Language, Power and Intercultural Communication
Language, Power and Intercultural Communication:

The Policies and Politics of Translation

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ...................................................................................................................... vii

Argument ......................................................................................................................................... 1

Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 7

Language, Power and Intercultural Communication

Chapter 1 .......................................................................................................................................... 18
Contemporary Culture: Focus on Language
  1.1. Multi-/Interculturalism and multilingualism ........................................................................ 23
  1.2. Language, identity and power ............................................................................................... 26
       1.2.1. Language and identity .................................................................................................. 29
       1.2.2. Language and power ................................................................................................. 33
  1.3. Conclusions ........................................................................................................................... 38

Chapter 2 .......................................................................................................................................... 39
Cultural Representation, Discourse and Intercultural Communication
  2.1. Representing the self and the other ...................................................................................... 42
  2.2. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) ...................................................................................... 46
  2.3. The case of political discourse ........................................................................................... 53
       2.3.1. Mircea Geoană’s and Traian Băsescu’s political speeches in the 2009 presidential elections ...................................................................................................................... 57
  2.4. Conclusions ........................................................................................................................... 79

The Policies and Politics of Translation

Chapter 3 .......................................................................................................................................... 82
Translation as Cultural Mediation
  3.1. The challenges of the supra-cultural mission ....................................................................... 82
  3.2. Globalisation as cultural mediation ...................................................................................... 84
  3.3. Multimodal discourse ........................................................................................................... 92
  3.4. Conclusions ........................................................................................................................... 97
Chapter 4 ......................................................................................................................... 98
The Practice of Translation: Translation in Practice
  4.1. Marketing translation. The translation market ........................................ 99
  4.2. Multimedia translation ............................................................................... 103
  4.3. The case of subtitling ............................................................................. 107
    4.3.1. Horațiu Mălăele’s Nuntă mută [Silent Wedding], 2008 .... 112
  4.4. Conclusions .............................................................................................. 125

Final Remarks ............................................................................................................. 126
References .................................................................................................................... 134
Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 145
Appendices .................................................................................................................... 150
Index ............................................................................................................................... 199
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ARGUMENT

Somewhat unconventionally, this study starts from the realisation that, after centuries of communication via translation, the translator is still perceived as a service provider at best, without the associated training or professionalism being acknowledged. As for translation, it is mainly endowed with a utilitarian function, its possibility of influencing social practice being largely neglected. Looking deeper into the different avatars of translation studies, another observation which has retained my attention is the fact that the very component which would help promote an improved image of translators on the contemporary stage is still indeterminate and subject to much debate. Moreover, approaching translation through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis seems restricted to the text as a minimal unit of discourse or to the networking of texts as reflecting various forms of interaction.

Given the situation outlined, I am proposing that the translator’s status be emphasised as that of a highly trained intellectual involved in mediation, analysis and change, notions that are emphasised in Critical Discourse Analysis. This methodology, therefore, needs to be included in the wider frame of approaches benefiting translation studies.

Critical Discourse Analysis is employed here to look into the act of translation as a socially determined discourse, also contaminated by change and by a politics of manipulation. Moreover, this methodology is used to support the intended three-step investigation of discourse, the goal of which is underscoring the role of language as a site for – and actant1 in – the struggles for power obvious in: the text’s syntax and forwarding techniques; the text’s overall marketing strategies; and the contextual and intertextual forces impacting the text.

The Marxist philosophy – with a general penchant for applying a dialectical grid in ‘reading’ social change and political action – which informs the relatively newly emerged Critical Discourse Analysis – is not intended, however, to efface the diversity and mobility of the

1 The term is imported from Bruno Latour, for whom it sociologically indicates both the subject and the object of the general actor-network, the activity of which is described as “mediation” or “translation” (Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory, 2005)
postmodernist situation or its inherent polyphony. On the contrary, it is meant to identify a recurrent leitmotif in the construction, de-construction and re-construction of the contemporary multimodal cultural text, which leaves deep imprints on the collective memory of the public, and whose global communicative endeavours are (or at least should be) facilitated by multimedia translation.

My incursions into the theory and practice of multimedia translation – an intersectional, interdisciplinary domain by definition – have entailed a selection of the principal representative and thought-provoking concepts and opinions forwarded by cultural and film studies, by media and communication studies, by social and political studies, and, lastly, by semiotics and information technology – an intrinsically postmodernist enterprise.

