



DEVELOPING TRANSLINGUAL AND TRANSCULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH PEDAGOGIC SUBTITLING

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Abstract

This paper expounds a language pedagogy that is framed within the ecological perspective on language learning elaborated by Leo van Lier (2000, 2004) and Claire Kramsch (2009, 2010) and adopts Maria Tymoczko's (2007) holistic approach to cultural translation. Next, I report on a case study where the proposed methodology was integrated in the syllabus design of a 3-credit module I taught as part of a professional development course attended by secondary school EFL teachers at the University of Bari during the 2013-2014 academic year. Students analysed and translated salient scenes from the bilingual drama *La stella che non c'è*/*The Missing Star* (directed by Gianni Amelio, 2006). In so doing, they unveiled the connectedness between language and culture and how they both are "discursively constructed" in social contexts (van Lier, *The Ecology* 184).

Keywords: *ecological approach, symbolic competence, transcultural competence, subtitling*

A Multilingual Language Pedagogy

The pedagogy I put forward in this study is framed within the ecological perspective elaborated by Leo van Lier and Claire Kramsch. This approach embraces the idea that language is a semiotic ecosystem that co-operates with other meaning-making processes. It therefore focuses on the study of "language as relations (of thought, action, power), rather than as objects (words, sentences, rules). It also relates verbal utterances to other aspects of meaning making, such as gestures, drawings, artifacts, etc." (van Lier, "From Input to Affordance" 251). Consistent with van Lier's ecological model of language description, Claire Kramsch (*Multilingual 7*) espouses the notion of language as a symbolic system and states that "language use is symbolic [1] because it mediates our existence through symbolic forms that are conventional and represent objective realities, and [2] because symbolic forms construct subjective realities such as perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and values."

The use of symbolic forms to represent people and objects in the world as well as construct perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, aspirations and values engenders symbolic power. More specifically, as symbolic power, language is a relational human activity, whereby we co-construct and negotiate personal and social identities, while becoming aware of our own and of other people's subjectivity, historicity, values, individual and collective memories, emotions, and aspirations (Kramersch, "Symbolic"). In line with this view of language, Kramersch maintains that in our increasingly global, migratory world, learners of modern languages need to grow into multilingual subjects. In order to achieve this goal, it is essential for them to develop a cluster of abilities that constitute what she names "symbolic competence." Symbolic competence comprises (Kramersch, *Multilingual* 200-201):

- an ability to understand the symbolic value of symbolic forms and the different cultural memories evoked by different symbolic systems;
- an ability to draw on the semiotic diversity afforded by multiple languages to reframe ways of seeing familiar events, create alternative realities, and find an appropriate subject position between languages;
- an ability to look both at and through language and to understand the challenges to the autonomy and integrity of the subject that come from unitary ideologies and a totalizing networked culture.

Congruent with this vision of language teaching are the recommendations made in the Ad Hoc Committee Report on Foreign Languages issued in 2007 by the Modern Languages Association of America. MLA advocates that the goal of foreign language education is to form "educated speakers who have deep translanguingual and transcultural competence," (MLA 2) which requires that students be trained to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture (MLA 3-4). To that end, the report envisages that learners be taught differences in meaning, mentality and worldview as expressed in their native and foreign languages. This kind of education encourages the use of literature, film and other media to challenge students' imaginations and help them consider alternative ways of seeing, feeling and understanding things (MLA 4).

The report also recommends the development of programmes in translation and interpretation because "[t]here is a great unmet demand for translators and interpreters, and translation is an ideal context for developing translanguingual and transcultural abilities as an organizing principle of the language curriculum" (MLA 9). This inclusive stance, which reconciles the dichotomy between translation as a means and an end in the language classroom and paves

the way for a multilingual pedagogy, underpins the teaching method I present in my paper. The aim is to harmonize language and translation pedagogy in the same learning environment.

To this end, I integrate Maria Tymoczko's holistic approach to cultural translation with the multilingual pedagogy advocated by Kramersch and endorsed by MLA. Tymoczko's usage of the term 'holistic' (*Enlarging* 233) follows current terminology in the United States in the fields of education and medicine. In these fields 'holism' indicates attention to all facets of a child or patient such as mind, body, family, environment. "Holistic cultural translation," as Tymoczko (238) explains, "is similar: material culture is not forgotten, but it is contextualized within larger frameworks and supplemented by attention to many aspects of culture that are less tangible on a physical level."

