INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND IDENTITY:
AN EXERCISE IN APPLIED SEMIOTICS

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Overview

Central to the present discussion is the semiotic dimension of context (words as 'signs') and the way this 'social-semiotic' interacts with other contextual aspects such as 'intentionality' (within 'pragmatics' or the purposes for which utterances are used) and 'situationality' (within 'register' or norms of appropriateness regarding who is speaking to whom, where, when, etc.). This interaction would be primarily regulated by the principle of 'intertextuality' (or how texts relate to other prior texts). This is constrained by text-centred factors such as 'cohesion' (surface continuity) and a range of conceptual relations relating to the 'coherence' of texts (or underlying conceptual connectedness). These mutually enriching interrelationships between text and context may be represented schematically as in Figure 1 (see next page; adapted from Hatim and Mason, 1990).

In this model of text processing, we view the reception and production of texts in general, and the process of translation in particular, in terms of various text-in-context relationships involving:

(a) the semiotics of culture or the way language use relies on a system of signs which singly or collectively signify knowledge and beliefs essential for members of a community to function effectively;

(b) the pragmatics of the communicative act or the way language is employed in conveying a range of intentions efficiently;

(c) the register membership of the text or how language is used in a manner that is appropriate to topic, level of formality, etc.

I N T E R T E X T U A L I T Y

Semiotic Interaction
Socio-culture
Socio-textual practices
Discourse
Genre
Text

I N T E N T I O N A L I T Y

PRAGMATIC ACTION
Presupposition
Inference
Speech Acts
Implicature

R E G I S T E R   M E M B E R S H I P

COMMUNICATIVE TRANSACTION
Language User (Dialect, etc.)
Language Use (Field, Mode, Tenor)

DISCOURSE, GENRE & TEXT TYPOLOGIES
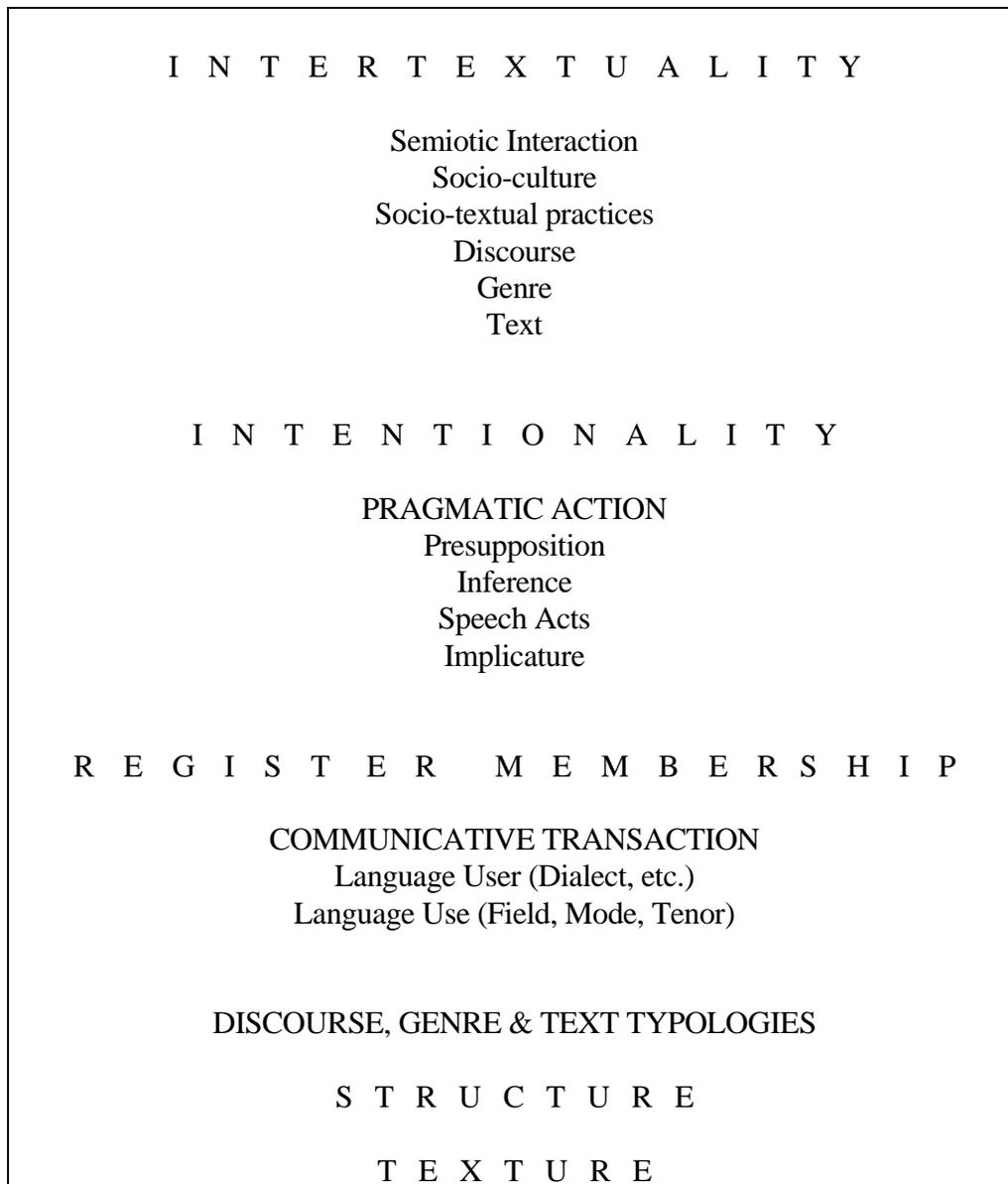
S T R U C T U R E

T E X T U R E

Figure 1: Text in Context

These contextual domains are systematically related to the way texts actually unfold, exhibiting a variety of 'structure' formats (compositional plans), and 'texture' patterns (cohesion and coherence).