In short, the ideological content of the investigation is provided by readings into the state of the art, grouped around the following contributors and their signature writings:

- Roman Jakobson (*Linguistics and Poetics*, 1981): to be operative, a message from the addresser to the addressee requires a context, a code and a contact; six functions of language emerge;
- Mikhail Bakhtin (*From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse*, 1975): discourse is defined by heteroglossia (primacy of context over text), dialogism (intertextuality) and chronotope (spatio-temporal matrix); truth is multiple, relative;
- Michel Foucault (*Truth and Power*, 1972): truth is subject to economic and political factors; it is produced and transmitted through universities, writings, armies, and media;
- Norman Fairclough (*Language and Power*, 2001): every social practice has a semiotic element; this aspect of social order is called ‘the order of discourse’; the language used by the mass media is investigated as a site of both struggle and power;
- Jan van Dijk (*Discourse and Manipulation*, 2006): discourse is a communicative event; it includes numerous ‘semiotic’ or multimedia dimensions of signification like conversational interaction, written text, associated gestures, facework, images, layout;
- Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1983): the real is more and more artificial, imaginary and symbolic;
• Jean Baudrillard (*Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 1993): today’s culture is predominantly one of electronic media, whose hyperreality rests on the consecutive strata of simulacra;
• Jean-Francois Lyotard (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984): knowledge is no longer the social subject, but in service of the social subject; the social bond is linguistic;
• Frederic Jameson (*The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1991): the cultural form of image addiction transforms the past into visual mirages, stereotypes or texts; any practical sense of the future is annihilated;
• Edward Said (*The World, the Text and the Critic*, 1983): culturally constructed distinctions are political, as is their study; texts are profoundly worldly: their use and effects are bound up with ownership, authority, power and the imposition of force;

As regards the general frame of the research carried out, it is subsumed to the Holmes/Toury map of translation studies (1988/1995), to which both an integrating and a methodological component are added:
In particular, the “pure”, theoretical orientations in translation studies which have been processed here are restricted to: the media of the internet, television and film; the area of two languages – Romanian and English; the semiotic dimension; the social, political and filmic text types; the first decade of the twenty-first century; the problem of intercultural communication. The descriptive approaches in translation studies are oriented towards: existing translations of the text types mentioned (as “product”); cultural mediation (as “process”); their “function” within the EU socio-cultural and political context.

Concerning the applied translation studies supporting the research, the focus is laid on: institutions, norms, legislation (translator training); policies, captioning/subtitling systems (translation aids); translation criticism of the corpus selected. Naturally, as may be noticed, the premise is that theoretical, descriptive and applied translation studies are dialectically connected, for the examination of one without the other would prove sterile.

The corpus, as referred to here, consists of political texts proper and filmic texts with a political substratum, together with their media representations:

- Mircea Geoană’s and Traian Băsescu’s speeches delivered in the 2009 presidential election campaign – read through the translator’s lens;
- Nuntă mută [Silent Wedding], directed by Horățiu Mălăele (2008) – read to emphasise the challenges of subtitling.

They are treated as meaningful events, whose systems of representation (discourses) produce historically determined knowledge and influence social practice, being discussed as symptomatic for the Romanian situation at particular points in time and as revealing the social and political aspects involved in: the construction and reconstruction of reality through discourse; the dialectical relationship between the two (with reality influencing discourse and discourse modifying reality); and the power-related implications of discursive strategies (with manipulation holding first place).

Other, more socially-oriented texts are also taken into account, though tangentially, in order to explore the wider backdrop of today’s European Union and the European/Romanian translator’s role within that system (i.e. judicial pleas formulated by Romanians with the European Court of Human Rights, office documents circulated in multinational companies in Romania, medical certificates presented to/from specialists abroad,
Instrumentally, as already stated, the texts chosen and read from the viewpoint of the translator as cultural mediator involve:

- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on discourse as being shaped (or erased) in demanding contexts, studies the connections between discourse and social practices in diverse societies, being particularly interested in the interrelation between language and power (Blackledge, 2005). There have been significant contributions to CDA, but, for the purpose of this volume, I have chosen to concentrate mainly on those ascribed to two prominent scholars: Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough.

- Multimedia translation studies, whose central pronouncement is that, after the developments in technology which are operational in intercultural communication (where translation is essential), these processes have to be conceptualised and practiced differently than before. From among the numerous multimedia translation types, I have stopped to consider subtitling: the most significant and widely spread at present, therefore the most powerful nowadays.