A holistic approach involves considering the cultural underpinnings of the source text that the translator needs to negotiate because they may present difficulties for the target audience. Among the cultural elements that the translator might take into account as a guide for interpreting the source text are signature concepts, key words, linguistic and conceptual metaphors, discourses, cultural practices, humor, argumentation, rhetorical figures, overcodings and symbols. As Tymoczko (247) maintains, considering these cultural elements helps translators to compare their own culture with the source culture and this comparison can heighten self-reflexivity. Tymoczko and Kramersch envision a similar way of engaging with the text, which involves cultural analysis that fosters self-reflexivity. In the next sections I illustrate how a holistic approach to translation can be integrated in language learning and teaching.

Pedagogic Procedures

The pedagogic unit I present in this section was created while teaching a 3-credit module on English Language Teaching Methodology. It was aimed at a class composed of L1 Italian and L1 English secondary school EFL teacher trainees, who attended a professional development course at the University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy, during the 2013-2014 academic year. The course is named Percorsi Abilitanti Speciali (PAS). It is a teacher training programme established by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (Decree No. 249, 10th September 2010).

Five of the 15 hours of seminar time devoted to the module were taught by distance learning, while the remaining ones were taught in class. The textbook I used for the course was *Translation and Language Education: Pedagogic approaches explored* (Laviosa 2014).

The teaching unit covered 10 hours of seminar time in class. The learning objective was to unearth the symbolic dimensions of multilingual exchanges as they are represented in a multilingual film such as *La stella che non c'è/The Missing Star* (directed by Gianni Amelio, 2006). Inspired by Ermanno Rea's

novel *La dismissione* (The Divestment 2002), the film narrates the story of a journey from Italy to China. The protagonist, Vincenzo Buonavolontà, is a maintenance man working in a steel mill which is going out of business and whose faulty equipment has been sold to a Chinese company. Having repaired the mechanical defect by assembling a new control unit, Vincenzo flies to Shanghai. From there, he sets out to find the Chinese buyer with the help of Liu Hua, a student of Italian, who serves as his interpreter.

As the plot unfolds, Vincenzo's travel gradually turns into what Amelio (2006) calls "a journey towards himself." Discovering China, "the 'real' contemporary China" (Bona, "Italian film-makers" 51), will give Vincenzo "another idea of life" and the desire to live it to the full (Amelio 2006). But this is not a solitary self-discovery journey. Vincenzo's personal growth is achieved together with and thanks to Liu Hua, who is more than an interpreter or a cultural mediator. She gradually becomes a travelling companion who opens up her world and pours out her heart letting her whole person be permeated by the experience of being in a transcultural world, just as Vincenzo does and in harmony with him. The scenes that the students were asked to analyse and translate represent some of the steps taken by the two characters along their path to a new beginning.

The pedagogic unit was organized in four phases. The previewing phase involved introducing the ecological approach to language learning and holistic cultural translation. After giving a brief summary of the story narrated in the film as well as some background information about how the story came to life (see Appendix I), the viewing of the film without subtitles was assigned as homework. The film can be downloaded or viewed online by accessing the following URL address: <http://www.cineblog01.eu/la-stella-che-non-ce-2006/> (last accessed on 19th September 2014). The post-viewing activities involved first of all the textual and multimodal analysis of five selected scenes. These were: "The Journey Begins," "At the Police Station," "Very Maybe and Very Surely," "Italian a Minor Language," "The Stars on the Chinese Flag."

The analysis was guided by a brief introduction to the contents of each scene and by a series of open questions that invited students to reflect on the variegated themes addressed in the film (see the two worksheets below). This phase was then followed by the production of pedagogic subtitles from Italian to English. Finally, students compared and contrasted their individual analyses and translations in class and reported on the results of their collaborative work by means of an oral presentation. The teaching unit ended with a sing-along session as a cool-down activity. The song I chose was "Maybe there's a world" by singer-songwriter Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens). The reason for this choice is that the lyrics express, in my view, an important symbolic meaning conveyed by the journey made by Vincenzo and Liu Hua, i.e. the quest for an open, inclusive world where people connect with the Other (see Yusuf - Maybe

There's a World (Live Yusuf's Cafe Session 2007) + Lyrics at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNsw0uOFQil>, last accessed on 19th September 2014).

