speakers’ politeness preferences, where the player is aligning the opponent’s preferences, can lead to poor communication and is a costly rather than cost-effective strategy.
dynamic” (Boileau, 2015: 29). Nevertheless, information might be withheld ‘inadvertently’, as it were, even in a collaborative non-zero sum game. This might happen for a number of cultural/pragmatic reasons related to discourse features, especially relating to High and Low Context Communication behaviour. High and low context preference will determine strategies such as hedging, indirectness, and, at face value at least, may lead to non-communication and non-disclosure of potentially significant information, which may lead to misunderstanding and mistrust. Other strategies that tend to favour non-disclosure of information, i.e. non-communication, are topic-avoidance (culturally inappropriate content), silence (language external rather internal: pauses and silence to suggest contextual information rather than relating to discourse cohesive factors such as a shift in turns, syntax marking, foregrounding, division of meaning units, etc.). Gratuitous acquiescence (a tendency to not contradict but towards using an ‘empty yes’ as a relationship-maintaining feature, i.e. not openly contradicting), is particularly prone to misunderstanding both in private and institutional multilingual and intercultural contexts. Negative face, a desire to avoid intrusion, is another potentially disruptive (if misunderstood) non-communication strategy. The players’ strategies may not be congruent if those wants are culturally-governed and remain unexplained and mis-understood.27

3.1.2 Payoffs

What seems to emerge from this brief discussion is, unsurprisingly, the benefits of increased communication and an open information channel. Increased communication and increased information will give the interlocutors more ‘data’ on which to calculate their moves because they know what the other person is more likely to do and when they can be trusted. When a common goal is negotiated and reached cooperatively, an equilibrium is established. The payoff may not necessarily coincide with the initial wants and goals of either party and the objectives may shift during the course of the ‘game’ as a result of cooperative behaviour. The freer the information exchange (access to information) and the more open the communication channel is – the more likely it is that a non-zero sum (rather than zero-sum) situation is established. In the presence of an external mediator (culture broker, mediator, interpreter), a higher payoff seems to be more likely, if that mediator is competent and in good faith. In the absence of an external

27 In a multilingual setting involving migrants, it is important to remember that conditions, and thus contingent parameters as well as ‘wants’, change through a temporal arc of acculturation and what might loosely be termed ‘integration’. By the same token, with increased exposure to multilingual and intercultural settings (and the increased access to information that comes with migration as well as globalization and media technology), institutions and their representatives adapt to the communication behaviour and goals of their foreign-language speaking clients, and communication can over time become more collaborative as cultural information is exchanged and expectations and goals are better understood and adjust to each other.
mediator, a self-mediation process by the two parties will automatically kick in, unless either party has absolutely no interest in the game-playing negotiation (arguably, the more transactional an encounter the less likely this would be). Decision-making and ‘game-playing’ might also be affected by the dynamics between the players and if they are playing individually or in a group (on each side): a decision taken as a single individual (a person alone in an institutional setting rather than in a group) could lead to more defensive and less risk-prone strategies.

3.1.3 Limitations to the benefits of GT

As mentioned at the beginning of the paper, game-theoretic models assume rational behavior, and this may at times fly in the face of the more irrational tendencies in human communication and behavior, of subjectivity and of individual personality; such behavior might be more successfully captured and explained through a psychoanalytical framework (engaging the impact of the subconscious on human behaviour; see e.g. Boileau 2015). Furthermore, the very concept of rational behavior as envisioned in a game theoretic academic context may in itself be ethnocentric.

3.2 Data – examples of strategic moves in dialogic discourse with a focus on accommodation

The three dialogues that follow illustrate how interlocutors use game-playing strategies and moves and show how (non)accommodation is at the heart of a complex transactional dialogue that can be modelled as a game. I will not venture to attempt a mathematical representation here, suffice it to describe the relevant parameters.

Example 1

Examples 1 and 2 are taken from Boyd and Rudvin 2018. The data were collected at a migration centre in southern Italy by one of the authors; the interactions are between legal advisors and migrants in the process of applying for asylum. In example 1 we see two young Afghans (S2 and S3), who have been travelling for five months, ask for assistance in filing for asylum. The cultural mediator (S1), who has been asked by the lawyer to ascertain personal information, asks some questions, starting with enquiring about their entry point into Italy and the reasons for leaving their country.

1 S1: and why you <pvc> live {leave} </pvc> your country
2 S2: indahara, indahar () I’m from indahar

28 Examples 1 and 2 have been transcribed according to the VOICE transcription conventions [2.0]. http://www.univie.ac.at/voice.
29 The place of origin has been transcribed phonetically but has not been geographically identified.
The obstacle can be captured in the Italian lawyer’s mispronunciation of the verb ‘leave’ (pronounced with a short vowel) and understood by S2 as ‘live’ (i.e. ‘where do you live’), repeated in several turns. (An extended analysis can be found in Boyd and Rudvin 2018.) The two Afghans, whose immediate desire is to have information about the asylum process and the ultimate goal political asylum, presumably enact strategies that will maintain the pace of the ‘game’ and further their ultimate goal. They indicate a keen desire to engage in a cooperative game by using accommodation strategies ranging from responsiveness to silence (turn 4), to a rephrasing of the question (turn 5), and finally an open, more face-threatening, question (turn 6) when understanding has still not been achieved.

These utterances all signal speaker moves to gain mutual comprehension. S2 draws upon a number of resources to negotiate meaning and achieve mutual comprehension engaging in intense face-saving negotiations to maintain propositional content and at the same time face-saving (relationship maintenance, harmony). The immediate payoff is completing the asylum application procedure and the ultimate payoff, in a subsequent phase and ‘game’, a successful application.

The Italian mediator engages much less in clarification, accommodation and face-saving (turns 3, 7) as her wants are administrative, and the ultimate success of the asylum application does not really affect her. In turn 7 she simply reiterates her initial question, despite the intense negotiation through successive moves by the Afghans. Why she is withholding this information (i.e. not clarifying or rephrasing the question) could be due to lack of will, motivation, effort of accommodation, or simply of English proficiency as an Italian ELF user.

Repetition and paraphrasing are used by the two Afghans to pre-empt and avert problems and is “typical of a transactional conversation involving the exchange of information for a specific purpose and where the stakes are very high, at least for one of the interlocutors. We assume that the higher the stakes, the higher the level of cooperation and face-work by the interested party” (see Boyd and Rudvin 2018). In this case, the discourse and communication preferences are arguably given by the cultural patterns that are played out in communication strategies. (That is not

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30 In turn 2, S2 responds to the question he understood) and enacts highly face-saving moves towards the listener through receptive convergence (Cogo and Dewey 2012).

31 The authors’ interpretation of the dialogue is also based on the audio-recordings where the live voices convey further valuable context. Although based on informed evaluations, any interpretation is partial and/or incomplete and represents only the author’s own voice.
to say that individual rather than culturally convention-based preferences, patterns and wants are at play, that is impossible to fully assess.) The information balance is also misaligned: the first time they meet the asylum seekers are not prepared culturally or bureaucratically, at least not to the same extent as the Italian lawyer. For the Afghans, no information about the transaction, culture or person (the lawyer) can be gleaned from past experience and decisions are taken based on assumptions and evaluation of the other’s utterances, behaviour and feedback pattern. The lawyer, however, who has been in similar situations before, may be planning her moves on the basis of previous experience with asylum seekers, possibly from the same country. Her moves will likely be governed by a combination of past experience, cultural assumptions and situational (administrative, bureaucratic) preferences. The misalignment is exacerbated by institutional and possible socio-economic power asymmetry which also gives her the privilege to lead the Q/A based dialogue.

Example 2
In this example, the interlocutors are a Pakistani man (S2) being interviewed by an Italian language mediator (S1) at the Italian Council for Refugees. They are both speaking English, but only the mediator is a native speaker (illustrating the pitfalls of ELF communication when proficiency is limited and the need for a mediator/interpreter in the speaker’s own language). S3 is a native speaker of English who is here functioning as a mediator trainer.

1 S1: ok so how no your country of origin is
2 S2: country Pakistan
3 S1: <pvc> au {how} <ipa> aʊ </ipa> </pvc> and when did you arrive in Italy
4 S2. Italy 9 months
5 S1: and <pvc> au {how} <ipa> aʊ </ipa> </pvc>
6 S2: house?
7 S1: <pvc> au {how} <ipa> aʊ </ipa> </pvc> (.) <pvc> au {how} <ipa> aʊ </ipa> </pvc> did you arrive here
8 S2: <LNit> lavoro </LNit> {work}
9 S3: by boat?
10 S2: si
11 S3: by boat? (.) by aeroplane?
12 S2: no (.) speedboat
13 S3: from?

32 Factoring in probability to these analyses (as in example 1 in the appendix for a simple example) would increase the validity and usefulness.
14 S2: er Greece (3)
15 S1: why did you choose to come to Italy (.) why
16 S2: problem Pakistan (.)
17 S3. Why Italy
18 S2: <LNit> si </LNit> {yes}
19 S3: why not Greece or another country (.) why did you choose Italy
20 S2: Italy <LNit> buono </LNit> {good} < smiles>
21 S3: <smiles>

In this exchange the Pakistani man continually using face-saving strategies “to protect the mediator’s face and proactively take the initiative to avoid non-understanding or mis-communication” (ibid). Again, the mediator makes little effort to reformulate or adapt, reinforcing the existing power asymmetry in this elaborate game. ‘Translanguaging’, the Pakistani man uses key Italian words such as casa (house) and Caritas (a church-run charity offering assistance to migrants), and questura (police station). The parallel use of both native language (or lingua franca in this case) and institutional language (code-switching) by selecting a few core terms that refer to key pieces of administrative information for which there may be no translation, is cost-effective in terms of communication, and also typical of this multilingual administrative discourse domain (Zentella 1997 in Boyd and Rudvin 2018; see also Jenkins 2015, Canagarajah 2011, García and Wei 2014 on the use of two languages simultaneously). It is also possible that this move on the part of the Pakistani man is an attempt to gain prestige and empathy in the eyes of the authorities and further his own case (see Boyd and Rudvin 2018). The use of “yes” could be said to have the same accommodative function (gratuitous concurrence) that reinforces the power imbalance—i.e. not primarily agreement—but confirming that he is familiar with the concept or the institution nominated (while S1 believes, erroneously, that “yes” indicates that S2 has understood the whole sentence and agrees with her).

The Pakistani man is clearly struggling with comprehension and formulation in English, and accommodation moves are intense: gratuitous concurrence and choosing lexical items that are dense in propositional content (“problem Pakistan”, turn 16). Turn 20, shows an intense, overt move towards S1, who, however, fails to react. In the dialogue that follows (see Boyd and Rudvin for the remaining dialogue), the mediator trainer (S3) steps into the conversation to assist the service provider and adopts a variety of accommodation strategies to further the dialogue and as a demonstration for the trainee, including fragmenting the sentences into clauses, speaking slowly and enunciating clearly (focusing on consonants), using simple lexis, paraphrasing and rephrasing in a more detailed manner. S1’s efforts at accommodation continue to be meagre, she asks questions, establishes her role (maintaining power distance) and does little to clarify by way of verbal or non-verbal (voice and intonation) signals, impeding the transactional goal of the conversation. She seems not to be particularly concerned with S1’s application and
more concerned with fulfilling her administrative duties. It is only through the mediator that a situation of unequal information is re-distributed, realigning power asymmetry, and that the migrant is able to activate his ‘wants’. Lack of communication and imperfect information are constitutive of power asymmetry; the degree of cooperation is also impacted by this asymmetry.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are highly collectivist and hierarchical societies\(^{33}\), high on the power distance ranking, so it would be natural for the non-Italian speakers to play along with this rule of the game, which, in essence they do; they do not challenge the Italian verbally or through para-verbal signals\(^{34}\). Their strategies are presumably governed by their cultural values but also the desire for an ultimate payoff. The desire for payoff (successful asylum application) would (intuitively speaking) counteract any gender imbalance and face-saving wants.

Later in this dialogue the phrase “for asylum” creates difficulties for S2 (turn 43), followed by a very long pause in which he seems to be assessing his next move, negotiating a careful balance between face and relationship-maintenance and comprehension of the propositional content.

42 S2: <LNit> si</LNit> {yes} no}
43 S1: for asylum (6)
44 S2: <LNit> non ho capito </LNit> {I don’t understand}

When S2 still does not understand he chooses to acquiesce with a “si” rather than attempt a second FTA (S1 did not respond collaboratively to the first one). “These frequent passages of intense accommodation seem to be a clear indication of S2’s acknowledgement of social and institutional hierarchy and cultural “politeness”.” (Boyd and Rudvin 2018, 186). S1, on the other hand, continues to not accommodate and use expressions that are incomprehensible to S2, as mentioned; she seems to be only concerned about “fulfilling her legal and bureaucratic duties (and ascertaining that S2 understands the UNHCR definition of “refugee” and the bureaucratic procedure) regardless of whether he really does understand her questions or not. It seems to be a purely pro-forma routine rather than a transactional exchange” (Boyd and Rudvin 2018, 185).

GT lends itself well to the analysis of multilingual ELF (or translanguaging) encounters due to its—usually—highly cooperative nature (see Seidlhofer 2004) and constant evaluation of the interlocutors’ propositional and pragmatic intent due precisely to the lack of shared world knowledge (to whatever degree). Assessing and evaluating the interlocutors’ intent on the basis of imperfect information leads to a continual back-and-forth of moves that is enacted through the variety of accommodation strategies that the speakers have at hand, be it repetition, re-

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\(^{34}\) https://genderstats.un.org/#/countries. This could conceivably be offset by the gender configuration—the representative of the institution that represents a higher social power, at that moment, is a woman; both countries score high for gender imbalance.
articulation (slowness of speech, emphasis on certain phonetic or stress features, adopting words with high lexical density, syntactical and/or lexical simplification), topic change or non-verbal language through gaze, body-positioning, smiling (as encouragement and to mitigate a potentially face-threatening act). This high-investment ‘feedback pattern’ of the dialogue is aimed at pre-empting and/or solving misunderstandings in order to reach the desired goal (payoff). If the communicative event is transactional, the effort put into this dialogic mode will be governed by the strength of each interlocutor’s ‘want’. In a cooperative situation where each party desires a harmonious dialogue and a win-win (non-zero sum) outcome, the investment and effort put into pre-empting misunderstandings accommodation will arguably be congruent. If the desired outcome is less immediately transactional and relationship-building and harmony is foregrounded, or if face-negotiation is foregrounded, the ‘let-it-pass’ principle is more likely to be adopted (see Boyd and Rudvin 2018). However, in a transactional situation with a strong power imbalance, as we see in examples 1 and 2, where the ‘wants’ of the migrant and the service provider are misaligned, the effort and investment may be skewed. The interlocutors are adopting unequally convergent (reducing distance) and divergent (establishing distance) strategies (see Cogo and Dewey 2012). In these examples we see a complex balancing of let-it-pass and the foregrounding of propositional content, influenced by institutional, social and other contextual features of discourse power (ibid).

The payoff matrix could be represented simplistically in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Harmony</th>
<th>Indifference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afghan</strong></td>
<td>(1,-1)</td>
<td>(1,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Harmony</strong></td>
<td>(1,-1)</td>
<td>(1,0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indifference</strong></td>
<td>(-1,-1)</td>
<td>(-1,0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Harmony* = relationship maintenance through face-negotiations (payoff for Afghan = higher likelihood to process his asylum application favourably).

*Indifference* = not engaging in maintenance and face negotiations (payoff for Italian lawyer = less investment of time and effort, minimal effort to fulfil bureaucratic obligations; possibly an increased power asymmetry that brings immediate gratification). This is not a generous interpretation, perhaps not even a likely one, but we will use it for the sake of argument.

Note that we have defined and modelled the preferences in a competitive, non-cooperative fashion assuming that the Italian lawyer’s behaviour was due to her lack of accommodation in this passage. This is clearly an assumption on the part of the author, and the payoff matrix could alternatively have been modelled as a cooperative non-zero sum game where both parties gain from cooperative–accommodation based–strategies. Clearly, at the level of the community rather
than individuals and in a long-term socio-political perspective, this would be more desirable.

