



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Corso di Laurea Magistrale
in Interpretariato e traduzione editoriale, settoriale

Tesi di Laurea

The challenge of cultural transfer in translation:
beyond words, translating society

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2021 / 2022

Abstract

This dissertation explores the practice of translation and examines the different factors involved in transposing a message from the source to the target language. There are many types of translation and strategies to adopt for effective rendering. In an attempt to review the various aspects to bear in mind when translating, such as cultural and historical background, this dissertation consists of a theoretical part (Chapters 1 and 2) and a more practical one (Chapters 3 and 4), where examples of adapted translations are proposed.

The first chapter presents the opinions of academics and scholars about the definition of culture and how it influences translation, as well as the main differences between the English and Italian languages. These variations shape the way in which the human brain thinks and perceives the world. The second chapter investigates the role of equivalence and presents some theoretical frameworks defined by some of the most prominent scholars and researchers in the field.

The third chapter provides a brief overview of the concept of globalization and how it has entailed a new model for translation, influencing the way people live, make business, and have access to different goods or services, including translation. The final part of the third chapter marks the transition from a theoretical to a more practical aspect of this thesis, in which some examples of extreme translations are introduced, such as taglines taken from recent advertising campaigns.

The fourth and final chapter is dedicated to some concrete examples of promotional material, successfully rendered into Italian thanks to an effective work of transcreation, that is the translation for marketing purposes, a practice that involves various skills, such as copywriting, which, combined with profound linguistic competence, is pivotal to the achievement of a successful translation.

Abstract

Questa tesi si prefigge l'obiettivo di esplorare la pratica della traduzione ed esamina i diversi fattori coinvolti nella trasposizione di un messaggio dalla lingua originale alla lingua di destinazione. Esistono molti tipi di traduzione e molteplici strategie da adottare per una resa efficace. Volendo considerare i vari aspetti da tener presenti durante il processo traduttivo, come, per esempio il background culturale e storico di un dato territorio, questa tesi si compone di una parte per lo più teorica (Capitoli 1 e 2) seguita da una parte di natura pratica (Capitoli 3 e 4), dove vengono proposti esempi di slogan e traduzioni adattate per la pubblicità, settore in cui il traduttore è fortemente chiamato a tenere in considerazione l'elemento culturale.

Il primo capitolo presenta le opinioni di accademici e studiosi sulla definizione di cultura, su come essa sia da considerarsi imprescindibile per la traduzione, e le principali differenze linguistiche tra la lingua inglese e quella italiana. Queste diversità caratterizzano il modo in cui i parlanti di una determinata lingua pensano e percepiscono la realtà che li circonda.

Il secondo capitolo indaga il ruolo dell'equivalenza dinamica e funzionale, presentando alcune definizioni proposte in merito al suddetto concetto dalle maggiori figure di spicco nel mondo della traduzione.

Il terzo capitolo della tesi propone una breve panoramica sul fenomeno della globalizzazione, di come quest'ultima abbia influenzato e cambiato radicalmente la maniera in cui le persone vivono, lavorano e hanno accesso a diversi beni o servizi, tra cui figura anche la traduzione. La parte finale del terzo capitolo, inoltre, segna il passaggio dall'aspetto teorico a quello più pratico dell'elaborato, in cui vengono citati alcuni esempi di traduzioni estreme, ovvero slogan tratti da campagne pubblicitarie più o meno recenti.

Il quarto e ultimo capitolo è dedicato ad alcuni esempi concreti di materiale promozionale, reso con successo in italiano grazie a un efficace lavoro di transcreazione, ossia traduzione specifica per il marketing, pratica che coinvolge diverse abilità, prima tra tutte il copywriting che, combinato con una profonda competenza linguistica, risulta fondamentale per il raggiungimento del traguardo traduttivo.

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Introduction

Commonly, knowing a language is a synonym for being able to translate. Easier said than done, as there are a variety of different factors to consider when approaching translation. The practice of translation is as ancient as humankind, people from different backgrounds have used translation to draw from each other's knowledge, learn new practices, and share useful information. Since then, however, the practice has developed and transformed: thanks to *translation studies*, new theories and methods have been implemented. Translation studies has emerged around the 1950s and paved the way for a new way of conceiving translation.

So, is it true that to be a translator, it is sufficient to be able to speak the language? Well, the answer to this question is not simple at all, but before answering it, one consideration can be made: it also depends on the amount of effort put into the translation. Good work can be considered as such if it is effective and successful in reaching the communicative intent. If the answer was “yes”, then there would be no room left aside for reasoning, as all translators would be doomed and destined to be replaced by machine translating. Fortunately, this is not the case. There is a reason why *Google Translate* has not taken over the world of translation yet, and the reason is that translating is not a mere mechanical process, where one message in language A can be transposed to language B in a blink of an eye through synonymic equivalence. To be more precise, equivalence might be the most proper solution in some cases, it all depends upon the type of text, or communicative intent, the translator wants to achieve. For instance, there are texts in which culture is a pivotal element to consider for the sake of translation, without culture a translator would be highly exposed to failure, as there might be some cultural-bound elements they might not be able to recognize, understand, and eventually, reproduce in their native language. There are different types of translations, and there are different types of messages, and an experienced translator should broaden his or her knowledge to be able to identify all the dangers with which translation is fraught.

Nowadays, translation is widely used for business purposes. Most of the time behind the request for a translation there is a specific product, movie, or service to be launched in a different market and to break the language barrier, it takes a professional to

do the job. Investing in a good translation is, therefore, fundamental to ensuring a proper communication strategy. In this field, a new practice has recently emerged: *transcreation*. Above all, it concerns the translation of marketing texts. This new discipline comes from the necessity for enterprises to produce lucrative advertising. Thanks to globalization, the economy of the various nations has changed, and the phenomenon has transformed the way businesses are conducted, therefore, companies had to find a compelling way of communicating with people. Scholars have largely discussed this practice, and not everybody agrees on the importance of transcreation: some of them do not even consider it translating, but rather, a process that allows translators to be paid more for their well-conceived performances.

My dissertation aims to prove that mastering one language is not sufficient to be a successful translator. There are different types of translations that need different approaches, a certain amount of knowledge in a specific field, and skills to be carried out. In this thesis, the role that culture owns during the process of translation is examined, to determine its effect and impact on translation. In other words, the triangle between language, culture, and translation is discussed. In the first chapter, a general overview of the definition of culture is presented, following the opinions proposed by eminent scholars, to then analyse the main linguistic discrepancy between the Italian and the English language. Language singularities, such as extralinguistic cultural-bound references, are pivotal when translating, a simple misunderstanding or a wrong interpretation of the text can lead to a translational catastrophe.

In the second chapter, the current thought of various researchers is analysed, whilst the main concepts regarding translation are described, mentioning scholars who have given pivotal contribution to the world of translation studies. This chapter aims to highlight the concept of equivalence, which has different meanings according to the context being explored. Some practical examples are also presented at the end of this brief chapter, and some taglines, and slogans, pave the way for more accurate and detailed instances in chapters 3 and 4.

The third chapter reveals how globalization has changed our way of living and working, influencing translation as well. A new concept of the translation process has emerged, to cope with the demands of a market in global expansion.

Chapter 4 is entirely dedicated to some case studies, aimed at pointing out how important the cultural element is. Without a deep knowledge of the culture and historical background of a nation, it would not be possible to provide a successful translation, resulting in enormous loss and opportunities for both personal and professional growth.

1. Culture, a general overview

The first chapter of my dissertation provides an overview of the notion of “culture”, the role of translation and how translation and culture are linked today. In this chapter the main approaches in translation studies will be presented, with a specific focus on the concept of adaptation.

Over the last few years, the recent growth of globalization has caused a loss in cultural differences, thus making life more standard to everyone. But this has not always been the case, and the phenomenon of globalization seems to conflict with the definition of culture. According to Cristina De Rossi, anthropologist at Barnet and Southgate College in London:

Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones and a million other things.

As culture is strictly related to a specific group of people belonging to a precise geographic area, there are many different types of culture. What follows is a brief presentation of the classification of different cultures as defined by researchers and professors from the Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota.

1.1. Western culture

The term “Western culture” determines the way European nations live, including those who have been massively impacted by European movement, for instance, the United States¹.

¹ Essay by Dr. Beth Harris and Dr. Steven Zucker, available at <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/start-here-apah/brief-histories-apah/a/a-brief-history-of-western-culture> (Last accessed: 27/06/2022)

Many historical events have helped shape Western culture during the past 2,500 years. The fall of Rome cleared the way for the establishment of a series of often-warring states in Europe, each with their own heritage². The Black Death of the fourteenth century reduced the population of Europe by one-third to one-half, rapidly transforming society. Because of the Plague, Christian religion gained more and more importance among European countries, focusing largely on apocalyptic themes. In addition, the disruption of trade routes between East and West set off new exploration, and ultimately, the incursion of Europeans into North and South America contributed to the diffusion of Western culture. Nowadays, its influence is largely widespread in almost every country of the world.³

1.1.2. Eastern culture

Eastern culture refers to the societal attitudes of nations in Far East Asia (counting China, Japan, Vietnam, North Korea, and South Korea) and the Indian subcontinent. Like the West, Eastern culture was intensely influenced by religion, and yet it was likewise strongly affected by the development and reaping of rice⁴. Overall, Eastern culture shows a lesser degree in terms of refinement between common society and religious theory as opposed to what happens in the West.

However, this umbrella term covers an enormous range of traditions and histories. For example, Buddhism originated in India, but it was largely overtaken by Hinduism after the twelfth century⁵. As a result, Hinduism became a major driver of culture in India, while Buddhism continued to exert influence in China and Japan. The pre-existing

² Plackett B. (2020), Why did Rome fall? Live science, available at <https://www.livescience.com/why-did-rome-fall.html> (Last accessed 27/06/2022)

³ McNeill H. W. (1969), History of Western Civilization, The university of Chicago Press.

⁴ Fuller D. Q. (2012), Pathways to Asian Civilizations: Tracing the Origins and Spread of Rice and Rice Cultures, available at <https://thericejournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1007/s12284-011-9078-7> (last accessed 27/6/2022)

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Buddhism/The-demise-of-Buddhism-in-India> (Last accessed 27/06/2022)

cultural ideas in these areas also influenced religion. Centuries of interactions — both peaceful and aggressive — also led to these cultures influencing one another. Japan, for example, controlled or occupied Korea in some form between 1876 and 1945. During this time, many Koreans were pressured or forced into replacing their names with Japanese surnames⁶.

1.1.3. Latin culture

A large portion of the Spanish-speaking countries are believed to be linked with Latin culture. Latin America can be identified with those parts of the Central America, South America, and Mexico where Spanish, or Portuguese are the main languages spoken by the population of the area. Initially, the expression “Latin America” was used by French geographers to separate Anglo dialects from Romance (Latin-based) dialects. Spain and Portugal, which are part of Europe, are seen as the major influencers of what is known as Latin culture.

Therefore, Latin cultures are incredibly different, and many blends indigenous traditions with the Spanish language and Catholicism brought by Spanish and Portuguese colonizers. Many of these cultures were also influenced by African cultures due to enslaved Africans being brought to the Americas starting from the seventeenth century, according to the African American Registry⁷. These influences are particularly strong in Brazil and in Caribbean nations.

1.1.4. Middle Eastern culture

The term "Middle Eastern culture" is another umbrella term that includes a huge diversity of cultural practices, religious beliefs, and daily habits. The region is the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and is home to dozens of languages, from Arabic to

⁶ <https://www.historychannel.it/it> (Last accessed 27/06/2022)

⁷ Gates Jr. L., Appiah K. A. (1999), African American Registry, Black history in Latin America, a story, available at <https://aaregistry.org/story/blacks-in-latin-america-a-brief-history/> (Last accessed 27/06/2022)

Hebrew to Turkish to Pashto. While there is a wide range of religions in the Middle East, the main one is, by number of numbers, Islam, which has played a large role in the cultural development of this region.

Middle Eastern culture has also been shaped by the Ottoman Empire, which ruled a U-shaped ring around the eastern Mediterranean between the fourteenth and early twentieth centuries. Areas that were part of the Ottoman Empire are known for distinctive architecture drawn from Persian and Islamic influences⁸.

1.1.5. African culture

In the mainland of Africa there is the cradle of Humankind. Human life started on this mainland. Africa is home to various tribes, ethnic and social gatherings. One of the key components of this culture is the vast number of ethnic gatherings all through the 54 nations.

At present, Africa is isolated into two social gatherings: North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. This is on the grounds that Northwest Africa has solid binds to Middle East, while Sub-Africa offers chronicled, physical, and social qualities that are altogether different from North Africa. The unforgiving condition has been a substantial figure the advancement of Sub-Saharan Africa culture, as there are various dialects, foods, craftsmanship and melodic styles that have sprung up among the far-flung populaces.

Africa has the longest history of human habitation of any continent: Humans originated there and began to migrate to other areas of the world around 400,000 years ago. African culture varies not only between national boundaries, but within them. One of the key features of this culture is the large number of ethnic groups throughout the 54 countries on the continent. Africa has imported and exported its culture for centuries: East African trading ports were a crucial link between East and West as early as the seventh century. This led to complex urban centres along the eastern coast, often connected by the movement of raw materials and goods from landlocked parts of the continent.

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Middle-East> (Last accessed 27/06/2022)

It would be impossible to reduce the complexity of all African culture to one feature alone. Northwest Africa has strong ties to the Middle East, while Sub-Saharan Africa shares historical, physical, and social characteristics that are very different from North Africa.⁹

1.2. The definition of culture

The word culture draws its origin from the Latin words root colo + suffix -ere, the meaning of its root is “to cultivate”. Culture includes a variety of human elements such as language, food, religion, traditions, customs, and manners as well as values, and thoughts.¹⁰

As Williams observes, the concept of culture is considered one of the most complicated in the English language¹¹. To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts, and feelings about the world in ways which will be understood by each other¹². More than that, culture is something that characterizes and distinguishes mankind from the animal kingdom.

Bakhtin views culture from another perspective; he compares one culture with another¹³. He states that in the realm of culture, outsidership is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that a foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly: a meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come

⁹ Bowden R. (2007) Africa, Wayland.

¹⁰ De Luca S. (2005), Enciclopedia dei ragazzi, Treccani, available at:
https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cultura_%28Enciclopedia-dei-ragazzi%29/#:~:text=L'origine%20del%20termine,apicoltura%2C%20e%20cos%20C3%AC%20via
(Last accessed 27/06/2022)

¹¹ Williams R. (1983), Writing in society, Biddles Ltd.

¹² Bluedorn A. C. (1998), An Interview with Anthropologist Edward T. Hall, Sage publications, Inc.

¹³ Lachmann R. (1989), Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counterculture, University of Minnesota Press.

into contact with another foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings. New questions arise when dealing with a foreign culture, questions that it did not raise itself; answers need to be sought in it; and the foreign culture responds by revealing its new aspects and new semantic depths¹⁴.

Culture, however, must be the product of learning and knowledge. It is a collection of people, behaviour, and emotions. Statements people make and actions they perform are invariably a product of their culture¹⁵. Ward Goodenough, an American anthropologist, assumes that culture consists of all the elements a person has to know, or believe, in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members.¹⁶ Under this exception, culture is not perceived as a material phenomenon, it is not made up of concrete things, it is an organization of behaviours, and emotions. It is the idea of things that people share among the community. In other words, culture is shared by several people having a set of beliefs, and that express themselves using a common language to convey their thoughts and messages within their social context.

1.2.1. Edward T. Hall's Cultural Iceberg Model

In 1976, Edward Hall, an American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher, developed the iceberg analogy of culture¹⁷. Although the interpretation of this theory may vary among the researchers, this model has been used for many years to represent the nature of culture, which is the iceberg. Hall believes there are some features that could be seen from the surface, as they appear to be above the water, but there are also some

¹⁴ Hall J. K., Vitanova G., Marchenkova L. (2005), Introduction: Dialogue with Bakhtin on Second and Foreign Language Learning, Routledge.

¹⁵ Hymes D. (1996), *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice*, Taylor & Francis Group.