In this paper I focus on the group analyses and translations of two scenes, namely “The Journey Begins” and “The Stars on the Chinese Flag.” Here are the worksheets I devised for these scenes:

Scene 6: The Journey Begins

- Vincenzo e Liu Hua begin their journey. They take the train from Shanghai to Wuhan, the capital of Hupei in Cenral China. In Wuhan, a large city of eight million people, the first steel mill in the country was built in the nineteenth century. Vincenzo breaks the ice and starts to talk with Liu Hua. How does the conversation begin? How does it develop? Reflect on the importance of reciprocal language learning to know the Other and let the Other discover your language and culture.
- Transcribe the dialogue and translate it into English line by line.
- When you come to class, you will compare and contrast your analysis and translation with the ones carried out by your fellow students. You will discuss the linguistic and cultural elements you attempted to relay in your translation. You will also expound the elements you privileged when there were conflicts between translating specific aspects of the text.

Scene 17: The Stars on the Chinese Flag

- This scene takes place at Liu Hua's grandmother's house in Pianyan, a small town near the Yangtzen River. On the day before they leave for Bautou, in Inner Mongolia, Vincenzo and Liu Hua have an intimate conversation that goes to the heart of the human values and aspirations they cherish. Is there convergence between their beliefs? Is there harmony between their ideals and the cultural realities they belong to?
- Transcribe the dialogue and translate it into English line by line.
- When you come to class, you will compare and contrast your analysis and translation with the ones carried out by your fellow students. You will discuss the linguistic and cultural elements you attempted to relay in your translation. You will also expound the elements you privileged when there were conflicts between translating specific aspects of the text.

Students' Reflections and Translations

After completing the first part of the module, that was delivered online, I met my students for the first time in class. I introduced myself giving a few details about my bilingual identity. I was born in Italy to Italian parents. At the age of twenty I moved to Great Britain, where I got married, raised a family, worked as a bilingual secretary, completed my undergraduate and postgraduate studies and embarked on an academic career in language and translation teaching. In 2002 I returned to my home country and since then I have lectured in English language and translation in a wide variety of educational contexts. Italian is my native language and English is my language of habitual use. Also, I am a free-lance professional translator normally working from Italian into English in the specialized fields of business, finance and economics. I then asked students to fill in a language biography, whose format was adapted from one of the three components of the European Language Portfolio (see Appendix II). Conceived as a tool for promoting plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a personal document that was designed in 2001 for the European Year of Languages by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe within the Common European Framework of References for Languages. In addition to the language biography, the ELP comprises the language passport, which describes the learner's intercultural learning experiences, and the dossier, which includes documents selected by the learner to illustrate his or her intercultural competence. See the dedicated website at: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/> (last accessed on 19th September 2014). In the language biographies, students gave an overview of their most important learning experiences with other languages and cultures. They then read out a brief statement that summarized their linguistic identity.

The language biographies revealed the multilingual composition of the classroom. This was made up of 10 native speakers of English (originally from Ireland, Wales, England, Canada and the US) and 15 native speakers of Italian (most of them from Southern Italy). Six of the English native speakers were raised bilingually in English and Italian. The rest of the class was made up of teachers who had studied English and other foreign languages in secondary and tertiary education. They all considered their knowledge of languages as a source of intercultural enrichment. As one bilingual student put it, "My Italian and American identity helps me understand different cultures, ways of life and languages. It enables me to make comparisons and find the good aspects as well as the bad ones in each of the two countries." This observation is echoed by a student who was raised monolingually and learnt English and German at school and university, "I like learning new languages and new cultures and when I do, I feel very good and very gratified because it is an enrichment for myself."

Having become acquainted with one another, the students formed 5 groups, one for each scene. During group work they discussed their individual

analyses and translations with a view to reaching a consensus on the various interpretations of the scene and on the most accurate and fluent renderings of the original dialogue. The teaching unit ended with an oral presentation in which every group, that was made up of 2 native English speakers and 3 native Italian speakers, reported back to the rest of the class. Here are the comments made on “The Journey Begins” scene by Group 1:

