

## Chapter 2

### Lingua-Franca Variations and Film Interactions

This chapter focuses on the linguistic and communicative features of lingua-franca variations, starting from the general perspective of cross-cultural interactions, aimed to the exploration of more specific context concerning the selected corpus of migration movies. Such variations will be defined “scripted”, since they stem from the authors’ predictions of how lower-status, non-native speakers in interactions would attempt to authenticate the native varieties of the higher-status participants. Finally, this chapter also explores the notions of moves and acts in Conversation Analysis, in order to introduce a number of new moves identified in the examined scripts.

#### 2.1 Defining ELF Research

The label “English as a Lingua Franca” (ELF) is connected to the investigation of the cross-cultural communicative contexts that involve non-native English speakers. Such interactions are generally analysed in order to identify the properties of the language employed as well as the participants’ attitude and the influence of the speakers’ cultural constructs and backgrounds in the use and development of their English variations.

In fact, according to ELF scholars, non-native speakers do not normally communicate by means of the type of English that is acquired through education as a second language. They contend instead that lingua-franca variations develop from a process of “language authentication” (Widdowson 1979), which consists in transferring to the lingo the cultural and experiential schemata, as well as the syntactic and pragmatic structures of the speakers’ native languages (cf. Guido and Seidlhofer 2014: 10). On the one hand, this justifies the structural and lexical deviations that are usually identified in the ELF variations; on the other, the cultural specificity of the process entails that high levels of schematic and linguistic differences may increase the cases of miscommunication or misunderstanding in cross-cultural interactions. In fact, specific cultural constructs may be “cognitively and linguistically inaccessible” (Guido 2008) and “conceptually unavailable” (Widdowson 1991) to the interlocutors, and therefore the distance between the senders’ and recipients’ background knowledge that inform the respective discourse communities (Carrell 1983) may lead to problems at the time of interpreting the intended messages. In this sense, and focusing on the participants’ behaviours, two mains approaches may be identified.

Firstly, ELF scholars reveal that in most of the communicative contexts non-native speakers may act like creative contributors to the locutionary levels of the messages, by producing neologisms or modifying the original

terms so as to pursue the “fullest communication possible” (Seidlhofer 2011: 18-19). According to this view, the conveyance of the speakers’ intentionality is more important than notifying and correcting misspellings or mispronunciations—which generally pass unnoticed (Mauranen 2012)—whereas utterances display a simplified, sometimes fragmented, syntactic structure, or the recourse to specific verb tenses (MacKenzie 2013). At the same time, also the native speakers’ role tends to be codified. It seems, in fact, that they let the cooperative imperative prevail over the territorial one (Widdowson 1983), namely, also native speakers are concerned about the communicative dimension of the interactions. Such achievement is pursued by means of processes that make the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects (Austin 1962) accessible to the participants in a cross-cultural interaction, such as a number of accommodation and meaning-negotiation strategies (Jenkins 2000; Cogo and Dewey 2006; Mauranen 2007), or by asking for feedback about the participants’ intentionality. For these reasons, even though senders and recipients may come from different linguacultural contexts, once an ELF exchange respects the rules of cross-cultural cooperative interactions, one could consider both participants as members of cross-cultural discourse communities, who share a common communicative purpose (Swales 1990; Seidlhofer 2011: 87).

Yet, the cooperative imperative is not predominant in any contexts: Guido (2008), for example, shows that in specific socio-cultural and political scenarios, such as those connected to migrations, participants can play high or low status, due to the distance between the interlocutors’ linguacultural backgrounds. In similar cases, the high-status participants’ experience may inform the interpretation of the interlocutor’s intentionality (also cf. Halliday 1978), in order “to come to an understanding of the unknown communicative situation they are involved in” (Guido 2008: 23). As a result, though, the prevalence of the high-status participants’ schemata in cross-cultural, asymmetric interactions may cause misinterpretations of the illocutionary force – as in the case regarding the reformulation of migrants and asylum-seekers’ oral reports, or when rendering specialized interactions into another language in translation. In both cases, the cultural differences favour the misinterpretations of the speakers’ intentionality, due to the mental processes activated by receivers. It follows that the cognitive dimension is important in text production and translation (see Chapter 1 above), as well as in the active interpretation of cross-cultural interactions, since the prevalence of top-down cognitive processes may result in “displacement” (Guido 2008: 75) or “entextualization” (Urban 1996) processes that affect the success of the communicative acts. “Entextualization” denotes the attempt at “relocating the original instance of discourse to a new context” (Urban 1996: 21) by means of the editor’s decontextualisation of the received discourse from its original socio-cultural and pragmalinguistic surroundings. The discourse is then

retextualised into an alien context (cf. Guido 2008: 75), with possible differences in terms of the effects in receivers of the messages that have to be conveyed. In this book, the “entextualization” process will be adapted (Section 2.2.1) in defining the framework of audiovisual translation of the selected corpus of scripts.

## **2.2 Developing ELF Research**

ELF research so far has enquired into the features of cross-cultural interactions in the communicative contexts of education (Mauranen 2012; Gotti 2014), immigration (Guido 2008) and computer-mediated business interactions (Poppi 2014). The approaches in literature are generally grounded in the analysis of the levels of speakers’ cooperation, as well as in discussions about the influence of the different schema-bound or culture-bound notions and constructs in the development of ELF variations. At the same time, English as a lingua franca is also the object of studies that describe the linguistic and communicative characteristics of specific university courses tailored to suit an international audience. Finally, ELF research also outlines the strategies of textualisation, interpretation and retextualisation of cross-cultural communication from both general- and specialised-discourse perspectives.