Example 3

INT = interpreter, US = American businessman, IT = Italian businessman

Example 3 is from Garzone and Rudvin (2003: 96-97) taken from an interpreter-mediated dialogue in the business setting illustrating a situation in which an American negotiator is discussing a business transaction with his Italian counterpart about a product being sold in Italy, stressing that he should general rules should be followed categorically (universalism, Hofstede 2004) when it comes to budget expenditure (sales promotion versus advertising) and no exceptions should be made to allow for the specificity of the situation (particularism, ibid). The American negotiator is clearly at an advantage in this game because he is playing by the (universal) rules, whereas the Italian negotiator is suggesting they tweak them. The dialogue then shows how the interpreter is drawn into the conversation when the conversation between the interlocutors—American and Italian negotiators—becomes heated and tense. The interpreter’s decision is a difficult one, that of keeping a balance between: professionalism (keeping out of the argument), translating the conversation to both sides with minimal alteration, mitigating the emerging tension and conflict. In this case the interpreter departed from her professional role only momentarily to help harmonize the situation before reverting to her primary role as interpreter.

INT = interpreter, US = American businessman, IT = Italian businessman

• 1. IT no:: non proprio. In quel caso si trattava di incentivi speciali per quantitativi, insomma. più:: ehm sul versante pubblicitario
• 2. INT not really. In that case it was special incentives for large quantities. More ehm more on the advertising side.
• 3. US sales promotion is sales promotion and advertising is advertising,
• 4. INT la sales promotion é sales promotion e :: (.) la pubblicità é pubblicità.
• 5. IT ((addressing the interpreter)) = sa:: ma:: glielo spieghi gli incentivi sono una forma di pubblicità
• 6. INT bu::t incentives are a form of advertising [after all]
• 7. US [he knows] that is not true:: (.) he knows we want our advertising money to be spent on advertising
• 8. INT lo sa bene che non é vero ehm lo sa che vogliamo che spendiate per la pubblicità i soldi che vi diamo per la pubblicità ((in a lower voice))guardi che non si riesce a convincerlo. da loro [le regole si applicano alla lettera]
• 9. US ((addressing the interpreter)) [Good, try to explain it to him]
Example 3 with the Italian and US negotiators (players) seemed to suggest a zero-sum competitive game where the strategies of the Italian interlocutor was directly at odds with and contrasting with the culture-governed strategies of the American (“universalist”, rule-respecting); but this may also have been a covert negotiating strategy where culture was used a pretext for excluding the opponent. He seemed to mis-interpret, for cultural reasons, the American’s preference for allocating funds (see Garzone and Rudvin 2013). Whether or not the American negotiator desired the same payoff as the Italian negotiator (to maintain the contract and the relationship or to not renew the contract) and was competitive rather than cooperative, is impossible to know. It is possible that a cultural pretext (“universalist”, sticking to the rules) was less costly in terms of effort and face negotiation than an open and equal access to and exchange of information; a lack of communication would then play to his advantage. In this case, however, the choices are incompatible: if the American sticks to the rules, the Italian cannot tweak them. The solution will be given by the mandate (power) balance of the professional roles and the Italian is clearly the subordinate. His choice is whether to acquiesce to the role of his superior, or challenge him by pushing for the (intuitively common-sense and we assume culturally governed) strategy of tweaking. Either way he loses.

4. Conclusions: The presence of a mediator

It seems safe to say that the presence of a competent culture broker or language mediator, or an interpreter, may yield better results than a self-mediated multilingual encounter using a lingua franca, as seen in the examples above. Let us look again at the various phases involved, from a GT perspective. Players have

- (un)equal information about the situation;
- (un)equal information about the interlocutor;
- unequal language code and linguacultural nexus and mutual knowledge of this;
- an (un)equal power distribution (relevant to intercultural institutional discourse);
- (ir)rational behaviour, according to own set of cultural beliefs and preferences;
- Preferences and wants measurable through ‘utility’ and ultimate satisfaction value;
rational choice assumptions to optimize own benefit;
- individual strategies related to their specific personalities and situation
- (do not) receive payoffs;
- reach an equilibrium where any action will affect the status quo (Nash Equilibrium or Pareto optimal);
- play a competitive zero-sum game or agree on cooperative mutually beneficial solution.

Most human intercultural activity, in a globalized world, is not mediated and people are largely left to themselves to the arduous task of enacting mutual comprehension among speakers of different linguacultures. The higher the awareness of the strategic parameters and choices involved, the more informed the interlocutors’ decisions will be and the higher the chance of reaching a cooperative decision (in situations that are initially conflictual and litigious, the premise would be that the parties must be inclined towards cooperation to achieve an optimal solution and increased (mutual) payoff). Being informed of the culture- and language specific communication codes of the interlocutor is clearly crucial, and the most plausible way to pre-empt communication breakdowns. If the vehicular language is one of the party’s native languages, this may hinder the awareness of linguacultural barriers and the willingness to make the effort to accommodate35. It may also create a strong power asymmetry where the (for example) native English speaker is at an enormous advantage. When both users are not native speakers, for example ELF users, the will to accommodate may be stronger, in order to reach the objective. As we saw in Examples 1 and 2 with the Afghan and Pakistani interlocutors, however, that is not necessarily the case, and the power balance may be such that only one party is willing to make a cooperative effort. As we saw in these same examples, the presence of a mediator deflated the situation. As a player in the game and through language accommodation strategies, her intervention created a free(er) exchange of communication and access to information that was valuable for the decision-making process. The face-negotiation (facilitated by the mediator) were expressions of linguacultural preference for the Afghan and Pakistani interlocutors, and strategic in their desire to reach the desired final payoff – a successful asylum application. Their moves were strategically governed by logic/rationality to reach a concrete payoff, and at the same time governed by collectivist cultural parameters of power-distance and face negotiation, upholding cultural conventions of non-confrontation. It was hard to say how aligned they were with the service provider’s preferences and thus to establish an equilibrium.

35 Indeed, paradoxically, monolingual native English speakers are not the most effective ELF communicators; see as pointed out by Jenkins and others in this link from the BBC homepage http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20161028-native-english-speakers-are-the-worlds-worst-communicators.
With this contribution I hope to encourage other scholars to apply GT to multilingual interactions in both mediated and non-mediated, transactional or more relationship-building settings. Ideally, specific features regarding the players' wants and desired final outcomes should be factored in to such an analysis. In this contribution we have suggested that strategies can be illustrated through intercultural dimensions as well as verbal and non-verbal, propositional and pragmatic behaviour.

References


Kaur, J. 2009. “Pre-empting Problems of Understanding in English as a Lingua Franca.” In Mauranen A. and E. Ranta (eds.), *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies...


Theory, 72, 173–197.

Further Reading

Appendix:

Available at: https://web.stanford.edu/class/symbsys150/autonomous-decisions-5-1.html

Expected utility theory - decision theory for a single agent.
Example 1: Planning a party - a game against nature
Our agent is planning a party, and is worried about whether it will rain or not. The utilities and probabilities for each state and action can be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature's states:</th>
<th>Rain</th>
<th>No rain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(p=1/3)</td>
<td>(~p=2/3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party planner's possible actions:</th>
<th>Outside</th>
<th>Inside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 3</td>
<td>2 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The expected utility of an action A given uncertainty about a state S = Probability(S|A)*Utility(S|A) + Probability(not S|A)Utility(not S|A)
Note that action A can be viewed as a compound gamble or outcome. Also, note that the probability of a state can depend on the agent's choice of action, although, in the above example, it does not.

For the party problem:
EU(Outside) = (1/3)(1) + (2/3)(3) = 2.33;
EU(Inside) = (1/3)(2) + (2/3)(2) = 2
Therefore, choose Outside, the action with the higher expected utility.

(Noncooperative) game theory - decision theory for more than one agent, each acting autonomously (no binding agreements).
In the examples below, we'll assume two self-utility maximizing agents (or players), each of whom has complete information about the options available to themselves and the other player as well as their own and the other's payoffs (utilities) under each option.

Example 2 - Friends hoping to see each other
Consider two people, Chris and Kim. They both enjoy each other's company, but neither can communicate with the other before deciding whether to stay at home (where they would not see each other) or go to the beach this afternoon (where they could see each other). Each prefers going to the beach to being at home, and prefers being with the other person rather than being apart. This game can be represented by the following normal (or matrix) form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Beach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>(0,0)</td>
<td>(0,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>(1,0)</td>
<td>(2,2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each player has a set of strategies (={Home, Beach} for both players in this example). Specifying one strategy i for the row player (Chris) and one strategy j for the column player (Kim) yields an outcome, which is represented as a pair of payoffs (Rij,Cij), where Rij is the utility the row player receives, and Cij is the utility the column player receives. In this example, going to the beach is a (strictly) dominant strategy for each player, because it always yields the best outcome, no matter what the other player does. Thus, if the players are both maximizing their individual expected utilities, each will go to the beach. So Beach-Beach is a dominant strategy equilibrium for this game. Because of this, Kim and Chris, if they are rational, do not need to cooperate (make an agreement) ahead of time. Each can just pursue their own interest, and the best outcome will occur for both.

Example 3 – “Friends” with asymmetric preferences
Now consider Betty and John. John likes Betty, but Betty doesn't like John that much. Each knows this, and neither wants to call the other before deciding what to do this afternoon: stay at their respective homes or go to the neighborhood swimming pool. Here is the normal form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Pool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>(2,0)</td>
<td>(2,1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>(3,0)</td>
<td>(1,2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, Betty's best strategy depends on what John does. But if she assumes John is rational, she will reason that he will not stay home, because going to the pool is a dominant strategy for him. Knowing this, she can decide to stay home (because 2>1). This is called iterated dominance. In this example, Betty gets higher
utility than John because of their relative preferences, and John gets less utility than he would have if Betty wanted to be with him.

In this example, Pool-Home (3,0), Home-Pool (2,1), and Pool-Pool (1,2) are all Pareto optimal outcomes. An outcome is Pareto optimal (or efficient) if no agent can be made better off than that outcome without making another agent worse off. The equilibrium outcomes in both this example and the previous one are Pareto optimal.

Example 4 - Prisoners' dilemma
Consider Stan and Leland, two prisoners who have each been offered a deal to turn state's witness (defect) against the other. They can't communicate. They had originally agreed to remain in solidarity, i.e. not testify against each other, but since the agreement cannot be enforced, each must choose whether to honor it. If both remain in solidarity, then they will each only be convicted of a minor charge. If only one defects, then the state will throw the book at the other and let the defector go. If they both defect, each will get convicted of a serious charge. The payoff matrix (higher positive utility implies a better outcome) is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Solidarity</th>
<th>Defection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stan</strong></td>
<td>(3,3)</td>
<td>(1,4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leland</strong></td>
<td>(4,1)</td>
<td>(1,1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this game, the strategy of defection is weakly dominant for each player, meaning that whatever the other player does, defecting yields an outcome at least as good and possibly better than remaining in solidarity would. Note that if the bottom right cell payoffs were (2,2) instead of (1,1), then defecting would be strictly dominant for each player. Either way, Defection-Defection is a dominant strategy equilibrium. However, it is not Pareto optimal. Both players could be made better off if neither defected against the other.

This is an example of a social dilemma: a situation in which each agent's autonomous maximization of self-utility leads to an inefficient outcome. Such a situation can occur for any number of people, not just two. An agreement by two people to trade with each other (involving goods, services, and/or money) set's up a prisoners' dilemma-type game whenever the agreement cannot be enforced.

Example 5 - Coordination
Let's go back to Chris and Kim. They are going to the same conference, and each is expecting the other to be there, but they haven't seen each other yet. The conferees have their choice of two activities on the first afternoon: swimming or hiking. They both hope to see each other -- if they don't they will have no fun,
and each prefers swimming over hiking. They must each decide what to do before knowing where the other is going. Here is the normal form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Swim</th>
<th>Hike</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swim</td>
<td>(2,2)</td>
<td>(0,0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hike</td>
<td>(0,0)</td>
<td>(1,1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The best outcome is obviously Swim-Swim, but going swimming is not dominant for either player. Both Swim-Swim and Hike-Hike have the property that each player's strategy is the best (or tied for the best) response to the other player's strategy in that pairing. This defines a more general equilibrium notion called the Nash equilibrium. The dominance equilibria of examples 1-3 are all Nash equilibria as well.

A third equilibrium exists in this game involving what are called mixed strategies. A mixed strategy is a probability distribution over the pure strategies (which are Swim and Hike for each player in this example). (Note that the players do not have to have the same set of strategies available to them, even though that has been the case in all our examples.) In this example, if each player individually throws a die and goes swimming if the die comes up 1 or 2, and goes hiking if the die comes up 3, 4, 5, or 6, the resulting expected utility (2/3 for each player) cannot be improved upon for either player given that the other player uses this strategy.

In 1950, John Nash (depicted somewhat fictitiously in the film *A Beautiful Mind* -- the book is more accurate!) proved that every finite game, involving any number of players, has at least one (Nash) equilibrium, though there might not be any that involve only pure strategies for all players. In this example, there are three equilibria: the mixed strategy equilibrium (Swim,1/3; Hike,2/3)-(Swim,1/3;Hike,2/3), and two pure strategy equilibria -- Swim-Swim and Hike-Hike. When there is more than one equilibrium, and players cannot make binding agreements, they must try to coordinate to arrive at an equilibrium outcome. When only one equilibrium is also Pareto optimal, as Swim-Swim is in this case, that fact should suggest to rational players that it will be the one around which they coordinate. Many other criteria for equilibrium selection have been studied (e.g. focal points, subgame perfection, stability -- see the reading on game theory).

**Example 6 -- “Battle of the sexes”**

Finally, let's consider Roy and Jen. They are going to the same conference as Kim and Chris in example 5. They each would prefer to be in the same place (the swim or the hike), but their preferences differ about which it should be. Roy would
rather go swimming, and Jen would rather go hiking. Here is the matrix form:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{Jen} & \text{Swim} & \text{Hike} \\
\text{Swim} & (3,2) & (1,1) \\
\text{Hike} & (1,1) & (2,3) \\
\end{array}
\]

This game has three Nash equilibria: Swim-Swim, Hike-Hike, and \((\text{Swim}, 2/3; \text{Hike}, 1/3) - (\text{Swim}, 1/3; \text{Hike}, 2/3)\). Note that the mixed strategies differ for each player in the third equilibrium: each goes to their preferred activity with 2/3 probability. All of the equilibria are Pareto optimal this time, so that does not help for selection. Only the mixed strategy equilibrium results in equal expected utilities for the two players, so if both value equality or symmetry, this might be the focal point. But of course it will be difficult for Roy and Jen to see that unless they have studied game theory!
Troubled talk in cross-cultural business emails.

A digital Conversation Analysis of Interactions

Marianna Lya Zummo

Abstract

This study analyses the troubled talk occurring in an exchange of business emails between an Italian manufacturing company's general manager, his staff and their Pakistani consultants. The exchange is a communicative event in which conflicts (i.e. troubles) arise due to a variety of causes: the computer-mediated communication, the use of English as a Lingua Franca, the cultural differences between interactants and the stressful nature of the situation.

Set in the tradition of studies which look at issues of intercultural differences in communication, (Katan 2006; Cucchi 2010; Manca 2016), this research addresses the question of the ongoing adaptation between high context and low context communication preferences (Hall, 1976) embraced by the Italian and the Urdu speakers. Politeness strategies have already been studied in the context of email writings (e.g. Poppi, 2012) and as an interactional event (Herring 1996; Baron 1998, 2003; Cho 2010; Gimenez 2000, 2002; Giles, et al., 2015) but to the best of my knowledge, this is the first study involving Italian and Pakistani intercultural interaction of any kind.

This research attempts to make a contribution to linguistic studies by verifying whether: 1) emails can be studied using interactional methodological tools; 2) both positive and negative politeness strategies are used in the exchanges; and 3) language and cultural attitudes may favour misunderstandings and misinterpretations, thus being an obstacle in intercultural business interactions.