We had convergent and divergent interpretations of this scene. Some of us thought that the century eggs did not simply act as an icebreaker, but had a profound symbolic value, namely the birth of an intimate relationship between Vincenzo and Liu Hua and the beginning of their life journey together. Liu Hua’s apparent lack of appreciation for Vincenzo’s gift is only superficial. Deep down she is pleased about it. She also feels reassured when she realizes that Vincenzo cares about her family knowing that she was travelling with him. On the contrary, others thought that the century egg was a mere pretext for starting a conversation. What really brought the two characters together in a relationship of mutual trust, they said, is their keen interest in learning each other’s native language. This is demonstrated by the genuine effort they both put into pronouncing their names correctly in an informal register and by the trust they show towards each other in their reciprocal role of language learners and instructors. Our views converged in regarding Vincenzo’s and Liu Hua’s exchange of linguistic knowledge as a form of respect towards each other and their respective cultures. As language learners and teachers ourselves, we clearly perceived this act of sharing between the two characters as a way of showing a kind of intimate, mutual understanding.

What follows is our translation of the dialogue between Vincenzo and Liu Hua. Alternative renderings of the original expression are separated by forward slashes. We have favored short sentences and an informal register throughout in order to relay the friendly mood of the conversation. We thought this was important in light of our interpretation of the entire scene. We therefore translated the verb *accompagnare* with *come with*, rather than *accompany*. For the same reason we rendered *più semplice* with *simply*, rather than *simply put*. Also, we translated *Io Vincenzo* with *I’m Vincenzo* rather than *My name’s Vincenzo* and *certo* with *sure* rather than *of course*. The question put by Liu Hua to Vincenzo, *Perché parli Cinese?*, means either *Why are you speaking Chinese* or *Why do you speak Chinese*, so we decided to include both translations. Most of us preferred to translate *Ecco, ho preso due uova del centenario!* with *Look, I got two century eggs!* because we thought it was more engaging than saying *Here, I have,*

which was favored only by one member of the group. In the end, we decided to respect both options and include them in our final version. The translation of *brava* was discussed at length. We considered *well done*, *great*, *good girl* as potential equivalents. We chose *well done* in the end because this is the most frequent expression we ourselves use when we wish to reward our students' accurate responses. The Italian native speakers in our group made us aware of Liu Hua's particular use of the Italian syntax, owing to the fact that she is a language learner of Italian. For example, *Quanto mi dai di soldi* is not strictly correct. In standard Italian the equivalent expression is *Quanti soldi mi dai* and *più semplicemente* is the accurate equivalent of *più semplice*. We decided to privilege readability and comprehensibility as our guiding principles and did not make any attempt at relaying Liu Hua's idiosyncratic expressions, even when Vincenzo mirrored her when he said: *Oppure più semplice, Vincè*. Finally, we had some difficulty in transcribing the Chinese word for century egg, which was inaccurately pronounced by Vincenzo and corrected by Liu Hua. So, we did some research on the internet and discovered that the Chinese word for *stupid* is made up of two characters, i.e. *bèn*, that literally means *stupid*, and *dàn*, which means *egg* (for a full explanation, see Chinese Hot Words on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bD_KADDg9Sw, last accessed on 19th September 2014). The correct Chinese word for century egg is *pídàn*. This is made up of two characters, i.e. *pí*, which means preserved, and *dàn*, meaning *egg*.

Scene 6: The Journey Begins

V: Ecco, ho preso due uova del centenario, bèndàn!

V: **Look, I got/Here, I have two century eggs, bèndàn!**

L: Perché parli cinese?

L: **Why are you speaking Chinese?/Why do you speak Chinese?**

V: È una lingua curiosa, facile poi.

V: **It's a curious language and also easy to learn.**

L: Lo sai che significa "bèndàn"?

L: **Do you know what "bèndàn" means?**

V: Certo, uovo del centenario.

V: **Sure, century egg.**

L: Come lo dici tu, significa "cretino".

L: **The way you say it, means "idiot/stupid".**

V: Cretino! E allora come si dice?

V: **Idiot/stupid! Well/Then, how do you say it?**

L: pí-dàn

L: **pí-dàn**

V: pei-dàn, così?

V: **Like this, pei-dàn?**

L: pí-dàn

L: **pí-dàn**

V: pii-dàn

V: **pii-dàn**

V: Sono contento che m'accompagni.

V: **I'm happy you are coming with me.**

L: Quanto mi dai di soldi?

L: **How much will you pay me?/How much money are you going to give me?**

V: Quello che vuoi.

V: **Whatever you want.**

L: Quanto dici tu, va bene.

V: **Whatever you decide/say is fine.**

V: Sei di Shanghai?

V: **Are you from Shanghai?**

L: No.