Strategically, the emphasis is placed on the translator’s training, aimed at developing intercultural sensitivity, and thus carrying out a supra-cultural mission.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) adopted shows how translators become cultural mediators, predicts a change of identity as the translator moves from the local to the global, invites changes in the individual’s/translator’s cognitive environment, highlights aspects of cultural blindness and distortion, and points to the necessary change from ethnocentrism (the superiority of one language-culture over another) to ethnorelativity (the belief in mediation between text, reader and the context of culture) (Katan, 2004, 329-331).

The general aims of the research outlined, which coincide with the conceptual premises envisaged, are the following:

- to show that language does not only function within a complex set of power relations; it is as a power structure in its own right;
- to underline the discursive nature of social practice;
- to stress that intercultural communication today cannot be reduced to applications of linguistic expertise, but asks for thorough knowledge in many related fields;
• to focus on instantiations of the contemporary craving for translation as cultural mediation within the European Union and in Romania as a member state;
• to view the mediating phenomena from a multidisciplinary perspective, in close connection with the policies and politics governing them, and under the dominance of the various contemporary media;
• to use the case studies, firstly, to demonstrate the pros and cons of the practice of translating things into hegemonic English and, secondly, to contribute to disseminating knowledge, making recommendations and informing decision makers.

The volume is structured into two parts: *Language, Power and Intercultural Communication* and *The Policies and Politics of Translation*. The former is subdivided into two chapters (*Contemporary Culture: Focus on Language and Cultural Representation, Discourse and Intercultural Communication*) and deals with multi-/interculturalism and multilingualism, language and identity, language and power, representing the self and the other, Critical Discourse Analysis, and the case of political discourse. The latter consists of two more chapters (*Translation as Cultural Mediation* and *The Practice of Translation. Translation in Practice*), which develop already existing discussions on the challenges of the supra-cultural mission, globalisation as cultural mediation, multimodal discourse, marketing translation and the translation market, multimedia translation, and the case of subtitling.
INTRODUCTION

The contemporary age and stage have witnessed a major revision of traditional patterns of thought in almost all domains. Tentatively defined as “the postmodern turn” (Hassan, 1987), this reconsideration is indicative of all approaches to reality, be they philosophical, artistic or linguistic. In questions of mediation and systems of representation (under focus here), the connection between language and reality has remained a continuing preoccupation, despite the different standpoints adopted or interpretative grids applied to it. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is possible to identify: the “linguistic turn” – through which language is no longer perceived as a medium for expressing meanings which pre-exist their linguistic formulation, but as a meaningful system in itself; the newer “turn to discourse” – whereby representation ceases to be equivalent to a direct or mediated reflection of reality, and begins to be associated with a form of signification per se; and finally, “the critical turn”, which foregrounds the notions that meaning and signification systems are historically, socially and culturally constructed, and which determines that researchers/practitioners need to be aware of their own contextually determined positions and constraints when learning and then disseminating knowledge (that is, reality) via language. (Locke, 2004, 11-12)

This study starts from the premise that discourse is an element of social practice, with a political dimension, referring to facts and actions, objects and people, values and practices, thus being reflective of the various hypostases of reality. Reality, however, undergoes changes, as does discourse. So, to understand this metamorphosis or the way in which discourse is produced and reproduced, one has to consider the characteristic elements of any societal system, namely the attitudes, values, mental representations, ideologies, education, and cultural and historical background that define the structure of human organisations – all of which are woven into an intricate texture based on dominance and inequality.

The method selected to facilitate this understanding is the one advocated by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), or “the critical

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2 Although the theoreticians and practitioners of CDA do not define it as a method proper (advancing the term ‘methodology’ instead), the term ‘method’ is employed
linguistic approach of scholars who find the larger discursive unit of text to be the fundamental unit of communication, [that] specifically considers institutional, political, gender and media discourses (in the broadest sense) which testify to more or less overt relations of struggle and conflict” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, 1-2). As already mentioned, translation studies readers, anthologies and encyclopaedias, with a few exceptions, do not enumerate CDA among the possible directions/grids to be used in discussions on the role played by the translator, on the very act of translation or on the emerging translated text, not to mention the worrying reality that the legislation related to translation overlooks the importance of the perpetually changing contextual factors in delineating the rights and the obligations of translators. That is, the issues associated with language, power and intercultural communication or to the policies and politics of translation are considered separately, whereas our goal is that of showing the politically fashioned inter-determinacy of cultural text and social context and its constant becoming. In other words, “new variables are considered relevant, namely those which relate to the context as created by discourse, to the conventions which operate in particular types of discourse and to the real-world context in which discourse takes place” (Croitoru, 1996, 132).

