Translation and Discourse

<u>Question 5</u>

Discuss the concepts of Intertextuality and/or Interdiscursivity and consider the adjustments a translator has to make in order to convey similar implicatures in a translated version. Choose your own examples.

By

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1. Introduction

Communication is essentially incomplete and inferential — it is impossible to "say everything about anything at any point in time" (Winter 1994, p.47). To derive intended meaning from a spoken utterance or text, the hearer or reader needs to enrich or modify semantic representations of linguistic input (literal or prototype meanings) by using inferences based on context. This context, or background, is "the space of possibilities that allows us to listen to both what is spoken and what is unspoken"; and meaning is created in an active process whereby "linguistic form triggers interpretation rather than conveying information" (Winograd and Flores 1986, p.57).

This "space of possibilities" forming the context of a text or utterance is a subset of the recipient's entire cognitive environment, selected on the basis of relevance. A person's cognitive environment includes information that can be perceived externally, as well as knowledge stored in memory, and information deriving from previous utterances or texts (Gutt, 1991, p.26). This latter aspect of the cognitive environment is referred to as intertextuality.

Intertextuality, which has been described as an "all pervasive textual phenomenon" (Hatim 1997a, p.29), and a "precondition for the intelligibility of texts" (Hatim and Mason 1997, p.219), is essentially a mechanism through which a text refers backward (or forward) to previous (or future) texts, by alluding to, adapting, or otherwise invoking meanings expressed in those other texts. In order to retrieve the full range of intended meaning in a given text, readers need to be able to recognise and understand such intertextual references. Failure to do so will result in partial understanding, or incomplete retrieval of the intended meaning of the text concerned. The implications of this for translation are clear, since the potential for failure to recognise intertextual reference between languages and across cultures is likely to be considerably greater than within them, since such recognition requires social knowledge.

This essay is organised as follows. Section 2, following this introduction, discusses types of intertextuality and provides examples. Section 3 analyses some examples, and section 4 considers translation strategies for dealing with intertextual references. The final section draws conclusions.

2. Types of intertextuality

Intertextuality can operate at "any level of text organisation" (Hatim and Mason, 1997, p.18), involving phonology, morphology, syntax or semantics (Hatim 1997b, p.201); and its expression ranges from single words or phrases that have special cultural significance in a given

linguistic community at a certain time, to macro-textual conventions and constraints associated with genre, register and discourse. Intertextuality, therefore, encompasses any element (macro- or micro-) that enables readers to identify and derive meaning from the surface features of the text in question by reference to other texts or text features they have previously come across. Intertextual reference is not usually made casually or for embellishment purposes, but is nearly always motivated; it is used deliberately to convey meaning.

Several writers have attempted to classify different types of intertextuality and provide structure to what is a very wide-ranging and varied phenomenon. These are summarized and expanded upon in Hatim (1997a).

Horizontal or vertical reference

Citing the work of Bakhtin, Hatim distinguishes between horizontal and vertical intertextuality. In the first case the relation between two texts is explicit—a text, or extract thereof, written in reply to or development of another one, for example. This type of intertextuality is a key feature of academic writing and has been identified by Hoey (1991, p. 31-34) in terms of "academic oeuvre" and "text colony". Vertical intertextuality, on the other hand, is more implicit, and may relate, for example, to writing conventions.

Manifest or constitutive reference

The second dichotomy discussed by Hatim stems from the work of Fairclough (e.g. 1992), which sees intertextual reference as manifest (typically expressed explicitly through surface textual features such as quotations and citations), or constitutive and hence more opaque. In the latter case the reader has to activate the reference by tracing it back to its source; the reference is there in the surface features of the text but the reader has to make an effort to retrieve it. A reader's inclination and/or ability to do so will vary from individual to individual.

Degree of mediation

Each of these classifications of intertextuality are seen by de Beaugrande and Dressler (e.g. 1981) in terms of the degree to which the author, or translator, introduces his or her personal assumptions or beliefs into the text in question, i.e. the extent of mediation.

Clearly these three types of classification are overlapping, with horizontal and manifest reference tending to be least mediated, whereas vertical and constitutive reference will usually involve greater author/translator presence.

Socio-cultural objects and socio-textual practice.