This relationship between text and context is not uni-directional (e.g., top-down from context to text) but highly interactive (i.e., both top-down and bottom-up). That is, producers and receivers of texts constantly shuttle between the textual and the contextual domains, allowing higher-level factors such as 'culture' to inform 'wording' and, in turn, to make it possible for the emerging 'texts' to modify the contexts within which they are originally envisaged.

To illustrate the modes of interaction characteristic of language use when texts are analyzed or constructed, let us take text reception as a convenient point of departure, and first try out a bottom-up strategy, looking at how a particular sequence of utterances may be handled by an ideal reader.

Text A

Since the Enlightenment, science has stirred hearts and minds with its promise of a neutral and privileged viewpoint, above and beyond the rough and tumble of political life. With respect to women, however, science is not a neutral culture. Gender - both the real relations between the sexes and cultural renderings of those relations - shaped European natural history and, in particular, botany....

Scientific American (February 1996, page 98)

The way the various linguistic elements concatenate to form a sequence which exhibits 'formal' continuity is subsumed under 'cohesion' (Halliday and Hasan, 1976 and 1985). Here, a variety of conjunctive and reference relations, patterns of themes and rhemes, kinds of information, lexical repetition and other lexico-grammatical choices, all become part of the fabric of the text. These features can all be found in Text A above, ensuring that the various surface components are mutually connected (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981).

In dealing with the various grammatical, lexical, logical and conceptual relationships, text users constantly refer to a number of 'schemes' within which to fit the emerging structure. These frames, schemata, scripts (or whatever term one may want to use) are all intended to facilitate the construction of a 'text world', a set of interrelationships which may be subsumed under 'coherence'. Systematically, the various compositional plans tend to point to 'events' in a story sequence, 'concepts' in an explanation, various 'facets' in a description or a series of 'steps' in an argument. Text A, for example, is a 'counter-argument': a position is first presented only to serve as the background against which a counter-position is then put forward. The 'neutrality of science' is posited only to pave the way for the subsequent counter-claim: 'the prevalent bias of science'.

The latter view is the one intended ultimately to hold sway in this text.

Like any reader, the translator embarks on a journey from text to context and back to text armed with an important stylistic principle to do with the need to assess 'what one is given in the text' (e.g., a fronted *Since the Enlightenment, science has*) against the background of 'what one could have been given but was not' (e.g., an embedded adverbial, as in 'Science has since the Enlightenment been...'). The latter option, if available, would be deemed slightly 'marked' in English and, to retrieve coherence, questions must be asked regarding the motivation behind its 'defamiliarizing' use (Fowler, 1986/1996). Such rhetorical effects (or absence of such effects) must always be accounted for by the translator who would ideally seek to render both the letter and the spirit of the source text.

The semiotics of culture

In attempting to account for the semiotic dimension of context, the semiotic notions of 'signifier' and 'signified' (i.e., the 'sign') are crucial. According to the American language philosopher Charles Peirce (*Collected Papers*, vol. 2, para. 228), a 'sign' is "something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity". For these interrelationships to be appreciated fully, the sign must be seen at a local as well as a global level. Locally, text users utilize what we have referred to as a collection of 'socio-cultural' objects, to be distinguished from the more dynamic level of global utilization in which some of these objects take part in the development of 'socio-textual' macro-structures to do with:

(a) expressing attitudinal meanings and promoting particular world views or ideological positions (e.g., racial hegemony as discourse);

(b) operating within highly ritualized forms of language use which uphold the requirements of conventionalized 'communicative events' (e.g., the language appropriate for a 'cooking recipe' as genre);

(c) attending to particular rhetorical purposes and achieving a variety of rhetorical aims (e.g., 'arguing', 'narrating', as texts).

Another way of capturing the distinction between socio-cultural objects

and socio-textual practices would be to deal with these two categories along lines suggested by Fowler (1981):

> There is a dialectical interrelationship between language and social structure: the varieties of linguistic usage are both products of socio-economic forces and institutions - reflexes of such factors as power relations, occupational roles, social stratifications, etc. - and practices which are instrumental in forming and legitimizing those same social forces and institutions.

That is, the *practices* side (e.g., discourse, genre and texts) would subsume the textual means by which the various socio-cultural *products* (e.g., scientific terminology) are formed and promoted. Terms denoting these products, we suggest, are bound to be intrinsically static and rather insignificant compared to the higher-order process of engaging in textual practices proper of, say, relaying racist sentiments, writing in the Mills & Boon style, or engaging in a rebuttal.