Part of the broader social context – under the influence of its various forces and pressures – the translator is an important piece in the puzzle, building an image which then crosses cultural frontiers. In society, however, the myth that translators and translating are unimportant or secondary is still very much operative. Proof of this may be found in official EU documents like the Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (in French: Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne), commonly referred to as NACE, which regulates professions and occupations recognised throughout the European Union and which is available, on public display, on the internet. In its 1996 issue, it reads:

74. Other business activities
74.8 Miscellaneous business activities
74.83 Secretarial and translation activities (my emphasis)

here to offer clarifications on the approach adopted and the tools used in decoding the issues of representation and reconstruction.

3 Basil Hatim and Ian Mason’s Discourse and the Translator (1990) is a good example.

This class includes:
- stenographic and mailing activities:
- typing
- other secretarial activities such as transcribing from tapes or discs
- copying, blue printing, multigraphing and similar activities
- envelope addressing, stuffing, sealing and mailing, mailing list compilation, etc., including for advertising material
- translation and interpretation
This class also includes:
- proofreading

All the while, in the real world, translators have been struggling to survive against all odds. The particular situation of subtitlers is illustrative in this respect. As Jan Ivarsson has uncovered, some of the reasons why subtitling had a bad reputation were: in many countries, audiences were not used to having films/programmes subtitled; frequently, the quality of the subtitles was below average, not only because poorly achieved by the translators, but also because “film importers lowered the status of subtitlers by using master lists contrived to exploit insufficiently qualified and underpaid subtitlers” (1992, 10-11).

The situation described is not very different today, but it cannot only be blamed on bad pay leading to bad translations. The absence of any kind of reaction, feedback or criticism was the most intriguing and the most dangerous ingredient in the game. Not only should writers, TV producers, film directors and audiences be expected to react. Translators themselves should intervene in support of quality and professionalism in the field, as indeed should everyone who is involved in or regulating translation studies and training.

In other words, despite arriving with a bang, awakening people to the increased tensions between cultures, the twenty-first century has not brought about the success of translating cultures (Katan, 2004, 1-2). Translators are still inerly and condescendingly perceived as people who engage in text-based copying. This being the case, my inquiry is intended to challenge the stereotype, hoping to expose the error and to demonstrate the contrary.

The first thing I have found is that, in the 2008 edition of NACE5, the modifications reflect a significant shift in attitude or perspective, with the general class (formerly associated with business) being promoted to professional, scientific and technical activities, and with translation being
separated from secretarial tasks, mentioned in connection with interpretation, and setting the norm both for the category and the subcategory of professions.

74 Other professional, scientific and technical activities
74.3 Translation and interpretation activities (my emphasis)
74.30 Translation and interpretation activities (my emphasis)

This shows that steps have been taken in this respect and that translators are gradually being recognised as occupying a forefront position on the contemporary stage, yet standards cannot be lowered, and non-adaptation to growing requirements and demands is inconceivable. Anyway, bad translations are still ignored, and the specific functions and tasks of translators remain somewhat shadowy.

In Europe, the status of translation (hence the role of translators) is regulated by Brussels – the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) of the European Commission – which works in all twenty-four official languages of the EU and is aimed at facilitating effective multilingual communication within the European institutions common to all 27 member states. The translation departments and agencies of other EU bodies (European Council, European Parliament, European Court of Justice, etc.) are handled by a translation centre in Luxembourg.

Despite the policy of multilingualism promoted, as the English Style Guide. A Handbook for Authors and Translators in the European Commission⁶ specifies under the rubric ‘Official/working/procedural languages’,

> [t]he relevant regulations do not distinguish between official and working languages. Internally, however, the Commission works in three languages – English, French and German – unofficially referred to as the ‘procedural languages’. Material generated inside the Commission for internal use only is drafted in one or more of these and, if necessary, is translated only between those three. Similarly, incoming documents in a non-procedural language are translated into one of the procedural languages so that they can be generally understood within the Commission, but are not put into the other official languages (101).

As a result, the only truly international languages remain English, French and German (the rest being relegated to regional) making their way into the mainstream via translation. The good news, under the circumstances, is

that local cultures and their languages are encouraged to survive, and that translators around Europe will continue to play a vital role in intercultural communication. Nevertheless, they need to observe the EU language legislation if they are mediating access to European law and politics. From this point of view, translators are guided by the translation and drafting resources for EU languages – information made available on the official site of the DGT. Strangely, however, the most important aspects related to language and translation – of interest to decision makers, academics, translators – seem to be perceived as miscellanea and are grouped under the rubric Related links, where the following may be accessed, among others: Translation and drafting resources (Translation guidelines for translation contractors; Language recognition; Clear writing – translation quality; Special character sets; Languages, countries and currencies); Publications on translation, language and linguistic issues (brochures catering for language professionals and the general public); Translating Europe (a project created to bring together translation stakeholders in Europe); Language industry facts and figures (covering professional working in translation, interpreting, subtitling and dubbing, localisation, language technology tools development, international conference organisation, language teaching, linguistic consultancy).