Results show that linguistic research can contribute to online interactional events by identifying linguistic and pragmatic markers that could be associated with cultural dimensions (Hall 1976; Katan 2004; Hofstede 2004)

Keywords: Intercultural Communication, Politeness, trouble, business emails

1. Introduction

In business communication, the variety of English employed by non-native speakers from other cultures goes under the acronym BELF (as used henceforth), which stands for Business English as a Lingua Franca. Business negotiations can be difficult, especially when conducted by and among non-native speakers, since nuances of meaning might be lost and cultural issues may interfere with interpretation of meanings. Moreover, the newly available mediated methods of
communication, considered a fast and convenient way to make first contact with clients, can also create obstacles because they use different discourse styles. For example, push emails, a system that implies an always-on availability, have provided new frames of communication. Smartphones signal the incoming emails, which can be read and answered within a short period of time, and the content of the email is reframed as a chat answer. The interactional event thus takes the form of messages, with replies conceived as sequences within adjacency pair formats.

This work aims to shed light on the conflicts emerging during troubled professional encounters, in particular, on the linguistic patterns and communicative features employed by interactants using BELF in a computer-mediated context, such as salutation norms, web-influenced styles, requests, repairs and politeness strategies to solve conflicts.

In order to achieve this purpose discourse style, organization, adjacency, turn-taking as well as politeness accommodation will be analysed with interaction analytical tools provided by the Cross Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (CCSARP, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984) and digital Conversation Analysis (henceforth, CA) (Giles, et al., 2015). Finally, the linguistic and communicative features identified, troubles and repairs will be discussed within the frameworks of intercultural communication (Hall, 1976; Katan, 1999/2004; Lewis, 2006; Hooker, 2008).

2. Theoretical background

As an analytical framework to study contexts, digital CA explores the convergence of written texts and talk (conversational-like data) occurring in digital (synchronous and asynchronous) contexts with a conversation analytic approach. In CA, interactional topics include the notion of “trouble” as an obstacle occurring in interactions caused by a gap in understanding of messages, in auditory perception, or in the expression of a message (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977). The remedy for this communication breakdown is repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977), which occurs when participants identify a problem during the interaction and provide a side sequence to overcome the communication gap. Research has extensively studied such repair episodes in face-to-face interactions (e.g. Egbert, 1997; Fox, Hayashi and Jasperson, 1996; Maynard and Heritage, 2005), and Herring (1999; 2013) has studied cases of repair strategies in multiparty online textual or audiovisual conversations to overcome problems due to the lack of textual cohesion and coherence. Later on, conversation analytical tools have been adapted to synchronous online interactions (Herring, 1999; Giles at al., 2015) and to asynchronous settings. For example, Gibson (2009) adapts the notion of sequentiaity to the study of interculturality in email exchanges, exploring the ways in which conversation analysis aids “the analysis of culture as a textual
interactional achievement”\(^1\). Although email is “now considered the oldest computer-mediated communication technology, [it] still constitutes a relatively 'new' communication mode with interactional norms that are not yet conventionalized” (Darics, 2015: 8). Research has demonstrated that emails have their own stylistic features (Gimenez, 2000, 2002), including linguistic economy (contractions, ellipsis, acronyms, spelling), grammatical complexity (omission of parts of speech such as subject pronoun), expressivity (unconventional punctuation, case features to express emphasis) as well as speech-like features (Baron 1998, 2003). These conversational features are used to make physical and relational distance shorter but, on the other hand, may create communication gaps and misunderstandings (Cho, 2010). Other studies (Gimenez, 2000, 2002) have also underlined that emails are characterized by an informal and personalized style and register, and yet that, in more professional contexts, they display the linguistic conventions used for their social function of impressing a business partner (Pop and Sim, 2016).

Drawing on findings from research on politeness (see, among others, Bargiela Chiappini and Kádár, 2011), greetings and closings in email exchanges, as well as address terms, are part of politeness formulae to maintain relations in a friendly working environment, while the use of emoticons and capitalization are understood as inappropriate and disrespectful of business email recipients. Some linguistic indicators such as formality and the use of appropriate titles are considered particularly important but politeness norms, as is well-known, vary according to culture. In fact, the way speakers use language and communicate messages is structured according to values and conventions that are aspects of one's culture. For example, from an intercultural standpoint, Chinese tend to use honorifics more than their less formal Italian interlocutors (Poppi, 2012). This depends on the cultural choices and speaking styles within the in-group, and on how much can be communicated through words or by cultural contexts (Katan 2004). Thus, when speakers express an opinion or describe a personal experience revealing their identity, they are also expressing their beliefs, their values and perceptions, that is, they are expressing their culture. Hall uses the terms of high and low-context cultures (Hall, 1976) to refer to how people from different cultures communicate, that is how they convey meanings using words and contexts.

Lexico-grammatical features appear to be generally unproblematic and of no obstacle to communicative success in ELF (English as Lingua Franca, Seidhofer 2004) and, when adopted in business contexts (BELF), the language used reflects the various cultural background of its speakers (Louhiala-Salminen, 2012). This has been also showed by Cucchi (2010) who used Hofstede’s dimensions (individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity

versus femininity) to study English as a lingua franca, for predicting and interpreting linguistic differences on the basis of cultural differences. She demonstrates that ELF used by Italians reflects specific national discourse styles that depend on the speakers’ cultural orientations (use of pronouns, reduced personalization, complexity and technical words), thus confirming that cultural dimensions are effective in predicting or explaining specific communicative and linguistic choices on the basis of national identity. Cross-cultural studies have widely demonstrated the interconnectedness between language and culture in promotional language such as tourism (Manca 2008; Katan 2016), private pension brochures (Katan 2006), advertising (Cucchi 2010), and business communication (Hooker 2008). All these studies reveal specific features related both to High Context Cultures (HCCs) and Low Context Cultures (LCCs) a sort of categorization seen as a continuum rather than a clear-cut distinction. Following Hall (1976), Katan (2006), argues that HCCs are more implicit in their communication that is less linear with respect to the LCC. LCCs (e.g. British or North American), on the other hand, tend to be more explicit, task-centred, with a division of responsibilities, and tend to explain things to accommodate individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds. In Lewis’ tripartite model HCCs are similar to “reactive cultures” (e.g. Pakistani culture) seen as being accommodating, polite and indirect, if compared to the “multi-active” type (e.g. Italian) that show emotionally-charged reactions and impatience. The third cultural type is called “linear-active” (e.g. Germany) that is more oriented towards directness and planning events ahead step by step.

An additional perspective is offered by Hooker (2008), who shows how the cultural mechanism that is displayed in an exchange highlights the differences between what he has called rule-based and relationship-based culture practices. These two categories regulate interpersonal relations and, on a deeper level, deal with the perception of human existence. While rule-based cultures rely on confidence in rules and norms, relationship-based cultures trust individuals and are therefore more interested in maintaining good connections. These two cultural behaviours seem to be “grounded in different conceptions of human nature” (Hooker, 2008:1) since they regulate relations and deal “with the uncertainty of human existence” (ibid). This distinction not only does it affect negotiation style, attitudes and power distance but also offers new perspectives for understanding intercultural/cross-cultural business communication. Hooker’s research has shown that doing business with cultures other than one’s own, thus, often means encountering misunderstanding and communication differences when exchanging information. For example, the comparative analysis of business emails in a multinational context between Iranians and native English speakers’ (from Britain and the United States) highlighted both similarities in the use of moves and steps in the emails, and discrepancies in the use of certain rhetorical strategies (Mehrpour and Mehrzad, 2013). According to this study, Iranian requests sound more respectful because of specific expressions that minimize the imposition of their
commands (“could you kindly”, “we would like to ask”). The result is an “over-politeness strategy” – as the scholars put it, which is mainly due to the direct transfer of expressions from the Persian language to the English language and may be seen as inappropriate for an English audience, since readers need more time to get to the core of the email (Najeeb, Maros and Nor, 2012).

Cultural and linguistic differences in interactional business English may result, as a consequence, in a lack of comprehensibility thus creating interactional trouble (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Hooker, 2008; Suh, 2015).

2.1 Data and participants

The data consists of a self-compiled corpus of business emails, exchanged between an Italian company manager and his staff, and a Pakistani “dealer\(^2\)”, the manager, and his technician. All participants are male, in their thirties to fifties. The Italian manager and his staff work for an Italian company that provides manufactured tools. In this exchange, they talk about a particular tool that will be used in a big project financed by the Pakistani Ministry, the client. The Italian company is represented by its dealer, a company that works as one of the sub-contractors. The client asks the main contractor (that relies on sub-contractors) to search for the best materials, which will be checked and eventually approved by a consultant. The main contractor chooses the different companies represented by the subcontractors, because it receives Ministry funds only once the consultant has approved of the quality of materials and of construction standards. The subcontractor has consequently the important role of mediator between the manufacturing company and the main contractor (and consultant).

The corpus is composed of 155 emails produced by four participants between October 2015 and February 2016. During the first month only 15 emails were written but the number increased over the following months (68 emails in February). The emails are mostly from the two managers (55 emails by the Pakistani manager, identified here by PM, and 57 by the Italian, identified here by IM). The Pakistani technician's emails (PT) are mostly sent to the Italian manager (31 emails), while the Italian technicians (IT) write to both PM and PT (11 emails).

2.2 Methods and Analysis

This paper makes use of digital CA (Giles, et al., 2015), which describes the practices of interactions analysing both individual instances and collections of patterns occurring in, and adapted for, digital (computer-mediated and often internet-mediated) contexts. In addition to the study of interaction patterns, digital CA offers important tools to study intercultural communication in terms of

\(^2\) The term is taken from the data and refers to the particular activity of the Pakistani group, with the meaning of middleman, distributor.
different strategies employed by native and non-native speakers. Kaur (2011) identifies four main sources of misunderstanding when using English as Lingua Franca in social interactions: pragmatic ambiguity, performance-related misunderstanding (mishearings or slips of tongue), language-related misunderstanding (non-standard use of lexical items) and gaps in world knowledge. For this paper, these sources should be understood within the online asynchronous context in which communication occurs, i.e. language-related, channel-related and cultural-related constraints.

Following the main objective of identifying the origin of miscommunication, emails were displayed according to their chronological sequence, then they were grouped by sender in order to analyse individual stylistic patterns. The analysis was carried out following three stages according to the framework adopted: 1. Digital interaction was analysed within the Digital CA; 2. politeness and requests relying on Cross Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project model and the digital CA, and 3. troubles and repairs are discussed within the framework of intercultural communication. The emails were first investigated as an interactional event: participants were identified and the sequential organization was studied following a chronological order. The emails were categorized according to the following criteria: addressivity (that is the practice used to identify the intended addressee by name, in particular in asynchronous group discourse, Herring 1999), the topic under discussion, adjacency pairs, sequences of utterances that are mutually dependent and are produced by two participants, (opening sequence-greeting or answer-question sequences). Table 1 summarizes the type of sequence analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Addressivity</th>
<th>Topic under discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15/10</td>
<td>PT &gt;IM</td>
<td>Purchase order and advance payment. Question: confirm payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/10</td>
<td>IM &gt;PT</td>
<td>Payment check + question: confirmation labelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/10</td>
<td>PT &gt;IM</td>
<td>Confirmation answered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/10</td>
<td>IM &gt;PT</td>
<td>Answer acknowledged + Question on furniture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/10</td>
<td>PT &gt;IM</td>
<td>Answer on furniture + question competitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/10</td>
<td>IM &gt;PT</td>
<td>Answer competitors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Sequence in email exchange between participants PT and IM, date and topic.

Secondly, the emails were edited for privacy issues, grouped by sender and analysed for style differences. Two categories were taken into account, in accordance with their layout and content: letters and memos. Letters (see below, a) are characterized by either a graphic distribution of the written text, by at least an opening (Dear Mr, Dear Sir, or Sir) or a closing (Best Regards), and a formal writing style. Memos (as in b) have a more informal style (very often reproducing speech-like style) or they
may be a list of things to-do.

a. Dear Mr. IM,
Thank you for your Greetings.
Sir, for your kind information, we had a discussion with Mr. [name] and they have requested us to submit another proposal of [...] We have downloaded the catalog from your website. Today, Mr. PM and I will visit [the site] for the construction drawings of the [tool]. We will inform you regarding the loads and the parameters [client] has considered for this type of [tool].

Please inform us the best suitable time we expect your proposal for [tool] ready to be submitted to [client].

Regards, A [Signature] (A13)

b. Yes! (PM31)

In the second stage, data was analysed in terms of politeness norms in epistolary conventions (opening and salutation; closing and signature; addressing and titles), and in terms of request strategies at sentence level, since request may be concerned with an imposition softened by politeness. They may be of a direct nature (want statements, obligation statements, hedged performatives, performatives and mood derivables), conventionally indirect requests (suggestory formulae, query-preparatory), and non-conventional indirect requests (strong hints, mild hints). I am drawing upon the Cross Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (CCSARP, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984), because it focuses on the speech acts of requests and apologies. The request is a speech act that is considered to be a negative face-threatening act and deeply influenced by culture (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984), since speakers tend to adopt the strategy involving the degree of directness allowed by their own native politeness system, and may cause cross-cultural miscommunication. The concepts of negative/positive face and threatening acts are taken from Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), in which politeness is intended as a set of social skills used by participants to protect one's self-image (face) in a social interaction. In particular, Brown and Levinson’s analysis of politeness considers both positive strategies (paying attention to the other's face needs) and negative strategies (ensuring that the other's face is not imposed on).

Following Blum-Kulka's (1984) categories, four types of sentence-level request strategies were considered for the analysis. Examples from my data are given for reasons of greater comprehensibility: 1. Mood Derivable (the most direct request, in which the grammatical mood of the verb marks its illocutionary force, “Do the needful and much more to sort this issue positively”), 2. Want Statement (with sentences overtly expressing the request to satisfy the speaker's intentions, desire or feeling, “I want to know in advance your further steps”), 3. Query Preparatory
(a preparatory condition of possibility or willingness as in “Could you please investigate about this possibility?”), and 4. Hint (the request is suggested but not expressed “consider that we haven't received an answer to our question about [preferred tool]”).

Finally, I discuss the exchange in terms of cultural distance and relate it to high and low context culture categories (Hall, 1976) and to Hooker's distinction of rule-based and relationship-based cultures (2008). Cultural differences in business communication, according to Hooker, depend on the high or low context culture origin of the interlocutors, and generate different ways to e.g. write a contract, negotiate, or make a decision. On a deeper level, Hooker explains that these differences are related to different conceptions of human existence e.g. the confidence in the objective validity of rules, the social ties that guarantee and have precedence over one's own welfare, and even the conception of human nature. In relationship-based cultures, human existence is understood beyond the single unit of the individual and is extended to the community. Relationships are fundamental and social control is exercised through them (2008:10), with certain figures having authority over others, whereas, in rule-based cultures, the individual is seen as having no authority over others. In Hofstede’s model this different degree of “unequal distribution of power within societies” is called Power Distance (Cucchi 2015: 6). Focusing on adjacency pairs, misunderstanding and conflict in talk, and its repair were studied; and the results were compared with reference to negative and positive politeness as well as to high and low context cultural orientations. The exchange is also studied in terms of cross-cultural business communication style, looking at the cultural mechanism that is displayed in the exchange, distinguishing rule-based and relationship-based culture practices (Hooker, 2008).

3. Findings

3.1. First step: The interactional event

The first email, sent on August 17th, 2015, deals with some issues concerning the business project. At that time and for the following two months participants are PT and IM. Sequences deal with timetable updates, requests for feedback and confirmations of payments. The emails are quite short with few sentences, in (almost) formal style and mostly organised as question/answer pairs.

15.10 08:38 A > IM
Dear Sir,

Please find below the swift message of payment transfer to your account. Please confirm us if you received the payment.

15.10 12:10 IM > A
Yes, payment received and production process officially started. Today we will update you about the revised delivery schedule. Please confirm with urgency to Mr. [name] your APPROVAL (or your comments) about our labelling proposal.

Best regards [signature]

The second email in the example (15.10 12:10 IM>A) shows how some messages are functionally related to each other: the second email is dependent on the first one in a two-part exchange as it requires the first email to fully understand the meaning of the interjection 'yes'. Consequently, these emails represent an adjacency pair within the online interaction.