Socio-textual practices

The transition from 'objects' to 'practices' is possible, but is a matter of degree and may best be seen in terms of a continuum. Socio-textual practices are envisaged as essentially subsuming how, from a particular 'ideological perspective' (or 'discourse'), text users can cater for a fairly limited number of 'conventionalized communicative events' (or 'genres'). In turn, these genres are seen as 'sites' within which 'texts' are negotiated in pursuit of a variety of 'rhetorical purposes'. Text A above provides one such format - the contrastive configuration of 'claim' and 'counter-claim'. The drift of the 'argument' is fairly straightforward: a 'straw-man gambit' setting the tone by presenting a 'claim' as somewhat problematical (i.e., not unblemished) and then by presenting a 'counter-claim' as a more convincing alternative. Thus, 'science stirring the hearts and minds with a promise of neutrality, above and beyond the rough and tumble of political life' is a proposition that is of dubious validity and is thus open to closer scrutiny. The counter-position (i.e., the scrutinizer) is ushered in with an adversative ('however'), and the issue of gender is raised to challenge the 'cozy' arrangement presented initially (Hatim, 1997).

Beyond the unit 'text', language is used as a vehicle for the expression of attitudinal (i.e.,. ideological) meanings. We may adopt an objective, analytical attitude to subject matter (e.g., the UN Secretary General's annual report), or alternatively, engage in a variety of discursive practices that are essentially more

involved and 'hortatory' (e.g., the espousal and expression of feminist ideals, a discourse which Text A above serves rather subtly). Another example which shows how a variety of discourses compete in catering for an overall discoursal theme is the following text from *Readers' Digest*:

Text B

A Symposium of Opinion

Up to last Monday, I must confess I didn't have much hope for a world state. I believed that no moral basis for it existed, that we had no world conscience and no sense of world community sufficient to keep a world state together. But the alternatives now seem clear. One is world suicide. Another is agreement among sovereign states to abstain from using the atomic bomb. ...

A French philosopher referred to "the good news of damnation" - doubtless on the theory that none of us would be Christians if we weren't afraid of perpetual hellfire. It may be that the atomic bomb is the "good news of damnation" that it may frighten us into that Christian character and those righteous actions and those positive political steps necessary to the creation of a world society, not a thousand or 500 years hence, but now.

[Round Table Radio programme, NBC, August 12, '45]

Readers' Digest (October 1945, page 11)

What is interesting about this sample is not only the favourable discoursal attitude expressed towards the use of the 'bomb', but also how this discourse is allowed to blend subtly with another discourse (that of 'religion'). Note in particular how 'nukespeak' creeps in and almost completely hijacks and appropriates the religious connotations evoked. Note also that, in order to drive home the nub of this piece of argumentation, a claim/counter-claim textual format is exploited: 'A world state is untenable/ However, the alternative is world suicide'. The proposition 'world state' is then re-interpreted in terms of an implicit consensus over the use of the bomb, a view deviously promoted as one way of restoring Christian justice (Fairclough, 2003).

Alongside such discoursal attitudes, there is that part of textual practices which relates to how language use is made appropriate to conventionalized formats involving a sense of a 'communicative occasion' and the 'participants' in it (Bhatia, 2004). Consider the following text sample:

Text C
>   As usual, I entered my office at the usual time. As usual, I opened
> the window and began to read, as usual, the papers. *Liberty!* Where's
> that story? There it was, on the international front page: *Interpol Seek
> International Fraudster.* I began to read: *From our police
> correspondent* ('correspondent'! what a joke!). *Interpol are reported
> to be on a state of alert after an international fraudster managed to
> cheat his innocent victims out of more than £200 million. The
> fraudster, who goes by a number of aliases and travels on a variety of
> passports, has a scar on his forehead...*
>   From *7*, an Arabic novel by Ghazi Al-Qusaibi.

In this translation from Arabic, the translators have had to mobilize their
textual competence in the area of genre. The source text in Arabic does not
exhibit the features of the journalistic genre clearly and unambiguously. The
rendering in English, however, has successfully conjured up what the target
reader would only react to as typical of 'journalese': the entire text world of
headlines and front page news.

Towards a more interactive pragmatics
        Such an approach to signs at work, particularly at the macro-level of
textual practices, adequately accounts for what Fowler (1981) describes as the
textual means instrumental in forming and legitimizing the products yielded
by the diverse socio-economic forces and institutions involved. In this view,
not only discourses, genres and texts, but also the objects which go into their
formation, as well as those which stay behind and remain dormant, require
that signs are seen more interactively. This vision of language as a social
semiotic (Halliday, 1978) has implications for other domains of context. To
begin with, it entails that our approach to pragmatic meaning (or 'the purposes
for which utterances are used') be extended to take in the whole gamut of
text-in-context relationships, including most significantly the crucial area of
socio-textual practices.
        In effect, this means that we need to adopt a more interactive approach
to such pragmatic constructs as speech acts, inference, presupposition and
implicature, and deal with these not as actions performed by the use of
isolated items of linguistic expression but rather as properties of entire
discourses, genres and text formats. For example, different pragmatic readings

could be envisaged for the phrase *slightly better* in the following sample:

Text D

Lebanon

_____

**For the tenth time
give us a chance**

From our Levant correspondent

The latest peace plan for Lebanon, signed in Damascus on December 28th. has **a slightly better** chance of success than the nine previous plans hopefully pressed upon that sad country since the civil war began more than a decade ago. One of the signatories has already just survived an assassination attempt by disgruntled people within his own following.