Inside this restrictive frame created by translation policies, the politics of language empowerment at work in the act of intercultural communication should be given special consideration. It is this particular dimension that is investigated here, by looking into the main tools for analysis provided by the relatively new domain of translation studies, by discussing language within the frame of contemporary culture, by considering cultural representation and its mediation across frontiers, and by exploring two particular cases which are symptomatic of and recurrent within the present-day situation: translating political and filmic discourse. The growing public awareness regarding the visibility of translators and the social, political and cultural roles they play is also obvious in the emergence and diachronic metamorphosis of translation studies.

The practice and discussion of translation (Munday, 2000, 7-15) has been long established, dating as far back as the first century BC (with Cicero and Horace). Nevertheless, the study of the field has developed into an academic discipline only quite recently, in the second part of the twentieth century. If originally it was conferred a secondary status (because

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7 Regulation no. 1 (1958), listing the official languages and how they are to be used, is the very first piece of legislation issued in the EU.
8 Available from https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/translation
9 Available from https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/translation
of the gearing of translation to language teaching for centuries, with the grammar-translation method extensively used in the language classroom, eventually it grew into an area of advanced university training, together with the emergence of the communicative approach in language learning activities. Step by step, shifts oriented translation towards linguistic and cultural studies, via workshop practice (with emphasis on the translation process as a means of better understanding a text), comparative literature (with its aim of approaching literature transnationally and transculturally) and contrastive analysis (of two languages, in view of identifying general and specific differences).


Today, translation studies are not only extremely active, but also informed by and informing numerous and varied theories and practices, having acquired an interdisciplinary character which is aimed at placing it within the broader setting of contemporary culture.
As an interdiscipline\textsuperscript{10} which combines linguistic, literary, media and cultural theory, translation studies today reflects the increasingly globalised, information-rich society which uses and abuses translation in ways which would have been inconceivable decades ago (with the technological and electronic component creeping in to complicate things even further). At an uncomfortable crossroads for theoreticians and practitioners alike, translation studies are slowly but surely developing along the lines of:

- new models – like Toury’s descriptive polysystemic approach mentioned above, in tune with the postmodernist frame of mind and of reference, with a considerable impact on the discipline in terms of “the abandonment of one-to-one notions of correspondence and of the possibility for linguistic/literary equivalence (unless by accident), the involvement of literary tendencies within the target cultural system in the production of any translated text, the destabilization of the notion of an original message with a fixed identity, the integration of both the original text and the translated text in the semiotic web of intersecting cultural systems” (Gentzler, 1993, 133-134);

- new integrating strategies – like the one proposed by Mary Snell-Hornby in \textit{Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach} (1995); it promotes fusing literary, general and special translations into a single continuum (instead of considering them to be distinct translation spheres) and incorporating cultural history, literary studies, socio-cultural and area studies, as well as the study of relevant specialised subjects (to approach legal, economic, medical and scientific texts)\textsuperscript{11} in the general and global translation effort;

- a new methodology – one which “neither prioritizes broad concerns with power, ideology and patronage to the detriment of the need to examine representative examples of text, nor contends itself with detailed text-linguistic analysis while making do with sketchy and generalised notions of context” (Harvey in Venuti, 2000, 466), but which considers both faces of the coin, interpreting their progressive interconnectedness.

\textsuperscript{10} A term introduced by Willard McCarty, “Humanities computing as interdiscipline” (1999), quoted in J. Munday, 2000, 182.

\textsuperscript{11} Her stratified model is resumed by Figure 11.1: 32 (1995).
Naturally, there have been other notable attempts at finding stable ground for considering translation studies while simultaneously inscribing them within the frame of interdisciplinarity\(^{12}\), but they have proved as difficult as rewarding, since few may boast of specialising in various fields simultaneously. Nevertheless, what all these enterprises have generated is a tendency to approach the phenomenon, process and product of translation from the standpoint of multiple subjects of interest in today’s world of research, such as history, transnational cultures, postmodernism, intertextuality, philosophy, politics, specialised discourse and linguistics.

