

Building Interpreters' Intercultural Competence

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Resumen

Se considera a menudo a los intérpretes como profesionales altamente aptos y expertos en lengua, y con todo, su papel como mediadores culturales es pasado por alto demasiado. Innecesario decir, la capacidad intercultural es una herramienta adicional por medio de la cual un intérprete puede mejorar su funcionamiento, así como el resultado total de las reuniones a las que se les llama para actuar. Puesto que la lengua en sí misma es una forma de expresión cultural, debe poder recibir la información del altavoz y "trasladar" literalmente (etimológicamente a través de) no solamente palabras y frases, sino – y es lo más importantemente – qué valores, opiniones del mundo y de las interacciones humanas se comunican. En el acontecimiento de la comunicación, las palabras nunca vienen solas: gestos del cuerpo, expresión facial, el uso del silencio y del espacio físico son factores igualmente significativos. En una breve ojeada al contenido de los cursos de intérpretes de italiano, se subraya el compromiso más fuerte de las ediciones interculturales en el entrenamiento profesional y se presentan algunas pautas para la introducción de estos conceptos en planes de estudios. Se analizan y se mide el lado intercultural que afecta al trabajo del intérprete en sus traducciones consecutivas y de enlace.

1. The levels of culture

In a study concerning culture, the first problem that arises is what to include in the definition of culture. It is indeed very difficult to say to which culture a person belongs, since we are part of many cultures at the same time. For example, we may identify ourselves as Europeans, but we are also part of how different the Spaniards are from, say, the Germans or the Italians from their Swiss neighbours, even in a country as small as Italy, Northerners and Southerners often claim their regional backgrounds, and so on, down to the smallest villages. In addition, each of us also belongs to other cultural groups, such as the company or institution where we work, the social organisation we belong to, our religious community, etc.

Even though there is no general consensus among scholars on what culture actually is, it is clear that there is much more to culture than we could ever observe, categorise, explain. This lack of agreement testifies to the complexity of the issue. One of the best-known analogies or metaphors used to describe culture is the iceberg theory, whereby the visible aspects of culture are only the tip of the iceberg, and what we often ignore – the part below the waterline – is the biggest part, but also what justifies the very existence of the tip. This metaphor dates from the time when psychoanalysis and anthropology strongly influenced each other, with psychologists learning more about humans as social beings and anthropologists attempting to formulate theories of culture. The iceberg theory has its origin in Freud's conception of Man as existing on two levels at once, namely the conscious and unconscious, and several of his disciples and other disciplines alike followed this distinction (Hall, 1990).

Among the scholars who have drawn inspiration from Freud's original concept are Edward T. Hall and Geert Hofstede, all of whom have contributed greatly to the intercultural studies, even though from different perspectives and for different purposes.

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall, widely recognised as the father of intercultural studies, developed a tripartite view of culture, which will be discussed in more detail in section 1.1.

In his highly influential *Culture's Consequences*, social psychologist Geert Hofstede represented an onion made up of different layers grouped into two main categories, values and practices. The 'onion' is represented by values, that is all that lies behind practices, and is therefore the core. As we move outwards we find rituals, heroes, and symbols (grouped together as 'practices'). The words, gestures, pictures and objects that are recognised as such by those who observe them are the symbols. *Heroes* are people who are recognised as models by a culture for their particular merits; they may be dead or alive, real or imaginary. Finally, *rituals* are collective activities that are socially essential despite the fact that they are not strictly necessary to the achievement of a goal. They include ice-breaking practices, greetings and forms of address (Hofstede, 2001).

Differently from Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars, an intercultural trainer and expert in international management, has a tripartite view of culture. In his view, the outer layer consists of what is the "observable reality of the language, food, buildings, houses, monuments, agricultural markets, fashions and art" (1997:21). All these elements are symbols of a deeper level. The middle layer includes *values* and *norms*, where the norms represent the shared beliefs of a community about what is right and what is wrong, whereas the values represent rather the core of culture is invisible, *implicit*, and is closely connected to the way people have adapted to the forces of nature in their environment. It includes those values that are so deeply held by people belonging to that particular community that they have become automatic: people do not know why they act a particular way, even though they recognise a certain behaviour as natural (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997).