¹⁶ Janet W. D. Dougherty and James W. Fernandez (1981), *American Ethnologist*, Wiley.

¹⁷ Katan D., Taibi M. (2021), *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*, Routledge.

substantial parts concealed beneath¹⁸. Most of those underwater features have a vast influence on our cultural behaviours. Important to say, most of those characteristics are completely neglected, although every single element included in the hypothetical iceberg has a role in communication¹⁹.

The visible aspects include elements of traditions, such as food and typical trends; the covered part encompasses the concept of faith and leadership, the definition of love and friendship, or the conversational approaches in various social contexts. The theory developed by Hall is useful to understand the high degree of impediment in translating cultural references.

In addition to that, Hall claims that the only way to learn the inner culture of others is to actively participate in their own culture. What is possible to learn from this theory is that a new culture cannot be judged merely by what one sees when one first meets it. On the contrary, it takes time to get to know other people from different cultural backgrounds and connect with them. Only by doing so, one can uncover the values and beliefs that underlie the behaviour of that given society.

¹⁸ Hall T. E. (1976), *Beyond Culture*, Doubleday.

¹⁹ Katan D., Taibi M. *Ibidem*.

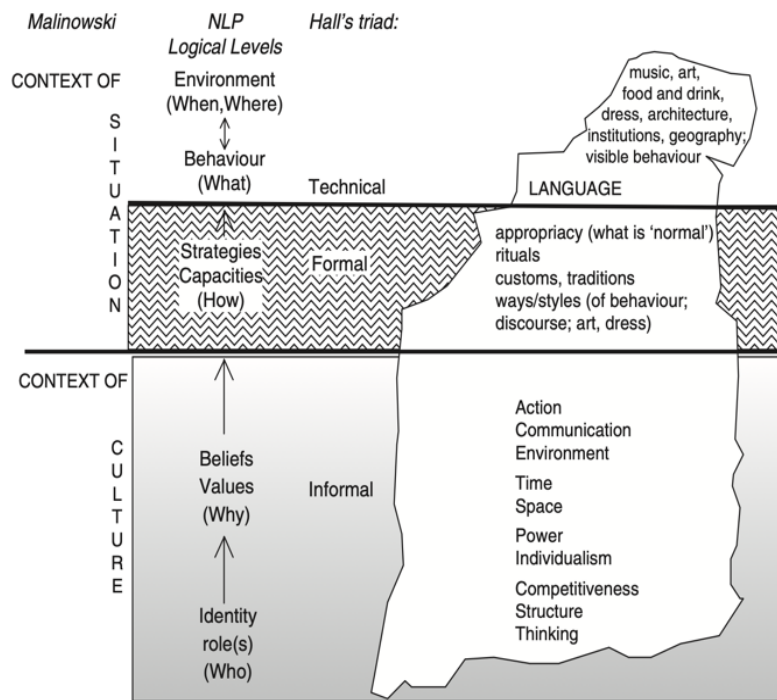


Figure 1 “The iceberg representation of culture” (Brake, Medina-Walker, Walker 1995)

As it is possible to notice in the image above, the iceberg is divided into three main classes: technical culture, formal and informal culture, which is why the image above is also called the “Hall’s Triad”²⁰. The first feature, technical culture, is defined as communication at the level of science. It defines everything that can be measured and that does not have a dual meaning, at this level we find visible behaviours, food and drink, institutions, and music. The second level defined by Hall is formal culture, which includes rituals, customs, and traditions. This level allows us to ponder on the fact that we are not completely aware of the routines of life until there is a change in them. Consequently, every element of this part is right below the line of the water. The third part of the iceberg consists in informal culture; it includes elements such as communication, perception of time and space, individualism, competitiveness, and many others. Since those aspects are considered as informal, according to Hall, there are no rules that concern the elements in this class. They are not learnt or taught but acquired by living in that specific culture.

²⁰ Katan D. (1999), *Translating Culture, an introduction for Translators, interpreters and mediators*, Routledge.

The levels themselves are based on Hall's 'Triad of Culture', which serves to putting the concept forward, dividing aspects of culture into what is unconcealed, semi-visible and unobservable (Figure 1). The frames below the water line are progressively more covered, but at the same time closer to our undiscussed convictions about what we know of world, and of our cultural distinctiveness. The layers also reflect the various ways in which we get acquainted with culture: practically, through explicit instruction; theoretically, through trial-and-error modelling; and unofficially, through the unconscious inculcation of principles and world views²¹. The extent to which a translator should intervene (i.e., interpret and manipulate rather than operate a purely linguistic transfer) will be in accordance with our beliefs about which frame(s) most influence translation. Translation scholars tend to focus on the more hidden levels, while practitioners are more concerned with what is visible on the surface.²² Throughout this analysis, it is possible to understand that culture is extremely complex, the several analyses that scholar, such as Hall, carried out more than twenty years ago have had repercussions in the study of culture and translation. Other researchers like Brake, Medina-Walker, and Walker developed in 1995 an evolution of the Iceberg Theory, and many other scholars such as Katan are still continuing their studies in this field²³. Although more than sixty years have passed since Hall proposed his iceberg theory, his model is still valid and taken into account today.²⁴

1.2.2. The cultural struggle for power

Sociologists and scholars of cultural studies tend to focus on the influence that culture exercises on society and institutions in terms of dominating ideologies. Culture is seen as the result of the pressures that social structures apply to social action²⁵. These pressures shape and manipulate the individual.

²¹ Baker M., Saldanha G. (2009), *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Routledge.

²² Baker M., Saldanha G. (2009), *Ibidem*.

²³ Akbari A., Shahnazari M. (2014), *HomoKult: A New Model in Translation*, Sage journals.

²⁴ Katan D., Taibi M., *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Jenks C. (1993), *Cultural Reproduction*, Routledge.

Two other paramount differences distinguish this approach from the traditional anthropological model. First, individuals cannot be assigned to ‘a culture’ in this view. Instead, they have many cultural provenances, are variously privileged or suppressed from different perspectives, and will negotiate a position within a set of complex cultural systems that are constantly competing for power. Within translation studies, scholars drawing on polysystem theory²⁶, postcolonial theory²⁷ and narrative theory²⁸ all share this assumption. Secondly, the system of culture itself is constantly subject to questioning. At this level, translators intervene between competing systems of power, no longer to facilitate but to participate in constructing the world, acknowledging that texts are carriers of ideologies²⁹. The translator, at this point, is no longer a detached mediator but is conscious of being ‘an ethical agent of social change³⁰, or ‘an activist’ involved in narrating the world from the very beginning³¹. Similarly, Venuti’s preference for foreignizing strategies focuses on the opposition to the global hegemony of English³², hegemony that communicates and normalizes specific cultural values (e.g., capitalist, colonial). Intervention at this level clearly raises many ethical questions; in practice, the difficulty of unsettling this level of culture means that only a fine line separates a successful translation, which resists generic conventions, from introducing a new way of writing or way of thinking. Ultimately, culture should be understood not only as a series of pre-settled frames, but as a combined system, in a constant state of mutability, through which textual signs are negotiated and reinterpreted according to context and individual viewpoint.

No matter what the circumstances, one thing is always true: culture is a lively part of all human beings that constantly evolves. If, on the one hand, our world interconnects

²⁶ Xizhi ZHANG (2014) Application of Polysystem Theory in the Field of Translation, China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/25723618.2014.12015480>

²⁷ Bassnett S. Trivedi H. (1998), Postcolonial Translation, Theory and Practice, Routledge.

²⁸ Baker M. (2019), Translation and Activism, Emerging patterns of narrative community, Routledge.

²⁹ Hatim B., Mason I. (1997), The Translator as Communicator, Routledge.

³⁰ Tymoczko M. (2006), Translation: Ethics, Ideology, Action, The Massachusetts Review, Inc.

³¹ Baker M. (2019), *Ibidem*.

³² Venuti L. (1998), The Scandals of Translation, Towards an Ethics of Difference, Routledge.

through culture, without which our roots would mean nothing, on the other, our existence is riddled by conflicts associated with religion, ethnicity, and ethical beliefs: the fundamentals which make up culture. Culture is a flowing concept, that is the reason why it is very difficult to give it a proper definition.

We can assume that change is inevitable, but most people see value in respecting and preserving the past. This makes culture a very delicate matter that can be conveyed from one people to another thanks to translation only. Translation is a bridge that connects two or more different worlds. Nevertheless, the question of classifying translation activity by subject domains, topics, genres, text types, text functions or other criteria is not unproblematic³³.

³³ Baker M., Saldanha G., (2009), *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Routledge.

1.3. Cultural translatability

Another group of elements that affect a specific culture and its perception is behaviour. Each culture has its own rules about behaviour; rules about what is right or wrong have always existed and they have changed over time. In addition, etiquette has a decisive role in the constitution of a culture: several attitudes that may seem “normal” in some cultures can become rude or inappropriate in others³⁴. This is particularly important in commercial products, which are made to be sold, and it is always necessary to make sure that none of the elements, especially in advertising, proves offensive for the target culture.

Translation has always played a pivotal role in linking cultures and nations, stimulating other to draw knowledge and wisdom from one another. Not to mention that it has also functioned as a channel to transmit the cultural heritage from generation to generation. It is true that recent translation theories can be considered as the product of last century’s modern way of thinking, but this product would have never been possible without the knowledge that had formerly been gathered by previous generations of researchers and scholars. It goes without saying that cultural features are paramount in influencing translation. That is the reason why, nowadays, not only does modern translation deal with linguistic aspects of vocabulary, but also with cultural aspects, as undervalued cultural differences may cause even greater incomprehension and issues for a translator than linguistic differences. Translating involves not just two languages, but a transfer from one culture to another³⁵. It is possible to get to the conclusion that both the cultural and social backgrounds of source language texts are fundamental to mastering the challenging tasks that occur during the translation process into the target language.

As previously stated, whenever a translation concerns two languages and two identities, a translator gets exposed to more pending issues. Language is not a nomenclature³⁶, it would be too easy to find synonymic equivalence from language A and transfer it to language B, without considering several factors that may lead to different

³⁴ Katan D. (1999), *Ibidem*.

³⁵ Dickins J., Hervey S., Higgins I. (2002), *Think Arabic Translation, A Course in Translation Method: Arabic to English*, Routledge.

³⁶ Culler J. (1976), *Presupposition, and Intertextuality*; The Johns Hopkins University Press.

choices in terms of style, vocabulary or meaning. Therefore, translators should confront themselves with the hard task of conveying, or rather, not conveying the expected meaning because of cultural issues, and to be more precise because of a mistreat of cultural words. Put it differently, the task of the translator at this level is to transfer the terms and concepts present in the source text with minimum loss, so that what can be found in the target text is somehow equivalent to what can be found in the source text.

Nida confers equal importance on both linguistic and cultural differences between the source language and the target language and concludes that differences between cultures could cause even more struggling for the translators than differences in language structure would do. Therefore, translators are permanently confronted with the thorny issue of how to treat cultural words and phrases implicit in a source text and with the way of finding the most appropriate technique to successfully transmitting these words and phrases in the target language.³⁷ It is possible to assume that the most problematic aspect of translation is doubtlessly finding the right equivalence, whether cultural or linguistic.

Translation studies are often concerned with the triangular relationship among language, culture, and translation, paying particular attention to the so-called ECR (Extralinguistic Cultural-bound References). As a result, it is possible to assume that cultural distance is one of the most demanding tasks a translator must bear in mind when getting down to translating.

1.3.1. Linguistic discrepancies

The reason for the choice of Italian and English is that the rendition between them provides an ideal case study of translation, above all, when talking about commercial translation since these languages are very different in many respects. Italian and English languages drawn their origin from two different families: Italian is a Romance language, whereas English comes from Germanic, Saxon, and Latin languages. Although both languages are influenced by Latin words, English words that come from Latin, when used, contribute to creating a writing style that can be perceived as stylistically hypotactic.

³⁷ Eugene A. Nida (1964), *Toward a science of translating*, Brill Publishers.

Among the several differences concerning these two languages, there is the way Italian and English people think and express themselves: English is concise, brief, characterized by short sentences, which leave no space to long and complex periods. On the contrary, Italian is characterized by a prolix style, rich in vocabulary that aim at emphasising the message the communicator wants to convey. These differences are even more noticeable when examining a written text.³⁸ To enrich our list of arguments, one major variation that differs English people from Italian people is the way they perceive time. These differentiation results in a great difficulty for Italians to fully understand English tenses. More than that, the Italian language allows for a flexible word order, whereas there is little possibility for the English language to combine words differently, as its order is quite fixed: English tends to follow a SVO word order, whereas this combination can be completely twisted in Italian³⁹.

All these instances and examples help us understand how differently English people speak compared to Italian people, leading to a completely diverse way of thinking, and behaving. All these variations contribute to shaping a distinct mentality that results in different writing styles and approaches. It goes without saying that languages differ. As previously mentioned, this is particularly true when the two languages stem from entirely different language families, such as in the case of Italian and English. Neither are two languages ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached⁴⁰.

Different languages thus entail different cultures and societies. Each society has its own unique nature, which involves all its aspects, traditions, customs, laws, and norms. From all these variations, a different use of the language paved its way through. These differences derive primarily from different historical or religious backgrounds and draw their diversity from different experiences that each culture underwent. This concept is also emphasised by the hypothesis of linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir–Whorf

³⁸ Sauter K., Verspoor M., (2000), *English Sentence Analysis, An introductory course*, Jhon Benjamins Publishing Company.

³⁹ Coles R. (2010), *A Companion to Grammar and information Structures*, QuattroVenti.

⁴⁰ Lander (1965), *The Niger Journal of Richard and John Lander*, Routledge.

hypothesis, which suggests that the structure of a language affects its speakers' worldview or cognition, and thus people's perceptions are relative to their spoken language⁴¹.

1.3.2. Language and culture

As culture comprises a collection of societal factors, language is inevitably a part of culture. If language is believed to be a series of habits concerning behaviour, and if culture is the total set of habits which men learn, in this regard language seems to be a part of culture, a subset of those habits and traditions⁴².

Language events do not take place in isolation from other events; rather they operate within a wider framework of human activity. Any piece of language is therefore part of a situation, and so has a content, a relationship with the circumstances. Indeed, it is this relationship between the substance and form of a piece of language, on the one hand, and the extra-linguistic circumstances in which it occurs, on the other, which gives what is normally called 'meaning' to utterances.

Each culture has its own specific associations and heritage symbols. As a result, individuals grow up in the midst of a larger community, thus acquiring vast background knowledge coupled with numerous beliefs, habits and values may help the translator to be close to the source text culture (STC)⁴³. These matters are reflected in a person's use of language since language is said to be the prerequisite for the transmission of basic aspects of human life, such as political, legal, and religious systems which are transmitted by linguistic methods of communication⁴⁴. Language does not exist as a separate unit from the culture of any given society. It goes without saying that the mere content of a language is deeply linked to culture. Each language has its own geographical area wherein

⁴¹ Giesbrecht R. (2009), *The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis*, Gring Verlag.

⁴² Lander, *Ibidem*.

⁴³ N. E. Enkvist, J. Spencer & M. J. Gregory (1964), *Linguistics and Style*, London: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁴ Greenberg C. (1971), *Art, and Culture: Critical Essay*, Beacon Press Boston.

the inhabitants conjointly speak it, thus setting them apart from those people who do not know the idiom⁴⁵.

This intimate relationship between language and culture can also be found in the use of cultural terms. Such terms are the result of social interaction, political affairs, and historical background, including religious, economic, and geographical aspects of a given society. In other words, cultural terms, and conceptualization, are those elements that belong specifically to a certain cultural identity.