L: **No.**

V: La tua famiglia, li hai avvertiti che venivi con me, sì?

V: **Have you told/Did you tell your family that you're/were coming with me?**

L: Sono venuta per tradurre, non per rispondere alle domande.

L: **I'm here to translate, not to answer (your) questions.**

L: Liu Hua.

L: **Liu Hua.**

L: Il mio nome è Liu Hua.

L: **My name is Liu Hua.**

L: Oppure più semplice, Liuà

L: **Or simply, Liuà.**

V: Liuà. Io Vincenzo.

V: **Liuà. I'm Vincenzo.**

L: Vincenzo?

L: **Vincenzo?**

V: Oppure più semplice, Vincè

V: **Or simply, Vincè.**

L: Vincè.

L: **Vincè.**

V: No, Vincè

V: **No, Vincè.**

L: Vincè.

L: **Vincè.**

V: Brava.

V: **Well done.**

Here are the comments made on “The Stars on the Chinese Flag” scene by Group 5:

In this scene of self-reflection, Liu Hua e Vincenzo exchange their personal beliefs and thoughts about the cultures in which they live. They also reveal their suffering. As they tell each other about the pain and bitterness they feel, they find some comfort in sharing their burdens with one another. They even share an ironic smile while reflecting on the problematic aspects of their respective cultures. When Liu Hua and Vincenzo say: “Immagina Cina senza cinesi ... o l’Italia senza italiani,” they express, in a lightly humorous way, that their countries would be better places to live in if they were not contaminated by the cruelty and injustices inflicted by their own people. Also, the two characters discuss the symbolic value of the Chinese flag. Liu Hua says: “Qualcuno dice che le stelle della nostra bandiera significano: onestà, pazienza, giustizia e solidarietà.” Vincenzo replies by saying that he believes there is always something missing from the values a flag symbolizes. The audience is left to wonder what these missing values may be. Respect maybe? Freedom maybe? Kindness? Each of us can provide his/her own answers on the basis of their personal experiences. So, Liu Hua and Vincenzo are similar to each other because they are individuals that perceive the injustice surrounding them and act against such injustice by being kind and respectful towards the Other. There is, indeed, harmony between them, and by this we mean harmony between their individualities that rise above cultural barriers.

What follows is our final version of the translated dialogue. We have separated alternative, acceptable renderings with forward slashes. We too noticed some inaccurate expressions uttered by Liu Hua such as the omission of the definite article and the use of marked collocation, i.e.

Cina instead of *la Cina* and *ti danno multa* instead of *ti fanno la multa*. We did not try to relay these special features of her way of speaking. Our aim was to reach a balance between accuracy and fluency whenever we could. Also, being aware of the intimacy expressed by this dialogue, we rejected formal renderings such as *many children are inexistent* or *the stars on our flag represent* or *I had another understanding of what the stars represented* or *Even in China things are certainly not going well* or *Also here things are hardly/not exactly going well*. For the same reason, long and well-formed sentences that are typical of written rather than spoken discourse were also edited, e.g. *For the elderly, many things change in a year. Things change also for children*. Some of us thought of translating the original imperative sentence *Tu immagina Cina senza cinesi* with a rhetorical question, i.e. *Can you imagine China without the Chinese?* But this stylistic choice would have been incongruent with Liu Hua's particular way of speaking. Finally, we discussed the most appropriate equivalent for the verb *lasciare*. This is used by Liu Hua when she says: *C'è gente che quando ha un altro figlio, o lo nasconde o lo lascia*. The direct English equivalent of *lasciare* is normally *leave*, but, in this context, we decided to use *abandon* because, being negatively connoted, this word conveys more accurately the pain and sadness that transpire from Liu Hua's facial expression and tone of voice.

Scene 17: The Stars on the Chinese Flag

V: No, lascialo stare.

V: **No, leave him alone./No, don't worry, it's ok.**

L: Non è un giocattolo. Se si perde?

L: **It's not a toy. If he loses it?/It's not a toy, what if he loses it?/If it gets lost?**

V: Ma quello è sveglio. Ha già imparato a montarlo e rimontarlo tutto da solo.

V: **But he's clever/bright/smart. He has already learnt to assemble it/take it apart and reassemble it/put it back together all by himself.**

V: Stai bene coi capelli così. Da quanto tempo non vedevi tua nonna?

V: **You look nice with your hair like that. How long is it since you've seen your grandmother?**

L: Un anno fa.