Regardless of the labels we choose to use, it is essential that interpreters are aware of different levels – or layers – of culture and recognise that there is much more to language proficiency and technique.

This paper is part of a wider study based on the recordings of real interactions between Italian and English with the mediation of an interpreter. In order to analyse in more depth all levels can affect the performance of interpreters, I am going to refer to the framework of E.T. Hall that I mentioned above.

1.1 Hall's Triad of Culture

Needless to say, no diagram can ever account for the complexity of culture and its transmission. However, E.T. Hall's tripartite model arguably provides a rather comprehensive – although simple – approach to the problem. This model, developed in *The Silent Language* (1990), is based on a simple idea: all aspects of our lives carry the mark of the culture that produced them.

be more or less explicit, depending on how truly and deeply "cultural" they are.

Hall named the three levels he identified in human behaviour *technical*, *formal*, and *informal*. Communication at the *technical* level occurs at the highest level of consciousness and in a coherent outline form (Hall, 1990). Most of the information is explicit and is passed verbally. The communication process leaves no or little room for interpretation and negotiation of meaning. Katan (1999) points out, communication at this level has no extra-linguistic context, so in intercultural interactions, problems only arise when the interpreter lacks adequate technical knowledge. Arguably, however, a good interpreter - equipped with a native or near-native command of both languages and some preparation in the specific field - will be able to support communication of most technical items, as these can be - if not translated - at least explained or paraphrased. For example, in the case of a word like "*bisturi*" (lancet), if the interpreter does not know the exact translation of the word, s/he can still convey the message by saying "*surgical knife*". Moreover, both the interlocutors being experts in the matter, they will help on the most technical issues, thus accepting the role of the interpreter as a mediator or "walking translator of words" (Katan, 1999:12).

The second level of culture, that Hall named *formal*, is more closely related to cultural behaviour concerns values, taboos and patterns of communication, and is usually learned early in one's life, especially when a mistake is made and someone corrects it. When something at the formal level of culture is learned and becomes part of one's set of values, the person finds it conceivably acceptable. Hundreds of little details add up until they amount to a form of behaviour that nobody questions (Hall, 1990). The elements of communication at this level include the address, rules of conversation, i.e. the form, or the way in which things are said, and patterns of nonverbal communication such as posture, eye contact, gestures etc. These elements play an important role in communication, so much so that they may affect the outcome of an interaction. A typical manifestation of culture at the formal level is the use of first names: for example, in the United States first names are very commonly used in working environments, in most European countries they are only used with family members, friends and in close relationships, and are rarely maintained in superior-subordinate interactions. A good interpreter should be aware of the cultural differences s/he mediates, and be able to adjust them to the target culture, in order for the interaction to proceed as smoothly as possible. As mentioned above, American business people address each other by their first names. The interpreter translating from and into Italian should recognise this pattern as one manifestation of the US business culture at the formal level. For the corresponding form in the Italian culture, that consists of the person's title and surname, the name would therefore become "Signor White" or "Dottor Brown", etc.

Finally, in Hall's words, "the *informal* is made up of activities or mannerisms which we are so much a part of our everyday life that they are done automatically. They are not blocked when cerebration takes place" (1990:72) (emphasis added). This level is called *of-awareness* because it includes those aspects of behaviour which are dictated by the subconscious part of our brains. Again, elements of nonverbal communication play a major role at this level. The line between formal and informal patterns of behaviour and communication is often blurred. A gesture may have implications at both the formal and informal levels of communication, the difference being in the degree of awareness in the person using it. In some cultures

children are taught not to look into their parents' eyes when they are being scolded, but to show respect. In other cultures, instead, respect for the speaker, especially if this is shown by looking at him/her directly in his/her face (Hall, 1989; Reynolds and ...). Depending on the situation, a person will be more or less aware of the way in which contact: s/he may recognise that one type of behaviour is *formally* more appropriate and *informally*, to behave in a particular way.

For obvious reasons, the informal level of communication is the most difficult for mediators, because of the greater risk of misunderstandings, because its manifestations are more subtle. To give a good example for an interpreter, acting at this level would mean being able to "interpret" the actual intention of a speaker who says something as simple as "OK": is it just "I understand"? Or may it mean "I agree and agree"? Or something like "I see your point, but please move ahead"? Or anything else? An aware interpreter could try and decode some clues of nonverbal communication such as the intonation, the tone of the voice, any particular hand gesture, etc., which are used differently from culture to culture. This should help him/her find the most appropriate expression to convey the message in the target language and culture.