Important is to delineate the techniques that might be used to translate culture-specific concepts when it comes to practice⁴⁶. Cultural expressions to be translated are also known as Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference (ECR). Translating extralinguistic cultural references (ECR) is one of the most onerous challenges with which translators have to deal, as ECRs often affect unique aspects of a culture. Such terms are frequently unknown to the members of another culture and have no equivalence in other languages. Various strategies can be applied to translate ECRs. Among them is substitution: this strategy involves removing the source text ECR and replacing it with another term, either with a different ECR or with some sort of paraphrase, which does not necessarily involve an ECR, to come up with an explicative portion of text that allows understanding. These elements can be considered as entities and processes, which have an extralinguistic reference element, such as food, people, or customs⁴⁷. However, to fully comprehend the difference between linguistic and extralinguistic nature of cultural elements, a distinction is required between the two. Linguistic cultural references are closely linked to distinct aspects of a language, such as idioms or metaphors; whilst ECRs are connected to the aspects that do not belong to the field of language, but rather, they refer to the real world⁴⁸.

⁴⁵ Sapir E. (2002), *The Psychology of Culture: A Course of Lectures*, Mouton De Gruyter.

⁴⁶ Orudari M. (2016), *Translation procedures, strategies and methods*, Biology publishing.

⁴⁷ Pedersen J. (2005), *How is Culture Rendered in Subtitles?* MuTra.

⁴⁸ Mustapić L., Šutalo A. (2020) *Beyond Hermeneutics, challenging traditional approaches to literary and linguistic studies*, Cell thematic Issues.

1.3.3. The inference of cultural singularities in translation

Considering cultural divergencies can contribute to finding the right approach, especially when it comes to translating between two such culturally different languages as Italian and English. No message can be fully conveyed unless the information contained in the language section is followed by background knowledge of the reality expressed in the message.

Members of societies that share the same language have higher possibilities of being members of the same cultural community. This means that they share customs, behaviours, and principles as well as knowledge about the past and foundations of their community. These preconditions, which allow them to create and apprehend messages in their own idiom, should always be provided when the same message is about to be transmitted in a different linguistic code.

Dickins considers cultural differences to be of a delicate essence needing an independent strategy, rather than literal translation, which can be referred to as cultural transposition. He claims:

General cultural differences are sometimes bigger obstacles to successful translation than linguistic differences. We shall use the term cultural transposition for the main types and degrees of departure from literal translation that one may resort to in the process of transferring the contents of an ST from one culture to another⁴⁹.

When dealing with literary texts, some stylistic nuances may influence the course of the narrative discourse. Put it differently, although translations seem to be successful in transmitting the foremost message of a novel, they may undeniably fail to arouse the same degree of entertainment enjoyed by the readers of the source text. Considering Nida and Taber's point of view that the response of the receptor to the translated message must be

⁴⁹ Dickins J. (2010), *Junction in English and Arabic: Syntactic, discorsal and denotative features*, Journal of pragmatics, Elsevier, pp. 60

compared with the way in which the original receptors presumably reacted to the message when it was given in its original setting.⁵⁰

Catford, however, affirms that cultural untranslatability can be less troublesome than linguistic untranslatability:

This may lead to what we have called cultural untranslatability. This type of untranslatability is usually less 'absolute' than linguistic untranslatability⁵¹.

Newmark claims that the translation of cultural terms usually leads to potential issues unless there is cultural overlap between the source and the target language and its readership. He states that: cultural objects may be referred to by a relatively culture-free generic term or classifier plus the various additions in different cultures and one has to account for these additions, which may appear in the course of the source language text.⁵²

Venuti suggests that translation strategies “involve the basic tasks of choosing the foreign text to be translated and developing a method to translate it”.⁵³

For some translators, cultural divergences might be even more challenging a task than grammatical differences. A translator is required to be acquainted with the source language cultural background, to effectively deal with culture-bound terms. The translator should ideally have the same level of understanding of the cultures including both the source language and target language.⁵⁴

Larson⁵⁵ also affirms that in the case of similar cultures the conditions are not the same:

⁵⁰ Nida E. A., Taber C. R. (1969), *The theory and practice of Biblical Translation*, Brill Academic Pub.

⁵¹ Catford, J. C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 99

⁵² Newmark P. (2008), *Approaches to Translation*, Pergamon Press, pp. 94-102

⁵³ Venuti L. (1998), *The Scandals of Translation, Towards an Ethics of Difference*, Routledge, pp. 80

⁵⁴ Nord C. (1991), *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-oriented Text Analysis*, Rodopi.

⁵⁵ Larson, M.L. (1984) *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence*. University Press of America, Lanham, MD, pp. 95

When the cultures are similar, there is less difficulty in translating. This is because both languages will probably have terms that are more or less equivalent for the various aspects of the culture. When the cultures are very different, it is often difficult to find equivalent lexical items.

2. Equivalence in translation

The second chapter of my dissertation deals with the birth of Translation Studies, which led researchers to inquire into different theories and concepts related to translation, among which the notion of equivalence gained massive attention.

Equivalence has been widely debated among scholars, who devoted their research activity and their time to the identification of new techniques and strategies. Trying to give a proper definition to the word translation is everything but a simple task, sure is that mankind has always been fascinated by this practice. Yet, it is only during the 1950s and 60s that scholars start to collect different considerations, and research papers into a new discipline dedicated to the study of the translation phenomena.⁵⁶ Between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Noam Chomsky's generative grammar theory is used as a starting point for the birth of the discipline of translation studies⁵⁷.

Chomsky assumes the existence of structural rules in a linguistic expression, rules that can generate one univocal and coherent construct considered to be the basis of all linguistics. This potential, common to all languages, is defined as "*deep structure*". In generative grammar, the deep structure is the basic syntactic structure of a sentence. The deep structure is the manifestation that recognizes the ways sentences can be examined and interpreted. Deep structures are created by phrase-structure rules, and surface structures are derived from deep structures by a series of transformations. Thanks to a sequence of transformative principles, deep structure is converted into the surface structure, that is, namely, the linguistic product.⁵⁸ The most relevant aspect of Chomsky's theories, applied in the field of translation, is the assumption of the existence of universal linguistic properties, that are shared by all languages. Chomsky's work represented a turning point for scholars, who drew from the theory the idea that everything could be translated if languages share the same starting point. If there is a deep structure, then the concept will always be the same and translation is always possible⁵⁹. Chomsky, however,

⁵⁶ Munday, J. (2001) *Introducing Translation Studies*, London: Routledge.

⁵⁷ Chomsky N. (1965), *Aspects of the theory of Syntax*, the MIT press.

⁵⁸ Chomsky, N. (1957), *Syntactic structure*, Mouton & Co.

⁵⁹ Halliday, M. A. K. (1985), *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London: Arnold.

has never fully supported or rejected the association between deep structure and translation.

2.1. John Catford and beyond

The earliest linguistic approach to the study of translation phenomena was the concept of equivalence, which consisted in transporting the message from one language to another, adopting a symmetry between different linguistic codes. In 1965, John Catford published his essay “*Linguistic theories of translation*”⁶⁰, giving his prominent contribution to Translation Studies. Important to notice in his work is his interpretation of translation as textual replacement rather than transfer of meaning, and his language-bound concept of meaning itself, aspects that have been largely investigated by researchers and scholars.

2.1.1. The nature of Catford’s theory

Catford based his theory of translation on a precise theory of linguistics: he assumes that a theory of translation has to do with a specific relationship between languages and is, therefore, an appendix of Comparative Linguistics. Reasonably, the essay begins with an explication of the translation process, and then defines a typology. Catford’s point of view is that translation must be intended as the replacement of textual material in one language (Source Language) with equivalent textual material in another language (Target Language). From his definition two central notions are worthy special attention: ‘textual material’ and ‘equivalent’. The definition of “textual material” points out that it is not the entirety of a source language text which is translated, that is, replaced by target language equivalents.

Catford believed that a fundamental distinction had to be made between replacing source language textual material with equivalent target language material and replacing it with *non-equivalent* material. The former is the denotation of translation itself, and the latter is an aspect of the representation of the concept of “total” translation.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Catford J.C. (1965), *Linguistic Theory of Translation*, Oxford University Press.

⁶¹ Chesterman, A. (2012), *Catford Revisited*. In: Santos, D., Lindén, K., Ng’ang’a, W. (eds) *Shall We Play the Festschrift Game?* Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.

2.1.2. Equivalence and correspondence

Catford drew a very important conclusion when observing the distinction between textual experience and formal correspondence. A textual equivalent, he argues, is any target language text or segment of text which is observed on a particular occasion to be the equivalent of a given source language text or segment of text. This conception is quite compatible to Toury's⁶² reasoning that "a translation is any target language text that is accepted as conforming to target language norms about what a translation is supposed to be". In other words, his point is that any formulation of translation is culture-bound. According to Catford, equivalence depends on the point of view of the observer. The observer is an experienced bilingual or translator. As a result, a portion of text can be defined as equivalent assuming that a qualified translator believes it is. This point of view has also been shared by Anthony Pym in more recent times.⁶³ Equivalence is, hence, given by skilled translators, and it is up to clients and readers to welcome the solution proposed by experts.

Catford relied on the subjective opinion of a capable translator, rather than considering the viewpoint of a certain community, or standards, and this inevitably makes his formulation more personal: just one language expert can be considered sufficient to achieve a successful translation.

Some conclusions can be drawn from his work: in the first place, Catford's improbable supposition that these capable translators will automatically acknowledge what is or what is not equivalent, together with the implicit conjecture that there is only one equivalent within a specific context. Presumably, such acknowledgment is degree-dependant; in other words, that perceptions about equivalence must also be degree-dependant, according to who is judging, to the circumstances, to the function of the appraisal, and many other factors.

⁶² Toury, G. (1995), *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*, Amsterdam: Benjamins.

⁶³ Pym, A. (2004) *The Moving Text*, Amsterdam: Benjamins.

2.2. Anthony Pym's theories of natural and directional equivalence in translation

According to Anthony Pym the notion of equivalence represents a key word in. Diving into his work, it is possible to understand his viewpoint about natural equivalence and directional equivalence. In Pym's opinion, "the first type of equivalence, natural equivalence, shows what languages do before translation; the other, directional equivalence, is concerned with what they can do."⁶⁴ More precisely, directional equivalence is an asymmetric relation where the creation of an equivalent by translating in a specific way does not imply that the same degree of equivalence will be reached when translating into the original language. The degree of equivalence depends on the translator's choices and experience." Let us examine the sentence: "like a bull in a China shop". In Italian this sentence would be translated: "come un elefante in una cristalleria", some sort of equivalent to express the intention and meaning of the metaphor, but that does not translate literary the English sentence. Now if we were to translate back into English, it would not be structured as the original sentence.

Pym believed that everything that was written or said in one language could have the same value, and the same function, when translated into the target language. He believes that "the relation between the source text and the translation is then one of equivalence (*equal value*), no matter whether the relation is at the level of form or function. Equivalence does not mean that languages do not differ; rather, it just means values can be the same. The various theories sharing this assumption can be fitted into a broad *equivalence paradigm*, which can be broken down into two sub-paradigms. In the sub-paradigm, things of equal value are presumed to exist before performing a translation. It means that it makes no difference whether a translation is performed to transpose from language A into language B or vice versa. This kind of equivalence is thought to be *natural*, and it contrasts with *directional equivalence*". The notion of natural equivalence is also close to the idea many

⁶⁴ Pym A., (2008), Natural and directional equivalence in theories of translation, John Benjamins publishing company.

translators, clients, and translation users share about translation. Therefore, it should thus be respected in all its intricacy.⁶⁵

2.3. Eugene Nida's functional equivalence.

The American linguistic Eugene Nida, with his two major works, "*Toward a Science of Translating*", published in 1964, and "*The theory and Practice of Translation*", published 1969, marked a new beginning in the field of translation practice and theory. The core of his work is to consider intelligibility as something that can be reached in terms of impact of the message, not as something that can be obtained in terms of comprehension of the words through grammatically correct sentences. Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style, and "there should be a high degree of equivalence of response, or the translation will have failed to accomplish its purpose".⁶⁶ Put it differently, the one who translates the text should find the unknown Message 2 from the equation $E(M1) = E(M2)$, where $M1 = M2$ is not necessarily valid. The author, or the source (S), transmits the message (M1) to the source text reader, or the receptor 1 (R1); the translator, who is both the receptor (R) and the source (S), replicates (translates) the message (M2) for the target text reader, or the receptor 2 (R2); and the translation critic, who is qualified as both the receptor (R) and the source (S), makes a comparison between the two messages (M1 and M2) and judges whether M2 is "loyal" to M1.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Pym A. (2014), *Exploring translation theories*, Routledge

⁶⁶ Nida. E. (1969), *The theory and practice of Translation*, E.J. Brill, pp.12

⁶⁷ Nida, E. A., Taber C. (1969) *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, Leiden: E. J. Brill.

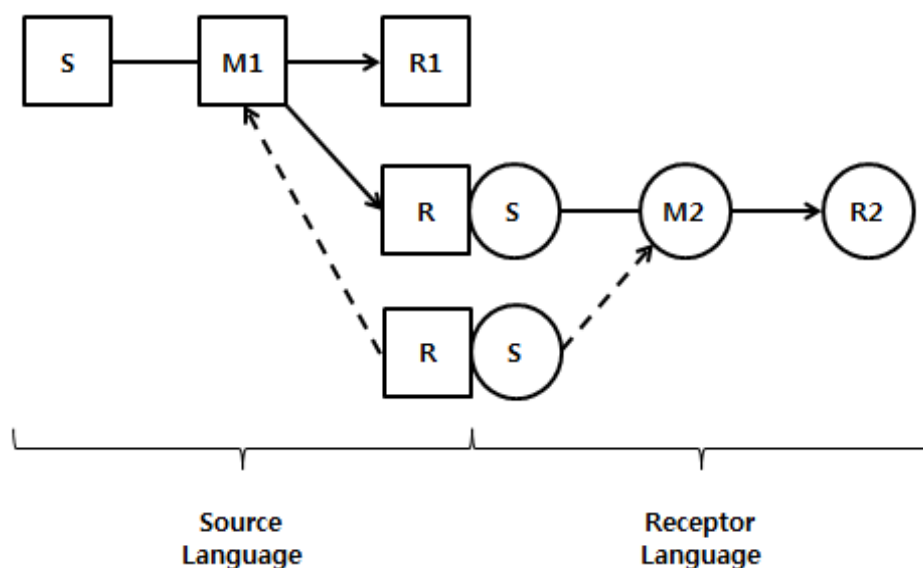


Figure 2 “Traditional Focus of Translation, Dynamic Equivalence: Nida’s Perspective and Beyond”, 1969.

In addition to that, Nida insisted that “words only have meaning in terms of the culture of which they are a part.”⁶⁸ In other words, language plays a decisive role in perceiving the environment surrounding us, meaning the typical structures of a language determine the way people see and understand the world. In expressing this concept, Nida is quoting the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis⁶⁹ of linguistic or cultural relativism. Therefore, languages have developed over the centuries according to the issues and problems of their native speakers: there is an intimate interdependence between language and habitat. For instance, some cultures have plenty of words to identify snow as a meteorological phenomenon, because they are forced to deal with it for a much longer period than other areas of the world. Cultural items and words have always been perceived as paramount to shaping mankind’s way of thinking, the latter does not depend merely on psychological features or deep-structured elements.

According to some scholars, Nida’s approach to translation gives a great linguistic and cultural freedom to translators, seen as the true receivers of the message in the first place. An approach that goes against the major dominant belief of the century, which

⁶⁸ Nida E. (1964), *Towards a Theory of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leiden: Brill.

⁶⁹ Hussein B. A. (2012), *The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis Today, theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 642-646, ACADEMY PUBLISHER.

promoted literal adherence to translation and encouraged technical exactness.⁷⁰ Nida rejected this way of approaching a translation, his aim was to render the message of a text as clear as possible to the potential reader, who might belong to a completely different culture. Nida's theories were therefore extremely pragmatic: the main target of a successful translation would be the impact on the readers belonging to the foreign culture.

The scope of a translator is becoming aware of linguistic and cultural distances between source and target cultures, adopting aimed strategies that enable him or her to bridge the gap and preserve the sake of communication. The aim is to determine the 'universal' content of the original and to transmit it to the readers of the language B so that their reaction is essentially the same as that of the original readers of the text in the language A.