But there are reasons for hope. First....

The Economist (Bold added)

This sample demonstrates how, to comply with the requirements of context, textural patterns must ultimately link up with the structure (or compositional plan) of texts. That is, as we progress through a text, the necessary task of accounting for the pragmatic and semiotic function of 'texture' (e.g., emphasis, repetition) can be performed adequately only in terms of the overall structural design of the text and in the light of a diverse range of contextual factors surrounding the text. For example, *slightly better* may equally plausibly be taken to signify that

  A. the peace plan is *only slightly* better than previous ones (and therefore not worth even considering), and that
  B. it is *appreciably better* (and thus well worth the effort).

To compound the difficulty faced by the translator, Arabic has two possible renderings available. The first pragmatic reading ('only slightly...') would be best served by the use of a so-called restrictive *qaSr* structure thus:

laa tatamata'u ' illa bi qadrin Da'iil min furaSi n-najaaH

Lit. 'does not enjoy but a minimal portion of the chance of success'

The second pragmatic reading ('appreciably better'),
on the other hand, invites the unrestricted syntactic structure:

tatamata'u bi furaSi najaaHni la ba'sa bihaa/kabiira

Lit. 'enjoys a reasonable (great) degree of success'

In such contexts, the futility of speech act analysis as an aid to translators becomes glaringly apparent when we find that, while two competing illocutionary forces are obviously at work, the single designation 'assertion' is indiscriminately and misleadingly applied to the utterance in question. This does not help the translator who has to distinguish between the two readings properly in order to opt for the one actually intended. The reader/ translator thus needs further specifications of the speech act in question.

As it happens, the two readings cannot be both an 'assertion'. Reading (A) seems to cater for the contextual focus: assertion + concession to the 'pessimistic camp' in the debate/argument, whereas reading (B) suggests assertion + concession to the optimistic camp. The 'plus-something', essentially a feature of 'texture', may be usefully defined through a careful analysis of the structural design of the text and of the context enveloping it. The text structure is a *balance* of some kind in which the first part cites a thesis rebutted in the subsequent discourse. Since the segment in question occurs in the first 'thesis-citation' part or what we have conveniently labeled a 'straw man gambit', *slightly better* must be seen as serving the camp not 'officially' endorsed by the text (which is about 'optimism'). Within this textual/contextual framework, sociotextual conventions provide us with a further insight into English rhetorical practices: what is used as a point of departure cannot be that which one wholeheartedly endorses; the principle of 'end-weight' requires that propositions endorsed come last.

So to answer the question of whether it is the optimistic supporters of the peace plan or the pessimistic detractors of the plan that are ultimately catered for by the occurrence of *slightly better,* text-organizational constraints, together with other discoursal and generic values, are invoked as reliable clues. Pragmatic analysis would thus have to await discoursal indications which,

while equally sign-based, nevertheless derive their impetus more stringently from the range of norms and conventions, as well as the ideological and political mores characteristic of particular social processes and institutions. All these factors, together with the socio-textual practices appropriate to a given discourse, conspire to support the reading that since *slightly better* occurs in the 'the straw man', the function served must be the lip-serving concession to the thesis entertained by the detractors who would promote the view that 'there is nothing in the plan to justify our support'. That is, reading A wins, supported by forthcoming textual evidence. The way the argument eventually develops moves us towards:

But there are reasons for hope...
        A more interactive notion of 'intentionality' is thus needed to account for these textual phenomena. Globally, text-level intentionality emerges as a function of higher-order purposes and not merely as the sum total of the various 'bits and pieces' that make up the text. Here, we perceive important pragmatic meanings related to overall text formats (e.g., counter-argumentation), to the thrust of entire discourses (feminism, racism), and to entire genres (news report). In this way, the triad discourse-genre-text enhances and is constantly enhanced by our ability as text users genuinely to 'do things with words', a problem which ultimately becomes one of translation.

A dynamic view of register membership
        Socio-textual practices, then, interact with the way texts unfold (texture and structure) and with the overall purposefulness of communication (intentionality). These practices also and equally meaningfully cross-fertilize with the way texts cater for the various ideologies and the social institutions they serve. This is achieved through the deployment of the lexico-grammar in the service of particular fields of discourse and attendant power structures. For example, consider how, in Sample X above, the horror of the atomic bomb was so 'innocently' described and how that theme subtly blended with religious themes, all in the name of Christian ethics and world peace. To optimize the effect of such diverse resources of meaning-making and to develop texts that are ultimately both cohesive and coherent, the textual dimension of register is bound to be involved. This 'enabling' function which discourse 'mode' performs covers the entire spectrum from spoken or written-like quality of language use to the analytical or emotive tone which dialogues

or monologues take on.