2. Liaison interpreting

"Language is much more than learning new vocabulary and grammar. It includes a cultural competence: knowing what to say and how, when, where, and why to say it"

(Hofstede, Petersen and Hofstede)

This statement should be taken into account by interpreters, who often bear the whole responsibility of guaranteeing the smooth flow of communication between the parties involved in a negotiation. As Taft points out, "a bilingual mediating person involves his personal skills in communication by using his knowledge of the nature of human functioning in general and in particular cultures in particular" (Taft, 1981:58).

Different modes of interpreting allow for different degrees of cultural mediation. Consecutive interpreting leaves little space for any type of mediation due to strict time constraints and the high information density of speech. *Consecutive* interpreting, on the other hand, does not have the same time constraints, but is still characterized by informationally dense messages and a monological mode of speech, both of which to a certain extent reduce the scope for cultural mediation on the part of the interpreter (mostly by limiting the exchange or feedback as the talk proceeds).

For several reasons, liaison interpreting offers a number of interesting insights to researchers. It is often considered as a second-class form of interpreting (Gentile, Ozolinis and Vasiliadis), its difficulties being in many cases underestimated. Liaison interpreting is characterized by a small number and physical proximity of participants, the absence of an audience due to the nature of the meetings, a rather informal atmosphere and, most importantly, by a direct mode of communication. While representing an obvious advantage, these features also bring into play many more aspects belonging to the informal level of culture, thus making the interaction more complex on the one hand, but more difficult to mediate on the other. In other words, in conference

of the speeches are prepared beforehand and they are structured in such a way that relies on nonverbal communication only to a very small extent. Conversely, in liai because of the greater spontaneity of the interaction, nonverbal communication plays a more important role and allows greater scope for cultural mediation on the part of the interpreter.

3. Case Studies: instruments of analysis

The analysis of the case studies presented below aims at showing the influence of intercultural skills on the overall outcome of mediated encounters.

Alongside Hall's theories, Grice's maxims (1989) have been used in the analysis of intercultural interactions, since they provide a useful instrument to point out cultural differences in communication. Grice's maxims are "an intuitive characterisation of conversational principles that serve as guidelines for achieving maximally efficient communication" (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and may be briefly summarised as follows:

<i>Maxim of Quality</i>	Do not say what you believe to be false or that for which you lack confidence
<i>Maxim of Quantity</i>	Make your contribution as informative as required
<i>Maxim of Relation</i>	Be relevant
<i>Maxim of Manner</i>	Avoid obscurity and ambiguity and don't be prolix

(adapted from Grice)

Indeed, these maxims take on a different meaning and value in each culture, and each particular culture considers as most appropriate in each situation in terms of Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner. The case studies below have shown how the interpreter's action on these maxims contributes greatly to the smooth flow of communication between the two parties.

3.1 Case study 1

The recordings used for the case studies were made at two different trade fairs in Naples. In the first case, the setting is a fair on business and incentive travel, and the interpreter is an old Italian woman, with fairly extensive experience in interpreting and a good knowledge of the area, where she lives and works.

The promoter is a young Italian lady who owns a promotion agency based in the area, about 10 km north of Naples. The buyer is a rather quiet, matter-of-fact Swedish

The transcription key is in *Appendix I*.

RECORDING No. 1

Part I

1 P [...] In più c'è da dire che noi possiamo realizzare anche eventi particolari su

Campi Flegrei grazie all'ausilio + e la collaborazione di quelli che sono gli en
+ quindi possiamo utilizzare Casina Vanvitelliana + possiamo utilizzare - que
le strutture -

[...] In addition we must say that we can organise also particular events in
the Phlegreian Fields thanks to the aid + and the collaboration of those t
local authorities + so we can use Casina Vanvitelliana + we can use - those
facilities -

2 I - + Ok + so in the: ehm area of the Phlegreian Fields they can also org
events in the places that are made available also by public bodies, for e
casina Vanvitelliana //++which is + a little house + in the centre of a lake +
island//.

3 I Yeah.

4 P E' la casina di Pinocchio.

It's Pinocchio's little house.