What is certain is that the cultural component remains dominant. This may be seen in the fact that postcolonialism is usually considered from a poststructuralist standpoint (T. Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context*, 1992), in historiography, literary theory and criticism, Discourse Analysis (an earlier incarnation of CDA), and in society and ideology contaminating linguistic manifestations and literary norms (L. Venuti, *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, 1992).

Firstly, what is underlined by these more recent directions in translation studies is that human communication works as a direct and efficient strategy of socially influencing the political behaviour of individuals, and has an extremely powerful impact on attitudes and beliefs which, in turn, determine a given culture. Translation, technically a discourse-generating mechanism, is incorporated in the cultural context. As such, it cannot exist in complete isolation from the political situation, and cannot separate itself from ideological substrata. In other words, within a closed circle or along a repeated, cyclical pattern, communication, politics and translation coexist, mutually influencing and revisiting one another, facilitating or, indeed, at times obstructing the intercultural encounter. Translation from and into English is subject to the same processes.

When intercultural communication is envisaged, what needs to be analysed are the governing influence of language management on translation, the constant pressure exercised on translation by glocalising power structures (foremost among which are the media and EU politics) and the inner mechanisms of truth production: political and economic institutional regimes. As has been demonstrated by CDA scholars, truth is not outside of or lacking in power. It is produced through multiple constraints, and there is no society which does not have its own regime of

truth. It follows that changing what is in people’s heads seems pointless. Convincing them to question ready-made and readily accepted truths or to see that there are infinite representations of the real is a totally different matter, however.

Secondly, what is purported is the notion that the media, which carry translations through to the audience and translations themselves as media, are further challenges. In addition to their inherent strategies for distorting communication (which do not ask for the reader/viewer/listener’s right to retort or to intervene in the message), if inadequately constructed, both translation and the media may negate their communicative finality and have negative effects culminating in the dissolution of genuine social and cultural contact, and the distrust in long distance, mediated communication.

Mass media (a paradoxical term which actually refers to a unilateral mass phenomenon) are public only with regard to the emission/encoding of the message; as for its reception/decoding, that usually takes place in a private environment, denying any possibility of actual or physical interaction. Traditional cultural media like literature are steadily losing ground in favour of more accessible forms of mass communication, television holding first place in this respect. Nowadays, the mediating media have invaded all aspects of everyday life. Their immediate success is due to their rapid transmission of data, their simplification of content, their simultaneity or the capacity of creating an impression of plurality of experience. In contrast, older cultural products seem unending, elitist and artificial or far-fetched.

Televised political discourse and filmic artistic discourse are acts of communication in which factors other than the verbal ones also contribute to transmitting information. Multimodal in essence, their diverse semiotic channels supplement the absence of linguistic expression as do, for that matter, the silences themselves. In other words, we may communicate even when saying nothing, discourses and their translation thus becoming all the more appealing as a consequence of the gaps, the breaks, the fissures (the slippery ground) they contain.

Moreover, the dialogic nature of discourse (in a permanent dialogue with other discourses), together with the indirectness of its double-voicedness (Bakhtin, 1975), renders it even more complex and triggers further difficulties in translation. This particular subtle manifestation has been signalled by the research in the areas of translation studies which focus on discourse, the most innovative works positing that explicit discourse is important in studying translation, but that implicit discourse is “that which ultimately facilitates optimal transfer and renders the much
sought-after translation equivalence an attainable objective” (Baker, 2001, 68).

The two types of multimodal discourse mentioned and which make up the core of this investigation are also, poignantly, characterised by influencing techniques like persuasion, propaganda and manipulation. They are shaped in keeping with intentions of various kinds, recognisable as long as shared – though arbitrary – systems of signs are operative (the grammars of language, rhetoric, narrative, image and sound production, etc.). Both are constructed in keeping with the norms and processes of linguistic tradition, but they are mainly oriented towards attaining a pre-established, well thought out goal.

Due to their intricacies, translating and mediating televised political discourse and artistic filmic discourse are not only very challenging enterprises, they are under constant threat of contamination from manipulative devices and techniques specific to the many filters in the communicative chain (political interests, counsellors, financial gains, politicians, personal vanity, journalists, different media; novelists, film makers, script writers, stage directors, actors, budgets, rewards/awards, etc.). Unless observed and appropriately blended in the overall process and product, the enterprises mentioned run the risk of adding yet another filter to the cross-cultural dialogue: the translator himself. Thus, empowered by the potential threat, it seems the translator has gained respect image-wise and has, by consequence, started to mount the social and professional hierarchical stair.
LANGUAGE, POWER AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION
CHAPTER 1

CONTEMPORARY CULTURE: FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

Culture is not simply its sum of norms and values that we all have been born into. It has always been a primary force, driving people to conceptualise, understand, pass judgements on and communicate their understanding of the world around them. From this standpoint, culture “consists of the maps of meaning, the frameworks of intelligibility, the things which allow us to make sense of a world which exists, but is ambiguous as to its meaning until we’ve made sense of it.” (Hall, 1997, 9) In this process, representations are the most important facet, not truths.