Nida paid particular attention to the reader's reaction, probably because he dedicated most of his life to the project of translating the Bible. Nida's practical approach does not prioritize the form of the text, but rather, focuses on the function of the text itself: the message contained in the Holy Bible had to educate and transmit the word of God, it had to inspire certain reactions in the readers, and help them adopt correct behaviours. Such emphasis on the response of the receptor is based on Nida's insight that translation is a multifunctional communication, which also performs expressive and imperative functions, as well as an informative one. Nida puts special emphasis on the expressive function: "one of the most essential, and yet often neglected, elements is the expressive factor, for people must also feel as well as understand what is said"⁷¹.

Moreover, a translator is asked to make semantic adjustments. All the idioms, figurative meanings etc. should not be transposed literally, rather, they should be replaced with their functional equivalents. For example, in English-Italian translation, the English metaphorical idiom "the elephant in the room" should not be translated literally into Italian, but be replaced with an Italian idiomatic expression of equal value, or, if not possible, by a short paraphrase explaining the meaning of the original: "il problema che tutti possono vedere, ma di cui nessuno vuole parlare" (back-translation into English: the

⁷⁰ Nida, Eugene A. (2003), *Fascinated by Languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

⁷¹ Nida E. (1969), *Ibidem*, pp. 25

problem everyone knows about, but that no-one wants to deal with). Despite the discrepancy of the lexical meaning, the replaced target language idiom performs equivalent functions: it maintains the message and impacts the receptor in substantially the same manner as the source language idiom. This is in line with Catford's textual equivalence in which the source and target items are "interchangeable in a given situation"⁷².

The translation process does therefore consist of a phase of decoding the message, followed by recoding a suitable text for the target readers. According to Nida, translator should break the message up and render its structure as basic as possible, then transfer its meaning from source language to target language, and finally make all the stylistic and semantic adjustments necessary in the target language.

Profound cultural and historical changes or the degree of indeterminacy of metaphorical processes do not seem to bother Nida in his conceiving of a real science of translation.⁷³ On the one hand, Nida's theoretical model also offers notable interesting features for a further reflection upon translation: the pole of reception is assigned with great attention; it is true that the existence of an exact interpretation of the Target text is hypothesised, but what is most important is to provoke a determined reaction in the reader of the target language. The reader of the target language is the centre of attention in this theory, and it is based on his or her ability to interpret the world. Pivotal changes are introduced into the Metatext, in order to make it comprehensible to target readers.

Quite daringly, it might be argued that Nida's approach to translation contrasts with Venuti's foreignization theory.

⁷² Nord, C. (1991) *Text Analysis in Translation. Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Applications of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

⁷³ Elmahdi O. Mahyoub A.M. (2016), *Errors in Translating Equivalence*, Integrity Media.

2.4. Lawrence Venuti

Nida's target-oriented approach seems to differ from Lawrence Venuti's, who is more inclined to favour the visibility of the translator. Translations are considered as second-hand products, they age and lose "charm", whereas the original work of literature seems to be immune from the effects of time. On the top of that, to complicate things any further, publishers and clients do not acknowledge translators for the right merit, paying them very little for their services, without recognizing the effort that they put into creating something accessible to everyone.

According to Venuti), translators are socially, and economically neglected; they are even forced to adopt a way of translating which respects the dominant target-oriented policy. This policy provides that the more natural and fluent a text seems to the target audience, the more successful the translation should be considered, meaning that the translator's intervention must be invisible. Translations should read as smooth as possible, mirroring the original.

It is possible to find evidence of translators' invisibility in their works, they are asked to remove the ambiguity in the source text, replace outdated idioms with modern linguistic expressions, explain cultural references so that they become more accessible and understandable to the final readers.⁷⁴ The results of this approach may have negative consequences on translators. Their work is marginalized, readers tend to attribute success to the author of the original text, rather than appreciate the service offered by the translators' community.

The need for domestication at all costs leads translators to hide themselves behind words, or to betray cultural differences to please the target audience; the Italian notorious expression "*traduttore traditore*" (translator traitor) seems to fit perfectly within this concept of betraying the original, by adopting more suitable solutions according to the target culture. As a result, readers often receive a simplified text, which does neglect all the beauty and peculiarities of the source text.

⁷⁴ Venuti L. (2008), *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Routledge

Venuti strongly believes that translators must make their own interventions in the source text by maintaining ambiguities, distancing themselves from the logic of domestication: a translation must be perceived as such, letting readers be aware of what they are reading is a true translation that maintains references to different cultures. This translation practice, however, has been described as 'alienating' as it safeguards differences on a cultural level, such as differences that belong to the source text, and thus to the source culture. The foreignizing foreignizing approach questions whether the focus should be on the pole of reception, arguing that the reader must be interested in the original author's style, and collect information to fully understand, and appreciate, cultural differences in the text. Put it simply, the source text is being defended, and the supremacy of the target text is being challenged.

A conscious mediation between the needs of the target reader and the preservation of the 'rights' of the source text is needed. The translator is no stand-in or ventriloquist for the foreign writer, but a resourceful imitator who rewrites the original to appeal to another audience in a different language and culture. This audience ultimately takes priority, ensuring that the verbal clothing that the translator cuts for the foreign work never fits exactly⁷⁵.

According to Venuti, he claims that:

The risk of transforming what is foreign into something too familiar or simply irrelevant is high. The loss in translation remains invisible to any reader who does not undertake a careful comparison with the foreign text, such as most of us. The gain is everywhere apparent, although only if the reader looks. But usually, they don't look. Publishers, copy editors, reviewers have trained the audience to value translations with the utmost fluency, an easy readability that makes them appear untranslated, giving the illusory impression that we are reading the original. We typically become aware of the translation only when we run across a shock on its surface, an unfamiliar word, an error in usage, a confused meaning that may seem unintentionally comical. Hence, the first thing to bear in mind when reading a translation is a translation cannot be read only considering its meaning, but its use of language too; the formal features of the translation should be appreciated as well. A translation ought

⁷⁵ Venuti L. (2004), How to Read a Translation, Words Without Borders Magazine. Last accessed (14/07/2022) <https://wordswithoutborders.org/read/article/2004-07/how-to-read-a-translation/>

to be read differently from an original composition precisely because it is not an original: an entire foreign culture is involved, not just a foreign work.⁷⁶

Venuti advises to read translations, although with an eye out for the translator's work, with the awareness that the most a translation can give is an insightful and eloquent interpretation of a foreign text, at once limited and enabled by the need to address the receiving culture.

2.5. Extreme translations

Now that a general overview of the major scholars and researchers approaches towards translations has been introduced, it is possible to consider some issues, which might fall outside the range of more traditional translations, according to the notion of equivalence stated above.

Before reporting some examples, it is fundamental to question the definition of translation, and what purpose it may serve. This task may seem quite hard to perform, but it is important to bear in mind that every context and every situation is different, according to target audience. There is no right formula to use when translating, no magic ingredient for a perfect combination of words: it all comes down to choices. Whether being literal, or finding a suitable equivalent is the dilemma with which translators are supposed to confront themselves.

Sometimes, theory is not sufficient: it takes a fair amount of experience, and creativity, to make things work. Nida was firmly convinced that a translation should always privilege the target readers, to make them understand a powerful message serving a meaningful intent. But what if the message is the motto of a massive car company, such as “*Today Tomorrow Toyota*”, should it be translated? There is not a right answer to this very last question, as it depends upon a great number of factors. As far as Italian language is concerned, the slogan has not been translated, and it is nowadays fully accepted by its audience. Had it been transposed literally, it would, not have had the same appeal. Another aspect to consider is the possibility of being in a non-English-speaking country, where linguistic purity is seen as an uncompromising rule; and what would happen if the

⁷⁶ Venuti L. (2004), *ibidem*.

possible buyers of this specific product were not adults, but children who do not speak a word of English?

Similarly, behind advertising messages, such as “*Lavazza crema e gusto ogni momento è quello giusto*” (back-translation: Lavazza cream and flavour, every moment is the right one); “*la morale è sempre quella, fai merenda con Girella*” (back-translation: the moral is always the same, have a snack with Girella); “*dove c’è aia c’è gioia*”(back-translation: where there is Aia, there is joy); “*fare l’amore con il sapore*” (back-translation: make love with flavour) or “*o così o Pomì*”(back-translation: like this, or like that), and last, but not least “*chi ama baci!*”(back-translation: who loves, kisses!), follow the same translation problem. Finding a sort of equivalence is not always that automatic, nor is it easy, considering the scope of the message and the linguistic discrepancies.



Figure 3 “*La Morale è sempre quella! Fai merenda con Girella!*”, Source: Google



Figure 4 “O così’, o Pomì”, Source: Google



Figure 5 “Chi ama, Baci”. Source: Google

Examples like those mentioned above can be found everywhere in the marketing world: an American Jewellery chain, Kay Jewels, came up with the tagline “*Kay Jewels, every kiss begins with Kay*” to promote their new jewellery collections, or again, the beautiful paronomasia of Nabisco biscuits “*Nibble a Nab for a Nickle*” which translated would be “*sgranocchia un Nabisco per 1 euro*”⁷⁷, not really an enticing solution, as the rhythm of the original is completely lost in the Italian version.

As far as cultural puns are concerned, they are even more impossible to render: “*Carne Montana, mezzogiorno di fuoco*”; “*Lubiam, ed è subito eleganza*” (back-translation: Montana, midday of fire; Lubiam, and it is immediately elegance). The first is a clear reference to a Western movie⁷⁸, the second is an indirect quotation⁷⁹ from the Italian poet and translator Salvatore Quasimodo. Clearly, a foreign reader will have a great deal of difficulty when trying to codify the message behind these advertisements.⁸⁰

With these instances, there is evidence of the diversity that surrounds translation, it is not an automatic process where text A equals text B, without considering for whom the translation is being made, and why. Issues like those found in advertising might be considered issues of “*extreme*” translations, where the language expert is asked to broaden his or her mind for the sake of the message.

2.6. James Holmes

Those above are examples of translations that require a particular amount of creativity and knowledge of the socio-cultural context. As James Holmes defines them in his conceptual map of Translation Studies, area-restricted issues in translation can prove a pain in the neck of those who do not belong to the same cultural background. More than that, trying to respect the nature of equivalence, or as Holmes calls it, the translation matching, seems impossible in specific contexts. Area-restricted issues can be of two closely related kinds; restricted as to the languages involved, or as to the cultures involved. In both cases, language limitation and culture limitation, the degree of actual

⁷⁷ Nasi F. (2005), Traduzioni estreme, Quodlibet.

⁷⁸ *High Noon*, an American Western film produced by Stanley Kramer in 1952.

⁷⁹ S. Quasimodo, (1930) *Ed è subito sera*, (back-translation: and it is immediately evening) a poem.

⁸⁰ Nasi F. (2005), *Ibidem*.

restriction may vary. In the field of culture-restricted theories there has been little detailed research, although culture restrictions, by being confused with language restrictions, sometimes get introduced into language-restricted theories, where they are out of place in all but those rare cases where culture and language boundaries coincide in both the source and target situations.⁸¹

According to James Holmes, theories that are to be applied to translation should be based on the experience of the translator. He divided the discipline into two brunches: pure and applied Translation Studies.

As far as pure translation studies are concerned, they offer an overview of the product of the translation, that is, the final text. Similarly, they are divided into theoretical and descriptive. Theoretical studies explain what a translation is, what happens during the translation process, and to what results different strategies lead to. Whereas the descriptive brunch questions the importance of the orientation of the translation, whether it should be product-oriented, process-oriented, or function oriented.

Finally, in the applied branch, Holmes describes in the importance of this discipline and its use for teaching foreign languages, he also dived deep into the importance for a translator to receive proper merit and the right economical reward for his work of translation.

The aim of *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* is to trace a general history of translation, to better find a suitable strategy, which can work and be applied to every occasion, some sort of *vade mecum* to follow.

⁸¹ Holmes, J. (1975), *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 66-80.

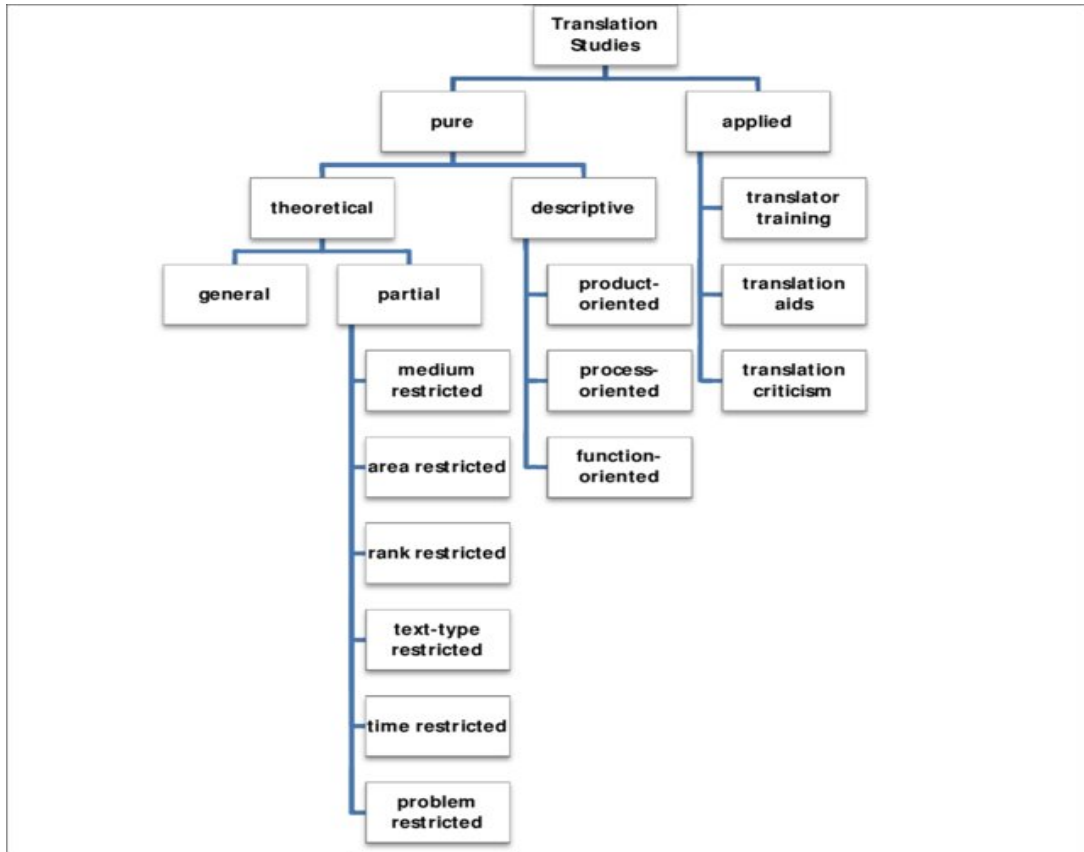


Figure 6 “Map of The Name and Nature of Translation Studies”, Source: Holmes (1975)

As ambitious as it may seem, Holmes’s work gave its important contribution to scholars and researchers in exploring the world of translation studies.

3. Translating for marketing purposes

Recently, the global situation has changed. Boundaries among countries, whether physical or imaginary, have been abolished, and relationships have been enhanced and strengthened. The world is an interconnected place, where people can move freely, exchange business and services, and where different cultures can easily come in contact.

Doubtless, this transformation has both negative and positive aspects. The phenomenon, called *globalization*, ensures several benefits, but pushes people to deal with unprecedented economic and cultural consequences: those against globalization may argue that it has led to the exploitation of resources, and to a worsening of working conditions.

On the contrary, those who see the potential of the phenomenon may argue that it has favoured cross-cultural exchange: nowadays it is possible to share ideas, learn new languages, taste new foods, and listen to other music genres. In other words, people who travel around the world, whether for business or for leisure, have the chance to read different books, experience the locals' lifestyle, and even develop a sort of empathy and appreciation for other people and culture. Not to mention the opportunity to become more tolerant and open-minded, thanks to the possibility of getting to know others who share a completely different view of the world.