In November, a misunderstanding concerning a product breaks the flow of conversation, which is restored after a few email exchanges. Within a month, though, the issue is discussed again and some complaints and mild accusations are made. This time, a third participant, the leader of the Pakistani company, takes part in the exchange with the aim of providing an adjustment (defending his group’s work). The Christmas holidays interrupt the exchange for some days, with only the Pakistani participants sending emails with updates. After the Italian Christmas break, an intense exchange of emails takes place, with an average of eight emails a day. The topics deal with requests for documents, guarantee issues, technical questions regarding materials and drawings, and commercial strategies. This time all the participants contribute to the exchange, but the dialogue is essentially between PM and IM (i.e. the Pakistani technician and the Italian manager). The emails are multi-addressed, with a number of emails within the same day concerning a variety of issues. As such, the reply may be a single email addressing the specific issue but more often, when the exchange involves more participants and long emails, question-answer sequences take the form of multicolour successions of lines, added to a forwarded message, each colour representing one participant’s reply:

15.01 15:41 PM > IM email text: “comments in blue”
14.01 15:39 IM> A, PM email text: “reply below in red”
14.01 15:26 A >IM, PM [text in black]

Moreover, Mr. PM met Project Manager […], and he asked PM about a 50 year warranty for […]. We told them that in general [company] provides a 5 year warranty. Then they […]. See, the reason to tell you all this regarding warranty is to ask you what to offer as they require a 50 year warranty […]. Please explain to us regarding what to offer as a warranty. […] We can propose 10 year warranty […]. In addition we can issue a declaration of performance stating […]. Just received a paper from [source][…]. Mr.[name] will send you.

This strategy of multicolour succession is employed to reduce the time spent
writing and to make everyone aware of the discussion under way. Addressivity becomes essential in order to avoid misunderstanding and to ensure one is talking with the proper interlocutor. The following email is from PM to IM and IT, but it has an in-text addressed to PT:

PM> IM, PT, IT
FYI. Plz check the pics attached! This was also submitted to [...]. Mr.PT plz say [name] to get specs from [...]. Regards [signature]
(PM14)

The more tense the dialogue becomes, the more the email style turns into a spoken-like exchange. The email texts become a chat style conversation, with messages answered within a few minutes and designed as synchronous replies, using single words as email bodies ('yes', PM31), or word-sign substitutions ('???' IM43). Informal written style also emerges in the case of angry tones, with the use of capitalization and bold, red to focus on the importance of what is being said, as in the case of these extracts from the Italian emails:

1) Mr. PM., As discussed by phone, YOU are our representative in the area and YOU must solve this unbelievable issue. (IM29)

2) This is not a GUARANTEE LETTER!!!
This is just a service life confirmation [...]. You/your customer are doing a fatal confusion (IM45)

3) Dear All, [...]. It is absolutely wrong and ridiculous that [their] documentation is better. In the table it seem [we] did not have sent drawings and installation procedures [...]. So contact immediately the client, the engineer and all necessary people to clarify immediately and give them all the documents [...]. We have worked a lot and we do not accept to be out [...]. (IT6)

By analysing data as an interactional event it is demonstrated that its computer-mediated nature does not constitute communication troubles, since users are aware of the communication mechanisms typical of computer-mediated exchanges. In the following paragraph, I will take into account textual style and format organization as they may reveal users' adaptation to the ongoing interaction.

3.2 The email context: Discourse Organization, Communication Styles, and Politeness

Results for email style show that memos were preferred to emails (95 memos and 59 emails), with memos that omit greetings, and emails including address terms
that vary from “Dear Mr + Surname” (28 occurrences) to “Mr + Surname” (14 occurrences). The low occurrence of address titles confirms the essentially informal style of the exchange. Workgroup emails are opened by 'Dear all', with paragraphs in the main text that are addressed to individuals. Titles are used alongside opening sequences, with Italian speakers using “Dear Mr + Surname” and Pakistani speakers using the form “Mr + Surname, Sir/Deear Sir” (see Table 2). Interestingly, “sir” is used quite often, both as an opening and as an addressing term in the mail body and its overuse shows both a close relationship between the sender and the reader and the conversation-like style of the email. It also reminds of the over-politeness strategy (Najeeb, Maros and Nor, 2012) that is used in reactive cultural types (Lewis, 1996).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discourse Categories</th>
<th>Italian writers</th>
<th>Pakistani writers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Dear Mr + Surname</td>
<td>Mr + Surname, Sir/Deear Sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greetings and small talk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good day, hope you will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>enjoying [...], hope you are fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of gratitude</td>
<td>Thank you for your detailed reply</td>
<td>Mr IM, Sir, [...] thank you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regards + Signature, Regards, Cordiali</td>
<td>for your support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing</td>
<td>Regards + Signature, Regards, Cordiali saluti/Best regards</td>
<td>Regards + Signature, Regards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Examples of discourse organization and examples taken from the Italian and the Pakistani mails.

After addressing the email (referring to the recipient by name), only the Pakistani speakers continue with greetings and small talk, which is a typical Pakistani communication pattern according to Lewis (1996). Expressions of gratitude are found only in four emails, two in the Pakistani technician’s emails and two in the Italian leader’s. While opening sequences are quite informal (often even omitted), closings are always used with the sequence “Regards + Signature” or simply “Regards”. One Italian technician always uses the two languages, closing “Cordiali saluti/Best regards”.

123 requests in 89 emails were found, with the highest percentage being (77%) in the Italian leader's emails and the lowest (29%) being in the Pakistani Manager's. Both direct (Mood derivable and Want statements) and indirect (Query preparatory and hint) strategies are involved but the “mood derivable” category is used far more often by all writers (69,92%), although it is always softened by the use of “please” (as in “Please, clarify immediately your position”, IM29). Applying a decreasing percentage of use, the next strategies are the “Want” statements (e.g. “I want to know in advance your further steps”; 13,1%) and the “query preparatory” requests (e.g. “Could you please investigate about this possibility?”).
13.82%). The “Want” statement is the least used strategy in the Pakistani requests (three occurrences). The “hint utterance” is the least used request strategy (3.25%) in the data, and employed when dealing with delicate matters (“the best will be to have some info about [product’s name] before issuing our proposal”, IM14).

Speakers tend to use both indirect and direct strategies in their emails, and this is important for politeness considerations. Indirect requests are not the most common choice, perhaps because they are considered inappropriate in the business context. Participants rather use direct strategies preceded by softeners, which are face-saving but do not change the immediacy or the tone of the request. Direct strategies, involving a marked illocutionary force (Mood derivable requests that make use of imperatives as in “Do the needful”, IM30) as well as the speakers' expressed intention that the addressee will act as requested (Want statement), are often used in particular by the Italian speakers, who tend to sound more direct. This is also suggested by their use of capitalization and red colours as strategies to convey a (moderately) aggressive tone, and by quite directive sequences (see examples above in 1, 2, and 3) that, together with their high use of mood derivable request strategy may suggest a forceful transactional nature of this email exchange.

On the other hand, the Pakistani writers tend to mitigate their utterances and use softening reply strategies when accused of something (as in “How could you think we have doubts about you?”, PM6). Such use of softening strategies (mostly hedges and hinting) is usually employed as a (negative) politeness strategy to save the recipients' face, since they minimize the imposition of the speech act. However, the use of softeners does not mirror the sender's consideration and respect for the recipient, since no instances of more articulated negative politeness strategies, such as “If you have the time, could you send me the documents” are found. Such a sentence would show the sender's consideration for the recipient's time but, also, the addition could be perceived as a loss of recipients' time (Najeeb, Maros and Nor, 2012). In addition, more articulated strategies would not be consistent with the rapidity and the brevity of the exchange in the email interaction, which forces the development of more versatile politeness strategies (Baron, 1998; Gimenez 2000; Murphy and Levy 2006). The difference in the request strategies employed by the participants may depend on their different cultural orientation, which is probably the main issue causing communication problems.

3.3. On communication problems, repairs and cultural preferences

In this section the use of ELF is considered as a possible cause of troubles and then data is discussed against the intercultural framework of relation-based versus rule-based cultures to verify whether cultural differences may be seen as the source of troubles in communication.

The data under investigation contains a variety of communication problems, which presumably depend on various aspects, e.g. the email exchange, the use of English by non-native speakers, the different cultures of the speakers', and the situational
context (the closing of the deal is at the same time a reason for tension as well as the final reciprocal goal).

Since exchanges establish and negotiate personal relationships, the interaction must take into account the participants and their culture. In the days immediately before the 25th December, the cultural assumption of the Italian speakers encourages the exchange of Christmas wishes in their closings (“Best regards, merry Xmas and happy new year!”, IM15). The Italian speakers are well aware of the different cultural background at least on this aspect of material culture as evidenced by their email informing their interlocutors that their offices will be closed (“As usual our offices will close today at noon for Xmas and will reopen at January 7th.”, IM12), because of 'their' holidays (“Since we are very close to our Christmas holidays [...]”, IT1). Their Pakistani interlocutors adapt their response to the situational context (“Please get ready after your holidays for a proposal”, PT18), and respond to the New Year wishes (“First of all a very warm greetings for the year 2016, hope you all are fine and enjoying your vacations”, PM26). Integrating the wishes in the corpus of their texts, they show communicative competence since they orient themselves to otherness, select the situational information and choose the type of response that allows a successful exchange. The potential cultural blunder is averted and the relationship is saved.

Communication problems occur instead because of misunderstandings concerning the deal and depend mostly on their linguistic competence and the lexis they use. English accuracy is not an issue:

4) Our priority is also firstly but [client] didn't gave any comment because they have submitted to [name], today I went to [client] still same answer that no reponse from [name]. [name] designer said that [company] came up with some [specific] codes which he himself gave him answers regarding to come up with AASHTO no [specific] code. (PM1)

A recent study on BELF (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2012) suggests that content and clarity are more important than form and “correctness”. So for them business English is described as a simplified variety of English without “complicated phraseology, idiomatic expressions or complex sentence structures” (ibid.: 266). In this corpus, the deviant use of language is not a cause of communication troubles (as in Seidhofer, 2004) except at the lexical level, which results in language misunderstandings that need repairs (“what do you mean with "verification"?”, IM35; “you are speaking about "guaranteed life" or "duration of guarantee"?”, IM35). When communication problems concern words referring to strategic concepts, repairs come in the form of clarifications:

5) (I) Coming to guarantee terms, it is necessary to define two concepts: A) Guarantee terms - this is the period in which [company]
will keep the responsibility about fabrication defects. Our standard time is [...].

B) Expected lifetime - it corresponds to the expected life of the bearing, keeping the same design performances. It is totally different from the previous point. The expected lifetime could be [...].

The concept of "guaranteed lifetime" is void of sense. (IM36)

From the perspective of high and low context orientations (Hall 1976; Lewis 2006), Katan (2006) and Cucchi (2010) have shown that HCCs are more expressive, highlighting feelings and relationships in interaction, whereas LCCs are instrumental in that they rely on facts. In the wake of these studies, Pakistani and Italian subjects in the data are expected to orient themselves as in a high context culture frame. However, data seem to show that different orientations are involved. For example, in my data, IM presents the Italian company as a horizontal structure, he points out that people's roles are established by their accomplishments, and each person has their own set of tasks and responsibilities. This is an example of Hofstede's low power distance dimension, which seems to correlate with a rule-based society (Hooker 2008), since the social structure is decentralized and responsibility is distributed. IM's messages are direct, regulated by compliance with pre-existing agreements, less interested in courtesy and face-saving. The Italian emails often contain background information and explanations that are provided to avoid misunderstanding (see e.g. “5”), whereas the Pakistani emails seem more interested in the group relationship (e.g. they use small talk about the Christmas holidays), and talk around the point, an attitude that may cause frustration to their Italian interlocutors (“Confused questions are the reason of confused answers (if any)!" IM35). Moreover, IM tries to withdraw from conflicts to avoid direct messages to save the Pakistani's face and not to destroy the relationship. Indeed, he tries to focus on solutions as we can see in example “5”, where he tries to clear up the linguistic misunderstanding. It seems IM's attitudes are closer to the linear-active cultural type (as in Lewis Model, 1996), which shows similarities with low context culture orientations. After that, in a further email, he blames the person responsible for the misunderstanding (see example “1”), which seems to be concerned with a multi-active type (in the Lewis model) or, better, to the rule-based culture position (Hooker, 2008). ‘Rule-based’ regards human beings as autonomous individuals, responsible for their own actions. In addition, the correspondence written by the Pakistani group shows a degree of deference, with an attention to high power distance, conveyed by the practices of respect and formality (the use of greetings, the repetition of the use of the word “sir”). This is a characteristic of relationship-based cultures, which focus on maintaining
relations and therefore rely on courtesy and face-saving exchanges.

4. Discussion and concluding remarks

The data under investigation are a rich source of linguistic information about what normally happens during a business relationship in terms of rapport management, conflict and repair strategies. Digital CA and the study of sequences have provided new methodological perspectives in the analysis of email exchanges: the sequential organization has allowed understanding of how the conversation unfolds, how the topic is addressed and how relations unfold. The conversation takes place as an email exchange between five writers, who are familiar with multi-addressed email conventions. Elements of structural politeness (greetings and closings) are used to maintain working relationships, but are omitted or limited in the case of hurried responses. Unlike the former variable (i.e. the digital context), ELF, on the contrary, may be a cause of communication troubles but only at the lexical level. Misunderstandings are mostly based on lexicon; and conflict concerns the action to be undertaken or have been already undertaken, and the renegotiation of such actions. In all these cases, users know how to use genre conventions, including typographical adjustments, to mirror the tone of a face-to-face conversation. We can safely state that the mediated-computer communication does not constitute in this case a source of troubles.

Finally, the intercultural analysis has proved valuable to detect the origin of communication conflicts which seems to depend on the cultural differences between rule-based and relationship-based cultures (Hooker, 2008). Although it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between the cultures at play, and I can only refer to the participants' preferences, it seems that the Italian contributors respond to a rule-based orientation, thus showing practices that are typical of a low context culture (where, for example, communication tends to be explicit, see Katan, 2006). The Italians do business with interlocutors, who have different orientations than their own, which means that they often encounter misunderstanding when exchanging information, and occasionally suffer from what they perceive as a lack of information (“Your clarifications will help us to understand what happens”, IM10; “What happens? What about the requested deliveries?”, IM20, in bold red letters in the email to express frustration/disagreements). The Pakistani participants, presumably also due to their role as intermediaries within the relationship, employ the practices which are typical of relationship-based cultures, giving a lot of weight to people and meetings and preferring situational knowledge3 (“it will be sorted out at the time of installation or at the time of visit

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3 Situational knowledge is a term used in media and communication contexts. The situational knowledge is an experience-based knowledge that people use (even if unaware of it) to understand an environment/context/situation that looks like something similar to what one has once
not a big deal”, PM11; “Tomorrow again ... Discussion ....will start ...lets see what comes into their mind”, PM42), which will provide an implicit understanding of the context, based on their past experience of the same situation.

The push email system creates a new frame in which the email takes the form of a spoken/chat-like dialogue with very quick answers (like 'yes', PM31) in a conversation continuum. It is a development of email discourse as an intersection of written and oral discourse, displaying features associated with face-to-face interactions (informality, immediacy, and synchronicity) within a written mode (planning, asynchronicity), described by Cho (2010) and Gimenez (2000, 2002). My study also confirms how graphics and orthographic devices (capitalization, different colours, punctuation marks) are employed to move closer to the spoken style of face-to-face exchanges (i.e. changing tone through capitalization). These emails appear to resemble chat conversations, sharing style and time sequences, and are characterized by brevity and reduced politeness indicators (Murphy and Levy, 2006). My results also suggest that, in this particular exchange, the Pakistani writers fall at the two extremes of formality, being inclined towards both conversation-like styles (PM) and to (more) formal written sequences (PT), whereas the Italian speakers fall within this formality continuum.

The data have also shown that there are different orientations toward the conflict raised by misunderstandings, which depend on the speakers' cultural preferences. In our data, Italian strategies involve a high level of directness, with sentences and capitalization that intensify the force of the complaints. On the other hand, the Pakistani interlocutors were found to prefer softer strategies (reformulations and indirect complaints). The difference in orientations may be explained in terms of power relations: despite the potential symmetrical positions of the interlocutors, in particular of the two managers PM and IM, the use of directives by Italian speakers, together with the Pakistanis' constant requests for directions, suggests an unbalanced relationship or, in Hooker's terms, a different consideration of authority figures. Certainly, all these strategies do not help to protect the relationship between the participants, where the main act taking place is the business deal. This study suggests that this mutual goal is challenged by both language misunderstandings and by cultural orientational preferences. The latter represent obstacles and cause delays in the business process and schedule, as demonstrated by the example of service life confirmation/guarantee email.
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Najeeb, M. and Nor F. 2012. “Politeness in E-mails of Arab Students in Malaysia”.