Culture in the process of translation

Now that the full cycle from text to context and back is covered (Figure 1 above), we are in a better position to deal with the notion of 'culture' and the specific issue of 'identity'. This is all part of semiotics which, as argued above, is a particularly privileged dimension of the way we conduct our textual business. The unit of semiotic analysis is the 'sign', a semiotic construct which has proved admirably suited for dealing with how cultures come in contact, clash, or live in harmony. In fact, it is this notion of signification (or 'semiosis') which is now widely used in the study of intercultural communication (Scollon and Scollon, 1995) and which as such has also appealed to the more context-sensitive theories of translation (e.g., Hatim and Mason, 1997).

In translation studies, however, culture as a domain of enquiry has had mixed fortunes over the years. The so-called 'cultural model' emerged as a reaction to earlier conceptions of translation geared primarily to account for 'equivalence' in terms of grammatical and lexical categories as elements of the linguistic system. This was a time when, disillusioned by such models of linguistic description as structuralism and generativism, both linguists and translators felt that the attitudes and values, and the experience and traditions of a people, inevitably become involved in the freight of meaning carried by language. In effect, the argument ran, "one does not translate languages, one translates cultures".

These ideas were not totally new to translators who had already been operating with so-called 'ethnographical-semantic' methods. Here, meaning was defined in terms of 'cultural fields' reflecting the world-views of given communities of language users. To study the ensuing culture-boundness, formal methods such as 'chain analysis', 'hierarchical analysis' and 'componential analysis' were heavily used (Nida, 1971). For example, it was important to point out such blind-spots (or 'cultural gaps') as those relating to whether certain languages and cultures needed to lexicalize, say, the difference between a maternal and a paternal uncle. Within this paradigm, theoreticians and practitioners came to be equally preoccupied with the 'civilization' aspects of the source text.

The culture-bound view of meaning relations, however, was soon to be found wanting and more 'dynamic' views of translation equivalence were promoted: anything which can be said in one language can be said in another,

unless the form is an essential element of the message (Nida and Taber, 1969). Issues such as 'reader response' came to the fore, and the focus shifted to aspects of the process such as the 'purpose of translation' and the requirements of the immediate situation. Translation strategy had to be re-adjusted as a result and, instead of excessively indulging in comparative ethnography, cultural adaptation to meet different needs was encouraged as a translation procedure.

All of these developments, welcome as no doubt they were at the time, were a far cry from a fully-blown theory of translation truly committed to the dictum 'a word is a world'. Insights into what constitutes cultural meaning were rather static. From our own perspective here, what is more serious is that such views have proved too influential to go away quietly. They have lingered even in more recent studies of the translation process. To a large extent, this is motivated by the need to get to grips with the elusive notion of 'equivalence' across languages which invariably and, as Baker (1992:18) observes,

> ... understandably tend to make only those distinctions in meaning which are relevant to their particular environment, be it physical, historical, political, religious, cultural, economic, legal, technological, social, or otherwise.

Various theorists have thus attempted to categorize cases of such cultural non-equivalence. Newmark (1981), for example, adapts Nida's breakdown of the various aspects of culture and presents his own scheme along the following lines:

1) Ecology: Animals, plants, local winds, mountains, etc. (*qaat* and the numerous Arabic words for camel).

2) Material culture: Food, clothes, housing, transport and communications (*kuufiyya*).

3) Social culture: Work and leisure (*hammam*)

4) Organizations, customs, ideas: Political, social, legal, religious, artistic (*al-Azhar, awqaaf, isnaad*)

5) Gestures and habits (a shake of the head means 'no' in English

but 'I don't know' for an Arab).

Recent developments in the study of culture

The aim of citing the above list of features is to illustrate the basic thesis that while terms denoting, say, 'material' or 'social culture' are indeed important in the work of the translator, these must surely be considered finite for any language and therefore manageable in any communicative task. A good glossary of such terms should suffice in most cases. However, elements within such classifications can and often do acquire varying degrees of dynamism, with culture becoming less a nomenclature and more a way of thinking. Unless and until such dynamism is accounted for, these items remain dormant and should not therefore demand so much of our attention in activities such as translation. Within this dynamic conception, culture would be, in the words Snell-Hornby (1988:40), a "totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception" with language becoming "not an isolated phenomenon suspended in a vacuum" but "an integral part of culture". The American ethnologist Ward H. Goodenough captures this broad sense of culture in the following terms:

As I see it, a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative, sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behaviour or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them. (1964:36).

Agar (1992:11) echoes this in suggesting that

Culture is not something people have; it is something that fills the spaces between them. And culture is not an exhaustive description of anything; it focuses on differences, differences that can vary from task to task and group to group.

It is in this sense that Agar (1991:168) speaks of "rich points" - "from lexical items…through speech acts up to fundamental notions of how the world works" - which are differences that can cause culture conflicts or communication breakdowns.

Cultural studies in the theory and practice of translation

Looking into the way translators and publishers operate within the Anglo-American translation tradition, proponents of Cultural Studies (CS) focus on values such as 'fluency' and 'transparency' which, while not undesirable in their own right, are to be resisted if secured at the expense of source text meaning and the cultural context surrounding it. As Venuti (1995:1) explains,

> An illusionistic effect of discourse ...: a translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities make them seem transparent... giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text - the appearance that a translation is not in fact a translation, but the "original".