However, with the advent of globalization, many companies have decided to broaden their business and trades outside their national borders, to increase profit and expand onto foreign markets. If on the one hand globalization has led to an increment of investments and profits, offered new business opportunities, and drawn attention to new fields of research and innovation, on the other, it has contributed to the standardization of markets, and, therefore, to the homogenization of goods and services. Consequently, companies have originated a conflict scenario where they offer the best product for the most competitive price.

Nowadays, companies compete on a global scale to encourage final users to purchase their products and services. Therefore, enterprises do everything that is in their

power to conquer consumers: here is why advertising is a pivotal priority for most entrepreneurs who want to attract as many buyers as possible.

A successful strategy to prevail on the competition is the optimization of advertising, and promotional material in general. In addition to that, company who want to expand their sales onto foreign markets should consider relying on professionals to develop an effective advertising campaign aimed at stirring up the target audience's emotions.

It is central, therefore, to implement a successful communication strategy, conveying the message properly in another language. One way to do so is doubtlessly translation, but before expanding onto the target market, it is necessary to carry out accurate research on the culture of the target country. Two aspects deserve particular attention at this stage: the needs of the potential buyers and a deep consideration of the local competition. Consequentially, companies need to create promotional and advertising materials that have the same emotional impact, and, therefore, that can guarantee a maximization of profits.

In addition to boosting productivity, the actual international scenario has also created a series of needs and demands that can be coped with only thanks to technological progress. In fact, not only has technology facilitated travelling, making it possible to easily cover great distances in a surprisingly short amount of time, but it also has simplified communication between different countries. As far as communication is concerned, translation has acquired a central role in a world where relationships among people is key to growth.

Nowadays, more and more translators keep entering the market, thanks to the possibility of using advanced technological tools to assist them with their tasks. Consequently, the offer has soared up and translators have started to be paid less for their work. In a survey conducted in 2018 by the Italian Association of Translators and Interpreters (AITI)⁸² on a sample of 500 people, only 10% of respondents said they had not noticed translation was starting to be paid less to be performed. On the contrary, those

⁸² <https://aiti.org/it> (last accessed 28/08/2022)

who had noticed the reduction attributed it to unfair competition: if everyone can be a translator, thanks to technological support, it is not surprising that prices started to fall due to an increment of the offer⁸³.

If on the one hand, technological progress has brought optimization, and better living conditions, on the other hand, the use of software and tools is perceived as a serious problem among translators, who have long been exploited and neglected. This difficult situation has forced freelancers and language service providers to broaden their services, focusing on assignments where technology is unable to perform, such as advertising, humorous texts, puns, or texts rich in cultural components. The technology at issue is also known as Machine Translation, (MT) and its improvement occurs quickly and daily. In other words, if translators do not want to lose their jobs to machines, they need to focus on those aspects where they can really make a difference, because that is where machines are failing.⁸⁴ To prevent being replaced by a machine, translators have introduced a new practice: *transcreation*. Some freelancers and language service providers promote this type of translation as a language service meant for users who wish to adapt their advertising and promotional materials. Furthermore, for all those businesses which want to expand onto the global market transcreation is key to an effective communication.

According to many other professionals, however, this approach is rather suspicious and hypocritical, it is perceived as an attempt to increase profits by naming translation under the guise of something else. More details about transcreation will be provided in the following paragraphs of this chapter, but for now it is important to focus on the issue of Machine Translation.

3.1. Machine translation

A further inconvenience for professional translators is the burgeoning technological advancement. An article published in the French economics and business journal

⁸³ <https://aiti.org/it/indagine-sul-mercato-dei-traduttori-e-degli-interpreti-2018> (last accessed: 28/08/2022)

⁸⁴ Tomarenko. V. (2019), *Through the Client's Eyes: How to Make Your Translations Visible*, BDÜ Weiterbildungs- und Fachverlagsgesellschaft mbH.

*Capital*⁸⁵ reports a worrying prediction: by 2025, a famous machine translation service, *Google Translate*, will be able to translate rapidly, guaranteeing a quite satisfactory quality. In addition to machine translation systems, translators are also forced to deal with computer-aided translation tools, and non-professional bilinguals entering the industry.⁸⁶

Despite the tightening up of working conditions in the language service market, translators and interpreters can continue to make a living from their jobs if there is an improvement in their professional figures. One of the reasons why this profession is under attack is that there is a great difficulty delineating the professional figure of the translator in the first place. In the past, translators and interpreters were believed to perform just one task: transferring concepts from a source language to a target language, probably following the Western tradition, whereby translators were obliged to faithfully render the source text.⁸⁷ This idea, which is increasingly obsolete today, drew a clear distinction between the role of the translator and that of the cultural mediator. The translator was thought to focus on texts that did not involve any cultural background and could, therefore, be faithfully rendered. As experience showed, with the cultural turn in translation theory, which occurred in the 1980s, and with the blossoming of globalisation, the differentiation between cultural mediators and translator has gradually faded, incorporating the cultural element within translation. Considering all these factors, Katan argues that to ensure the figure of the translator will not be completely supplanted by technology, it will be necessary to detect technological defects, for instance, the elements that a machine translation system is unable to identify, such as cultural components and creativity. The solution proposed by scholars, which would allow the pacific coexistence of new technologies and translators, is called *transcreation*, that is the translation of cultural-based content.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ <https://www.capital.fr/> (Last accessed 27/07/2022)

⁸⁶ Katan D. (2015), Translation at the cross-roads: Time for the transcreational turn?, *Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, available online at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0907676X.2015.1016049>. (Last accessed: 19/07/2022).

⁸⁷ Katan D., Taibi M. (2021), *Translating Cultures, An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*, Routledge.

⁸⁸ Katan D., *ibidem*.

The perspective presented by Katan may seem too pessimistic. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that, although machine translation systems are greatly improving the quality of the output, one should not assume that one day these systems will fully replace translators, as language is fluid and not static. Language evolves: the English spoken today is different from the English spoken fifty years ago, for instance, which is why a machine translation system will always need human intermediation to make updates on new words or constructs.

Undoubtedly, new technologies are getting better and better every day. Nevertheless, identifying flaws and weaknesses of technology to make them the aim of translation, which will then be renamed transcreation, is not the best way to address the problem. Moreover, this option would only narrow the field of action of translators, who are already sufficiently discouraged by technological advancement.

Katan's point of view on transcreation suggests that it is an innovative approach that might even replace translation. An explanation for this rebranding might be that this modern practice offers a new concept of translation, suggesting an approach that would make translators focus even more on cultural-based content.

3.2. Transcreation as a practice

Due to the following, and always increasing, demand of target-aimed translation, specifically for commercial purpose, the art of transcreation has gained massive visibility lately. Forums, conferences, and conventions have helped transcreation to emerge.

However, the practice is still the subject of animated debates and controversy among scholars, language service providers and translators. The term lacks a universally accepted definition. In 1957, the word was first used by the Indian poet, writer, and translator Purushottama Lal to refer to his translations of works from Sanskrit into English, including *Shakuntala* and *Bhradaranyaka Upanishad*.⁸⁹ Lal did not provide an

⁸⁹ Di Giovanni E. (2008), *Translations, transcreations and transrepresentations of India in the Italian media*, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.

actual definition of transcreation, but broadly described the purpose of the practice: identifying the spirit of the original text and render it into a proper translation by working on the target text, allowing it to convey the elements of the source culture⁹⁰. To be precise, the poet referred to transcreation to explain the intent of his work, which is not to preserve Sanskrit as a language, rather, to preserve Hindu tradition.⁹¹ The term began to be used for such purpose, and slowly acquired the connotation it has today: it refers to the linguistic sphere, taking into profound consideration the cultural dimension. This mentality has helped clarify the use of transcreation, a practice that stops being unidirectional, and that operates a transfer of concepts from a source language to a target language, becoming a bidirectional exercise where translators focus on both language and culture.⁹² Transcreation today is not very common among translators, nor is it among language service providers in general, mainly because most of them are reluctant to accept its existence as a practice that discerns from translation.

Although the number of agencies which offer transcreation among their services is constantly increasing, not all those working in the field of languages have welcomed the introduction of this new practice. Scepticism towards transcreation is tangible, perhaps because, given the absence of an official definition of the term, it is not possible to say with absolute certainty what the practice should deal with, nor to what extent one can speak of transcreation without 'invading' the field of pure translation. The reluctance to accept this new practice is glaringly evident on the internet, which is often the battlefield of heated debates, and a space where people, who share different opinions, confront themselves to achieve some sort of definition. The matter being discussed among scholars is recurrent and it concerns the differences between transcreation and translation.

In an article, written in 2012, Viviana Gaballo, lecturer at the University of Macerata, showed the hostility and reluctance of many translators to talk about the topic.

⁹⁰ Benetello C. (2018), When translation is not enough: Transcreation as a convention-defying practice. A practitioner's perspective, *The Journal of Specialised Translation*, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325361700_When_translation_is_not_enough_Transcreation_as_a_convention-defying_practice_A_practitioner's_perspective (Last accessed: 25/07/2022).

⁹¹ Lal P. (1970) P. Lal's Concept of an Indian Literature, Sahitya Akademi.

⁹² Vieira E. (1999), *Liberating Caliban's: Readings of antropofagia and Haroldo de Campos' poetics of transcreation*, Routledge.

The academic explained how great the division among professionals is. According to many, the term transcreation would be nothing more than a linguistic strategy, a refined way to refer to a high-quality translation; others think transcreation can only be used to describe good translations of marketing texts; and many others believe transcreation would be a mere copywriting exercise, based on an original approach.⁹³

Gaballo collected all these opinions from a series of comments posted under the article *Translation vs. Transcreation* published on *Bad language*, a website now renamed *Articulate*⁹⁴. Even though the article is not recent (some of the comments date back to 2003), opinions on the subject have not changed: today there is still little flexibility and inclination to welcome transcreation to the universe of language services.

It is common practice, for experts and professionals, to collect information and different points of view on transcreation, also using today's modern social networks. Among them there is LinkedIn, a platform that promotes professional relationships. On LinkedIn, Gabriel Fairman, a Brazilian philosopher and entrepreneur who is currently the CEO of Bureau Translations, published the article "*Why transcreation is the biggest lie ever sold to the translation world*".⁹⁵ Fairman's opinion on the subject can be inferred from the title, but it is interesting to analyse the article in detail to understand the reasons for such a cynical point of view towards a service that is increasingly growing on the market. In his article, Fairman depicts the world of translation negatively under different aspects. Unlike renowned professions, such as doctors or lawyers, translation is considered a second-class job, which does not allow translators to live comfortably, thanks to their occupation. In addition to the notorious prestige that gathers around translation, there are also several adverse conditions, such as extremely low profits and unreasonable deadlines, which do not allow translators to perform high-quality tasks, and

⁹³ Gaballo V. (2012), Exploring the boundaries of transcreation in specialized translation, Research Gate, available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256446051_Exploring_the_boundaries_of_transcreation_in_specialized_translation (Last accessed:25/07/2022).

⁹⁴ <https://www.articulatemarketing.com/blog/translation-vs-transcreation> (Last accessed:25/07/2022).

⁹⁵ Fairman G., available at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-transcreation-biggest-lie-ever-sold-translation-world-fairman/> (Last accessed: 25/07/2022).

relegate them to inconspicuous work, for which there is no need to take on great responsibility.⁹⁶

Nothing new so far, but the real question is: what does this have to do with transcreation? Fairman argues that transcreation is a kind of smoke and mirrors strategy, an approach adopted by translation agencies to justify the increment of translation fees, and he is quite convinced that any translation, if performed properly, can be called a transcreational work. In addition to that, according to Fairman, transcreation would be the ideal strategy implemented by translators to achieve the so-aimed recognition for the work done.

Analysing the article detailly, a certain fervour can be perceived in his words, and it may be justified, since Fairman works in the field of translation and, and not in the field of transcreation. This approach is completely new and might be seen as a menace that puts in jeopardy a rather precarious profession. What Fairman does not consider, however, is that transcreation has the potential to flourish on the market, leading to the birth of new services. Something that has already happened with localisation, a practice the author himself seems to know rather well.

Fairman is not the only one who reluctantly accepts the existence of transcreation: in fact, there are many translators and language service providers who harshly criticise those who offer such a service, disguising it as something different from translation. In many people's opinion, in fact, the word transcreation is interpreted as 'creative translation', a view that understandably generates harsh criticism. The critical nature of this interpretation stems from the right observation that every translation is, in its own way, a creative work, as Gaballo⁹⁷ also states, and as such, it requires an interpretation of the source text, and a rendering into the target language, which must be congenial to both the linguistic code and culture.

⁹⁶ Fairman G., *Ibidem*.

⁹⁷ Gaballo V. (2012), Exploring the boundaries of transcreation in specialized translation, article online available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256446051_Exploring_the_boundaries_of_transcreation_in_specialized_translation (Last accessed: 21/07/2022).

In the examined article, Fairman refers to the precarious working conditions translators with which must deal and justifies the choice of a new practice as a possible way out to remedy for the outrageous circumstances that they are facing. Therefore, according to the author, they came up with a new translational approach, that of transcreation.

Another scholar debated whether the subject is worth being recognized or not. David Katan, in 2016, published an article that has something in common with Fairman's work: the precarious situation of translators on the market. One of the critical issues the scholar highlights is the reluctance to take responsibility for the solutions that translators decide to adopt during their translations.⁹⁸ Katan attributes a passive attitude to translators, that might be the result of the technological advent, which have perhaps deprived translators of their autonomy in the decision-making process, or else, the causes of this passivity can be attributed to the perilous working conditions⁹⁹ discussed above.

3.3. What it takes to be a translator

One of the most debated issues in translation is the rendering of the source text. Whether the target text should be as faithful as possible to the original, or whether translators should be given free rein to come up with proper solutions, is the “one-million-dollar question” concerning translation. Same situation occurs in the field of transcreation: being a relatedly young field of interest, experts are still enquiring into the practice.

Another important issue that sets researchers and scholars apart is finding some remarkable differences between translation and transcreation. To dispel any doubt and make it simple, some might argue that translators have the task of faithfully rendering the

⁹⁸ Katan D. (2016), *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹ Fairman, *Ibidem*.

source text into the target text, whereas transcreators are allowed to use a more creative and less orthodox¹⁰⁰ approach.¹⁰¹

This description of the two different approaches is too trivial, and might also sound quite inconvenient, broadly for two reasons. Firstly, it suggests that translation is not a creative process, but it is, and secondly, it insinuates that transcreation experts are more experienced than translators. As far as transcreation is concerned, Gaballo does not share the common opinion, according to which transcreation is a service that differs from translation, but rather, she describes it as a strategy that can be applied to various types of text.

One of the characteristics of transcreation is found in its *productivity*, that is the ability to produce new constructs, or new words, which can fill the cultural and linguistic gaps that may occur in the passage from a source language to a target language. In addition, productivity is the ability to enrich the target language with new solutions, which have the power to facilitate the understanding of concepts for the target audience.

To support her argumentation, Gaballo draws up a list of various skills needed to perform transcreation, which includes language mastery, flexibility, originality, and the ability to elaborate the text.¹⁰² In this regard, a brief reference should be made to the International Standard Organisation, which in 2015 published a standard (the ISO 17100: 2015 standard)¹⁰³ describing the professional skills a translator should possess. Section 3.1.3 of the standard states that the professional translator must own the following abilities:

¹⁰⁰ The adjective orthodox was intentionally used here to describe the approach transcreation has according to some translators, as many of them do not even consider it translating.

¹⁰¹ Gaballo V. (2012), Exploring the boundaries of transcreation in specialized translation, article online available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256446051_Exploring_the_boundaries_of_transcreation_in_specialized_translation (Last accessed: 21/07/2022).