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Empowering the Italo-Australian community through news translation.

A case study on Il Globo community newspaper

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Bologna University, Monash University

Abstract

Within social relations in globalized and multilingual spaces affected by massive movements of people (e.g., Australia), globalisation encourages specificity at the micro-community level. “Ethnicity” here represents “a great source of comfort” (Spinner, 1994: 59) and community newspapers are indeed expressions of ethnicity, embodying an ongoing struggle between the multiple forces of globalisation represented by host and heritage cultures and languages, as well as providing an independent and meaningful voice for the community.

This case study on the Italo-Australian community newspaper “Il Globo” explores translational aspects in the articles treating national issues in Australia (“Stati & Territori” section). Thanks to a senior journalist at “Il Globo” (IGJ henceforth), I retrieved English source texts (ST) and published Italian target texts (TT), affording a privileged look into news translation practices and outcomes. A corpus of 12 published TTs was analysed against the STs that informed and guided IGJ’s writing, paying special attention to how the journalist quoted her sources and dealt with cultural-specific items (CSIs, House, 2006).

Finally, I discuss how this case study’s results can contribute to and offer a different perspective on the complex issues that link globalisation, language, and power within migrants’ communities and the role of ethnic media in today’s highly globalised multilingual and liquid (western) societies.

1. Il Globo in Melbourne: a safe place for the Italian community

Il Globo, like any community newspaper conceived by migrants, was founded in 1959 with the aim of filling “the void of the lack of information about the homeland” (Mascitelli, 2009: 21). It consequently became the journalistic output of the growing Italian community settling in Melbourne during the post-war

I will address the journalist using the feminine as a randomly chosen gender and I will not disclose her name for privacy reasons.
Australian Government campaign “Populate or Perish” (Jupp, 2007; Menge et al. 2015: 25-48). Southern European migration to Australia was met with racism, from which Italian migrants were not exempt (Totaro, 2013). Establishing a community newspaper in such a context assumes a symbolic function, signalling the ethnic community’s intellectual and economic growth, and will to assert its unique identity in relation to other communities in the same geographical space, to the homeland, and to the hosting country (Mascitelli, 2009; Spinner, 1994).

Particularly during the pre-Internet era, Italian migrants lacked a sense of belonging to their homeland and to their new country. This feeling of limbo exacerbated their difficulties in defining their own identity (Totaro, 2013; Spinner, 1994). As a result, the sense of community created among individuals sharing the same geographical origin was received by and expressed through the publication of a newspaper in Italian. *Il Globo* thus played a “proactive role for, and on behalf of, the Italo-Australian community” (Johansson, Battiston, 2014: 425), crucial to the building, acceptance, and empowerment of the Italian identity in Melbourne and Victoria.

During its first years and until the Internet became a widespread commodity, *Il Globo* served the same function as other ethnic media; it connected the Italian community to Italy, filling the gaps left by Australian mainstream media, and to their host country, helping them to fathom the major political, social, and economic events unfolding in Australia (Johansson, Battiston, 2014). In addition, *Il Globo* provided a source of relief, a safe place for the Italian community, contributed to the shaping of an Italo-Australian identity, and kept the Italian community informed (Carli, 2009; Mascitelli 2009).

*Il Globo*’s educative function has evolved greatly since its establishment. Many Italian migrants arriving in Australia in the 1950s were semi-literate and spoke (different) dialects as their first language, and (possibly) standard Italian as their second language (Rubino, 2002, 2010). *Il Globo* fostered literacy among the Italian community (Carli, 2009: 100), and promoted their acculturation and integration into Australian society. Finally, *Il Globo* also encouraged the community’s progressive Italianisation (De Mauro, 1970), by providing a non-tangible meeting place where Italians from different linguistic backgrounds read and learnt facts about Italy and Australia. Nowadays, this educative function focuses on preserving the use of Italian among the community, particularly among the newer generations. Hence, translation plays a fundamental role.

This study exclusively considers the printed version of *Il Globo*, which is published twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays) and offers a two-fold focus covering Italian and Australian affairs. Published predominantly in Italian, *Il Globo* features “cultural and linguistic translations” (Conway, 2011). According to Conway, cultural translation is understood as “the explanation of how a community with a different perspective makes sense of an object or event”, while linguistic translation is “the re-expression of words in another language” (Conway, 2011: 166). These two types of translations are distinct but closely intertwined, as
linguistic translation is what makes cultural translation possible; and, in turn, cultural translation inevitably affects linguistic translation. In the context of *Il Globo*, translation enables linguistic transfer, mediates between different cultural and linguistic locales, and promotes linguistic “revitalization” of the heritage language.

Another relevant point to consider is *Il Globo*’s readership. *Il Globo* appeals to an extremely varied audience in terms of education, interests, and age (Carli, 2009: 99-100; Cafarella, Pascoe, 2009: 131-132): Italian retirees who are long-term loyal readers, younger Italians who migrated to Australia from the early 2000s, first- and second-generation Italian migrants, and learners of Italian as a second language. Furthermore, IGJ revealed that the community plays an active role in directing editorial choices, because, as IGJ put it, the community is constituted by pro-active readers who “are not shy in expressing their opinions” about the newspaper’s content. This understandably has an impact on the journalist who is under multiple constraints: language transfer, space and time limitations, and (her idea of) *Il Globo* readership with diverse levels of competency in Italian.

The journalist who provided the printed data for this study was interviewed twice between July and November 2016. IGJ is in charge of the “Stati & Territori” section, focusing on Australian states. In Italy, where she grew up and studied, IGJ was not a journalist, nor a translator, only finding her feet in the industry in Australia when she started working for *Il Globo*.

2. **Analysis**

The sources of this case study are the reports (and TTs) drafted by IGJ and published in “Stati & Territori”. The STs collected by IGJ and from which she drafted her reports are taken predominantly from Australian news websites. The aim of this case study is to identify translational trends, focusing in particular on the attribution of sources and Cultural Specific Items (or CSIs; House, 2006). This case study, therefore, combines comparative analysis with ethnography and contextual analysis of the time and place of publication, for both STs and TTs, to allow us to better understand the issues involved in producing news stories in a multilingual environment.

Table 1 provides an overview of the Australian STs and their respective TTs. It includes ST and TT headlines and word count.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TT</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>Source Texts Headlines</th>
<th>Target Texts Headlines (“Il Globo”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>“Meanwhile in Victoria: CFA Volunteers ambush Daniel Andrews” – The Australian, 15/06/2016</td>
<td>“I volontari della Country Fire Authority hanno manifestato contro l’accordo con l’UFU”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>“CFA Crisis: United Firefighters Union payment to ex-Victoria Police Association revealed” – The Herald Sun, 17/06/2016</td>
<td>866 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>389 words</td>
<td>[Country Fire Authority volunteers demonstrated against the deal with UFU] 20/06/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>“Furious CFA members ambush Premier Daniel Andrews in Ararat” – The Herald Sun, 15/06/2016</td>
<td>1225 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1008 words</td>
<td>“Furious CFA members ambush Premier Daniel Andrews in Ararat” – The Herald Sun, 15/06/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td>“CFA protests interrupts Victorian Government’s new renewable energy target” – ABC News, 15/06/2016</td>
<td>697 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>697 words</td>
<td>“CFA protests interrupts Victorian Government’s new renewable energy target” – ABC News, 15/06/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>“Election 2016: Federal Labor pledges funding for study into second Basslink power cable” – ABC News, 17/06/2016</td>
<td>576 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>“La Trobe Valley jobs at risk as coal plant likely ‘gone by 2020’” – The Australian, 17/06/2016</td>
<td>414 words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>414 words</td>
<td>“La Trobe Valley jobs at risk as coal plant likely ‘gone by 2020’” – The Australian, 17/06/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>117 words</td>
<td>“Posti di lavoro a rischio nella La Trobe Valley per la chiusura della miniera di Hazelwood” [Jobs at risk in La Trobe Valley due to Hazelwood mine closure] 20/06/2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J</td>
<td>“Broken Hill water crisis: NSW to build Murray river pipeline under $500m supply plan” – ABC News, 16/06/2016</td>
<td>“Mezzo miliardo per l'acqua di Broken Hill” [Half a billion for Broken Hill water] 20/06/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>“Nicholls proposes alternative job creation programme in Queensland budget reply speech” – ABC News, 16/06/2016</td>
<td>“Qld, assunti in un anno seimila dipendenti in più nel settore pubblico” [Qld six thousand employees in the public sector in one year] 20/06/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>“NT – Labour promises inquiry into political funding if it wins the election”, The Australian, 17/08/2016 511 words</td>
<td>“NT, la campagna entra nella fase decisiva” [NT, campaign enters its final stage] 18/08/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>“‘We can change’: CLP appeal to NT voters”, news.com.au, 14/08/2016 483 words</td>
<td>“‘We can change’: CLP appeal to NT voters”, news.com.au, 14/08/2016 483 words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
<td>“CLP’s Adam Giles hits rock bottom in the Northern Territory”, The Australian, 15/08/2016 1786 words</td>
<td>“CLP’s Adam Giles hits rock bottom in the Northern Territory”, The Australian, 15/08/2016 1786 words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We can note that, in the majority of cases, there is more than one ST informing the TT, and that the TTs are considerably shorter than STs. Cutting, contracting and/or selecting of information, and modifying the title and lead, etc. are considered distinctive features of news translation (Bassnett, Bielsa, 2009: 63-64; Valdeòn, 2014), which is a target-oriented form of translation.
The target publication layout also has an impact on the resulting TT. For example, TT1 and TT12 are the main reports in “Stati & Territori” page, thus they are more prominent than other reports and are therefore afforded more space. TT5, TT7, and TT9 are positioned in the middle, after the main report, still occupying a significant portion of the page. Similarly, TT10 and TT11 are displayed at the bottom of the page in its central section, thus holding a key position on the newspaper’s page. The remaining reports appear in the right column in decreasing order of importance: TT4 at the top of the right column and TT2, TT3 and TT8 at the bottom of the right column under the section labelled “in breve” (in brief). The most salient reports present the tripartite headlining structure of pre-headline, headline and sub-headline, a standard feature of Italian newspapers (Taylor, 2009: 138-139). Hence, *Il Globo* continues the tradition of Italian printed press by preserving its structures and conventions (Cafarella, Pascoe, 2009: 130-131).

2.1 Attributing sources and reporting voices

The first part of this analysis concerns the attribution of sources and reported voices in the TTs. Table 2 (below) contains examples of how IGJ references her sources in the TTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TT</th>
<th>Report section</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Back translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td>“Secondo un giornale […]”</td>
<td>according to a newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>“Il quotidiano Herald Sun ha rivelato”</td>
<td>The newspaper Herald Sun revealed that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>“Secondo l’Herald Sun”</td>
<td>according to the Herald Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>“Lo dimostra un’analisi condotta dal quotidiano The Australian […]”</td>
<td>An analysis carried out by the newspaper The Australian shows that […]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>“I documenti di bilancio […] mostrano […]”</td>
<td>Financial statements show that […]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>“Un ispettore di Worksafe […]”</td>
<td>A Worksafe inspector […]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body</td>
<td>“Fonti interne alla prigione […]”</td>
<td>Sources inside the prison […]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 Sources attribution in the TT*

This data suggests that IGJ differentiates between two kinds of sources when quoting them in her reports. If the source is another (Australian) newspaper, she quotes it if this newspaper holds exclusivity over the reported event and/or uses it to garner substantial pieces of information (e.g. TT1, TT6 first line). If the STs
quote another source (e.g. official report or document, speech delivered by a public figure), IGJ quotes the primary source directly (e.g. TT6 second line, TT9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST</th>
<th>ST quote/reported speech</th>
<th>TT</th>
<th>TT quote/reported speech</th>
<th>Backtranslation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>“we’ve got not only the plan for a feasibility, but the pathway to help finance it, if it stacks up” he [Mr Shorten] said.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“Abbiamo pronto non solo un piano di fattibilità, ma anche un percorso per il finanziamento dell’opera, con la nostra proposta di stabilire facilitazioni creditizie per i dieci miliardi di dollari per opere infrastrutturali di questo genere”, ha sottolineato Shorten.</td>
<td>“Not only do we have a feasibility plan ready, but also a path for the construction’s funding, with our proposal of establishing credit facilities for the ten billion dollars destined to infrastructure works of this sort”, Shorten underlined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Deputy Premier Troy Grant said the investment would “give Broken Hill the opportunity not just to continue to exist but to thrive”</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>“Questo investimento darà a Broken Hill l’opportunità di rifiorire, non solo di continuare a sopravvivere. Il problema dell’approvvigionamento delle risorse idriche per questa città è di lunga data, e meritava una soluzione definiva” ha detto il vice premier statale Troy Grant.</td>
<td>“This investment will give Broken Hill the opportunity to flourish again, not only to survive. The problem of water supply for this city is a longstanding one and deserved to be addressed with a definitive solution” said Deputy State Premier Troy Grant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Chief Minister Adam Giles […] conceded it [his government] had made mistakes, saying it was most often criticised for disunity in its ranks</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>“è vero, abbiamo ricevuto molte critiche giustificate per la disunità mostrata nelle nostre file, per avere venduto il Territory Insurance Office and for</td>
<td>“It is true, we received legitimated criticism because of the disunity showed in our ranks, for having sold the Territory Insurance Office and for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and for selling the Territory Insurance Office and leasing Darwin Port for 99 years without mandate.

“Where we could have done better was to have listened to the people, engaged in a conversation with the electorate before making these decisions” he said. He told a crowd of 150 party faithful that a re-elected CLP government would be “a government that will listen to and consult with Territorians, and fight with tenacity for the Territorians’ best interests”.

“We will listen, we will consult, we will decide and then we will act. We’re already getting better at this”, Mr Giles said.

Table 3 collects examples of reported speech found in the TTs under study. Generally, the TTs tend to use a single quote to summarise the information in several ST quotes.

In the ST-N first example, the ST uses reported speech, whereas TT7 directly quotes Giles’ own words. The ST-N second example alternates between direct quotes and reported speech with contextual information about who was addressed and in what circumstances. TT7 is considerably shorter and therefore more concise. This use of contraction in TT7 turns the ST-N reported and direct speech into a single direct quote. IGJ also omits contextual information, perhaps considering it irrelevant to her readership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and for selling the Territory Insurance Office and leasing Darwin Port for 99 years without mandate.</th>
<th>Insurance Office, e per avere concesso in leasing per 99 anni il porto di Darwin”</th>
<th>leasing Darwin Port for 99 years”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Avremmo potuto fare di meglio se avessimo ascoltato di più la gente, se avessimo consultato di più l’elettorato prima di prendere quelle decisioni. Ma se saremo rieletti il nostro nuovo governo ascolterà di più la gente e agirà solo dopo aver consultato gli elettori”, ha detto Giles [...].</td>
<td>“We could have done better if we had listened more to the people, if we had consulted more with the electorate before making those decisions. But if we are re-elected our new government will listen more to the people and take action only after consulting with the electorate” said Giles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Bassnett and Bielsa (2009: 7-8) and to Valdeòn (2005, 2014), the deletion or omission of contextual information and the manipulation (e.g. appropriation, permutation, etc.) of direct/reported speech are frequent in news translation. Bassnett, Bielsa (2009) and Valdeòn (2005) argue that there could be a number of reasons why the journalist/translator (or “journalator” following Van Doorslaer, 2012 and Filmer, 2014) decides to switch from direct to reported speech and vice-versa. Such a strategy allows journalists/translator to sound more authentic (direct quotes), to meet the needs of their prospective audience, to accommodate for specific time and space constraints, to not interrupt the reading flow, or to take distance from what was said. IGJ’s most pressing concern was probably meeting the space requirements imposed by the editor, as the general tightening of TT7 seems to suggest.