Hatim (1997a) goes on to make a distinction between *socio-cultural objects* and *socio-textual practices* as vehicles of intertextual reference. The first of these (socio-cultural objects) operate at a micro-level and may be conveyed in a single word or phrase that has particular significance

for a given culture at a given time. An example provided by Hatim and Mason (1997, p.18) is the biblical reference to Job in the phrase "the patience of Job"; another similar example from the same source would be references to " Jonas" in describing someone as a traitor. Intertextual references to the Bible and other universal and more or less timeless literary works (Shakespeare, for instance) are likely to be long-lasting and retrievable by a wide range of cultures.[1] Other more ephemeral references, to the political or entertainment domain for example, would normally be more restricted in their spatio-temporal accessibility.

Examples of this type would include the terms "Thatcherism" and "Son of Star Wars", or the use of "Drugs industry" and "Pretoria case" in the following headline:

A: *Drugs industry humiliated in Pretoria case* (Guardian Weekly, May 2, 2001)

Each of these is likely to conjure up a series of images, attitudes and meanings in the minds of individual readers, going beyond mere semantic representation, that can be traced back to previous texts they have read; although as time passes and the sources become historically more distant, and they lose their relevance or fade from public view, the references concerned are likely to become weaker.

Socio-textual practices, on the other hand, are the macro-constraints and conventions governing register, genre, discourse and text type, which make it possible to recognise a given text has a member of a wider universe of texts. Thus, for example, text A is recognisable as a newspaper headline through conventional features such as the absence of definers and auxiliary verbs. Fowler (1991, p.23) also argues that newspaper editorials are likely to display styles and ideologies that identify them as dependent upon the economic and/or political interests that finance them.

Moon (1994, p.121) points out the role of metaphor and fixed expressions in establishing intertextuality, in the form of shared cultural knowledge, and Fowler (1991, pp. 165, 213) argues that the meaning of metaphor and proverbs is accessible through intertextuality. The same idea is echoed by McCarthy and Carter (1994, p.115), who see intertextual competence involved in recognising "oblique references" to shared cultural knowledge and experience, in terms of sustaining cultural membership and solidarity.

3. Analysis of examples

The term "Son of Star Wars" referring to the missile defence system currently being proposed by President George W. Bush, is very rich in intertextual reference, as analysed below following the approach used in Hatim (1997b, pp.201-2). It links back to the original strategic defence

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[1] It is not usually necessary to know the exact source of a reference to be able to retrieve its meaning. It would be

initiative introduced in the 1980s by President Reagan. This was dubbed "Star Wars" in reference to the highly popular science-fiction film of that time, and in reference to President Reagan's Hollywood background as a second rate movie actor. The whole scheme was considered by many people to be in the realms of science-fiction and therefore not to be taken very seriously. Yet its implications were extremely serious, since it involved the possibility of conflict in space, and a further ratcheting up of the Cold War. The new version being proposed 20 years later comes at a time when a new version of the Star Wars film has recently been released, and it is being proposed by an American President with right-wing views considered to be very close to those of Ronald Reagan. George W. Bush is seen by many as Ronald Reagan's ideological offspring, so the term "Son of Star Wars" is an apt way to describe this new-generation missile defence policy which is so close to his heart. The fact that it is being proposed at a time when the Cold War threat no longer exists makes it seem to many people all the more ridiculous and deplorable. The blunt-sounding "Son of…" rather than "The Son of…" seems to suggest a being lacking in intelligence, and it makes the term "Son of Star Wars" sound even more derogatory than "Star Wars" as applied to the original idea in the 1980s.

As a second example, we can consider the following headline from the *Daily Telegraph*:

 B: *Holiday high jinks at 5am land Euan in more trouble* (*Daily Telegraph*, August 18, 2000).

In this newspaper headline referring to Euan Blair, son of the British Prime Minister, the single word "Euan", especially when used in conjunction with "trouble", for many British people in the summer of 2000 would have conjured up images of a fun-loving teenager constantly causing embarrassment to his famous father. Readers' attitudes towards this would probably depend, among other things, on their political point of view. In the ensuing nine months, however, the teenager in question has largely been out of the news, and the evocative power of his first name has probably faded considerably.[2] The alliterative phrase "holiday high jinks" supports this image of having fun, while "land [someone] in more trouble" evokes images of an accident-prone schoolboy, and recalls stories of the "Just William" or "Boys Own" type. The word "more" reminds the reader that the teenager in question (Euan Blair) had been in trouble on previous occasions. The reader is likely to know this is a result of having read previous news reports.

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sufficient to be familiar with the phrase "the patience of Job" without knowing the Old Testament story, for example.