L: **A year ago.**

V: In un anno cambiano tante cose per i vecchi. E pure per i bambini.

V: **In a year lots of things change for old people. And also for children.**

L: Non ha nessuno. Mia nonna lo sta crescendo come un figlio.

L: **He hasn't got anybody. My grandmother is raising him like a son.**

V: Sembra arrabbiato pure quando ride. Proprio come te.

V: **He seems angry even when he laughs. Just like you.**

L: Lo sai che in Cina se hai un figlio in più ti danno multa? Tanti bambini non esistono. Non li registrano nemmeno. C'è gente che quando ha un altro figlio, o lo nasconde o lo lascia.

L: **Do you know that if you have another child in China, they fine you? Lots of children don't exist. They don't even register them. There are people who, when they have another child, either hide them or abandon them.**

V: Certo che anche qua le cose non vanno tanto bene, eh.

V: **Also here things aren't going too well./Things aren't good here either.**

L: Tu immagina Cina senza Cinesi.

L: **Imagine China without Chinese.**

V: E Italia senza italiani. No, non pretendo tanto. Un po' meno approfittatori, arroganti, cialtroni. E un po' più di rispetto.

V: **And Italy without Italians. No, I'd never demand that much./I don't/can't expect that much. Just less profiteers, scoundrels and arrogant people. And a little more respect.**

L: Qualcuno dice che le stelle della nostra bandiera significano onestà, pazienza, giustizia, solidarietà.

L: **Some people say that the stars on our flag mean honesty, patience, justice and solidarity.**

V: Io sapevo un'altra cosa. E comunque ne manca sempre qualcuna.

V: **I knew something else. Anyway, something is always missing./There is always a missing one./Some are always missing./There is always one missing.**

At the end of the module I asked students to critically reflect on different aspects of their past and present learning and teaching experiences. More specifically, I asked them to reflect on: a) the language teaching methodology that was used when they learnt English at school, b) the language teaching methodology that was used when they learnt English at university level, c) the methodology that they currently use as EFL teachers and d) the methodology they had practiced during the teacher training course at the University of Bari. This is what they stated after consulting one another in small groups:

Although we are not the same age and come from different countries, we were mainly exposed to the grammar-translation method when we attended high school. Our teachers used to have us read some dialogues gravitating round a specific grammar topic. Then, they would explain the rule, as well as the way we could actually apply it to different

sentences. The problem, though, was that such sentences had no context, so we had no direct experience or possibility to use what we had just learned. We admit success was guaranteed as our test scores were always high. In the long run, though, rules tended to be forgotten – not to mention the difficulties encountered when speaking to native speakers. Grammar rules started to have a stronger basis only when our spoken sentences found a real context, e.g. during our educational and professional stays abroad. It was here, then, that the grammar and translation method made sense as it gave accuracy to our speaking performances. During high school, we had no language laboratory or chance to speak and interact with an English mother tongue. On the other hand, our English language teacher spoke little English and conversation was neglected almost at all times.

Once at university, the grammar and translation method started to be accompanied by the oral method thanks to an improved general learning condition: the presence of some native speakers of English and a language laboratory. However, the persistent problem was that our final exams were always based on a written piece where grammar and translation were the two most important elements to consider. Oral and communicative competences found little room or relevance in the final grading. Today, we find ourselves in the position of teaching three different subjects. Either we teach the English language, literature or conversation. We truly believe that a multilateral approach is needed in our EFL classrooms, and more than one teaching methodology can turn out being useful to meet our learning objectives, which involve the ability to operate between languages and cultures. The experience of analyzing film dialogues and engaging in pedagogic subtitling through collaborative learning has been interesting and stimulating because it has enabled us to pay close attention to form as well as meaning, thus enhancing our understanding of the nature and symbolic power of language as well as the interrelationship between language and culture in a translingual and transcultural environment. Working in groups of L1 Italian and L1 English speakers enabled us to refine our interpretation of the source text so as to relay its meanings in the target language as accurately and fluently as we could possibly do.