5 I //ehm yeah, it was made famous because of a film about Pinocchio + - r
Disney one - + but the Italian one//

6 B - Ok ++ the Italian + the original -

7 P - la casa della-

- the house of the-

8 I (???)//the place where the: + fairy lived + the fairy you call-//

9 B - yeah -

10 I //Yeah, that's where SHE lived + and ++ it's in the middle of a lake + it's
was built by a famous architect// +

11 B Ok.

12 I //I think he's the same who made the: + Royal Palace in Caserta//

13 B Ok

This short excerpt offers a number of interesting hints for analysis. The first of interventions is on the amount of information provided and the number of words used (2), she reduces the number of words (from 44 to 32 up to "Casina Vanvitelliana") to amount of information provided by the promoter in (1). After that, however, she adds information ("++which is + a little house + in the centre of a lake + on a small island") to make more sense of what the promoter is saying about the Casina Vanvitelliana. As a person living in the area of Naples, this place is known as "la casina di Pinocchio" the setting for the Blue Fairy's house in a very popular Italian TV film about Pinocchio. Therefore, when in (4) the promoter refers to the place simply as "la casina di Pinocchio" the cultural reference which is almost impossible for the buyer to catch. In addition, she offers the buyer a reason for being impressed by this place and by the possibility of using it as a holiday home. As a matter of fact, she does not even mention the fact that the place is beautiful. However, she detects this communication problem and, at several points, she describes the place and provides some information about the architect and the film, in order to convey to a cultural outsider what the place means to the promoter and to people who share her cultural background.

Part II

14 B - Could you explain - this? What do you actually mean by 'skywatching'?

15 I Che cos'è lo skywatching?

What is skywatching?

16 P Ehm + praticamente + è una cosa che fanno i nostri operatori + che sono tutti di Baby Travel. Noi collaboriamo anche con Baby Travel come operatore.

Ehm + actually + it's a thing that our operators do + who are among other

- Baby Travel. We collaborate also with Baby Travel as an operator.*
- 17 I So + they cooperate with Baby Travel – as operators –...
- 18 B Yes
- 19 I ...and they organise this. (TO THE PROMOTER) E che cos'è...?
...and they organise this (TO THE PROMOTER) And what is it...?
- 20 P (???) molto particolari. Skywatching è l'osservazione delle stelle + del celeste
(???) very particular. Skywatching is the observation of stars + of the heavens.
- 21 I Yeah + skywatching is when you watch the STARS:
- 22 B OH:!
- 23 I //So they organise special excursions where you can watch the stars//.
- 24 B Yes. Because anyone can watch the sky.
- 25 I Yes. //Dice che// tutti possono guardare il cielo, //non tutti possono guardare le stelle//
Yes. He says that everybody can watch the sky, everybody can't watch the st

Just before this exchange the buyer has read something about *skywatching* in one of the brochures. He asks the promoter what it is and, to a very direct request for clarification, the promoter fails to provide a direct answer (16-19), and only replies when the interpreter repeats the question a second time and on her own initiative – what *skywatching* actually is (19).

The interpreter's mediation proves to be essential to avoid a halt in the information flow between the two parties. This is even more true since the buyer, who is a Swedish man, belongs to a culture where successful communication relies on clear, concise and informationally-dense messages (

In the framework of Hall's theories presented in section 1.1, we see that in these initial exchanges the interpreter mediates mostly at the formal and informal levels of culture, partly because of the technical nature of the interaction. There is, however, one example of culture expressed at the technical level, "enti territoriali" (1), which the interpreter translates as "public bodies" (2). A more accurate translation for this Italian expression would have been "local authorities", but that this lack of accuracy does not interrupt the communication flow. The essence of the interaction is conveyed through smoothly and neither of the parties does even notice this fault at the technical level.

Some additions from the interpreter, such as information about the architect, the film *Vanvitelliana* itself, are certainly irrelevant from a technical point of view, but they do not interrupt the communication flow and help the two parties build a relationship, which is particularly important in this kind of meeting, where the two people meet for the first time in view of a possible future agreement. Arguably, the time frame being very limited for the parties to exchange information and reach an agreement, it would be in the speakers' interest to be as verbally explicit as possible. In fact, the importance of the interpreter's prompting the promoter to explain what the Casina and the "skywatching" are.