Produced and transmitted within the common body of cultural experience and heritage, representations contribute to outlining cultural maps, or models (otherwise referred to as culturally shared attitudes), which are rooted in people’s notions about the world they live in. Although potentially conveyed in a variety of ways, cultural models are mainly passed on via language. The linguistic transmission of culture may take overt forms (identifiable in proverbs, aphorisms, myths, legends) or covert ones (through daily or frequent communicative interaction), both linked to the core notion of reality – which is neither absolute nor abstract, but experienced “within familiar contexts of social behaviour and cultural meanings” (Bonvillain, 2003, 47).

As pointed out by linguistic anthropologists, “the worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels” (Sapir, 1949, 162). Moreover, the “concepts of time and matter are not given in substantially the same form by experience to all people, but depend upon the nature of the language or languages through the use of which they have been developed” (Whorf, 1956, 135). In other words, communication through language is only partly efficient cross-culturally since consensual referentiality remains on slippery ground and people’s perception of interaction with the world around them is intertwined with the possibilities of having it expressed.
On a large scale, if culture and language have grown together and have mutually influenced each other, this state of immediate correlation has gradually been effaced over time, as cultures have evolved much more rapidly than languages, and as we have, for years now, observably been moving towards a phase where, unfortunately, “the forms of language will in course of time cease to symbolise those of culture.” (Sapir, 1949, 102) In our global world today, the prophecy seems to actually take place. This is obvious when considering the following aspects:

- English as lingua franca has taken on a pragmatic role, serving institutional communication purposes sooner than culturally charged ones;
- Science and technology have imposed an international vocabulary, and language structures which resemble English, if they are not English outright;
- The enforcement of this new language on a multitude of linguistic communities reveals the power structures underneath, adding the political dimension which subverts the cultural one;
- Global English is increasingly and actively taking shape outside the native speaker boundaries, modifying original linguistic specificities;
- English as a second language rather than a foreign one is also covering new ground, taking on a multimedia component.

A thorough analysis of all these aspects has brought to attention to various opinions focused on the social, historical, cultural and political relationships involving the notions of choice and constraint, on the huge amounts of contemporary translation ‘back’ into English and on the status of English as lingua franca. Three such opinions are particularly relevant:

What I think is sorely lacking from the predominant paradigm of investigation into English as an international language is a broad range of social, historical, cultural and political relationships. There is a failure to problematise the notion of choice and an assumption that individuals and countries are somehow free of economic, political and ideological constraints (Pennycook, 1994, 12).

The inhabitants of the colonial and economic empires are translating back into English in ever-increasing quantities, and we cannot sit back and pretend they will go away (Campbell in Anderman and Rogers, 2005, 36).
English has become a global language; the majority of non-native speakers use it as a lingua franca among themselves rather than as a ‘foreign’ language to communicate with native speakers. […] English as a Lingua Franca, like any other instance of language change, is an entirely natural phenomenon, [yet] it is often not viewed this way (Jenkins, 2012, xi).

In theory, as well as in practice, English as lingua franca remains a controversial issue. On the one hand, it has the potential of helping individual nations attain an international profile. On the other hand, the coexistence of a national and an international language gives rise to numerous problems. The recurrent arguments brought in relation to English as a lingua franca (summarised in Anderman and Rogers, 2005, 1-4, and in Pennycook, 2008, 6-7, and adapted to the topic of the present study) are:

- **Linguistic imperialism or linguistic hegemony.**\(^{13}\) Considering that English is frequently and predominantly being used within the European Union, the risk of limiting cultural and linguistic diversity grows exponentially.
- **Global English: language change and language use.**\(^{14}\) (Over)Used worldwide, English is going through a process of hybridisation – with terms like ‘Eurospeak’ or ‘McLanguage’, advanced by Snell-Hornby, 1999, denoting the metamorphosis – which has obvious political and economic implications.
- **Transcultural flows.**\(^{15}\) There has been increasing interest in the transmutation of cultural forms. They spread, “move, change and are reused to fashion new identities in different contexts” (Pennycook, 2008, 6). These changes are commonly reflected in language,\(^ {16}\) bringing about new forms of localisation as the margins assume novel avatars and contribute to destabilising the centre.\(^ {17}\) In other

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\(^{13}\) See sections 1.2.1. and 1.2.2.