In an attempt to pinpoint how values such as 'fluency' have come to be the hallmark of the translation doctrine upheld within the Anglo-American tradition, Venuti (1995:20) focuses on two basic translation strategies: foreignizing vs. domesticating the source text. Domestication, generally adopted as the common route in translations conducted in the West, is explained in the following terms: "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target language cultural values, bringing the author back home". The foreignizing method, recommended in CS as a more appropriate procedure, is "an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad".

Socio-textual practices revisited

Socio-textual elements of linguistic expression, and the way they are organized, ultimately realize what we have referred to as 'discourses', 'genres' and 'texts'. These are 'semiotic' areas of socio-textual activity within which we 'pragmatically' do things with words, exploit the communicative

potential of 'register' and operate within typical 'structure' formats and patterns of 'texture'. Discourses, genres and texts as macro-signs are clearly distinguished from what we have referred to as 'socio-cultural objects'. However, the difference is not dichotomous. There seems to be a gradient where individual cases may be seen in relative and not absolute terms. That is, socio-cultural objects tend to exhibit varying degrees of prominence along a dynamism continuum the optimal end of which would be purely 'socio-textual' values (discursive, generic, etc.):

Minimal   >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> Maximal

DYNAMISM

Socio-Cultural Proper   >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>   Socio-Textual Proper

Figure 2: The dynamism gradient

To put it differently, some socio-cultural objects remain dormant, others exhibit higher degrees of dynamism, culminating in some highly creative instances of language use. To illustrate the idea of a gradient which captures the varying degrees of dynamism exhibited by a given socio-cultural object in a given context, consider the following text sample. In this text, note in particular the use of the Arabic '*amaama* (literally 'turban'), and how this socio-cultural object may be located further down the scale towards the static end of the dynamism gradient:

Text E (Back translation from Arabic)
The Turkish President Kenan Evren has adopted a balanced policy which involved tolerance towards the growing Islamicist movement in the country. For the first time since 1921, the *'amaama* appeared in the Turkish Parliament.

Here, the excerpt is part of a balanced, pro-Evren discourse, within the 'news report' as a genre utilizing straightforward 'exposition'. In this fairly

unmarked case, the use of *'amaama* is bound to be fairly static, engaging only in propping up a straight-forward socio-textual practice (essentially one with no axe to grind). In such cases, the translator is free to domesticate. Keeping "turban" may work, but a more sensible option might be something as unemotive and colourless as "the Islamicist trend/ presence", thus

> The Turkish President Kenan Evren has adopted a balanced policy which involved tolerance towards the growing Islamicist movement in the country. For the first time since 1921, the turbaned Muslims appeared in the Turkish Parliament**.**

An interesting hypothesis to entertain, then, is that macro-structures such as genre, discourse and text are sacrosanct source text features even if they turn out to be alien to the target reader. However, socio-cultural input, which is invariably a function of intentionless 'fashions of speaking', must be adapted, subdued and, if need be, jettisoned.

Proper domestication at the socio-cultural level can thus only enhance the quality of a translation: through target language 'fluency', it facilitates access to source text discursive thrust, genre integrity and textual coherence. This ensures that the socio-textual practices at work are preserved intact in the foreign language (i.e.,. foreignized). Perceptive foreignization is thus achieved by means of selective domestication, a strategy which can hardly be condemned as pernicious or unfair to the source language and culture (cf. Venuti, 1995).

Against this background, we may now move on to a consideration of the translation strategy adopted in dealing with some of the samples cited above. In this exercise, we will attempt to demonstrate the efficacy of the hypothesis that effective foreignization of the 'socio-textual' is best achieved through the domestication of the 'socio-cultural'.

The problem addressed by the translator of Text A is one essentially to do with text structure. By failing to invoke the appropriate intertextuality or retrieve the conventional format of the counter-argumentative text type, the translator was unable to cope with the socio-textual intricacy of the source text, despite perfect mastery of the socio-culture which in this case revolves around technical terminology. The target text produced simply does not work, as the following back translation from the Arabic published version clearly shows:

Text A1 (back translation from Arabic)

      Since the Enlightenment, science has stirred hearts and minds with its promise of a neutral and privileged viewpoint, above and beyond the rough and tumble of political life. *And with all due respect to women*, science is not a neutral culture. This is because gender - both the real relations between the sexes and cultural renderings of those relations - shaped European natural history and, in particular, botany....

      Next, let us cast our minds back to Text B cited above and recall that, for its socio-textual significance, this text relies on the discursive strategy of subtly mingling a favourable attitude to the use of nuclear power with religious sentiments, as the following segment shows:

      It may be that the atomic bomb is the "good news of damnation" that it may frighten us into that Christian character and those righteous actions and those positive political steps necessary to the creation of a world society, not a thousand or 500 years hence, but now ...