[2] In the early 1970s the following "knock-knock" joke was current among Conservative supporters, after Harold Wilson's Labour government had been defeated in the general election of 1970:

—*Knock-knock,*

—*Who's there?*

—*Harold.*

—*Harold Who?*

—*Have you forgotten already?*

As Fowler puts it, "a small reference, powerfully supported outside the text, economically provides readers with a whole frame of values…" (Fowler 1991, p.118), "cueing in readers' knowledge and attitudes [and] briefly inviting a ready-made point of view" (ibid, p.228). This is how intertextual reference can be used to sustain ideologies.

3.1 Intertextuality in newspaper headlines

Newspaper headlines make extensive use of intertextual reference, as the following examples taken from the Guardian Weekly (GW) show:

> *Silence of the Damned* (GW March 1-7, 2001) (reference to the film "Silence of the lambs" in the title of an article on humanitarian crises in West Africa and Afghanistan. The reference here is given additional potency by the fact that the follow-up to the movie has recently been released to the accompaniment of major publicity).

> *The Blame in Spain* (GW, Feb 22-28, 2001) (reference to the song "The Rain in Spain" from the musical *My Fair Lady*), as the title to an editorial poking fun at frictions in relations between Britain and Spain.

These two examples provide an interesting contrast, in which the intertextual reference in the first case appears to be much more seriously motivated and than in the second. The film to which the title refers was particularly horrifying and gruesome, and the newspaper article describes potential humanitarian crises involving loss of life on an enormous scale. The editorial about disagreements between Britain and Spain is written in a far more light-hearted tone, which is in keeping with the musical to which its title is intertextually related.

3.2 Intertextuality and matching relations

These examples can also be seen in terms of matching relations (Coulthard, 1992; Winter, 1994), in which the emphasis is on the single word that is different in the matched clause: "damned" replacing "lambs", in the first case, and "blame" instead of "rain" in the second. It is notable that in both cases the replacement word is phonologically very similar to the original. Winter (*ibid*, p.60) makes the point that incongruous matching relations form the basis for much cartoon-type humour, where "knowledge of the world", obtained intertextually, makes it possible to see the humour. A good example of this is a cartoon (GW March 8-14, 2001) referring to the pardon granted to Mark Rich by Bill Clinton at the very end of his presidency, which led to allegations of a kickback in return for donations to the Democratic party. In the

cartoon Bill Clinton is depicted holding up a bag full of money, and saying "I never … *never* had quid with this pro quo". This clearly matches his infamous untruthful statement denying sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, with "quid" replacing "sex" and "pro quo" replacing "that woman" in his statement of denial. The fact that Bill Clinton was at the time reported to have had an affair with Mark Rich's wife, adds further power to the intertextual mechanisms employed in this cartoon.

3.3 Intertextuality in news websites

Internet news sites, such as the BBC's <http:news.bbc.co.uk>and CNN's <http:www.cnn.com> also make wide use of humorous intertextual matching relations in the titles that link to their postings. Recent examples from the BBC site include the following:

> *(i) Six Appeal* (reference to the widely used expression "sex appeal", linking to an article on the six nations rugby tournament)

> *(ii) Text tourists* (reference to the expression "sex tourists", linking to an article about a group of young people who had become marooned in a small boat off Thailand and had succeeded in getting rescued by sending a text message on a mobile phone).

These two examples are typical of a current trend in society to forcibly invoke sex and sexuality in situations where they are not naturally present. In such cases the intertextual reference seems gratuitous and voyeuristic,[3] and presumably intended to titillate. Moreover, the second example could well be considered offensive to the people concerned by insinuating that they were in fact "sex tourists" on holiday in Bangkok.

> *(iii) Cleesed off* (a pun on the expression "cheesed off", linking to an article describing British comedian John Cleese's frustration with BBC bureaucracy in a recent television project).

To anyone familiar with the work of John Cleese, this example conjures up images of a Basil Fawlty tantrum, or a scene from Monty Python, together with empathy with the frustration of a highly creative and funny individual battling against what is often considered to be a stuffy and monolithic organisation.

4. The translation problem and strategies

Hatim (1997b, p.200) identifies the intertextual context of a text as "all the other relevant prior texts which the various textual clues in a given utterance conjure up for a given language user

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[3] Cf. Fowler's discussion of a Jan. 30, 1989 Times editorial entitled "Sex and the Synod" (Fowler, 1991, p.228).

on a given occasion of use." These prior texts need to be "revisited" in order to fully retrieve the meanings associated with the linguistic item in question. The translation problem, therefore, is basically a question of the extent to which these intertextual references are accessible to the target-language readership, or the degree to which such "relevant prior texts" are known to it. This is mediated by the type of equivalence required in the translation concerned, which in turn depends on the purpose of the translation. The translator has firstly to identify any intertextual references and then judge the likelihood that the target language readership will able to recognise them and cue in to the intended inferences. This will tend to be more difficult the more culturally specific the reference is and the more distant the cultures concerned.