2.2 CSIs: acronyms and institutions

This section analyses a selection of CSIs (House, 2006) by considering the strategies employed by IGJ in the translation of the acronyms in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TT</th>
<th>TT Acronyms</th>
<th>Backtranslation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dai volontari del CFA. Alcune decine di persone appartenenti alla Country Fire Authority [...]</td>
<td>By CFA volunteers. Dozens of people from the Country Fire Authority [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[I]l sindacato dei vigili del fuoco United Firefigthers Union concede all'UFU [...]</td>
<td>[T]he firefighters’ union United Firefighters Union grants the UFU [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>L’ALP federale promette [...] HOBART – Il leader federale laburista Bill Shorten ha promesso [...]</td>
<td>Federal ALP pledges [...] HOBART – Federal Labour leader Bill Shorten has pledged [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Qld, assunti in un anno seimila dipendenti in più nel settore pubblico”</td>
<td>Qld six thousand employees in the public sector in one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>NT, la campagna entra nella fase decisiva DARWIN – Il Chief Minister del Northern Territory Adam Giles [...]</td>
<td>NT, campaign entering the decisive phase DARWIN – Northern Territory Chief Minister Adam Giles [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>[A]mmettendo che il CLP [...]</td>
<td>Acknowledging that CLP [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Accantonate per il momento le leggi anti protesta in WA PERTH – Il ministro della polizia del Western Australia [...]</td>
<td>Anti-protest laws ‘momentarily’ set aside in WA PERTH – Western Australia police minister [...]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Acronyms in TT.

There are two acronyms in TT1: “CFA” (4 occurrences) and “UFU” (5 occurrences). The corresponding STs present three acronyms (“CFA”, “UFU” and “VFBV”). During the interview, IGJ stated that, acting as a gatekeeper for her
readership, she selected the acronyms she deemed important for the purposes of the story and omitted those which were irrelevant.

“CFA” (Country Fire Authority) and “UFU” (United Firefighters Union) are repeatedly included in TT1, accompanied by their extended English form either before or after the acronym itself. Occasionally, there is a periphrasis in Italian containing an explanation of the acronym, essentially a translation of the extended English form of the acronym. As Table 4 shows, similar strategies can be found in other TTs; IGJ tends to transfer the acronym by means of borrowing, often accompanying it with its extended English form (e.g. TT1: “CFA”; TT7: “NT”; TT11: “WA”). We observe a different strategy for TT1 “UFU”, preceded by a periphrasis in Italian and followed by the extended English form and the acronym itself. Following Malone’s classification of translational strategies (1988, in Taylor 2009), we could argue that there are two main strategies implemented: equation in the form of borrowing, and amplification through the translation of the English form into Italian (periphrasis, e.g. TT1 second line).

In TT2 the acronym “ALP” (Australian Labor Party) is made explicit in the following sentence through an adjective (“Laborista”) in attributing position characterising Labor politician Bill Shorten. In TT6 (“Qld”) and TT7 (“CLP”), the reader cannot find any addition to or translation of the short form or the acronym. In TT6, the reader can unequivocally identify “Qld” as the short form for the state of Queensland, because its capital city (Brisbane) is given in the report’s lead. In contrast, in TT7, “CLP” (Country Liberal Party) appears only in its acronym form.

Comparing how IGJ decided to render these three CSIs (TT2, TT6 and TT7), we note that her decisions are somehow inconsistent especially with reference to the acronyms. Indeed, I expected that IGJ would have made “CLP” (TT7) explicit as he did with “ALP” in TT2. Instead, the only way the reader can correctly identify “CLP” is through its opposite. Indeed, its opposite, the “Labor party”, can be found in the lead and last paragraph of TT7.

From the observation of the results, the amplifications described in this section generally run within the text and do not interrupt the reading flow through relative clauses or brackets. I noted that IGJ seems inconsistent when translating acronyms and short forms, however it is possible to hypothesize that this inconsistency fulfills two functions in the TTs: to make TTs unambiguous and clear, and for stylistic reasons since repetitions are avoided in Italian prose. Finally, while in an Italian newspaper the journalist/translator probably would have omitted the acronyms entirely, or included them in brackets, IGJ presumably prefers to keep them because her readership will no doubt encounter them in their daily lives.

This difference between the Italian and the Italo-Australian contexts may be regarded as an example of localization, in that the journalist bended the

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conventions of the Italian journalism to meet the needs and expectations of the Italo-Australian one.

Table 5 (below) contains examples of names of institutions and institutional figures/processes found in the TTs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST</th>
<th>ST Institutions/Institutional figures/processes</th>
<th>TT</th>
<th>TT Institutions/Institutional figures/processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The real politik premier Daniel Andrews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Il premier del Victoria Daniel Andrews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Daniel Andrews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The premier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Opposition leader Bill Shorten</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Il leader federale laburista Bill Shorten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Lower House</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>La Camera Bassa della Tasmania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-H</td>
<td>No-confidence motion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mozione di sfiducia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>The premier</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ministro delle risorse minerarie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>NT Chief Minister</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chief Minister del Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opposition whip</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Capogruppo laburista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>$2 levy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Soprattassa di due dollari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General manager</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Amministratore delegato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q-R</td>
<td>Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Centro detentivo giovanile di Malmsbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Regional and rural councils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local government authorities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Enti locali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Council amalgamations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Entità comunali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local government minister</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fusioni comunali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Council amalgamations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ministro degli enti locali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-protest legislation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Disegno di legge anti proteste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police Minister</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ministro della polizia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Australia Bureau of Statistics</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ufficio nazionale di statistica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>ABS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5 Institutions and institutional figures/processes in the STs and TTs.*

From Table 5 it emerges that institutional processes and figures are usually translated either by choosing an Italian equivalent or similar (e.g. line two in TT4, TT9, TT10, TT11, and TT12) or by translating the constituents of the phrase (e.g. “camera bassa” TT4, “ministro delle risorse minerarie” in TT4, TT2), or a blend of the two (e.g. “capogruppo laburista” in TT7). TT7 “chief minister” is the only case of borrowing in this CSI category. The CSIs in TT10 refer to institutions representing a specific entity in the Italian political landscape (“comuni”), which
do not perfectly match with the Australian system. Hence, there is inconsistency in the translation of “local government” and “councils”, with TT10 presenting more variety and terminological inaccuracy.

With reference to the results brought about by this case study, it could be possible to identify some general trends that might be common to other journalistic outputs involving translation. First of all, we note the tendency to localize both the information and the cultural references within a particular news item (e.g. “comuni” in TT10). This localising attitude is peculiar of the news discourse and, as a consequence, of news translation (Bielsa and Bassnett 2009; Valdeón 2015). It is indeed understandable that, when translating a piece of news, this has to be framed and constructed in order to be relevant to the target audience.

While analysing CSIs within the corpus of texts collected for this case study, I would have expected to find some instances of “explicitation” in line with the general trend of translated texts to be more explicit than originally produced texts (see Blum-Kulka 2001 “explicitation hypothesis”, 1986 here quoted from Venuti, 2001). Although there are some instances in which the TTs under study are more explicit than their (multiple) STs, I would be cautious in deifying it a trend within the context of ethnic news translation. From the data and the results of this case study, we can observe a general tightening of the TTs compared to the corresponding STs. Moreover, pinpointing the exact location of additions and explicitations is not always feasible.

Nevertheless, there are some instances in which explicitations are present (e.g. ST-H “Lower House” and TT4 “La Camera Bassa della Tasmania”, ST-R “$2 levy” and TT8 “Sopratassa di due dollari”, or ST-E “ALP” and TT2 “ALP” + “Il leader federale laburista”), but their number is too small to draw any conclusion in one sense or the other. Therefore, it might be interesting to investigate these issues further with a larger number of texts, ideally with two separate corpora of STs and of TTs that can be cross-analysed and investigated. Those corpora should be separate corpora but nevertheless comparable and, so to speak, “cognate”, in that it would be ideal to trace back multiple STs from single TTs (McGlashan and Baker 2017).

To conclude this analysis, I would like to show the only case of mistranslation in the corpus of texts considered in this case study. TT9 (see Table 6 below) reports the difficulties faced by staff working at a youth justice centre. The article reminds readers of a recent event during which an under-age detainee from a youth centre kidnapped a five-year-old girl in her father’s car. TT9 summarizes more than one newsworthy event, is very concise, and describes events that are socio-culturally close to IGJ and to her readership.

In the closing paragraph, we find an expression that might provoke misunderstandings for Italian-speaking readers. The sentence in Table 6 (below) seems to imply that “ice” is a disease, as the past participle in attributive position “affetto” is generally used to imply that someone is suffering from a disease.
Based on this translation, Italian readers unfamiliar with drug slang (i.e. “ice”-methamphetamine) would understand “ice” as an illness, and picture an ill teenager kidnapping a five-year old girl and stealing a car. They may therefore attribute the teenager’s behaviour to illness rather than drug abuse, undoubtedly making their judgement more lenient.

Later in TT9, IGJ describes the Malmsbury Youth Centre in Melbourne, detailing how the situation is becoming increasingly unsustainable both for employees and for local residents. This mistranslation constitutes a mere oversight, perhaps due to a calque of the noun-phrase structure of ST-R (“ice-addicted”). This structure is highly informative and economic in terms of space, and IGJ may understandably have wished to replicate something similar in TT9, potentially misled in the translation of the past participle “addicted” (in Italian “dipendente” or “drogato”).

A further explanation could be that the calque derives from a long exposure of IGJ to the SL which, as a consequence, influences her translation in her native language. Although Cafarella and Pascoe (2009: 126) dismiss the language of Il Globo as archaic, I did not find any evidence of archaisms in the TTs under study. The influence of English on the IGJ’s textual production could fit into the trends of an Italo-Australian written variety developing among a newer Italo-Australian generation and the so-called Italian “working-holiday generation” (Armilliei, Mascitelli, 2016). The latter comprises individuals who have completed the compulsory school cycle in Italy (60%) and have a decent level of English before leaving Italy (60%). If we accept this second interpretation, calques such as the one in Table 6 could become evidence in support of the emergence of a new Italo-Australian variety, but, of course, more data is needed in order to verify the existence of such a variety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST-R section</th>
<th>TT9</th>
<th>Back translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ice-addicted teenager accused of kidnapping […]</td>
<td>[...] a seguito della vicenda dell’adolescente affetto da ice [...]</td>
<td>After the incident (involving) a teenager suffering from ice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A teenager […] was high on ice […]</td>
<td>Body</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6 CSI and Mistranslation.*
3. Conclusions

The results from the analysis in Section 2 are thought to be symptomatic of the role of Il Globo within the Italian community in Melbourne. In 2.1, I focused on reported speech and its manipulations, in 2.2 the focus was on CSIs and the potential comprehension difficulties they arise in translation, showing how acronyms and names of institutions and institutional figures/processes are translated and observing that, in some cases, IGJ assumes a localising attitude towards CSIs. Finally, I tried to make sense of the only case of mistranslation found in the 12 TT’s corpus, suggesting that L2 interference in written language could point at the emergence of a new Italo-Australian variety.

With reference to localization and explicitation there are some considerations that should be made when talking about ethnic media. Indeed, in this context, this localising argument can be of arduous definition as questions about which is the source and the target locale in a diaspora context are surely bound to come up. Indeed, is it possible to identify one single locale of reference within such a context? Or would it be better to think of community newspapers as spaces of shifting locales? If we consider the constant movement back and forth from the heritage to the host country displayed by ethnic media, it is understandable that localization can assume different forms and directions according to the target locale envisaged by the news item. In the case of Il Globo, the target locale is surely the Italian community in Melbourne but the latter could be addressed in a number of facets: as Italians, as Italo-Australians, and as Australians. These shifts of course determine inconsistencies in the localising attitude we observed during the analysis.

In relation to Italo-Australian as contact language as described by Rubino (2002) or Caruso (2010), the case at hand could represent a shift in the definition and perception of Italo-Australian. Being a recent phenomenon, it needs to be analysed and studied in detail, however we could predict that the language would come to resemble standard Italian more closely with a reduction in interferences from Italian regional varieties and dialects, and with increasing interreferences from English. Additionally, it would have a different status, transitioning from a language that emerged because of the speakers’ lack of competence in standard Italian (and English), to one that creates a new linguistic code for its community.

Within this fluid linguistic shift of the contact variety, IGJ and other journalists at Il Globo have to ask themselves which (Italian/English) terms could represent a comprehension obstacle for readers and therefore necessitate an explanation, what information is relevant to the varied community of readers being addressed, and what can instead be omitted. While being faced with a readership constantly scrutinizing the journalistic output can have its downsides, it is also the very reason why newspapers aimed at long-established ethnic communities still exist in countries like Australia. The Italian community justifies the existence of Il Globo and defines its goal in- and outside the community itself. From this perspective, Il Globo still has a mission and plays a role within the Italian community. It keeps the
heritage language alive and offers a sense of unity and belonging, continuing “to furnish a type of news which mainstream media is unable or unwilling to provide” (Cafarella, Pascoe, 2009: 121), ultimately building a unique Italo-Australian multilingual identity through translation, both cultural and linguistic.

Acknowledgments
Bruno Mascitelli, Swinburne University of Technology; Tiffane Levick, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris 3.

References


Abstract

In the last decades advances in digital communication and audiovisual translation studies have significantly transformed the ways by which texts and people travel across linguistic, spatial and temporal boundaries. This is particularly evident in the everchanging landscape of audiovisual translation as a consequence of the digital revolution that has contributed to the creation of new forms of adaptation and proliferation of mediated and non-mediated products.

The case of multilingual discourse applied to contemporary diasporic and migrant films, in which sociolinguistics intervenes as a methodological approach to the translation of marginal voices, has gained scholarly attention as a result of the unprecedented number of migratory influxes within European countries, as well as of the effects of globalisation that have stimulated the growth of new perspectives on multilingual societies. These phenomena have had an impact on the interpretation and valorization of multilingualism as a resource for the understanding of crucial contemporary issues in the areas of intercultural communication, migration, multiculturalism and bilingualism within and outside European borders.

One aspect that makes multilingualism in films particularly interesting is that it is based on language diversity and difference, which makes translation visible. Translation therefore becomes part of the migrant stories and serves as a communication device among characters.

Drawing on studies on multilingualism in films and audiovisual translation studies within the field of language variation and difference, this survey depicts the multilingual setting of British filmmaker Shane Meadows’s Somers Town (2008) and aims to reflect, on the one hand, upon the development of European cinema in motion within a contemporary political framework of migrations and crossings and, on the other hand, upon the difficulties, challenges and constraints posed by the translation of language variation in multilingual films within procedures of audiovisual translation strategies and techniques. The investigation presents the different levels of language variation that intermingle in the film taken as a case in point, and also scrutinises alternative tools for the translation of multilingual speech (such as creative subtitling) in the attempt not to sacrifice the socio-cultural dimension of multilingual films, as well as the concepts of difference and realism which are the basis of multilingualism in cinema. Once the importance of multilingualism is determined, the subtitler will be able to decide which translation strategy can be used in order to disseminate the various multilingual levels that form the multilingual film in question.

Keywords: language variation, creative subtitling, migration cinema, audiovisual translation
1. Introduction

Audiovisual translation studies is a recent active field, though intertitles appeared in the early 1900s. Subtitling, dubbing and voice-over have been a blessing for the film industry, since they have permitted films to travel abroad, occupy international spaces and also have digital dissemination. Given its hybrid nature, audiovisual translation today attracts attention from scholars in translation studies, film studies, media studies, sociolinguistics and the sociology of cinema. Research in multilingualism in films has also increased within the creative cultural industries due to the main focus of this film genre on themes such as multiculturalism, immigration, cultural identity issues and war. Against a backdrop that testifies to the increasing popularity of multilingual films across platforms of niche audiences, translation issues referring to the constraints imposed on the translator/subtitler of multilingual films have received scholarly attention and have been measured according to the degree of multilingualism in polyglot films.

Moving from the concept that a multilingual film is by definition a multilingual object composed of image and sound - as forms of language in their own right, multilingual films can be regarded as films involved in more than one ‘natural’ language in their dialogue and narration. Multilingual films are therefore characterised by the presence of various languages or forms of languages within one film, including regional variation, accent and slang. Such a variety of multilingual films calls for equally diverse translation strategies ranging from total respect of multilingualism to imposed monolingualism.