The effect of the interpreter's mediation on these initial pleasantries is especially interesting in this case where one of the parties (i.e. the buyer) speaks very little – especially by Italian standards. The promoter is rather loquacious and wordy in her expression. Indeed, the buyer only shows that he is paying attention to what the promoter says by uttering monosyllables like "Ok", "Yes", "No". In fact, out of his total 45 utterances, 29 are made up of one of these words only).

Looking at the above examples through the lens of Grice's maxims, it appears that they have been acting mostly with regard to the maxim of Quantity, by shortening or adding to order to provide the amount of information that she believes to be appropriate in the context and culture. In doing so, however, she also operates at the levels of Relation (deciding what is and what is not – see how in Recording 1, line 16, the interpreter cuts some of the information from the tour operator, which she arguably considers redundant) and of Manner (by clarifying what otherwise would be obscure – see Recording 1, line 19, when she prompts the promoter to say "skywatching" is; or Recording 1, line 28, where she prompts the promoter to say "with the assistance they provide"; or Recording 1, lines 31-32, where "che fanno *quello*" becomes "*specialised in a particular thing*").

Needless to say, for interpreters, work on the maxim of Quality is less frequent and more difficult since it is not his/her responsibility to judge the quality of what the speakers say.

The following example, however, is an interesting case of action with respect to the maxim of Quantity since the interpreter does question a statement by the promoter and, before proceeding, asks for confirmation.

RECORDING No. 2

In the two following excerpts, the promoter and the interpreter are the same as in the previous recording since the buyer is a Canadian woman.

Part I

- 1 I What is it exactly you would you like to see + the: location? Or also some other
 2 B (???) the hotel and the area. She said that it's close to the airport and it's...
 we have somebody come into Napoli or (???) and they want to be: + fairly
 airport. You know...
- 3 I A volte capita che le persone che- che arrivano con loro vogliono stare
 all'aeroporto.
Sometimes it happens that the people who- who arrive with them want to stay
 at the airport.
- 4 P Ok.
- 5 I //Hanno questa richiesta particolare//.
They have this special request.
- 6 P Ecco. Allora il discorso è diverso. Io le posso: + addirittura DARE un contatto
 vicino all'aeroporto + quello sì. Ma non queste strutture ovviamente.
All right. So it's a different story. I can + even GIVE her a contact in the area
 at the airport + that for sure. But not these structures of course.
- 7 I //Queste qui quanto tempo ci vuole più o meno dall'aeroporto//?
These ones how long does it take more or less from the airport?
- 8 P Mah, queste ci metti un quarto d'ora venti minuti +
Well, these it takes you a quarter of an hour twenty minutes +
- 9 I //Ok//. These ones are twenty minutes' drive from the airport...
- 10 B (???)

11 I ...//but if you want something closer to the airport she can suggest some thin

Part II

12 B I don't know whether it'll be by the airport or where... so + it's twenty minutes back and forth, right?

13 I Perché dice... non sanno //ancora dove resteranno a dormire la notte del 3// darsi pure che staranno vicino all'aeroporto + da qualche parte... //però si ventina di minuti di macchina //non è un...//

Because she says... they don't know yet where they'll spend the night of the 3// could even be that they will stay near the airport + somewhere... but if minutes by car it's not a...

14 P ... non è un problema, infatti.

... it's not a problem, indeed.

15 B No problem?

16 I No problem. //E ci vuole veramente una ventina di minuti, eh?//

No problem. //And it really takes about twenty minutes, eh?//

17 P Sì sì sì sì. Tangenziale. Cioè... hai capito dove sta?

Yes yes yes. Ring road. That is... did you understand where it is?