4.1 Strategies

Baker (1992, pp.71-77 and 228-243) discusses this in terms of implicatures generally (i.e. implied meanings that are not explicitly written down in the text), and offers the following strategies for dealing with them: (a) literal translation; (b) cultural substitution; (c) elaboration and explication supplied by the translator either within the text or in a footnote; and (d) translation by omission. In addition to this last, one might add (e) transliteration by retaining part(s) of the text in the source language.

In a translation into Spanish, the first of these strategies would work well in the article title "Silence of the damned": *El silencio de los condenados* (the Spanish title of the movie was "El silencio de los corderos"). The single-word replacement in the matching relation (*condenados* for *corderos*) is phonologically and morphologically quite similar to the original, and arguably the semantic link between *corderos* and *condenados* (evoking the idea of lambs to the slaughter) is stronger than between *lambs* and *damned* in the English version. In this case, given that the movie was a hit worldwide, a literal translation would achieve a very high degree of communicative equivalence and provide target language readers with very much the same textual experience as that achieved by the source text.

The example of "Son of Star Wars", which also partly refers to a worldwide cinema box-office hit, would perhaps be a candidate for the last strategy (e) mentioned in the list. Although the movie itself has a perfectly acceptable title in Spanish *(Guerra de las Galaxias)*, and the original Reagan missile defence system was popularly referred to in this way by Spanish language press, a literal translation *Hijo de guerra de las galaxias* is cumbersome. Given that the English title of the movie is widely accessible, a case could be made for *Hijo de Star Wars* as a more satisfactory translation of "Son of Star Wars". The blander alternative *Star Wars II*

basically corresponding to strategy (b) would be more predictable, but would involve some loss of meaning.

The intertextual references contained in news website title links ("Six appeal" and "Text tourists") are arguably cases for translation by omission (strategy (d)), with replacement by some other title that ignores the references. In the first case, the term "sex appeal" is widely used as-is in Spanish-speaking countries. The matching relation here hinges on the phonological and morphological similarity between the words "sex" and "six". One possibility might be *Seis-appeal*, but it seems doubtful that this would be accessible to a Spanish speaking public as linking to Six Nations rugby, especially as Argentina is the only Spanish speaking country with a strong rugby-playing tradition. Given that the allusion to sex-appeal is largely gratuitous anyway, there seems little point in trying to render it in a translated version. This argument, in my view, applies *a fortiori* in the case of "Text tourists", given its potential for offence, although again a more or less literal *Turistas textuales* would be a possibility.[5]

Translation of the news headline about Euan Blair would probably be a candidate for some elaboration on the part of the translator. As a minimum, use of the first name Euan on its own would need to be supported by the surname "Blair", maybe even adding "son of the British prime minister". In a Spanish translation, and assuming a Spanish readership, a reasonable solution could be *Hijo de Tony Blair*; for a Latin American readership, possibly *Hijo del primer ministro británico* would be more accessible. Both of these alternatives, however, would involve jettisoning interpersonal meaning expressed through the familiar and affectionate use of the first name, in order to maintain retrievability of ideational meaning in the target text.

The editorial title "The Blame in Spain" would require cultural adaptation in a Spanish translation, for several reasons, even though there was a Spanish version of the musical "My Fair Lady" to which the intertextual link refers. The well established translation of the song (*La lluvia en Sevilla es una maravilla* with emphasis on the pronunciation of the 'll')[6] is brilliantly successful in preserving meanings in the context of the show itself, but does not lend itself to the one-word matching-pair adaptation used in the English headline, in which the word "blame" signals the ideational content of the article (reproduced in full in the appendix). Secondly, the intention of the editorial is to ridicule what it sees as Spanish whingeing, and a rhetorically equivalent translation of this into Spanish is unlikely to be perceived in the same way by a Spanish readership. Possibly a more suitable Spanish version, maintaining the light-hearted nature of the source text would back-translate as "Blame it on the Brits" (*La culpa (es) de los Británicos* perhaps?). The text itself does not repeat the intertextual reference to "My Fair

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[5] This raises an interesting issue of professional ethics: to what extent should the translator faithfully transfer what he/she interprets as gratuitous and potentially offensive meanings like this into the TL? Not all cultures have the same voyeuristic appetites, yet the meaning one infers from the reference is itself a reflection one's own cultural conditioning.