Conclusion

The benefits of collaborative and reciprocal learning that integrates authentic translation tasks in the multilingual language classroom are several. First, as the students themselves observed, it facilitates a deep understanding of the form and meaning of the source text and a fair assessment of the acceptability of different types of renderings in the target text. Also, it brings to light different

perspectives on the same reality such as the symbolic value of food that is evident not only in The Journey Begins scene but also throughout the film narrative. Finally, the critical reflections provided by the students on their own work show how language and culture “are *discursively constructed*, that is, they are shaped as they are enacted and discussed, in social contexts” (van Lier, *Ecology* 184, original emphasis). To conclude, I believe that a multilingual pedagogy such as the one outlined in this paper has considerable potential for developing the ability to operate between languages, allowing learners to enter the traffic of meaning and preserving global semiodiversity and glossodiversity. In order to unlock the untapped potential of multilingual teaching methods, it is crucially important to carry out interdisciplinary research that brings together scholars and educators working in literary, film and media studies as well as many convergent fields of applied linguistics.

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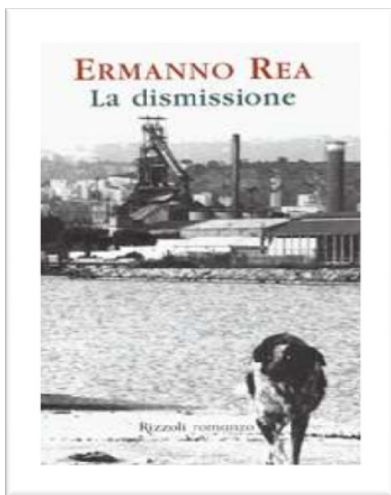
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Filmography

La stella che non c'è. Dir. Gianni Amelio. Perf. Sergio Castellitto, Ling Tai, Angelo Costabile. Cattleya/ Babe Film/ RAI Cinema, 2006.DVD.

Appendix I

The Missing Star is inspired by Ermanno Rea's novel *La dismissione* (The Divestment) (Milan, RCS Libri, 2002). The novel recounts the 1991 shutdown and sale, piece by piece, of the ILVA-Italsider steelworks. Built in the Neapolitan district of Bagnoli in 1909, the ILVA-Italsider was one of the most important industrial centres in Southern Italy for 30 years. The story is narrated by Vincenzo Buonocore (good heart), a skilled steelworker who instructed the Chinese buyer on how to run and maintain the iron-smelting furnace.



The Missing Star is the story of a journey from Italy to China. The protagonist, Vincenzo Buonavolontà, (goodwill) is a maintenance man working at a Genoa steel mill that is going out of business and whose faulty equipment has been sold to a Chinese company. Having repaired the mechanical defect by assembling a new control unit, Vincenzo sets out to find the Chinese buyer with the help of Liu Hua, a student of Italian, who serves as his interpreter.



Appendix II

LANGUAGE BIOGRAPHY

In the language biography you will compile an overview of your most important learning experiences with other languages and cultures. This will enable you to reflect on your own linguistic identity.

Name:

Year of birth:

Place of birth:

At home we speak: *

* You can fill in one or more languages or dialects.

With whom do I speak which language or which dialect?

In different situations you sometimes use different languages, for example at home or when talking to friends or when you go on holiday.

Example

- I speak *Limburger dialect* with *close relatives*
- I speak *English* with *some friends*
- I speak *Dutch* with *most other people*

With whom do I speak which language or which dialect?

Indicate what other things you can do in a language.

Example

- I understand *TV programs* in *Turkish*
- I chat in *English* with *my international friends*
- I read *magazines* in *French*
- I watch *movies* in *English* with *Italian subtitles*
- I watch *movies* in *English* with *English subtitles*

Underline one of the following statements

- I was raised monolingually
- I was raised bilingually
- I was raised multilingually

MY LANGUAGES

In which educational institutions did you learn the languages you know?

How long did you learn them for?

Example

- *French, Primary education, 1994 - 1996*
- *English, Junior general secondary education, 1996 - 1999*
- *German, Junior general secondary education, 1996 - 1999*
- *English, Senior secondary vocational education, 1999 - 2001*

MY LANGUAGES

Where else did you learn the languages you know? How long did you learn them for?

- **Language:**
- **Where:**
- **From - to:**

MY GENERAL EDUCATION

Which schools and university (or universities) did you attend?

- **School type/University:**
- **Town/Country:**
- **When:**

School and university certificates awarded

Indicate which certificates you obtained, for example at school, university or in language courses.

- **Name of the certificate:**
- **Where it was awarded:**
- **When it was awarded and at what age:**

Reflect on your linguistic and cultural competences and make a brief statement that summarizes your linguistic identity.