¹⁰² Gaballo V. *Ibidem*

¹⁰³ Iso standard explanation, available at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/translator-iso-171002015-qualified-status-maria-luisa-barbano/> (last accessed 23/09/2022)

a) **Translation competence:** the ability to translate content [...], including the ability to address the problems of language content comprehension and language content production and the ability to render the target language content in accordance with the client-TSP agreement and other project specifications.

b) **Linguistic and textual competence in the source language and the target language:** the ability to understand the source language, fluency in the target language, and general or specialized knowledge of text-type conventions. This linguistic and textual competence includes the ability to apply this knowledge when producing translation or other target language content.

c) **Competence in research, information acquisition, and processing:** the ability to efficiently acquire the additional linguistic and specialized knowledge necessary to understand the source language content and to produce the target language content. Research competence also requires experience in the use of research tools and the ability to develop suitable strategies for the efficient use of the information sources available.

d) **Cultural competence:** ability to make use of information on the behavioural standards, up-to-date terminology, value systems, and locale that characterize both source and target language cultures.

e) **Technical competence:** the knowledge, abilities, and skills required to perform the technical tasks in the translation process by employing technical resources including the tools and IT systems that support the whole translation process.

f) **Domain competence:** the ability to understand content produced in the source language and to reproduce it in the target language using the appropriate style and terminology.

(International standard ISO 17100:2015, 2015: 6)

As previously discussed, translators and transcreators have some abilities in common, such as linguistic skills, as well as cultural knowledge, and specific capacities that can be acquired only thanks to a deep understanding of the language. Nevertheless, it also takes a certain predisposition for transcreators to carry out their tasks, as owning a

strong linguistic competency is not sufficient. Equally worthy are also strong communicative skills and copywriting knowledge.

3.4. Transcreation, a profitable business

Even if there seems to be a discrepancy within the world of transcreation, as many still have conspicuous perplexities about this practice, some language service providers have already started to offer it among their services. Transcreation is a niche service that can guarantee considerable earnings, as it is becoming increasingly popular among users. Therefore, it is worth examining the way in which language service providers describe transcreation on their websites, to understand how the service is presented to today's potential clients.

The Slator *Language Service Provider Index* (LSPI)¹⁰⁴ ranks the world's greatest translation, localisation, interpreting, and language technology agencies. It is a great instrument, thanks to which it was possible to record the highest turnover of last year (2021). From the index, three agencies, within the top ten, have been selected for the purpose of examination:

- *TransPerfect* (United States)
- *RWS* (United Kingdom)
- *LionBridge* (United States)¹⁰⁵

The American company *TransPerfect* places the service in the *Global Brand Management* section, together with services such as Multicultural marketing solutions, Cultural Consulting, Transcreation and copy adaptation, and condenses it into a single solution: Multicultural marketing. The service is then presented as follows:

¹⁰⁴ <https://slator.com/language-service-provider-index/> (Last accessed: 25/07/2022)

¹⁰⁵ <https://slator.com/slator-2022-language-service-provider-index/> Last accessed: 21/07/2022)

Multicultural marketing solutions

TransPerfect's dedicated multicultural marketing team specializes in helping advertising, marketing, and branding professionals and agencies adapt their creative vision for any global market.

Our global network of expert copywriters and marketing linguists work with you to implement technology tools, creating efficiencies across the entire campaign lifecycle. And all projects are completed under our independently certified quality management system, ensuring highly accurate and culturally appropriate deliverables—every time.

Cultural consulting

Hours of thought go into selecting every tiny element of a campaign—the finest details can often make the difference between success and failure. When international markets are involved, cultural nuances can be too numerous to track, and the full creative process needs to be replicated in each market.

TransPerfect's cultural consultants possess or gather current, reliable, and insightful information about your concepts, your target market, and how to best adapt existing copy or create original copy and creative that will produce the desired result.

Transcreation and copy adaptation

When it comes to reaching global markets, it's crucial to retain the concepts, meaning, and significance of the source message. Taglines, headlines, and other creative marketing copy are often based on culturally dependent elements including idioms, puns, wordplay, insinuation, subtext, or rhymes in the source language. If translated directly into another language, these elements may not make sense or, at worst, can be potentially offensive.

TransPerfect's transcreation and copy adaptation services are led by an experienced project manager who works with a team of several linguists—each

with a background in advertising, marketing, or the relevant subject area—to develop the most appropriate creative solution for the target markets.¹⁰⁶

(*TransPerfect*, 2022)

On its website, *TransPerfect* suggests that the service can only be used for promotional texts and emphasises the priority of preserving the intention of the initial message. Special attention is dedicated to the brainstorming process, which is explained to the client step by step to forge a collaborative relationship. Moreover, *TransPerfect* also mentions that transcreation differs from translation, although in the Italian version of the same webpage, transcreation can be found under the name of creative translation, a choice, that of creative translation, adopted by other competitors as well.

RWS is another translation agency that draws a distinction between translation and transcreation on its website. Such distinction can be found under the section *localizing and translating content*. In particular, the agency explains in two different videos what transcreation and what translation are, and how they differ from each other.

RWS on translation:

There are many potential approaches on the spectrum for translating content. Determining which option is best for you depends on your content, needs, and goals. Translation utilizes professional human linguistics to transform content from one language to another. Translation combines in-market translators with in-house linguistic reviewers to provide consistent messaging across all projects and content types. To create accurate content that resonates in every market, translation requires grammar, style and terminology know-how, in-depth understating of local language and culture subtleties, as well as ISO-certified translation processes to ensure best practices are always followed. Translation should be used when content is nuance, recurring popular freeform, and targeted.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.transperfect.com/solutions/global-brand-management/multicultural-marketing> (Last accessed: 21/07/2022)

RWS on transcreation:

There are many protentional approaches on the spectrum for translating content. Determining which option is best for you depends on your content, needs, and goals. Transcreation is the process of adapting your communications both culturally and linguistically to convey a specific experience. This creative service allows you to subtly flex text and images to suit each market's needs. Transcreation differs from standard translation by focusing on the source content's intent more than just the words. Bilingual copywriters decipher and adapt the original content to retain the key message for the target audience and language. They possess specialized skillsets with deep cultural and linguistic expertise as well as backgrounds in marketing and advertising to adapt content to be locally relevant and resonant. Transcreation requires a thorough transcreation brief outlining objectives while allowing for creative license translation and creative writing skills, as well as extensive knowledge of both language and culture. Transcreation should be used when content is highly branded, creative, emotive, and nuanced.¹⁰⁷

(*RWS*, 2022)

Cultural background is clearly a paramount feature to consider, rather than just focus on transforming text A into text B.

Last example concerns *LionBridge*, an agency that offers transcreational services within the category *Translation and localization*. The description of the service starts with a couple of questions to guide clients into a profound reasoning behind the practice of transcreation:

What's the difference between translation and transcreation?

While translation adapts, transcreation recreates to bring true relevance in every language, everywhere. With our transcreation services, you can connect with your audiences in your authentic brand voice in every language, culture, and market.

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.rws.com/localization/services/translation/> (Last accessed: 21/07/2022).

What is transcreation?

Transcreation is the process of adapting a message from one language to make it culturally appropriate for another audience. Rather than rigid, word-for-word translation, the goal of transcreation is to duplicate the intent, context, style and tone and emotion of the original in an entirely new text that's written specifically for a particular market. The term “transcreation” combines two words: “Translation,” the rendering of text in another language, and “creation,” the act of producing something new. This highly creative process is provided with the support of language professionals who are experts in the linguistic and cultural features of your target market and are very familiar with your industry.

What kind of content needs transcreation?

When rendering hard facts in another language, you do not need transcreation. A stock report, for instance, tells readers about the trend of a stock’s price and what has been happening at the company to elicit such a trend. This material is factual, non-emotional: what you need is a translator with specialized knowledge of your industry. That is very different from more evocative content, including:

- slogans
- advertisements and billboards
- headlines
- TV commercials
- film and book titles
- e-screens
- banners
- claims
- special expressions
- content which is trying to connect emotionally to users
- blog content which is written in conversational format
- content that asks or answers questions (e.g., for voice search)

These kinds of messages communicate through emotion, tone and style and they often play with language and images. Here, cultural, and linguistic nuances are especially

important and literal translations rarely work. This is where you need a transcreation service.¹⁰⁸

(Lionbridge, 2022)

Unlike *TransPerfect*, *Lionbridge* presents transcreation in the same section where it talks about translation and localisation. The decision to condense the three services (translation, localization, and transcreation) into a single category does not allow fully understanding of when transcreation should be accepted as a proper solution, instead of translation. It does, however, speak of advertising content and promotional material, although the issue of brand image and cultural references seems to be equally distributed over the three services.

The difficulty of finding a proper translation equivalent of the term *transcreation* has not gone unnoticed. The transcreation expert Nina Sattler-Hovdar, in her book on the subject, has come up with an equation to provide her audience with a simpler solution to better comprehend the term. If it is easy to attribute the first part of the compound name (trans-) to the practice of translation, the association of the second part of the term (-creation) is not immediate. Very often, in fact, there is a tendency to interpret the creative component with creativity, an association that consequently generates strong scepticism on the subject.¹⁰⁹ The solution proposed by the expert is therefore a simple equation:

$$\text{Transcreation} = \text{Translation} + \text{Copywriting} \quad ^{110}$$

There are, however, scholars whose views on transcreation seems rather in line with those of other language service providers. Prominent among them is Ira Torresi, lecturer at the University of Bologna, who has written a handbook entirely dedicated to the subject.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.lionbridge.com/it/blog/translation-localization/transcreation-services-why-and-when-you-need-them/> (Last accessed: 21/07/2022)

¹⁰⁹ Sattler-Hovdar N. (2019), *Get Fit for The Future of Transcreation: A handbook on how to succeed in an undervalued market*, Independently Published.

¹¹⁰ Sattler-Hovdar N. *Ibidem*

¹¹¹ Torresi, I. (2020) *Translating Promotional and Advertising Texts*, Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Torresi's definition states that translation, localisation, adaptation, and transcreation are all different aspects of a single process, namely the trans-linguistic, trans-cultural and trans-commercial rendering of advertising and promotional material. Translation, understood as the transfer of concepts from a source language to a target language, is related to the linguistic aspect; adaptation and localisation (which she locates in the context of advertising, software applications and websites) concern the cross-cultural aspect; transcreation is related to the trans-commercial rendering of promotional material, and is the result of an exhaustive rewriting of the original text.¹¹²

Another noteworthy difference, in the description of transcreation provided by Torresi's, lies in the possibility of using a transcreational approach both for promotional texts and for any text with a persuasive character. By doing so, it is possible to perform transcreation also to translate curriculum vitae, covering letter, or institutional discourse into another language. Expanding the aim of transcreation might be misleading because it blurs the already rather questionable boundary between translation and transcreation, siding with those who do not actually admit the existence of the latter.

The contrasting points of view on transcreation are dividing scholars. Some of them seem to be reluctant to accept transcreation as a service and, even if some of them are willing to accept it, they continue to nourish some doubts. Some linguistic service providers, on the other hand, seem to welcome transcreation among the available services they offer. To the critics, this behaviour is just an excuse to take advantage of the situation and give a boost to the earnings of translation agencies. This mentality feeds criticism and encourages those who cannot find sufficient reasons to recognize that transcreation may be a worthy approach. As a matter of fact, the main priority of this practice is to be globally accepted, and Claudia Benetello, one of the most prominent Italian experts on transcreation, is struggling to explain the importance of acknowledging transcreation.

Thanks to transcreation, a service in-between translation and copywriting, every brand can accurately convey its message properly. The aim of transcreation is conquering the foreign market, onto where the business wants to expand itself.¹¹³

¹¹² Torresi, I., *Ibidem*

¹¹³ Benetello C., *Ibidem*.

3.5. What it takes to be a transcreator

To have a complete overview of the fundamental elements that make up the service, it is necessary to analyse the skills that belongs to the transcreation expert. Benetello, in an interview, proposes a list of skills that are essential to perform transcreation. The requirements are language skills, copywriting skills, cultural sensitivity, and local knowledge¹¹⁴. From her considerations, it is possible to deduce that, considering the set of skills needed to perform it properly, transcreation is not merely a linguistic service: there are aspects that do not concern uniquely the linguistic code, it is an out-and-out consultancy service. Professionals, moreover, must contribute to the creation of successful written advertising material, thanks to an accurate analysis of the target market, focusing on competitors and on the needs of local consumers.

Language skills:

By understanding how the words were used, the transcreation expert can produce an effective adaptation¹¹⁵. In most cases, literal translation of advertising material is disappointing and inconclusive. Translating literature and translating advertising are two distinct practices. The scope of the former is to allow the target readers to enjoy the same work of art, and, therefore, it is pivotal to safeguard the initial structure and form. As far as translating advertising is concerned, it should focus on the function through adaptation.¹¹⁶

Copywriting skills:

A transcreator expert should possess great copywriting skills. Advertising agencies, where advertising communication begins, the copywriter is the one who writes texts for the purpose of advertising;¹¹⁷ but when it comes to transcreation, possessing copywriting skills means being able to come up with an advertising message that sounds appealing to

¹¹⁴ <https://www.collettivointerpreti.com/la-vita-dellinterprete-traduttore/transcreation-intervista-a-claudia-benetello/> (last accessed 26/07/2022)

¹¹⁵ Benetello C., *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ Anholt S. (2000), *Another one bites the grass: Making sense of international advertising*, Wiley & Sons.

¹¹⁷ Testa A. (2006), *La parola immaginata*, il Saggiatore

the target audience, and at the same time, is coherent with the strategy applied to the original.¹¹⁸ To achieve a successful result, various strategies can be applied, such as the use of rhetorical figures, but also of ways of saying, idioms and rhymes.

For the sake of clarification, here are reported two examples that can help shed light on the importance of coming up with smart solutions. The first instance supporting the relevance of copywriting might sound familiar to the Italian audience. It is an advertisement created by the American multinational Procter & Gamble, better known as P&G, which in 1999 launched a line of innovative household cleaning products called 'Swiffer'. The tagline meant for the product reads 'When Swiffer's the one, consider it done'. To be sold in other countries, the slogan doubtless needed adaptation. The brilliant proposal suggested for the Italian market is the famous slogan "*La polvere non dura, perchè Swiffer la cattura*"(back-translation: the dust does not last, as Swiffer captures it).¹¹⁹ It is quite clear that the Italian tagline is not the result of a faithful translation of the English original, however, the initial communicative intent has been perfectly and smartly reproduced, maintaining the same rhythm and the rhyme presented in the original tagline.

Another interesting example concerns a multinational business, known as Coca-Cola. To be sold in China, adaptation of the name of the brand was required: contrary to Latin alphabet, which consists of grapheme-phoneme correspondence, Chinese characters do correspond to a phoneme, but they also have meaning. In a creative process, this difference might seem disadvantageous, because it imposes considerable restrictions. This is the solution they came up with: the brand was renamed 可口可乐 (pronounced as 'Kokou – Kolay'), maintaining a certain assonance with the original, but, at the same time, it has its own meaning: 'A pleasure for the mouth'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Benetello C., *Ibidem*

¹¹⁹ Humphrey L., Bradley J., Somers A., Gilpin G. (2011), *The Little Book of Transcreation: Insight into the world of creative translation*, Mother Tongue Ltd.

¹²⁰ Humphrey L. *Ibidem*.

Cultural sensitivity:

Another pivotal quality that transcreators should possess is cultural sensibility, that is the ability to produce suitable advertising messages for the target audience.¹²¹

Everyone is familiar with the famous tagline from McDonald's, an American fast-food franchising, which reads 'I'm lovin' it!'. To adapt the tagline into Chinese, changes had to be made. For the Chinese language, in fact, a literal translation of the phrase could not be acceptable since the word 'love' is characterised by a very deep and intimate meaning, therefore, it cannot be used light-heartedly. Indeed, lovers tend to say “I like you” rather than “I love you”. That is why, the company opted for 我就欢, that literally means “I just like it”, a solution that sounds much better and less inappropriate than the literally translated original, but at the same time, the witty adaptation offers vitality, just like the source.¹²²

Local Knowledge:

The fourth competence required to perform transcreation is knowledge of the local market, that is the ability to produce advertising messages that are suitable for the target consumer, and also different from the solutions provided by competitors¹²³. To better understand the parameters encapsulated in this brief definition, two examples have been chosen: the first instance reveals the importance of pleasing consumers, the second deals with the competition among different brands.