\(^{14}\) See section 3.2.

\(^{15}\) See section 2.1.

\(^{16}\) Generating ‘translinguistic’ flows. See Croitoru, 2011.

\(^{17}\) In this respect, there are two different opinions which are worth mentioning: one belonging to Phillipson (1999), and the other to Pennycook, 2008, and Appadurai, 1996. The former describes the global spread of English as a phenomenon of Americanisation and linguistic imperialism and hegemony, being closely linked to the first aspect mentioned above. The latter, more conclusive opinion, is that globalisation is a localising process: it “does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization” (Pennycook, 2008, 7) because “different
words, transculturation is related to how “subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant metropolitan culture” (Pratt, 1992, 6 qtd. in Pennycook, 2008, 7).

- **English and translation.** The influence exerted by English on the languages of Europe affects translation also. In the particular case of literature (still the most widely translated type of discourse), for instance, if European literatures are to be made known via translation into English, then observing the literary norms of the Anglophone target culture is necessary. However, in the domesticating process, the costs of the imposition are high, negatively impacting the preservation of local source cultures.

- **Language learning and teaching.** Recently, there has been a considerable decline in the interest regarding the study of modern languages, English included. (As already stated, it tends to become a second language rather than a foreign one). Nevertheless, employment is sooner available to those with knowledge of one or more languages. As regards teaching, with the emergence of an English lingua franca, a shift to reading and translation skills (previously considered secondary to listening and speaking) has become imperative.

- **Pragmalinguistics.** For cross-national exchange to be effective, pragmatic competence is required besides linguistic proficiency. Communication across cultures also presupposes deep knowledge of “the prevailing social and cultural traditions which speakers, unwittingly, bring with them from their own language” (Anderman and Rogers, 2005, 4) and attempt to carry across. Furthermore, it seems appropriate to add **multimodal English** to the above mentioned aspects, summing up the modifications undergone by Standard English in its processing via newer and very new media like the cinema, radio, television, mobile phone texting and video conferencing, internet browsing, messaging, e-mail writing, chatting, real time audio and voice over interacting – all of which facilitate global communication, but do damage to local cultural specificity, linguistically or otherwise. Insistently

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18 See section 4.1.
19 See section 3.1.
20 See sections 2.2., 2.3., 4.2., 4.3.
21 See section 3.3.
marketed by powerful corporations, multimodal English has come to pose the greatest threat on the educational and political dimensions of language use, supporting the commercial and pragmatic ones instead.

When the focus is on translation not only into and from English, but also into and from Romanian, and when the method of approach is one which presupposes a multidisciplinary perspective both on translation as process and on translation as product, another issue that needs tackling is that of minority languages. In the global setting, minority languages are exposed to contamination by the lexical and syntactical particularities of dominant languages. “As a result of continuous translation, they can no longer be translated. There is nothing left to translate” (Cronin, 2003, 141). For translation to remain functional and efficient, its effects on both minority and majority languages have been explored with the results showing that: while an increasing number of minority languages face extinction, majority languages (English in particular) are rapidly colonising parts of the world and in so doing are placing themselves under the threat of death by localisation, as the languages of the great empires of antiquity. The question of what exact role translation plays in the process of resurrecting languages or of bringing them to an untimely end has nonetheless remained unanswered.

What may be affirmed with certainty is the fact that “the figure of translation in majority languages emerges against the ground of translation in minority languages. […] The ground has to be considered otherwise the figure remains invisible” (Cronin, 2003, 146). Both ends of the translation mediated communicational chain need to be supported for interaction to actually take place. To this end, it has become imperative to encourage minorities to speak up and make themselves heard globally through what specialists in the field call “translation-as-diversification”22, which is based on the principles of visibility and foreignization, and which strongly opposes incorporation. It might just help preserve local cultures and their languages.

Another urgency is that of closely looking into the particular strategies to be employed in the process and practice of translation, strategies that raise self-awareness in the practicing translator. Otherwise, “if we treat text merely as a self-contained and self-generating entity, instead of as a decision-making procedure and an instance of communication between language users, our understanding of the nature of translating will be impaired” (Hatim and Mason, 1990, 3). This would improve and diversify

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22 The recognized alternative would be ‘translation-as-assimilation’, equivalent to invisible, domesticating or poor-quality translation.