Drawing on studies on multilingualism in films and audiovisual translation studies within the areas of language variation and difference, this study depicts the multilingual setting of a 2008 film entitled Somers Town and aims to reflect, on the one hand, upon the growth of European cinema in motion within a contemporary political framework of migrations and crossings and, on the other hand, upon the difficulties, challenges and constraints posed by the translation of language variation in multilingual films within mechanisms of audiovisual translation strategies and techniques. The investigation presents the different levels of language variation that intermingle in the film taken as a case in point, and also scrutinises alternative tools for the translation of multilingual speech (such as creative subtitling) in the attempt not to sacrifice the socio-cultural dimension of multilingual films, as well as the concepts of difference and realism, which are implicitly the basis of multilingualism in cinema. Multilingualism in films becomes a challenging category, if it is viewed from the perspective of the audiovisual translation challenges and constraints which arise from the creation of subtitled versions.

British films centred on migration are usually multilingual, since their objective is to depict linguistic diversity in today’s British society. This is also the principal aim in the film Somers Town. If multilingualism characterises this typology of film, then what “happens when multilingual films are translated into other languages for
distribution abroad? Is multilingualism maintained in the target versions of the film? And when multilingualism is omitted or substituted, is filmic manipulation technically or ideologically bounded?” (de higes-Andino, 2014: 211).

This study tries to establish a relationship between multilingualism/language variety in films and the different facets of translation—from its modes and techniques to its constraints—in the attempt to shed light on useful methods for the translation of multilingual films in any L2 and L3. Creative subtitling, with its peculiarities, provides useful alternative forms of translation and, more importantly, strategies for signalling the multilingual effect in translated versions—where it is possible to do it without compromising the final rendering of the subtitled version.

2. On migration films or diasporic films in motion

Despite global societies having been transformed into multilingual realities, films have been largely monolingual throughout history, and very little research was done in the past on multilingualism. Today the new policies in the field of the creative industries, the evolution of the European Union’s political and socio-cultural strategies, and the significant twentieth- and early twenty-first-century migratory movements, have brought about an interest in multilingualism in films. Indeed, the unprecedented number of migratory influxes and the effects of globalisation have stimulated the growth of new perspectives on multilingual societies and have also had an impact on the interpretation and valorization of multilingualism as a resource for the understanding of crucial contemporary issues in the areas of intercultural communication (Katan, 2009), migration, multiculturalism and bilingualism within and outside European borders.

Ongoing social and cultural changes, and the new interests in the spread of aesthetic audiovisual products that are able to testify the political and social transformations occurring in current times, have shifted the attention of filmmakers and producers to the dissemination of films and documentaries where the phenomenon of migration in all its connotations and implications could be represented and could also be used as a stimulus for future intercultural approaches within multilingual cinema.

Countless multilingual films on the topic of migration have been produced since the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century in order to contribute to the diffusion of the historical and political conditions of the migratory crossings over seas, borders and barbed wire (Demos, 2013; Moslund, Petersen and Schramm, 2015; Bond, Bonsaver and Faloppa, 2015; Mazzara, 2015; 2016). Indeed, over the past thirty years, European multilingual films have been transformed as a result of the increased visibility of filmmakers with a “migratory background” and a “growing interest in the facets and dynamics of postmodern multiculturalism” (Berghahn and Sternberg, 2014: 2). Modalities of
representations of “migrant and diasporic experiences and cross-cultural encounters have assumed a prominent position in cinematic narratives. As a consequence of these proliferating migrations, European cultures and societies have witnessed an inconceivable diversification, fragmentation and hybridization” (ibid.).

Multilingualism has turned into a central element for some sectors in the film industry, where multilingual settings, characterised by the switching from a standard language to varieties of non-standard language, uncover linguistic diversity and cultural difference. Multilingualism in films thus includes issues such as cross-cultural communication, individual and societal multilingual contexts, language politics and ideology, language and narration, translation and authenticity, and language contact. Language contact is a common phenomenon in today’s globalised world and filmmakers interested in migration and minorities tend to incorporate the contemporary context of cultural exchanges into the story of their films.

3. Somers Town

3.1 The film

Derived from the forgotten Somers landowning family, Somers Town is British director Shane Meadows’s dramatic film in black and white, which portraits a micro-community in a quarter between King’s Cross and Euston Road. The events take place in that area of London and have as protagonist, Tomo, a young boy from Nottingham (the broken home he runs away from), who attempts to escape from the sense of solitude and frustration he has experienced in his native Midlands. He gets off the train in London with no clue about what to do or where to stay. He meets Marek, a lonely Polish boy, whose father, Mariusz is a construction worker on the Eurostar terminal. Marek loves photography but has to cope with the existence of an alcoholic father. Sentiments of loneliness pervade Marek’s soul and his solitude becomes the landmark of the micro-community the Polish boy belongs to, as well as of the London metropolis in a broader sense. When he meets Tomo, he invites the homeless boy to move to his place. Marek and Tom become good friends and share a reciprocal love for a French waitress, Maria, who is apparently happy to keep the friendship of her two suitors. When the girl decides to go back to Paris, the two boys would like to do their best to find her.

The three characters, Tomo, Marek and Maria, occupy the multilingual setting in a multicultural London. Marek’s father works too many hours per day and this makes him drink and his son unhappy. Maria, the French immigrant girl who attempts to experience a new life in the British metropolis, is very lonely, and Tomo, who is an immigrant within his own country, abandons his native industrial
Midlands, which he sees as unfamiliar and distant to him. Within a varied multilingual and sociocultural framework, Tomo signals a regional linguistic variety within Standard English, the Polish father and son represent multiculturalism in London as a consequence of voluntary immigration from Poland, and the French girl reinforces the ambitious construction of multilingualism in the film within a globalised scenario. The black and white aesthetics in *Somers Town* provides the film with a sense of “lyrical evocation of mood – loneliness, dislocation, the sickening potency of first love” (Fradley, 2011: 286).

### 3.2 Language variation in Somers Town

The stories of the characters living in Somers Town are set within the context of a young working-class generation of immigrants. Their belonging to working class systems and to a young generation of immigrants categorises them from a sociolinguistic perspective. They are all immigrants who live in a cosmopolitan London, and have different geographical roots and linguistic origins. The multilingual setting is thus varied and determined by the presence of a mixed linguistic background, where Polish, French and Nottinghamshire dialect varieties coexist against a backdrop of English that is never the standard one. Drawing on sociolinguistic parameters, the origins of the *Somers Town*’s characters are marked in terms of diatopic variation (a variation according to geographical origins: i.e. Poland, France, the Midlands), diastratic variation (a variation according to social class or the social group to which the speaker feels he belongs to: i.e. working class) and diaphasic variation (a variation according to different communicative settings, different levels of style/register, such as oral vs. written language, foreigner talk, vulgar style: i.e. young generations of speakers). Table 1 contains some examples from the film representing the three types of language variations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Diatopic variation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Diastratic variation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Diaphasic variation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARIA</strong></td>
<td><strong>MARIUSZ</strong></td>
<td><strong>BOY 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parlez-vous français?</td>
<td>- Yeah, it’s late. See you mate.</td>
<td>- Cheers, you ain’t got another one, have you? So what brings you down ’ere?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Avez-vous des problèmes de l’intestin?</td>
<td>- Endowed. Basically, that means…He has a really big willy!</td>
<td>- He’s a joker, in’t he? No, five pounds, that’s it. And you gotta prove yourself to me first, do you understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Back translation:</td>
<td><strong>MARIUSZ</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you speak English?</td>
<td>- Oddaj mi je.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Do you have stomach problems?</td>
<td>- Nigdy już nie zobaczysz tych zdjęć.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MARIUSZ</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ty brudna świnio.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Oddaj mi je.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nigdy już nie zobaczysz tych zdjęć.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Back translation:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- You dirty pig.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Examples of diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variations in *Somers Town*.

The film is highly controversial, both socially and linguistically. Youth culture, poor integration of young people and ethnic minorities and urban violence are expressed through multilingual frameworks where non-standard linguistic forms, a wealth of slang, insults and vulgar uses, colloquialisms and, sometimes, bad grammar, occupy the linguistic space where English acts as the main language, and Polish, French and the Nottinghamshire dialect/slang turn around the principal idiom in a dialogic mechanism. Multilingualism thus provides information about the socio-cultural contexts of each character and “establishes the characters who belong to particular social or ethnic groups in relation to each other, assists in constructing the narrative and, fundamentally, helps the film to ‘make sense’” (Ellender, 2015: 4).

The multilingual equilibrium existing in *Somers Town*, where everybody speaks when he feels it is necessary to do it, reflects the Bakhtin’s Circle (Brandist, online) and its theory of dialogism, where dialogue and interactivity are central issues. According to the principles of interrelationship and coexistence of one national language and its internal strata, and of one national language and varieties of other national languages (i.e. Polish and French spoken in the UK by specific communities – which is the case in point in *Somers Town*), internal differentiations and subversive or non-standard uses of the language varieties present in the film take the form of registers and epitomise social variety. As a result, language varieties in multilingual films reflect the ways of experiencing and conceptualising the world through words, while also being markers of belonging to a social group.

*Somers Town* contains and is rooted in linguistic variation, which means that, as a multilingual film, it functions within “the co-presence of two or more languages (in a society, text or individual)” (Grutman, 2009: 182) and, more broadly, testifies to “the ability of an individual” (Díaz Cintas, 2011: 215) to speak “several languages, usually three or more” (ibid.). In a broader sense, “official languages, dialects, sociolects, slang, pidgin and invented languages” (de Higes-Andino, 2014: 211; Delabastita 2009) are all forms of language varieties that scholarly research in audiovisual translation has incorporated within the concept of ‘multilingual’. In the film under scrutiny, multilingualism is also very much connected with the concept of film genre. *Somers Town* can be located within contemporary European cinema in motion, which includes migrant and diasporic films in contemporary Europe. To put it in De Bonis’s words: “Multilingualism aims at realism: a more realistic rendering of the situations represented in the film in which each character speaks the language of the country he or she comes from” (De Bonis, 2015: 50).

Marek and his father, and Mariusz and his Polish friends, speak Polish, Maria speaks French with some of her clients, whereas Tomo mostly speaks colloquial English, a linguistic variant that is typical of his generation with occasional utterances in slang or dialectal expressions from Nottingham. The film provides subtitles in Standard English for the Polish dialogues (Figure 1), but not for the...
French ones. The choice of foreignizing French within the film has probably the aim of creating a distance between Maria and the public, which is the same distance existing between the boys and Maria (when she speaks French with other people in front of them). In a scene, while she is talking French to one of her clients in the bar, Tomo asks Marek: “What do you think they’re talkin about?”.

Figure 1: A conversion in Polish between Maurisz and Marek.

4. Subtitling multilingual films: the case of Somers Town

Subtitles are presented in several forms and are applied to a variety of audiovisual genres and media, which demonstrates that there has been a recent and fluid dissemination of this type of technologically advanced translational activity all over the globe. Different factors have contributed to the spreading of subtitling across mediated and non-mediated platforms, such as “the proliferation of audiovisual media, the need to access original versions of AV products as soon as possible and the newly-acquired flexibility of dubbing countries [that] have recently led to an increase in the volume and the nature of such activity” (Perego and Bruti, 2015: 1). The process of subtitling foreign-language films – which consists in providing the viewer with a synchronised written translation of the films’ oral dialogues, which is usually put at the bottom of the screen – is notoriously recognised as a challenge due to the fact that the final achievement can also imply the perfect combination of Roman Jakobson’s three forms of translation (1959/2000: 114). Indeed, subtitling foreign films involves intralingual translation as the source language (SL) rewording in any standard language (i.e. Tomo’s Nottinghamshire dialect transferred to Standard English), interlingual translation as the SL transfer to any target language (TL) (i.e. the English dialogues in Somers Town translated into any TL) and intersemiotic translation as the passage from one language system sign to another language system sign (e.g. dialogues become

1 The audiovisual translation mode of subtitling has been extensively scrutinised in scholarly research. For definitions, methodologies, strategies and techniques, see Jorge Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael (2007); Delia Chiaro (2009); Elisa Perego and Silvia Bruti (2015).
written words, spoken language becomes written language and changes in the register occur according to dichotomies existing between spoken and written discourse).

When transformations take place in the process of subtitling as an intersemiotic translation, these involve specifically three main areas of change: medium, SL original and code. Alexandra Assis-Rosa (2011) discusses these different levels of transformation by referring to changes in terms of speech (audible) and gestures (visible) turning into writing, changes in terms of phonetic categories turning into graphic ones and changes in terms of code, where both spoken verbal language and non-verbal language (e.g. signs, images) are turned into written verbal language. The number of variations in the process of subtitling makes it a very challenging mechanism from a cultural, linguistic and technological dimension, implying that subtitlers are “vulnerable” professionals, to quote Jorge Díaz Cintas’s well-know expression (2003: 43-4; Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007).

Translation into subtitling has generally been categorised as a form of adaptation from a variety of standard language to another variety of standard language. Despite translating difficulties emerging from this transfer involve a default situation (Berruto 2010), when sociolinguistically marked elements and varieties are determinant in the comprehension of the film, the default situation may be considered arguable and questionable in the domain of audiovisual translation (Pavesi, 2005, Perego, 2005, Díaz Cintas, 2009, Perego and Taylor, 2012, Federici, 2011; Ellender, 2015). In the specific case of Somers Town, language variety is distinguished by three levels: on the one hand, Polish spoken language put into the mouths of Mariusz and Marek and, on the other hand, Tomo’s linguistic variation from Nottingham. The level of French exists but is almost absent in comparison with the other two linguistic levels. This multilingual framework therefore involves high degrees of diastratic and diaphasic markedness, which, from the perspective of translation, is not a simple issue. From a translational perspective, the dialogues in Somers Town should be scrutinised by taking into account the concept of sociolinguistic adequacy of translation, which, in the case of Polish, would imply the transfer of that particular variety of Polish spoken by Marek and his father to a TL equivalent language variety of standard language according to diastratic and diaphasic criteria. In light of Gaetano Berruto’s considerations on sociolinguistic adequacy as the rendering of social meanings of a linguistic sign, translation applied to language variation is a difficult enterprise:

Guardando alla traduzione dalla prospettiva sociolinguistica, il problema centrale è appunto quello dei testi sociolinguisticamente marcati per la compresenza di più varietà di lingua, ciascuna delle quali per definizione è portatrice di significati sociali intrinseci alla comunità linguistica della lingua di partenza. Si tratta quindi della traduzione del significato sociale associato agli elementi (forme, parole, costrutti) di una lingua che lo veicolano.” (Berruto, 2010: 900).
In translation, the rendering of social meanings becomes a very ambitious procedure due to the numerous strategies that involve sociolinguistic equivalence, which may be hardly achieved considering that source and target languages have different morpho-syntactical structures (Berruto, 1987). As argued by Gian Luigi De Rosa,

a sociolinguistically equivalent rendering of marked elements would imply the identification of a similarly marked translation equivalent along the diaphasic or diastratic continuum or in the dimension of diatopic variation. This process which should tend towards the naturalization of the language of the sociolinguistically marked varieties—and not towards the neutralization—may lead, on the other hand, to the total neutralization of the degree and type of markedness of translation equivalents, which in this way, will result standardized in the target text. (2015: 19).

From an intersemiotic translation perspective, the translation of *Somers Town* in any TL language will always pose challenges regarding register. The film contains segments of language that deviate from standard oral language, and this makes subtitling it even more challenging but difficult at the same time. On some occasions, the characters use non-standard pronunciation (or accent), dialect (with a specific emphasis on accent, grammar and lexis) and varieties of language (including slang, specific jargon, swearing, excessive use of vulgar expressions), which clearly signal the fact that the participants in the fictional event belong to a particular social and generational group. Tomo, the protagonist from the Midlands, never talks in Standard English. When he speaks to Marek or Maria, he always uses short informal or colloquial syntactical sentences or dialectal terms. Colloquialism and informality also characterise Tomo’s short conversations with the boys he meets in the street, which implies that the film is marked from both diastratic and diaphasic perspectives. The following examples present cases of northern dialect from the English Midlands and also numerous colloquial or informal expressions from the mouths of generations of teenagers. There are also abundant cases of contractions, swearwords and interjections, typical of the register of young generations belonging to non-bourgeois social classes (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOMO: Please, I’m not gonna <strong>nick owt</strong>.</th>
<th><strong>Owt</strong> (northern English dialect staying for “anything”); <strong>Nick</strong> (informal British English for “steal”).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOMO: I got beat up last night by three <strong>lads</strong>.</td>
<td><strong>Lads</strong> (informal British English for “boys”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMO: I can’t, <strong>cos</strong> they won’t believe I’m 18. I <strong>ain’t</strong> got no ID.</td>
<td>Contractions and abbreviations: <strong>cos</strong> used for ‘because’; <strong>ain’t</strong> used as a dialectal grammatical substitution of <strong>hain’t</strong>, also representing London dialect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a teenage boy, Tomo makes use of numerous informal or colloquial English expressions, slang and vulgar terms. His conversations are thus often marked by what Díaz Cintas and Aline Remael have identified as the “anti-language”, which is the replacement of standard lexicon with informal language in order to create forms of informal “re-lexicalisations” (2007: 191). As linguistic elements used in the generationally marked settings which Tomo belongs to, swearwords and interjections are also employed in terms of social refusal of norms and stereotypes in developed societies.