The German brand Nivea, part of the Beiersdorf AG group and specialised in the production of personal care products, has become a much-discussed case study. During conferences and meetings on transcreation, expert report its case for examination. On Nivea's website, each product is followed by the image of a model. As far as the Italian version of the website is concerned, they have posted well-known faces, such as the actress Monica Bellucci, and other models with typical western traits of Italian women.

¹²¹ Benetello. C., *Ibidem*.

¹²² Humphrey L., Bradley J., Somers A., Gilpin G. (2011), *The Little Book of Transcreation: Insight into the world of creative translation*, Mother Tongue Ltd.

¹²³ Benetello C., *Ibidem*.

The same strategy has also been implemented for the South African webpage, where models with afro hair can be found, or for the Philippines webpage, which shows models with typical Oriental features. These examples demonstrate that the aim of the advertising campaign is to create a certain affinity with potential buyers, by associating the product with people the consumer can relate. This strategy has proved successful for Nivea, that used the same selling strategy on other different markets.

As far as the Korean webpage is concerned, it is possible to notice a substantial difference: the models presenting the products are not Korean, they have typical Western features instead. The reason behind this choice lies in the fact that the ideal standard of beauty, for Korean women, has nothing to do with the common Asian somatic traits. An article published by Spiegel Online in June 2019 ¹²⁴ states that South Korea is the country with the highest percentage of cosmetic surgery and the highest number of cosmetic treatments per capita in the world.¹²⁵ Nivea has taken this trend into consideration and used it advantageously to persuade Korean consumers to buy its products.

Doubtlessly, translation and transcreation are not the same practice, to confirm this statement, it is sufficient to examine the skills required to perform the two tasks, which differ from one another. Nevertheless, some comments under Fairman's article do not perceive transcreation positively, assuming this is just a strategy to increase profit. Criticism is enhanced, as some attribute the adjective "creative" to the practice of translation. Indeed, creativity should not be associated with translation, but with the entire process of creating written advertising messages based on an original idea ¹²⁶. Some people believe that translation and transcreation do coincide, because translation is never a word-for-word rendering of the source text. Undoubtedly, translation is not a process that relies on similar mechanisms, and there are strategies, such as adaptation, that ensure that the result of translation is appropriate, and understandable to the target audience. Similarly, transcreation does not imply a literal rendering of the original message. If the result fails to accurately reproduce the initial purpose of the text, however, it is necessary

¹²⁴<https://www.spiegel.de/international/global societies/plastic-surgery-hugely-popular-in-south-korea-a-1270545.html> (Last accessed:26/07/2022)

¹²⁵ Graça P. (2019), The pressure to be beautiful in South Korea, published on Spiegel Online.

¹²⁶ Sattler-Hovdar N. *Ibidem*

to make a radical transformation of the message, to preserve the intent of the original, and impact upon the target audience positively.

4. Practical aspects of Transcreation

In the previous chapter, an analysis of transcreation from a theoretical point of view has been conducted, starting with the first occurrences of the term, to then go on considering various points of view from translators, and researchers about this practice. The result that has emerged from the analysis is a diversified scenario that can be summarised in two major schools of thought: one affirming that transcreation does not exist, and it is simply a more renowned way to disguise translation; whereas those who have a different way of intending transcreation claim that the practice does exist, and it is far apart from common translation. A deeper analysis of this second strand of thought reveals a further difference of opinions regarding the definition of this practice. It emerges that, even though transcreation is increasing its demand on the market, its implementation as a service is struggling to be acknowledged. In addition to that, when transcreation is recognised as a plausible solution to adopt, it is quite hard to establish whether it should be intended as a linguistic service or, rather, a consultancy one.

Some think of transcreation as a translation strategy, or as a useful approach for translators to overcome the threats of the technological process in the field of machine translation. However, considering what has been said so far, transcreation should be intended as a service that stems from a concrete necessity, making it the only trustworthy approach.

The focus of transcreation is, thus, on the need to convey advertising and promotional messages in different countries while preserving the original intent. The challenges of this task are multiples, and could not be performed by a simple copywriter, who would tend to come up with something brand-new, rather than elaborate the material they have at their disposal. At the same time, however, a translator with no advertising or copywriting skills could lead to a result that is more related to a literal translation of the *copy*, the written advertising message, than being oriented towards the transposition of the message itself. In the light of these considerations, in chapter three, the importance of transcreation as a consultancy service has been examined, rather than as a linguistic service in the strict sense of the term. In this chapter, transcreation will be presented under a different light: the practical aspect will be analysed, making a comparison between

English and Italian language. The main issues that might cause a misunderstanding and a misuse of the practice will be considered, to then examine some works of transcreation from some famous international brands.

4.1. Field of activity

It is possible to claim that transcreation belongs to a niche market, also known as vertical market¹²⁷, in other words, the market is legitimated to charge higher prices, due to the uniqueness of the service offered. It goes in contrast with the concept of horizontal market¹²⁸, as the vertical market can only be provided by specialists in a distinct sector.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, advertising is known for the number of investments that are made every year, contributing to the development of transcreation for marketing purposes.

In describing the transcreation service offered by some of the most known translation agencies, constant references can be found to the internationalization of brands, and the need to communicate on a global scale. Therefore, the previous chapter has offered a general overview to explain a phenomenon that has strongly influenced the economy, and advertising accordingly: globalization. The International Monetary Fund, in a short report, written in 2008, gathered some main information on this phenomenon, and explained its history and consequences.¹³⁰ Globalisation has developed on several levels, the most relevant is undoubtedly the economic aspect, which over the last years has seen a gradual integration of economies from all over the world, through the transfer of goods, services, and assets beyond national borders. With the increase in global trade, which has occurred also thanks to the technological progress, consumers around the world

¹²⁷*Vertical Market*: a market which meets the needs of more specific market segments, such as the production of car components, or software, that aims at the automation of specialised tasks in a specific market or field of activity. (Gaballos, 2012)

¹²⁸*Horizontal Market*: a market in which a product or service meets a need of a wide range of buyers across different sectors of an economy.

¹²⁹Ray R., Kelly N. (2010), Reaching new markets through Transcreation: when translation just is not enough, CSA Research.

¹³⁰ <https://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/ib/2008/053008.htm> (Last accessed 10/08/2022)

have been able to choose from a wider range of goods and services at lower prices and, as a result, competition among brands and business has intensified. This mechanism has been explained by Theodore Levitt, US economist and proponent of the term globalisation, in his article “*The globalisation of markets*”, which he calls *standardisation*. He describes how prices started to get lower, and competition soared up¹³¹. It goes without saying that the increase in the variety of goods and services available, and with the price war between competitors, advertising had to undergo a change. To adapt to the various target audiences advertising started to be targeted, and it is precisely in this context that Simon Anholt's model of *smart centralisation* seems to fit in, a model that is fundamental to justifying the importance of transcreation.

Simon Anholt, founder of the international advertising agency *Cave Anholt Jonason*, has written a book¹³² in which he argues that advertising agencies should abandon the so-called *centralised structure*, where advertising messages are created on site, and translation agencies in other countries are simply charged with the task of translation and adaptation. Today, agencies must be able to adopt a local approach in each individual market. even if the concept behind the advertising message is meant to be globally distributed, every market should receive its targeted equivalent. Translation and adaptation are not sufficient to achieve this goal.

According to Anholt, translating an advertisement is like “colouring the tip of an iceberg red, hoping that the whole iceberg will turn red”. What make an advertising message effective are not words themselves, but a certain combination of words. One more issue that can be encountered by copywriters might be the difficulty of reproducing effective adapted messages, as they are trained to come up with some original ideas of their owns, rather than perform translation.

Intercultural barriers do exist and can be encountered with expressions that seem extremely easy to translate at a first glance. For instance, the English words *cup of coffee* can be quite challenging to translate in different languages, as those words do not share

¹³¹Levitt T. (1983), *The Globalization of markets*, Harvard business review: <https://hbr.org/1983/05/the-globalization-of-markets> (Last accessed: 22/08/2022)

¹³²Anholt S., (2000), *Another one bites the grass: making sense of international advertising*, John Wiley & Sons

the same meaning in all cultures. In Britain, it means a quarter-litre mug filled with hot water, instant coffee, and sugar. The Italian translation *una tazza di caffè*, a cup of coffee, is quite different: it refers to a smaller cup filled with espresso coffee, and a totally different taste. It should also be noted that *a cup of coffee* is a combination of words that is rarely used in common Italian language, where just *un caffè*, a coffee, is usually preferred.



Figure 7 “A cup of coffee” Source: Google



Figure 8 “Un caffè”. Source: Google

Anholt claims that faithful translation does not exist in advertising, therefore promotional texts should not be faithfully translated: they should be written all over again. The translator's primary task is to respect the original text, a priority that transcreators can

afford to change. According to Anholt, translation might be suitable for a poem or for a literary text, where the translator's focus is on translating back the original. In contrast to literature, advertising owns first and foremost a functional aspect: it is created for specific commercial purposes: to communicate brand values and increase sales. The best method to produce effective advertisement texts for each market is to provide a briefing to a good professional, so that they can write the text in their mother tongue, without any reference to the messages or slogans used in other countries. Furthermore, mastering a foreign language is not adequate; it is not sufficient to have spent a few months, nor is it to have spent a few years in a certain country to be a transcreator.

It takes deep knowledge of the market of the target country: a product or service can be a best-seller in the United States, and yet, be completely unknown in the Netherlands. It may be unique, different from others in Germany, but a so-called *me-too product*¹³³ in Australia. It can be perceived as a local product in its country of origin and as a foreign good in other countries. The same asset can be consumed in different countries around the world, but consumption can take place in different ways or for different reasons.

Culture is the other element to consider, for instance, the colour white is traditionally associated with purity in the West, and with death in the East. In France, the owl is a symbol of wisdom, while in Italy it is associated with bad luck. In New York, going to McDonald's means getting cheap food, while lunching at MacDonald's is a prestigious behaviour for people living in Moscow. In addition to the differences just mentioned, young Americans use the Sony Walkman to listen to music without being disturbed, whereas young Japanese use it to listen to music without disturbing others.

Rather than checking whether the translation conforms to the source text, it is pivotal to verify whether, in each market, emotions can be easily decoded by the consumers, and whether these emotions are experienced as credible if associated with the promoted product or service.

¹³³ *Me-too product*: a product introduced by a company after it has seen that other companies are successful with the same type of product. <https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/me-too-product> (Last accessed: 24/08/2022)

In his book, Anholt describes two different working realities operating in the field of internationalisation of advertising: *networks* and *domestic shops*. *Networks* use agencies distributed in different countries, with which they collaborate, to develop advertising solutions that are suitable for different markets, where the product/service will be sold. *Domestic shops*, on the other hand, are local entities that work on the internationalization of advertising campaigns. According to Anholt, both systems have critical issues that would not allow an effective rendering of the message the brand wants to convey. The *domestic shop* structure requires the brand to use a local agency to produce an international campaign. The main issue with this type of work is probably the lack of sensitivity of local agencies towards foreign consumers belonging to other countries.

Entrusting the development of an international campaign to a local agency made up of people from a single social and cultural context would make any attempt to internationalise the advertising campaign appear unnatural for a foreign audience¹³⁴. On the other hand, the structure of the *network* is, at first glance, more complex than that of the *domestic shop*. In such a situation, the brand turns to a central agency (lead agency) which processes the promotional material and distributes it to local agencies in the countries where the product/service is to be sold. The local agency receives the lead agency's idea and adapts it for the target market. The problem with this type of system is that local agencies are forced to work with ideas that have been previously produced by professionals from a different social and cultural context. More than that, they are also asked to remain faithful to the source idea. The risk is to produce something that might be perceived as extraneous. In order for the advertising agency to effectively connect the brand and the consumer, and produce appropriate international solutions, it is necessary to create a multicultural environment where experienced professionals cooperate with one another.

¹³⁴ Anholt S., (2011) Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations, U.K. Foreign Office Public Diplomacy Board

4.2. Transcreation: some case studies

As already mentioned, the focus is on marketing. A pivotal role was performed by globalisation, which enhanced the demand of specific services: companies want to operate internationally and must, therefore, adapt their products to local markets accordingly. Nowadays, it is possible to look for any kind of information about a specific product on the Internet. Nevertheless, even though data have become available anytime, anywhere on the web, it might be easier said than done to get the information one is looking for.

One issue that may occur is that the website does not offer the possibility of a comprehensible reading, as the language that readers understand might not be available. That might turn into a potential loss, as everyone prefers to be addressed to in their mother tongue, rather than in a foreign language. Consequently, potential buyers tend to purchase products for which information is provided in their native language.

Another unprofitable scenario could occur if the website is comprehensible to the reader, but the images shown on the site are not appealing, unclear, or socially unaccepted. This could damage the brand severely; images and videos must be adapted to the receiving culture. An accommodation facility that shows bacon in pictures promoting breakfast is unlikely to be successful in Muslim countries like Morocco, where people do not eat pork meat. An Italian restaurant should use images that have pasta, pizza, and breadsticks in the advertising message to draw the guests' attention, whereas in Germany, it might be more appropriate to promote typical German dishes. It is, hence, possible to claim that images unconsciously influence the reader.

The third and last unprofitable scenario that might occur is when the website seems suitable and targeted according to the cultural conditions of the receiving market, but the reader does not know the brand. Transcreation is a real art: the expert who performs transcreation must transfer the effectiveness of an advertising tagline from one language to another, while respecting its rhythmic and linguistic characteristics. At times this operation fails miserably, at other times transcreators can smartly achieve their intention.

Down below are some examples that might help identify some of the most famous examples of effective transcreation. As already mentioned, the task of transcreation is to carry the meaning of the advertising message from one language to another and, when possible, also its rhythm. This practice often fails, as translating something literally can lead to sentences that are completely unsuitable for the advertising context. This is where the transcreators get down to business, trying to do their best to come up with a suitable solution. Such is the case of *Haribo*, the German company that produces the world-famous gummy sweets and candies. The slogan with which Haribo conquered the market is: *Haribo macht Kinder froh, und Erwachsene ebenso*. The literal English translation is *Haribo makes children happy, and adults happy as well*. While the concept is quite clear and successful from an advertising point of view, the slogan was a real pain in the neck of translators from all over the world. In Italy, language experts did come up with a smart solution: *Haribo è la bontà che si gusta ad ogni età*, literal English translation: *Haribo is the goodness that can be enjoyed at every age*.

Another important example to be examined is the creative translation case that made international marketing history: it is a slogan that dates back to 1959, which is still considered when talking about transcreation. *Esso fuels* used the famous tagline: *Put a Tiger in Your Tank* to promote their gas and oil. Differently from the United States, Italy had been experiencing on its own country the drama of a lacerating war that had ended only few years before the slogan came out: for this reason, Italian advertisers decided that it was not appropriate to include tanks in an Italian advertising campaign. The Esso tagline was transformed into Italian as *Metti un tigre nel motore*; put a tiger in the engine.

In Italian the noun *tigre* is feminine, but the slogan reads “un tigre” (a tiger) using the indefinite masculine article *un*. The grammatical error was intentional: at the time, cars were still a men's business, and nobody would have wanted to put something feminine in their car. The poetic licence of the Italian advertisers who worked for Esso, therefore, improved the musicality of the slogan and adapted perfectly to the socio-cultural context of the time. Italian translators also managed to place a T - R alliteration in the sentence between the words *tigre* and *motore*, tiger and engine, to recall the sound of a tiger roaring. Creative translation is a very delicate matter, and the distance between a barely acceptable translation and a brilliant solution is very short.



Figure 9 "Esso advertisement, English version". Source: Google



Figure 10 "Esso advertisement, Italian version". Source: Google

Another case study on transcreation concerns the famous motor vehicle manufacturer *Volkswagen*: sometimes transcreation is not needed on a product tagline, but on the product name itself. This is the case, for example, of the renowned German car manufacturer Volkswagen, which launched its Volkswagen Jetta about twenty years ago. The intention was to recall, thanks to its name, the power of a Jet. In Italy, however, the product struggled to conquer the market, as it resembles the unpromising verb 'gettare', to throw away, as well as the term 'iettatura',¹³⁵ the tendency to believe that someone in a group of people is the promoter of bad luck (to jinx somebody or something¹³⁶).