In *Part I*, the buyer and promoter mention for the first time the airport and the need have hotels available in its vicinity for her clients. When the promoter says "queste strutture" referring to the hotels she promotes, which are located in the area of the Phlegreian Fields, she says, even these are only 15-20 minutes' drive from the airport (8). In *Part II*, toward the end of the encounter, the buyer has made arrangements with the promoter to go and see some of the Phlegreian Fields. Because the visit will take place on her last day in Italy, the buyer is being in time for her flight afterwards. In (12) she wishes to double-check with the promoter that it takes 20 minutes from these hotels to the airport, as the promoter told her before. The promoter translates that for the promoter (13) but then (16) she intervenes to double-check with the promoter what she has said is true. Arguably, from her knowledge of the area, she must have thought it a bit risky to say so (and it actually is quite unlikely, due to the distance and the usual traffic in the area). Another reason why the interpreter may have decided to check the reliability of the promoter's statement is her awareness of the different conceptions of time in Canada and in South America. In South America "20 minutes" can mean anything between 15 and 45 minutes, something which is almost impossible for the very time-conscious North Americans, to whom "20 minutes" can mean no more than 20 minutes (Hall, 1989). Interestingly, once the promoter has confirmed her idea, the interpreter does not insist on her point and leaves things as they are, since she is very well aware of her responsibility to provide information, especially when this would be in contrast with the wishes of the speakers. The interpreter's role in a situation like this is to help the two parties communicate and build a rapport, without ever taking over their respective roles (Gentile, Ozolinis 1996).

Very interestingly, the interpreter's action with regard to the maxim of Quality of Quantity is concerning time. The way in which people in different cultures conceive and manage time is one of the most stimulating aspects to analyse in intercultural communication; for this reason, time is the subject of a number of studies and is always included in intercultural training programs. Within this framework, the concept of time can be included in the informal level of culture, as it is acquired very early in life and we seldom question it later. In our example, neither the buyer nor the promoter seem to realise that the phrase "twenty minutes" can mean two completely different things.

their respective cultures, hence the interpreter's attempt to raise the issue to try and out before it is too late (with the possible consequence of the buyer missing her plane).

3.2 Case study – 2

In the second case, the setting is a fair on clothing and fashion accessories. The person interpreting is an Italian young woman, with no professional training and very little experience in this kind of work.

The exhibitor is a young Italian woman who represents a company holding several franchises in shops both in Italy and a few European countries. The buyer is an Irishman.

This situation points out very clearly the difficulties of liaison interpreting, that are highlighted by the interpreter's lack of skill and experience. Consequently, we may look at this person as a person who approaches interpreting studies for the first time, and use her most common to develop teaching strategies.

RECORDING No. 3

Part I

- 1 E Noi abbiamo: ++ dieci negozi nostri diretti abbiamo: ++ dieci franchising primavera ne apriremo altri sei.
We have ++ ten shops that are ours, direct we have ++ ten franchises and spring we're going to open six more.
- 2 I Ehm + sì. + For the next summer ++ they will ehm open another six points

This short excerpt shows, very simply, a case in which the interpreter fails to convey what the exhibitor wants to give, thus making the message less informative than it is supposed to be. This is certainly not a case of action on the maxim of Quantity, because the omissions are clearly the interpreter's choice but simply due to her lack of skill. This also indicates a failure at the level of the cultural, with the interpreter failing to provide the technical information expressed in "ne franchising" (1), which she translates with a very generic "points" (2). It is also interesting to note this interpreter's attitude with Case Study 1, where the interpreter tended to explicitly encourage the promoter to be more forthcoming; here, by contrast, the interpreter arbitrarily omits an important piece of information.

A similar failure is shown in the following excerpt – which is a continuation of Part I:

Part II

- 3 B Six?
 4 I Yeah
 5 B Six stand-alone. ++ Stand-alone.
 6 I YES! Yes.
 7 B Oh, right!
 8 I For the next summer.
 9 B Next summer...
 10 E Abbiamo ANCHE dei buoni fatturati.

- We have ALSO good turnovers.
- 11 B All in... all in Italy?
- 12 I Yeah. + All in... Solo in Italia altri sei?

In (12) the interpreter ignores completely what the exhibitor says in (10), although it the exhibitor attaches great importance to this information, since it shows her product and guarantee good profits.

The last excerpt from this interaction provides another example of the interpreter's failure in the exchange between the parties, with a very interesting conclusion on the part of the exhibitor.

