# Handout 1

# Communication styles, Intercultural Exchanges and Translation

This workshop is a discussion of some basic aspects of intercultural communication styles from the the perspectives of linguistic pragmatics and translation: the view that intercultural discourse can be treated as ‘fundamentally similar to any other form of communication’ (see Verschueren (2008:21).

# Cross-cultural approaches

# These tend to compare two contexts: one native and one non-native, using a discourse model which analyses the production of talk between participants. House (2000:148), for example, analyses misunderstandings between German and American participants and puts the differences down to ‘differential weightings given to small talk by German as opposed to Anglophone speakers’.

1. **Gumperz’s (1992) ‘contextualisation cues’.**

‘contextualization cues’

“speakers’ and listeners’ use of verbal and non-verbal signs to relate what is said at any one time and in any one place to knowledge acquired through past experience in order to retrieve the presuppositions they must rely on to maintain conversational involvement and assess what is intended’ (Gumperz, 1992:230)

*Look at examples 1/2. What’s happening here? In what sense is there a translational phenomenon going on here?*

Example (1): A job interview: The interviewer asks what has attracted the interviewee to L. bus company:

**Interviewer**: what do you think L. buses is going to offer you that R. don’t offer you?

**B**: well, there are quite a lot of things..um…for example like, um…Christmas bonus/

**Interviewer**: um….

**B:** so many things…um..holidays and all that..

(taken from Gumperz and Roberts, 1991)

Example 2 (own example)

‘?’ = rising intonation contour

‘.’ = falling intonation contour

English speaker (ES) taking leave of an Italian speaking friend (IS)

ES: Bye **?**

IS: Bye **.**

1. **Criticism of cross-cultural approaches**

Such studies tend to focus on failures in communication and the misguided assumption that an intercultural context is the sum of two contexts rather than the creation of a new one.

The main objective of a pragmatic approach is not to analyse and compare participants with different cultural ‘essences’ or traits, but to show how a new context has emerged and the way in which meaning has been generated in the interaction.

Verschueren (2008:25): ‘a static comparison of cultures seems the worst possible basis on which to approach intercultural communication’.

**Pragmatic intercultural approaches: beyond misunderstanding**

Recent studies use a pragmatic framework which goes beyond misunderstandings and cultural stereotypes. They analyse intercultural communication styles ‘to capture the dynamics of the processes involved’ (Verschueren, 2008) by focusing on the individual experience.

The focus is on

* analysing understanding rather than misunderstanding
* emphasising the centrality of individual **cognition**
* demonstrating how understanding is arrived at through inferential resolution

Example 3

*How are you? ‘I’m hot’ (Bubel, 2006:250) looks at this area beyond misunderstanding: small talk between a businessman and woman (German vs. English). Describe the small talk and what seems to be happening in this interaction from the perspective of a successful intercultural interaction:*

1. A: yes?
2. P. yes, hello Mrs Adler it’s Peter Sikes again speaking
3. A ah hello Peter
4. P: Hi
5. A: How are you?
6. P: I a:m very hot
7. A: you’re what?
8. P: very hot
9. A: oh (embarrassed laughter)
10. P. but otherwise not too bad
11. ….17
12. A: OK, so Peter I got your fax

# Handout 2: Communication styles, Intercultural Exchanges and Translation

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**The role of Translation in research**

The role of translation is frequently ignored or taken for granted in research contexts in the Arts and Humanities research even in IC research

In the Arts:

‘The marginality of translation reaches even to educational institutions, where it is manifested in a scandalous contradiction: on the one hand, an utter dependence on translated texts in curricula and research; on the other hand , a general tendency, in both teaching and publications, to elide the status of translated texts as translated, to treat them as texts originally written in the translating language’. p.89

Venuti, L. (1999) *The Scandals of Translation*, p. 89.

Indeed, intercultural transfer is often not allowed to take place so that readers are not given access to the original work. This happens frequently in children’s stories, for example, where covert translations do not allow the original to ‘shine through’ (House, 2009:23). Cultural transfer doesn’t take place. House (2009) provides a number of interesting examples taken from German translations of Paddington Bear.

Have a look at the additions and omissions in the German translation and discuss what kind of what kind of cultural filtering has occurred. What are the consequences for intercultural appreciation of stories?

Example 1:

Seeing that something was expected of it, the bear stood up and **politely** raised his hat

Der **Kleine** Bär stand plötzlich auf und lüftete seinen Hut.

Tr: The little bear stood suddenly up and lifted his hat.

In Philosophy:

Example 2

Talking about Anscombe’s translation of Wittgenstein:

**Denn die philosophischen Probleme entstehen, wenn dir Sprache feiert**

As

**For philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday** (alternative is: ‘language idles’)

Venuti observes:

‘No English translation can ever simply communicate Wittgenstein’s German text without simultaneously inscribing it with English-language forms that destabilize and reconstitute his philosophy’

Venuti, L. (1999) *The Scandals of Translation*, p. 108.

In Intercultural communication:

*Given that Turkish husbands can divorce their wives if they give birth to mentally retarded children, consider how understanding is resolved in this extract , the role of the interpreter and how translation is presented by the authors.*

Example 3

The following is an extract of a counselling session from Bührig and Thije’s (2006: 179) ‘Beyond Misunderstanding’ .