In the source text, this was negotiated carefully within the ground rules of the genre Round Table or 'radio discussion' (published as A Symposium of Opinion), and was introduced skillfully by the use of a convincing counter-argumentative format. Not only in dealing with this sample but throughout, the *Readers' Digest* translators into Arabic seem to adopt a similar strategy to the one we are advocating here. This is essentially to heed, and if necessary foreignize, socio-textual signals by keeping the discursive, textual and generic structures intact, while largely domesticating socio-cultural input. To put this differently, the cultural padding of the text is done in fluent Arabic, but this is strictly done in the service of source text's overall attitudinal meanings (e.g., 'the bomb is OK'), the rhetorical purposes pursued (e.g., counter-argumentation) and the sense of communicative occasion involved (e.g., polemic).

      One particular socio-cultural feature and the way it is handled in translation may be usefully singled out here. The reference to "the good news of damnation", with all its biblical overtones, is skillfully captured by a well-known and highly evocative Islamic saying (*rubba Daaratin naafi'a*) which may be glossed as 'what may on the surface look like a harmful thing can turn

out to be advantageous after all'. This thorough domestication has facilitated perfect access to the way 'nukespeak' and Christian discourse were intended to blend.

Intertextuality through sociotextual practice

The lesson drawn particularly from an assessment of the *Readers' Digest* translation strategy is that domestication is effective so long as it is restricted to the socio-cultural domain and made sensitive to the socio-textual norms of the source language and culture. To reword the dictum promoted by Cultural Studies (CS), we should bring the reader home for the 'socio-culture' but we must take him abroad for the 'socio-textual'. It is these finer distinctions which do not seem to receive adequate attention in mainstream CS. In practice, commentators within the cultural paradigm were primarily concerned with notions such as 'transparency' and 'fluency' that strategically rely on a thorough domestication of the foreign text. This has entailed that cultural values in the foreign work be excluded and resistant translation strategies discouraged. In carefully scrutinizing the data used by CS proponents themselves, however, it is clear that the harm being alluded to was done not because so-called 'cultural' values were usurped, but because the foreign text was invariably denuded of its 'socio-textual' essence.

To clarify some of the issues raised in the above discussion, we will now present a detailed analysis of a speech by the late Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran. But before we can adequately deal with this text, selected specifically to demonstrate the crucial role of socio-textual practices in the construction of meaning, it is important to summarize some of the strategic options available to the translator in practice. These courses of action may helpfully be presented from the perspective of the recent 'cultural turn' in translation studies. The new trend has been flagged as a much needed response to the failure of Translation Studies (and particularly the linguistics branch of it) to take us from word to text, but not beyond (Bassnet and Lefevre, 1990). Niranjana (1992:59) argues that:

It would be too much to expect translation studies, given their inherent limitations, to initiate or sustain a serious discussion of the political nature of translation, political in the sense that it is enmeshed in effective history and relations of power.

From the perspective of a 'critical translation studies', however, this

cannot be an accurate representation of the translation theoretical scene. True, the study of ideology 'in' translation leaves much to be desired, and the politics 'of' translation has not received the attention it deserves. But remarkable progress has been achieved in studying not only the 'translation of ideology' but also 'the ideology of translation' (Hatim, 2002). Text linguistics should not be dismissed or pitted against CS, as some commentators on the new paradigm seem on occasion to suggest. It is thanks to recent developments in register theory, in radical pragmatics and in the semiotics of culture that we are now able better to appreciate the ideological implications of strategies such as foreignization and domestication which form the fulcrum of the new model of CS.

In March 1989, the *Guardian* published extensive extracts from a message addressed by Ayatollah Khomeini to the instructors and students of religious seminaries. The newspaper used for this purpose the official translation from Farsi produced by the BBC Monitoring Service. To Western readers, the text appears unfamiliar and in parts disconcerting (Hatim and Mason, 1997). Given the brief within which BBC translators work, namely to relay all the features of the source text as they stand, the unfamiliarity of the target text to the English language reader is unavoidable and should not be over-emphasized in any translation assessment. As for the disconcerting effects ultimately relayed, a question or two could be raised regarding translation strategy. To be true to source text meaning and rhetorical effect, translation practice must surely go beyond the literal.

To give an example where foreignization can misfire when it becomes *blind* literalism, consider Text F:

Text F

Of course this does not mean that we should defend all clergymen. Dependent, pseudo and ossified clergy have not been, and are not, few in number. There are even persons in the seminaries who are active against the revolution and against pure Mohammedan Islam. There are some people nowadays who, under the guise of piety, strike such heavy blows at the roots of religion, revolution and the system, that you would think they have no other duty than this ...

It may safely be assumed that text types are universal cognitive structures: narration, argumentation and so on exist in every culture. Nevertheless it cannot with equal conviction be assumed that the concrete realization of

particular types (i.e., a given textual format) is necessarily uniform (or in certain cases even remotely comparable) across languages. Apart from frequency of use and other issues of appropriateness, different languages and cultures have distinct norms for the structuring of, say, a narrative or of an argument. For example, it is customary in English to make concessions to an opposing argument before asserting one's own case ('Of course .... However ... '). This particular argumentative device, although available, is not as commonly used in languages such as Arabic or Farsi. In fact, in these languages, the equivalent of text-initial signals such as 'of course' are frequently used in a more literal sense to usher in a 'through-argument', the exact opposite of counter-argumentation. Thus, in Sample F above, for example, we have a text beginning:

> *Of course this does not mean that we should defend all clergymen.*

The natural expectation here is that there will be an opposition to this view, signaled by something like:

> 'But the majority of these men are God-fearing individuals and their honesty and integrity are beyond reproach'.