Part III

- 13 I Sì + sì sì ok. Ok.
- 14 B That's eight euro. ++ yeah.
- 15 I EXActly the half ++ than the price you read. Ok?
- 16 B No, in my country + more.
- 17 I Is more? Is very expensive this one. But (???) for you I think. I don't know...
- 18 B No!
- 19 I No? Why no?
- 20 B This- this price?
- 21 I NO this price + for you is TEN euro.
- 22 B Oh ten euro?
- 23 I Yeah.
- 24 B No, it's not that expensive
- 25 I No expensive?
- 26 B No, it's very cheap
- 27 I It's cheap?
- 28 B Yeah. But in- in ... we work the: + we work + the: more than double
- 29 I Yeah.
- 30 B We're working by 2.5...
- 31 I (OVERLAPS) Ah, yeah. Ah, ok.
- 32 B ...is the mark-up + you know?
- 33 I Ok. I know. Yeah.
- 34 B So we would be TWENTY-five.
- 35 I Ah twenty-five.
- 36 B Would be the price
- 37 I For you for the BUYER?
- 38 B No, it's to SELL
- 39 I Ah...
- 40 B ...to SELL
- 41 I Ahah! OK! (Laughs) OK.
- 42 E Cioè? Praticamente?
So what? Well?

There are as many as 29 exchanges (13-41) between the interpreter and the buyer. The interpreter is carrying out a conversation about pricing policies which is not relevant to the purpose of the meeting and – most importantly – leaves out the exhibitor completely. Interestingly, the exhibitor comes into the conversation at last (43) to try and find out in *her* stand with *her* potential customer. With her attitude, the interpreter has created a situation, in which she has taken over from one of the parties and put her in a situation to continue the ongoing conversation, whereas her role of mediator should have been exactly the opposite: to put the two parties in the condition of understanding everything and being able to ex

freely. In interpreted-mediated communication, both parties must feel to be in communication flow, and the interpreter should always keep in mind that personal involvement should be reduced to a minimum (Gentile, Ozolinis and Vasilakakos, 1996).

In this situation, rather than acting on one of the levels of culture to improve communication between the two parties, the interpreter herself is making a mistake at the formal level. In other words, she is behaving in accordance with what is expected of her in her role as a mediator, which has a negative effect on the interaction she is mediating, as expressed in the exhibitor's "Cioè? Pratican

4. Conclusions

It is worthwhile noting that the cultural elements that are most frequently found in interpreting courses concern the "civilisation" of a country, that is its history, geography, politics, literature, society, as well as its cinema, arts, etc. We may name these a "visible" culture, and they are extremely important to understand the people who speak a particular language and hence the language itself. In interpreter training, however, this is not enough: it is also of great importance to teach students how to recognise and correlate the manifestations of a culture with the language and some attitudes of the speakers. This can be done by providing students with a framework that originates and includes all the visible aspects of culture, thus including not only the formal aspects but also belonging to the "technical" level, but also to the formal and informal ones. This framework can be compared to a chest of drawers, where each drawer represents a cultural category, such as history, geography, politics, time and space, the use of nonverbal communication, power distance, taboos, etc. The interpreter should be guided to store all they learn about a culture in the right drawer, so as to be able to access it and abstract the wider category from the particular element and develop the logical and analytical skills that will so much need in their profession. To give an example, rather than teach a culture like "Americans behave like this, Italians do like that", the focus should be on the realisation that each culture has its own particular way. This way, students become autonomous in building up their cultural awareness, in a process that cannot be completed with the end of the training, but will continue throughout the interpreter's lifelong learning.

Greater emphasis should also be placed on the communication strategies of different cultures and on the things that could facilitate – or hinder – communication. Such strategies encompass both the formal and informal aspects of culture. Formal aspects include greetings, the approach to a topic, which can be more or less direct or formal, the amount of ice-breaking time needed before getting to the heart of the topic, etc. Among the informal aspects are the difference between short-term and long-term planning, the value attached to time, the idea of Truth, etc. All these elements, which are often overlooked in language and interpreter training, should be kept in due consideration. As Scollon and Scollon (2001:15) state, "communication also takes place without the use of words"

In conclusion, intercultural awareness represents an extra-linguistic skill which is essential for communication, and it should be given a higher status in interpreter training courses.

Appendix I

Transcription Key

P	Promoter
B	Buyer
I	Interpreter
E	Exhibitor
<u>Text</u>	Literal translation
Text:	Lengthening of previous sound
+	Short pause (less than one second)
++	Longer pause (more than one second)
//text//	Words/concepts added by the interpreter in the translation
TEXT	Syllable loud or heavily expressed
. , ? !	Roughly indicate intonation
(???)	Tape untranscribable

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