The doubt that translation and transcreation are the same thing seems to dissolve not only when analysing the skills needed to perform the two activities, but also when examining the strategies to be implemented in both services. In the previous paragraph, the opinions of those who do not admit the existence of transcreation, and of those who make it coincide with translation have been introduced. In some of the comments to Fairman's article, the denial of transcreation is argued by comparing the practice to some sort of creative translation. However, it all depends upon the connotation of the adjective *creative*. Indeed, creativity should not be attributed to translation itself, but rather to the process of creating a *copy*, that is the written advertising message, which is based on an authentic concept¹³⁷.

Some people believe that translation and transcreation do coexist, because translation is never a word-for-word rendering of the source text. Undoubtedly, translation is not a process that relies on a similar mechanism, and there are strategies, such as adaptation, that allow the result of translation to be appropriate and understandable to the target audience. Similarly, transcreation does not imply a literal rendering of the original message: in most cases, a radical change in the structure of the message is needed to simultaneously preserve the source text intent and achieve the wanted effect.

¹³⁵ <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/iettatura/> (Last accessed: 26/08/2022)

¹³⁶ <https://www.wordreference.com/enit/jinx> (Last accessed: 26/08/2022)

¹³⁷ Sattler-Hovdar N. (2019), *Get fit for the future of transcreation: A handbook on how to succeed in an undervalued market*, independently published

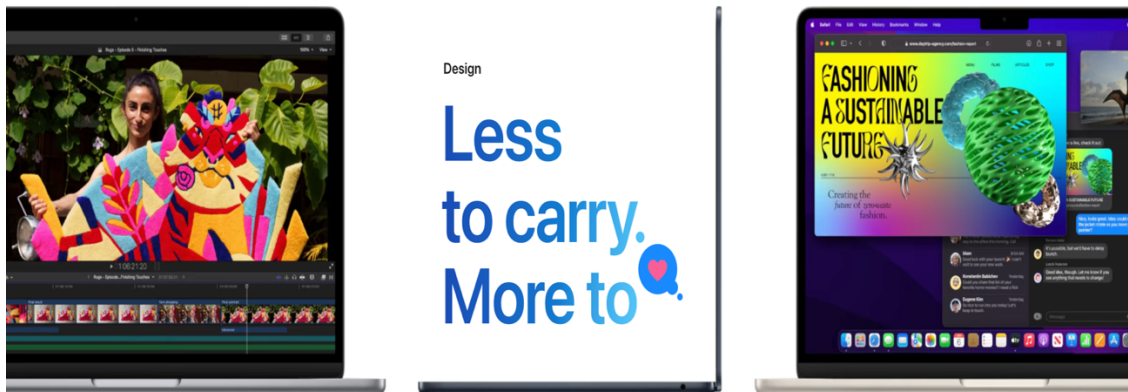
4.3. Transcreation and company websites: *Apple*

The following work of transcreation to be analysed concerns the MacBook air computer with M2 chip, produced by the famous American multinational technology company *Apple*. Before beginning, it is worth specifying that websites are generally great mediums of communication, as they allow more accurate descriptions and longer texts, without any restrictions, such is not the case of TV advertisements, which are limited by time constraints. Another aspect to consider is that users do not come across a website by chance. Rather, they reach the site of interest by typing its name in the search box and browse through the internet, willing to find out more about the product, and perhaps purchase it.

Back to the page to be examined, it lists the characteristics of the MacBook, and presents a series of information, each introduced by one or more headlines, followed by a brief description. The first headline in **figure 11** reads “*Less to carry. More to love.*”¹³⁸, which has been translated into Italian as “*Piccolo peso, grande cuore.*”¹³⁹, literal translation into English: *Little weight. Big heart.* In English, it is clear the contrast between the two adjectives: *less and more*, a contrast that was rendered into Italian with *Piccolo, little, and Grande, big.*

¹³⁸ <https://www.apple.com/uk/macbook-air-m2/> (last accessed: 30/09/2022)

¹³⁹ <https://www.apple.com/it/macbook-air-m2/> (last accessed: 30/09/2022)



Design

Less
to carry.
More to love.

Redesigned around the next-generation M2 chip, MacBook Air is strikingly thin and brings exceptional speed and power efficiency within its durable all-aluminium enclosure. It's the ultrafast, ultra-capable laptop that lets you work, play or create just about anything – anywhere.

1.24 1.13cm
kg thin

Figure 11 “Less to carry. More to love.”, Source: Apple



Design

Piccolo
peso.
Grande cuore.

Riprogettato attorno al nuovissimo chip M2, MacBook Air è assurdammente sottile, e il suo robusto guscio in alluminio racchiude performance ed efficienza straordinarie. È il portatile ultraveloce e ultraversatile per lavorare, giocare e creare, come e quando vuoi.

1,24 kg 1,13 cm
peso spessore

Figure 12 “Piccolo peso. Grande cuore.”, Source: Apple

As it can be seen, the rendering of the headline is different from the original. The key element of the headline is the sentence "*Less to carry. More to love*". The two adjectives *less* and *more* are the key elements of the headline, a contrast that had to be translated differently in Italian to allow the headline to have the same meaning in the same amount of space. The adjectives refer to the fact that the product is very easy to carry around, thanks to its light weight, a feature the consumer will fall in love with.

In the set of information that follows, **figure 13** and **figure 14**, there is a main headline, and two other minor sections, that describe the features of the product: a long-lasting battery and a quite silent M2 chip.



There's power in silence. Thanks to the efficiency of the M2 chip, MacBook Air can deliver amazing performance without a fan — so it stays completely silent no matter how intense the task.



Built to last. Puts the earth first. As responsible as it is durable, MacBook Air features 100 percent recycled aluminum in its compact enclosure.¹

Figure 13 "There is power in silence". Source: Apple



Silenzio, si lavora. Grazie all'efficienza del chip M2, MacBook Air offre performance incredibili senza bisogno di una ventola: anche quando lavora più intensamente, non senti volare una mosca.



È fatto per durare. E rispettare l'ambiente. MacBook Air è robusto, resistente e anche sostenibile, perché il suo guscio è realizzato al 100% in alluminio riciclato.¹

Figure 14 "Silenzio, si lavora". Source: Apple

The headline *There's power in silence* in its Italian version *Silenzio, si lavora* diverges lightly from the style of the previous headlines. It does address the reader directly and has a descriptive function concerning the product: its quiet way of working. Just like the descriptions that follow: in both the Italian and English version, a descriptive function in the tone of the message can be perceived, an invitation for the reader to take advantage of the benefits promised by such a product. It is also interesting to note how the Italian version includes the expression "*non senti volare una mosca*", literal English translation is *you don't hear a fly flying*, which directly addresses the reader in a quite friendly and colloquial style.

The following headlines in **figure 15** and **figure 16** have the same structures as the previous ones. Once again, there is a descriptive title "*The M2 chip can really zip*", promoting the speed of the chip, through the verb to zip, which in English means to move very quickly¹⁴⁰. Moreover, the repetition of the letters *I* and *P* in the words chip and zip creates a sort of rhyme that is quite challenging to reproduce in translation. The Italian headline reads "*Guarda che scheggia, il chip M2*", the rhyme is gone, but the meaning of the original has been faithfully reproduced in the translation, through the word "*scheggia*", that in English would be fast as lightning.

The M2 chip can really zip.

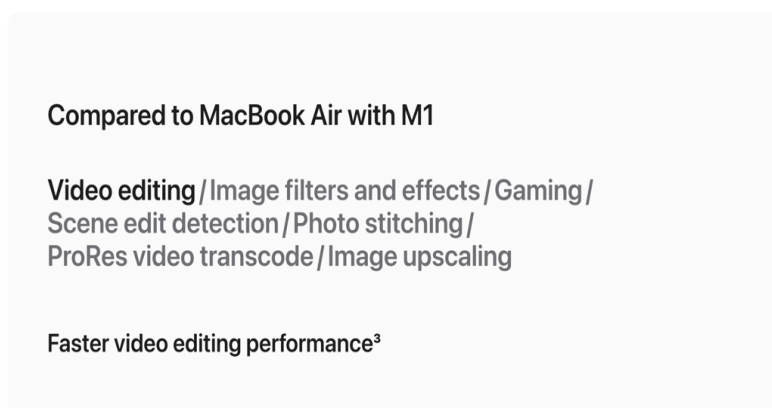


Figure 15 "*The M2 chip can really zip.*" Source: Apple

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.wordreference.com/definition/zip> (Last accessed: 26/08/2022)

Guarda che scheggia, il chip M2.

Rispetto a MacBook Air con M1

Montaggio video / Filtri ed effetti immagine / Giochi /
Rilevamento modifiche scena / Stitching di immagini /
Transcodifica video ProRes / Upscaling di immagini

Più veloce nel montaggio video³

Figure 16 “Guarda che scheggia, il chip M2”. Source: Apple

In the following headlines, **figure 17** and **figure 18**, two different descriptive approaches are to be found: the English version reads “*Look sharp. Sound Great.*” It addresses the reader directly, promoting the possibility of being seen and heard perfectly, thanks to new built-in camera and microphone. The style, as mentioned before, is descriptive, and also probably minimalist this time. Few words needed to present a product that does not need any further description.

Look sharp. Sound great.



Figure 17 “Look Sharp. Sound Great.” Source: Apple

Different story concerns the headline of the Italian version, which is quite familiar and friendly. It addresses the reader too, but as a friend that has been away for some time. The Italian title reads “*Che meraviglia vederti. E sentirti.*” Literal translation into English “How wonderful to see you. And hear from you.”

Che meraviglia vederti. E sentirti.

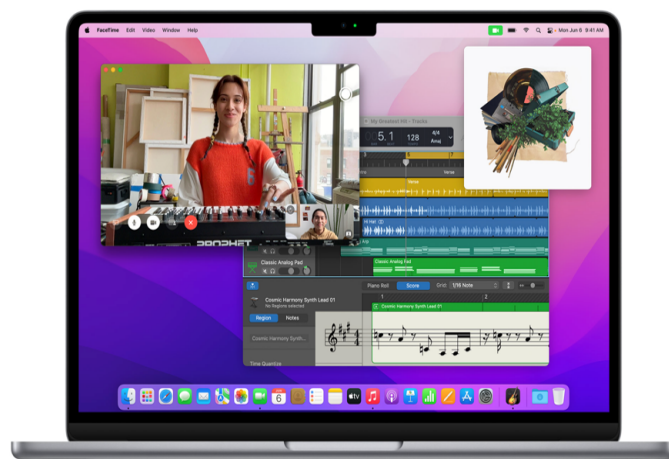


Figure 18 “Che meraviglia vederti. E sentirti.”. Source: Apple

In **figures 19** and **figure 20**, the first things that catch the eye are the two idiomatic expressions in both the English and Italian versions. The English headline reads “*keep plugging away*”. According to the dictionary, it means to keep working hard at something¹⁴¹. Literally, it also means to continue to attach and detach something, in this case, the power connector. The headline has been rendered into Italian as “*Ha sempre gli agganci giusti*”, to say the laptop can easily attach and detach to the power connector MagSafe, thanks to magnets, but the sentence has also a figurative meaning in Italian, that is “to develop friendships with influential people”.¹⁴² It is possible to say that the English version has been smartly rendered into Italian, preserving the initial message of the original, that of promoting the MagSafe system, but at the same time, translators have come up with a brilliant solution to transpose the idiomatic expression.

¹⁴¹<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/plug-away> (Last accessed 25/08/2022)

¹⁴²https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/aggancio_%28Sinonimi-e-Contrari%29/ (Last accessed 25/08/2022)

Keep plugging away.

The quick-release MagSafe power connector easily attaches — and detaches — with magnets, preventing any unintended flights. Two Thunderbolt ports let you connect and power high-speed accessories. You can also connect up to a 6K display. And the headphone jack supports high-impedance headphones.



Figure 19 “Keep plugging away”. Source: Apple

Ha sempre gli agganci giusti.

Il connettore MagSafe magnetico si aggancia in un attimo e si sgancia all'istante se inciampi nel cavo, così il tuo MacBook Air non rischia capitolomboli. Ci sono due porte Thunderbolt per collegare e ricaricare rapidamente dispositivi ad alta velocità, o per usare un monitor fino a 6K. E il comodo jack per cuffie funziona anche con i modelli ad alta impedenza.



Figure 20 “Ha sempre gli agganci giusti”. Source: Apple

Generally speaking, it is not possible to identify a single approach to the adaptation of headlines on the examined webpages. In some cases, a faithful rendering of the headline was possible, in others, a substantial change had to be applied to the headline to make it comprehensible to the target audience. As well as translation, there are not fixed patterns to follow to adopt the rightest strategy, rather, the choice is conducted by the experience of the professional translator, who is at the same time copywriter and language expert.

Concluding remarks

This thesis has considered the importance of culture to determine the translation process, and the skills needed to produce effective translation. Abilities that go beyond the mere knowledge of a language, as it is not sufficient to be able to speak a foreign language to succeed in being a professional translator. Certainly, linguistic elements are to be considered pivotal to the effectiveness of the communicative intent, but there are also several other factors to take into account when translating, one, doubtlessly the most relevant, is culture. To put it differently, finding the exact correspondence of meaning between two or more languages is easier said than done, above all, when considering different aspects. Cultural background plays a pivotal role in translation, that is why, most of the times, finding equivalents belonging to the target culture is the result of deep reasoning from the translator.

In addition to what has just been said, a translator should also have a deep knowledge of the various disciplines that concern the extra-linguistic context, such as, for example, the subject on which the text focuses. As far as technical or scientific translations are concerned, it is probably sufficient to find a suitable equivalence in the target language, but when it comes to literary or advertising translation, it is necessary to adopt different approaches and strategies. Each of the aforementioned fields require a profound capability to adapt the source text into the target text to transmit the message of the original, even if, sometimes, it means destroying the structure of the source text in favour of acceptable rendering.

The main purpose of some translation practices, such as *transcreation*, the translation of promotional texts, is to produce a remunerative message, that allows companies to sell specific products, goods, or services. To demonstrate that transcreation is not simply translation, various examples of adaptations for advertising have been provided, which aim to highlight the impossibility of a literal transposition, since it proved impossible and meaningless in most cases. A translator, therefore, should possess skills that go beyond mere linguistic competences of the foreign language, including technical, scientific, cultural or, in the case of advertising, copywriting skills.

From this work, it also emerged that globalization revolutionized the way information exchange is performed, which is now more efficient and complete, so it is possible to assume that also translation has been influenced by new discoveries, techniques, and strategies. Translation gives new life to works of art which would have probably been unknown to the rest of the world. This statement can be confirmed by the famous Korean film, *Parasite*, which gained the Academy Award as Best Picture in 2020. Such as a book, the movie's subtitles were translated from Korean into English, allowing also non-Korean speakers to enjoy the film: part of the merit goes to the translators, and to quote the South-Korean culture critic Kim Heon-sik:

[...] they don't translate literally or simply deliver the words, but they identify the message the director intends and 'design the language' so that the foreign viewers can arrive at the core of the message. It's a complicated job that requires both professional insight in filmmaking and linguistic proficiency.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Kim Heon-sik (2020), article available at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200206000722&mod=skb> (last accessed:27/09/2022).

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Ringraziamenti

Grazie alla mia famiglia, a mia madre e mio padre, per avermi sempre sostenuta, grazie alle mie sorelle per le avventure condivise insieme.

Un enorme grazie va anche a Milvia e Federico, che mi hanno sempre accolta e fatto sentire a casa, soprattutto quando ce n'era bisogno.

Infine, un doveroso grazie va a Eleonora, per avermi dato contro tutte le volte che avrei voluto mollare, per avermi supportato e sopportato incessantemente, senza sosta e senza riserve alcuna, in ogni difficoltà. Grazie per ogni viaggio, ogni camminata in montagna, ogni notte in campeggio sotto le stelle. Che il nostro legame possa accompagnarci per tutta la vita.