No such device is forthcoming because the source text is in fact a through-argument intended to condemn, not condone, the clergy in question.

Thus, the final court of appeal in matters like this seems to be once again the idea of socio-textual practice, particularly as related to the unit 'text' in this example. What the BBC translators have done cannot be described as domestication or foreignization, but purely and simply as blind literalism, a technique which may indeed be effectively used but only in, say, citational or pedagogic contexts.

Another example from the same speech also illustrates how pseudo-foreignization misfires badly. No Western reader can fail to notice the sustained imagery of 'blood' in the speech under discussion:

Text G
> GREETINGS to the trustees of inspiration, and to the martyred custodians of prophet-hood, who have carried the pillars of the greatness and pride of the Islamic revolution upon the shoulders of

their crimson and blood-stained commitment....

The crimson of martyrdom and the ink of blood.…

The drops of their blood and the torn-off pieces of their bodies.…

A typical reaction would be one of aversion on the part of the western reader both to the image itself and to its constant use throughout the text. From a discoursal perspective, this very persistence in sustaining an image normally does lend metaphoric expression an added communicative thrust. However, in this particular case, certain genre constraints render the reference purely socio-cultural in the source text and therefore domesticatable in the target text. Within the preamble (salutations) sub-genre, *the drops of blood and the torn-off pieces of bodies* is a direct reference to *'ashuura'*, an annual event to commemorate the martyrdom of Hassan and Hussain, sons of the Caliph Ali, the cousin of the prophet of Islam, Muhammed. In *Shi'a*-dominated countries, it is customary to mark this occasion with street processions in which wailing men flail themselves with chains until the flesh is torn and drops of blood appear.

Thus, we are here once again face to face with pseudo-foreignization. Khomeini's discursive strategy is not to incite violence or promote terrorism but to preach self-sacrifice, self-denial and truth to memory. In Farsi or Arabic, this semiotic construct happens to be relayed through the vehicle of the blood imagery. How it shapes up in the target language without producing unintended effects ought to be taken as the yardstick with which to judge its acceptability. The question now is: what do we do when faced with such difficult decisions - jettison the entire reference to this particular image or preserve it intact and in the process give rise to all kinds of unintended effects? We suggest that this discursive strategy, sustained by the 'blood' imagery, ought to be preserved but negotiated more carefully. After first mention, the translation may perhaps introduce the thematic net with an appropriate gloss. As we have shown above, it is only in this way that source text's discourse can be preserved (i.e.,. genuinely foreignized) with socio-cultural input appropriately domesticated.

In the Khomeini speech, discursive practice is thus heavily involved. But so is the structure of genre. The hybrid form political speech/religious sermon is realized in subtle ways through formulaic ways of speaking (at the beginning, middle and end). A substantial socio-cultural input upholds the

felicity of such structures and must therefore be subdued. These layers of meaning are part of the perceptions of those directly addressed in the source language and might well turn out to be alienating when rendered wholesale into the target language. Consider the finale to the above speech for example:

Text H

> So long as I live, I shall cut off the hands of the agents of America and the Soviet Union in all fields, and I am absolutely confident that all the people are in principle, as in the past, supporters of the system and of their Islamic revolution.

The socio-cultural input in this formulaic closing is part of a 'cultural code' that should not be allowed to mar the essence of what the genre (the speech/the sermon) and the overall discursive strategy are essentially about. Something like 'I shall impede with all my might' for *cut off the hands of* would perhaps be a more appropriate way of handling this situation.

The literalism in this translation shows some of the ills of foreignizing socio-cultural objects uncritically, and in the process, creating all kinds of myths. But, unless judiciously used, domestication of socio-culture is not a panacea. For example, since time immemorial, *jihad* has ceased to mean 'holy war with swords and daggers' but the term continues to attract this misleading domestication. Similarly, *fatwa* has never had anything to do with any form of, 'passing a sentence', let alone 'a death sentence'. Since the Salman Rushdi episode, however, this is how the word has come to be systematically rendered by the sensationally domesticating English-language media.

True, such myth creation cannot be entirely blamed on foreignization or domestication alone. The way we see this may simply be cast in the following terms: it is the 'strategic design' of the text which should be taken as the basis on which such translation decisions as foreignization and domestication may usefully be made. By 'design' we mean the register membership of the text, the intentionality of the text producer, and the semiotics of culture. Proper domestication is a facilitator for the expression of higher level meaning to do with one's genuine attitude to subject matter, or what we have referred to as 'socio-textual practices'.

This and similar conclusions point in the direction of yet another hypothesis: macro-structures such as genre, discourse and text are sacrosanct even if they turn out to be alien to the target reader. However, socio-cultural input, which is invariably a function of virtually intentionless fashions of

speaking, must be adapted, subdued and, if need be, jettisoned.

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