The second level of language variety is determined by the use of Polish, which is as much frequent as Tomo’s informal use of English. Polish is frequent in the conversations between Marek and his father, who never speaks English to his son, unless Tomo is in front of them. Polish is also the only language that Mariusz speaks with his Polish friends. In short, though Polish characters speak English when they interact with non-Polish people, their accent is markedly Polish, and they often make use of informal spoken English, where abbreviations, contractions and slang are very frequent, as the transcription in Table 3 shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLISH MAN 2: Marek, c’mon, how about your love life?</th>
<th>POLISH MAN 3: Marek, stay with us! Marek c’mon!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Contracted form of “come on”.)</td>
<td>(Contracted form of “come on”.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Examples of contractions from the mouths of Polish speakers.

Slang and vulgar slang, which is often present in the film under scrutiny, are used according to the socio-cultural meaning which is implicit in the conversation. According to the level of familiarity or unfamiliarity with specific meanings, or if an action or a dialogue represents a taboo or an excess of vulgarity in Polish culture, Marek, while he is conversing in English with Tomo, deliberately switches into Polish. Marek’s intentional switching from a kind of standard variety of English to his native language can be viewed as a rejection of Tomo’s way of acting. Marek speaks Polish in order to create a communicative gap with his English friend, who will be unfamiliar with Marek’s utterance. Thus, if the dialogues between the two friends begin in English, on certain occasions, they turn into Polish, as the example in Table 4 demonstrates:
Slang and vulgarity, swearwords and taboos are socio-culturally contextualised terms, “multifunctional, pragmatic units which assume, in addition to the expression of emotional attitudes, various discourse functions” (Dewaele, 2004: 205).

Multilingual films are migrant and diasporic films in which sociolinguistics intervenes as a methodological approach within the translation of marginal voices. As remarked by Chris Wahl, the polyglot element is a characteristic of the following film genres: “episode films, alliance films, globalisation films, immigrant films, colonial films and existential films. In all of them, the use of linguistic polyphony is paramount” (2005: 3). The depiction of specific identities marked by the use of sociolects, idiolects, dialects, national languages and foreign languages is determinant in providing a multilingual setting from a socio-cultural perspective that can limit “the translator’s room for manoeuvre while at the same time they open up possibilities for creative solutions” (Federici, 2011: 11). Subtitling linguistic variation, including foreign languages within a national language, can be a challenge, and scholarly research has demonstrated that it can be a failure if equivalences are not connected with a TL cultural framework of reference that does not cause the displacement of the SL characters (i.e. in the film La Haine translated into African-American Vernacular English [Whitelaw and O'Shea, 1996], the characters have been asked to talk a linguistic variety which has implied a relocation of their identities and, therefore, a displacement from the original setting).

Language varieties are essential to the full functioning of multilingual films and if the subtitles can transfer the SL varieties of the film, the TL audience will probably catch more the significance of the film on a cultural and social level. Nevertheless, as observed by a number of scholars (Bartoll, 2006; Assis-Rosa, 2001; Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007), linguistic variation (including multilingualism) is hardly preserved in TL subtitles, and non-standard expressions or slang and dialectal varieties of language are often omitted, thus, creating standardised and flattened translations in terms of social, cultural and geographical transmission of source language connotations and difference. Considering that the translation of dialect is already difficult within the same standard language, this task becomes even more complex when the transfer has to occur within the syntactical, lexical and cultural constraints of another language (Díaz Cintas and Remael, 2007: 191-192).

Difference is rooted in multilingual films – such as in the case of Somers Town –
and the complete domestication of these audiovisual products would imply an enormous loss at the level of the transmission of socio-cultural meanings. Drawing on recent studies on multilingualism (de Higes-Andino, 2014) and creative subtitling (McClarty, 2012), multilingualism in films can serve multiple purposes and several functions, such as showing the “visibility of translation in films which depict language diversity” (de Higes-Andino, 2014: 211), enhancing “the audience’s comprehension” and projecting “different ideas of the director and writers” (ibid.: 212).

According to the set of questions below, a translator/subtitler can evaluate the degree of importance of difference and language variation in the multilingual film he has to translate:

1. To what extent is linguistic variation fundamental to the context of the film in question?
2. To what extent does linguistic variation appear in the film?
3. What challenges does translation pose, and what are the solutions offered?
4. By means of which strategies and techniques, can linguistic variation be kept and transferred to TL subtitles?

In addition to this set of questions, a useful resource for the analysis of audiovisual translation applied to multilingual films is de Higes-Andino’s classification *Audiovisual translation modes in translated multilingual films*, which she divides into two sections: “Audiovisual translation modes” and “Characteristics”. In this taxonomy, de Higes-Andino includes the most used audiovisual translation modes for multilingual films and distinguishes the main characteristics that feature in subtitles in order to signal an L3 in dialogues (Figure 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audiovisual translation modes</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dubbing: replacement of “the original track of a film’s (or any audiovisual text’s) source language dialogues with another track on which translated dialogues have been recorded in the target language” (Chaume, 2012, p.1)</td>
<td>Target language (TL):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interlanguage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtitling: “[A] translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as the discursive elements that appear in the image (letters, inserts, graffiti, inscriptions, placards and the like), and the information that is contained on the soundtrack (songs, voices off)” (Diaz Cintas &amp; Remael, 2007, p. 8).</td>
<td>Typographical syntax (typographical signs used in subtitles to call attention to the presence of an L3 in dialogues):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inverted commas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normal (not typographically signed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opaque box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Square brackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Position on the screen:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
She also refers to a non-translation method for multilingual cinema, where L2 translation does not occur, and to a double translation process, where two translations take place, both included in her second taxonomy Other strategies applied to the translation of multilingual films (Figure 3):

- **Non-translation**: the absence of translation mode (dialogue is left untranslated - Martinez-Sierra et al., 2010).
- **Double translation**: the combination of translation modes (the message is translated twice, combining any of the translation modes presented above – de Higes Andino, 2009).

Strategies and devices that may transfer linguistic variety, which is present in multilingual films (in particular on immigration), are varied and can be applied on different levels: on a typographical level (i.e. the use of different colours, capital letters, Italics), on a technical level (the use of non-standard position of subtitles on screen), on a lexical level (the use of a non-standard terminology, the maintenance of foreign words, phrases and sentences, signs of exoticism), on a grammatical and morphological level (mistakes in the subtitled language, mislearned expressions and vocabulary and misunderstanding of culture-bound terms, mispronunciation in the written text).

Important shifts towards new forms of subtitling and relevant to the attempt to transfer linguistic variation and difference through subtitling have included the concept of abusive subtitling, which Mark Nornes has described as a form of “experimentation with language and its grammatical, morphological and visual qualities”, and which has brought “the fact of translation from its position of obscurity […] to critique the imperial politics that ground corrupt practices while ultimately leading the viewer to the foreign original being reproduced in the darkness of the theatre […] turning the film in an experience of translation (Nornes, 2007: 177).

Rebecca McClarty opts for the adjective “creative”, instead of “abusive”, and refers to the creative subtitler as someone who has to keep a “trilateral gaze: backwards to the source culture and the aesthetic qualities and semiotic codes of the source text; sideways to the influences to be gained from related disciplines; and forwards to the target culture and the aesthetic qualities and semiotic codes of the subtitles” (McClarty, 2012: 139). In brief, rather than defining subtitling by its

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**Figure 2**: Adapted from Irene de Higes-Andino (2014). *Audiovisual translation modes in translated multilingual films.*

**Figure 3**: Adapted from Irene de Higes-Andino (2014). *Other strategies applied to the translation of multilingual films.*
constraints, creative subtitling is interested in recreating “an aesthetics that matches that of the source text, instead of being bound by standard font types, sizes and positions”. Thus, creative subtitles, aim “to achieve difference rather than sameness” (ibid., 140). However, contrasting opinions exist on the act of subtitling multilingual films, especially from a creative viewpoint. If Carol O’Sullivan maintains that subtitling a multilingual product results in a reduction rather than in the exaltation of multilingualism (O’Sullivan, 2011), since the subtitled film presents one language instead of the multiple languages of the ST film, de Higes-Andino essentially distinguishes two different strategies for the translation of multilingual films: “there are two strategies available to translators: either to mark multilingualism or not to mark multilingualism” (2014: 222). Therefore, from de Higes-Andino’s perspective, the translator can decide to omit multilingual effects by leaving “conversations in L3” (de Higes-Andino, 2014: 222). On the other hand, if a translator chooses to mark multilingualism, a decision on which convention to apply must be taken. De Higes-Andino adds that though “no clear trend is generally observed” (2016), some of the conventions for a creative subtitling of multilingual films may include “box, brackets, capital letters, change of positioning, colours, italics, label, quotation marks, and square brackets”. (These conventions are included in her first taxonomy Audiovisual translation modes in translated multilingual films – “Characteristics”, Figure 2.)

Among the various strategies that can be used in order to produce a creative subtitling which is able to signal language diversities in the subtitled version, the position of subtitles on screen is one of the technical devices that has been taken into account. Even though the “standard position for subtitles is horizontal at the bottom of the screen since this limits the obstruction of the image, and this part of the screen is usually of lesser importance to the action” (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2007: 82), Somers Town as a multilingual film contains English subtitles when Marek and his father, and Maurisz and his friends talk in Polish. Thus, when the Polish conversation appears at the bottom of the screen in English subtitles, a hypothetical second caption contained L3 could be moved to the top of the screen. This signifies that when L2 subtitles appear at the bottom of the screen, L3 subtitles can be displayed both on the lateral side of the screen, or more canonically, at the top of the screen. Díaz Cintas and Remael account for the special position of subtitles when “some essential data are displayed at the bottom of the screen” (2007: 83).

In multilingual films, where language variation and/or the coexistence of more than one language are determinant in the comprehension and transmission of the alterity and otherness of the film, creative subtitling is the expedient that can allow these films to be disseminated in other languages. The respect for the norms in standard subtitling would not make the subtitling of multilingual films possible due to the numerous constraints, not simply in terms of temporal and spatial settings, but also from an aesthetic perspective. Thus, creative subtitling, which “leads us to the need for multidisciplinary research between film studies and audiovisual
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translation,” (McClarty, 2012, 150), encourages the experimentation of subtitling not by following norms, rules and conventions, but through the application of creative subtitling practices and techniques that include the use of “varying colours, typefaces, styles, special effects and positions” (ibid.), as de Higes-Andino has already highlighted. Similarly, Eduard Bartoll (2006) stresses the importance of using Italics to mark unlikeness between languages and de Higes-Andino (2014) proposes further visual and conceptual solutions for the dissemination of difference and linguistic variety in multilingual films, such as expansions (i.e. the addition of information about the content of the spoken L2 within brackets), the adoption of different colours, inverted commas, capital letters, new positions on screen and even putting labels when the idiom changes in the scene, as partially stated above (Figure 2).

By putting it in Irene Ranzato’s terms, an interesting case which relates to the diastratic phase in language variation and poses challenges in the translation process is teenage speech: “Some of the most interesting communities are those of teenagers in a given place and at a given moment in time as their way of speaking often reflects a specifically local reality which is difficult to render in translation, as virtually nothing like teenage slang becomes dated and old-fashioned so rapidly” (2015: 159-160). Marek and Tomo repetitively make use of “like” as a pragmatic marker, which is typically used in speech communities among London teenagers. In the opinion of Gisle Andersen (2001), “like” as a pragmatic marker, has always been used in British dialects and its current use among teenage communities in London depends on American English influence. Andersen and Fretheim add that “the pragmatic marker like is a highly noticeable and very frequent feature of many varieties of present-day English” (2000: 18). Furthermore, the author maintains that “like” as a linguistic marker can be used both to loosen or enrich the content of an utterance. In Italian, for example, this type of marker could be replaced with the term “tipo”, which is very informal and very common in colloquial speech of young generations, or with the remark “mica”, as in the example in Table 5. This could also be signalled with visual effects, as the proposal of translation shows below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIGINAL</th>
<th>ITALIAN SUBTITLE</th>
<th>BACK TRANSLATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOMO</strong> Look, mate, in England, it’s sort of like a tradition for like a... girlfriend to kiss her boyfriend, so, it sounds to me like you’re not actually with her, you just like her.</td>
<td><strong>TOMO</strong> Amico mio … In Inghilterra è tipo tradizione che la ragazza si baci con il suo ragazzo. A me pare, tipo, che a te piaccia, ma non state mica insieme.</td>
<td><strong>TOMO</strong> My friend … In England it is a kind of tradition for a girlfriend to kiss her boyfriend. I think you like her but you are not really together.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Tomo who talks to Marek about Maria.
The Polish accent in English spoken language is part of the multilingual dimension in Somers Town. Marek talks in English to Tomo but he keeps a strong Polish accent and, on some occasions, he also introduces terms in Polish, such as in the cases in which food is involved in the speech. This implies that the teenage Polish boy deliberately wants to mention Polish traditions and cultural features. In a conversation on food with Tomo, he refers to Polish sausage, which he indicates with the Polish term “Kielbasa”. A linguistic strategy that can allow the subtitler to keep the traits of foreignness and difference in the subtitled version is to maintain realia in the original language or to expand its meaning by adding information about that specific cultural-bound item. In the scene in which Marek addresses Tomo to bring him his breakfast, the Polish word is used. The realism of the film and the sense of difference that characterise it can be maintained if the term referring to Polish food is kept in Polish, as the proposal of translation shows in Table 6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIGINAL TEXT</th>
<th>ITALIAN SUBTITLE</th>
<th>BACK TRANSLATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOMO: What's that?</td>
<td>TOMO: Che roba è?</td>
<td>TOMO: Che roba è?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOMO: Mate, I can't eat no more foreign food.</td>
<td>TOMO: Amico mio. Basta con questo cibo straniero.</td>
<td>TOMO: My friend. I have had enough foreign food.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: A dialogue between Tomo and Marek on food.

5. Concluding remarks

When dubbing is applied to multilingual films, the distributors are not in favour of reproducing the original soundtrack to mark multilingualism. This happens for economic reasons considering that partial subtitling increases the costs of production. Besides, multilingual films have generally a different audience with respect to monolingual films. The multilingual film audience is more a niche public, who usually prefers the multilingual film he is watching to be marked by original soundtrack. The multilingual film amateur is thus more oriented toward the vision of subtitled versions of multilingual films than of its dubbed versions. However, the strategy of marking or not marking multilingual issues will depend on the rigid or soft requirements established in the translation brief. In some way, multilingual films in their dubbed versions are subject to a higher level of ideological manipulation with respect to multilingual films in their subtitled versions, where more attention is generally given to the reproduction of SL language and culture and to the maintenance of difference on screen.
By choosing Somers Town as the case in point for the exploration of multilingualism in films, this scrutiny has had the objective of outlining a model for the analysis of language variation and the different levels of multilingualism in cinema on migration and diasporic issues regarding the challenges and constraints that audiovisual translation modes pose in the translation of multilingualism. Multilingualism can be marked or unmarked according to ideological bounded criteria, the expectation of the public and the role that a translator of diasporic films has in relation to the filmic representation of migration and displacement in the country of arrival. In the subtitled version, not marking multilingualism and expecting the audience to detect multilingual exchanges from the soundtrack, may affect the spectators’ perception of the film as multilingual.

Despite the numerous difficulties in the process of translation and subtitling language variation as a consequence of diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variants, multilingual films should maintain their multilingual dimension in their subtitled versions and the adoption of aesthetic alternative methods and procedures (i.e. creative subtitling) can be on certain cases a profitable gain in terms of dissemination of difference.

References