A Turkish couple have come to consultation because they have a mentally retarded child. As their German is not very good, a Turkish doctor acts as an interpreter

DocM: German male medical doctor

PtM (T): Turkish male patient

PtF (T): Turkish female patient

IntM (I): Turkish male doctor

IntM (I) : Fazlasi giderse çocuk hasta oluyo normali giderse

(Tr) if too much goes across the child will be sick if the normal one goes

PtF (T): Hmhm

IntM (I): saglam oluyo onu simdi size gösterecez Yani

Tr: across the child will be normal that’s what we’ll show you now that is

PtF (T): Benden fazla gitmis yani

Tr: that is too much from me went

INtM(I): bundan kaynaklandigimi biliyoruz

Tr: we know it comes from there

DocM (D) Hmhm

PtM (T) ((derin nefes ahr)) Hatun, bi daha

Tr: (breathes deeply) Wife, ought I to

DocM: Hm

PtM (T) mi evlensem n’apsam? ((güler))

Tr: marry again? What ought I to do? (Laughs)

Pt F: ((güler))

Tr: (laughs)

IntM: ob er nochmals/nochmal heiraten soll oder was er machen sollte

Tr: whether he should marry again/once more or what he ought to do

Laughing

DocM: Hmhm

IntM: Herr Günes fragt er sich oder fragt er Frau Günes

Tr: Herr Günes , he asks himself or he asks Mrs Günes hmhm

DocM (D) Ich glaube nicht überlegung anstellen müssen

Tr: I don’t think you have to consider these thoughts

PtM (T): Ich Spaß machen, ja! Ich liebe meine Frau

Tr I making joke, yes! I love my wife.

INt M (lacht)

InT M (Laughs)

DocM (D) (lacht etwas)

Tr: (laughs slightly)

DocM (D): Ich will Ihnen erklären einfach, was passieren kan, wie das mit der Vererbung aussieht

Tr: I’d like to explain to you simply what can happen and what the heredity looks like

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**Translation, Globalisation and Hybrid texts**

*Compare these different definitions of ‘hybrid texts’: How do the definitions of hybridity relate to ICC?*

Example 1

Schäffner & Adab’s (1997: 327, cited in Snell-Hornby, 1999: 108) understanding of EU hybrid texts:

In the process of establishing political unity, linguistic expressions are levelled to a common, (low) denominator. Eurotexts reflect a Eurojargon, i.e. a reduced vocabulary, meanings that tend to be universal, reduced inventory of grammatical forms. […]

Acceptance is due to the limited communicative functions of the texts. EU texts […] function within the Community within which they are created (e.g. for the staff, or for meetings of the respective bodies). This means that there are clearly defined user needs. The multinational EU institutions as such are the target culture, hybrid texts are formative elements in creating a (truly) supranational culture.

(Schäffner and Adab, 2001:169)

A hybrid text is a text that results from a translation process.It shows features that somehow seem ‘out of place’/‘strange’/‘unusual’ for the receiving culture, i.e., the target culture. These features, however, are not the result of a lack of translational competence or examples of ‘translationese’, but they are evidence of conscious and deliberate decisions by the translator. Although the text is not yet fully established in the target culture (because it does not conform to established norms and conventions), a hybrid text is accepted in its target culture because it fulfils its intended purpose in the communicative situation (at least for a certain time).

But are hybrid texts always a result of translation?

Reformulation of definition by Schaffner and Adab (2001)

‘Hybrid texts, in addition to being products of text production in a specific cultural space, which is often in itself an intersection of different cultures, can also result from a translation process

Example 2

Snell-Hornby (1999) looks at an example of a UN text:

*Looking at her transediting of the text what do you think characterizes the ‘hybrid’ text in 1?*

Organisation structures for implementation of nuclear programme

*1. The National Electricity Board (ONE)*

The National Electricity Board, being a public industrial and trade authority, has the monopoly of electricity generation and transmission in Morocco. In this connection it is designated as the owner and future operator of any nuclear power-stations to be set up. This is the framework within which ONE, within the assistance of IAEA, has prepared the first planning studies, which will be examined and taken further under the agreement with France, and has also started to collect information and data on site choices. A special study has also been made of present population distribution in the area where a nuclear power-station may be built.

The National Electricity Board (ONE), a public industrial and trade authority, controls the generation and distribution of electricity in Morocco. Due to its monopoly of this area, it is considered to be the owner and future operator of any nuclear power stations which may eventually be set up in the country. Taking this into consideration, and with the assistance of IAEA, ONE has initiated a series of investigations which are, however, subject to approval by the French government. A survey to gather information and data on possible site choices has already begun and a special study is under way concerning the redistribution of the population which presently inhabits the area in which nuclear power stations may be built in the future.

**Questions for further discussion:**

1. Can one say then that a hybrid communication is a mixing of codes whose existence can be of positive value for raising awareness of identities?
2. Is the function of hybrid texts to contribute to the emergence of new genres in the TL?
3. Are institutions like the EU multilingual cultural spaces which are ideal sites for the emergence of hybrid texts?
4. What happens to hybrid texts when they are translated back into SL? (see venuti and philosophical language: leads to a deeper understanding of philosophical ideologies?