Lady", but uses it as a launch pad for an editorial that is highly ironic in tone and full of motivated cohesive links — from "blame" to "pique" (with the accent wilfully omitted from the name of the Spanish Foreign Minister) to "piquant"; and a secondary chain from "blame" to "beef" (dispute) to BSE; and from BSE (contamination) backwards via "nuclear" and "radiant" to "health hazard". The ironic tone set by the title is echoed in "Nelson's radiant heirs" the alliteration of "health hazard" and again in the dramatic "gory carcasses of the *corrida",* and in the final word of the article "Olé". Thus a single intertextual reference in the form of a matching pair in the title has been used to launch several chains of reference that actually create the rhetorical thrust of the whole editorial.

4.2 A semiotic approach

Hatim and Mason (1990, pp.133-7) take a semiotic approach to strategies for translating intertextuality, in which the translator's task is to identify the specific text elements that act as signs or pointers to intertextual reference (intertextual signals), and then trace the ways in which these signals link back to previous texts. Each intertextual sign needs to be evaluated in terms of informational content, intentionality and semiotic status (socio-cultural signification), in order to decide which aspects of the sign can be omitted in translation. Hatim and Mason (*ibid*, p.136) suggest that priority should always be given to intentionality over informational content, and offer a list of procedural priorities for translation, which are exemplified below for the sign "Euan" in the headline about Euan Blair.

1. *Preserve semiotic status*. This means conveying the socio-cultural meaning of the word "Euan" as a typical teenager who happens to be the Prime Minister's son.

2. *Preserve intentionality.* This means conveying the sympathetic, familiar and affectionate attitude conveyed by first-name use.

3. *Preserve linguistic devices that uphold coherence*. This would involve references in the text of the article itself.

4. *Preserve informational status*. In this case, this would involve retaining the name "Euan".

5. *Preserve extra-linguistic status*, i.e. the subgenre of newspaper headlines.

Assuming translation for a readership unlikely to be familiar with the names of the British Prime Minister's children, and still less their personal lives, complying with such translation procedures would require some explication, which might conflict with item 5 on the list. Hatim

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[6] I am grateful to Carmen Millán for this.

and Mason put this as the lowest priority, however, so a headline that back-translates as follows would be a possible outcome of their approach:

Fun-loving teenage son of British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in trouble again.

This fulfils criteria 1, 2, and 5. Coherence relations (criterion 3) can be preserved with respect to the main body of the text, and use of the name "Euan" (criterion 4) can also be made there. Although the first name has disappeared from the headline, the implied affectionate and sympathetic attitude is compensated for by "fun-loving".

5. Conclusion

Intertextuality is a wide-ranging, omni-present textual phenomenon that is crucial to text processing both within and between languages. The problem for translators is to render intertextual references into the target language and culture such that the meanings invoked in the ST are preserved and made accessible to the maximum extent possible. Often this will call for considerable creativity from the translator; for example, in the "Blame in Spain" editorial discussed above, a possible headline referring to the nuclear submarine problem would be: *"Lo que Inglaterra no se llevó".*[7] This is a matching pair invoking the established Spanish translation of the movie title "Gone with the Wind" *(Lo que el viento se llevó)*, which cleverly preserves the form of the intertextuality (light-hearted movie/show) while also linking successfully with the ideational content of the text.

In day-to-day practice, however, the professional translator will not always have time to search for creative solutions of this type, and, unless inspiration comes, he/she will have to settle for more pragmatic strategies. It is here that the guidelines and priorities proposed by Baker or by Hatim and Mason are so useful.

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[7] I am grateful to Carmen Millán for this idea.

Appendix

Editorial from Guardian Weekly February 22-28, 2001

The <u>Blame</u> in Spain

Spain's Foreign Minister, Josep Pique *(sic),* has a <u>beef</u> with Britain. Several, in fact. The first was provoked by Gibraltar, which he described as a "large duty-free shop", an unproductive parasite "living off" Spain. This seems an odd way to convince the colony's residents that they would be better off governed from Madrid.

More <u>pique</u> was shown over HMS Tireless (and engine-less), the nuclear sub under interminable repair stranded in Gibraltar. Far from being feted as gallant NATO allies, <u>Nelson's radiant heirs</u> have been castigated as <u>health hazards</u>.

Now comes the <u>piquant</u> news that Britain is also being blamed for the looming ruination of Spain's favourite bloodsport: bullfighting. The spread of <u>BSE</u> to Spain means the <u>gory carcasses of the *corrida*</u> may no longer be sold for human consumption. The Fighting Bulls Breeders Union is gloomy. Mass matador unemployment beckons. All of which might tempt many in Britain to cry: <u>*Olé!*</u>