Yet, the area of investigation concerning audiovisual translation (AVT) is still to be explored. This may be due to the fact that film scripts may not be considered appropriate for the study of lingua-franca variations and cross-cultural interactions, since they do not generally represent real, natural occurring exchanges. Even though what happens in a film may not reproduce the actual dynamics of interactions, though, it is contended here that lingua-franca research could benefit from the investigation of such text types, if specific objectives and target receivers are indicated. The multidisciplinary investigation of audiovisual scripts is therefore developed in order to identify the influence of the native speakers’ cognitive and linguacultural backgrounds in the actualisation of the lingua-franca variations that are included in the selected corpus of films. Hence, it may be assumed that such a process reflects the “authentication” and appropriation processes of a language (Widdowson 1979), since the linguistic and communicative features of the non-native speakers’ utterances are interpreted through the senders’ schematic and cultural constructs. Furthermore, once this ideological nature of cross-cultural interactions in some films is identified, it is also possible to enquire into the structural and verbal characteristics of the utterances, thus contributing to the earlier stages of training of cross-cultural mediators. In this sense, films like the ones that will be examined are seen as an initial test to identify how high-status and low-status participants interact in

asymmetrical exchanges, as well as to develop the mediators' skills in terms of reception and interpretation of different language variations.

This book will develop the earlier investigations of the original and target versions of migration movies (Iaia and Sperti 2013; Iaia, Provenzano, and Sperti forthcoming) by means of a multidisciplinary perspective that aims at the interaction between ELF studies and audiovisual translation. This approach would contribute to both research areas, since it will favour the exploration of the lingua-franca variations adopted in source and target audiovisual texts, as well as the exploration of the linguistic, cognitive and communicative features of the scripted conversations. Migration movies can represent a valid addition to the text types studied in ELF research because they generally represent the confrontation of non-native and native participants in cross-cultural, asymmetrical interactions. At the same time, even though the film dialogues entail a scripted dimension since what is staged has been planned by writers, it is claimed that precisely the phase of planning interactions does reflect the cognitive, cultural and linguistic processes which authors (and translators, as well) activate when textualising and retextualising source versions. It follows that such scripted interactions are informed by what senders expect from the development of cross-cultural interactions, thus representing interesting objects of analysis from the linguistic and socio-cultural perspectives.

### *2.2.1 Scripted ELF Variations*

The study of migration movies is connected to the proposal of a new terminology for the language variations employed in the selected corpus of films. They are in fact generally labelled as “broken” variants of a language (cf. Mangiron 2010), due to the lexical and structural deviations from standard norms. Yet, such definition does not convey the intercultural and communicative properties of lingua-franca variations, but it seems that the modification by means of the adjective “broken” entails some ideological reason. Broken languages are in fact associated with low-status participants and may contribute—for example in humorous discourse—to derogatory representations (also conveying native, high-status interlocutors' negative perception of non-native speakers).

For these reasons, the notion of “scripted lingua-franca variation” is introduced here to mark the non-native speakers' uses of language in both source and target versions. As for the source scripts, the notion of “scripted ELF variation” shall be adopted because the main language is English, due to the countries of production of most of the selected movies. When it comes to the analysis of target versions, instead, the label shall be turned into that of “scripted ILF variations”, for the analytical chapter mostly focuses on the Italian dubbing translations. It is claimed that the definition of “scripted ELF

variations” entails the peculiar lexical and structural features of the languages uttered by non-native speakers, as well as the cross-cultural dimension of production and reception of the corpus of “migration movies”. The latter expression labels those films that represent specific problems of migrants, such as the difficult integration in Western societies due to their relationships with the official institutions and the different socio-cultural and linguistic contexts they have to face. The scripted ELF variations result from the same processes of transfer of the L1 linguacultural and social backgrounds that is frequent in actual communicative contexts, and which is influenced by the participants’ cognitive frames (cf. Halliday 1978). Due to the text types under consideration, such transfer is actualised from a multimodal perspective, by means of the interaction between the verbal, visual and acoustic characteristics. In particular, the language uttered by non-native speakers, their position in space, their relationships with the native interlocutors, as well as their tones of voice or accents, provide indications about their status, the asymmetric characterisations of interactions, and the authors’ and speakers’ illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects (Austin 1962).

Furthermore, the multimodal analysis contributes to the identification of the asymmetric relationships from various perspectives. Firstly, the linguistic features may denote the difference in status, for the scripted variations are typical of the low-status participants. Then, as for the interaction between the visual and acoustic features, the participant who plays high status generally resorts to a higher tone of voice, or a more controlled, slow pronunciation, whereas his/her utterances are characterised by the absence of (or by limited) lexical and syntactic deviations. Also the acoustic dimension is crucial in the communication of the speakers’ intentionality, because mispronunciations or fragmented syntactic structures contribute to the characterisation of the low-status speakers. It is therefore evident that the production of scripted lingua-franca variations arise from top-down mental processes that underlie the construction and development of languages, and which indeed exemplify the script authors’ expectations based on linguacultural notions and constructs. Even though one may claim that such variations do not represent the actual features of natural occurring lingua-franca interactions, it is contended instead that their characteristics could help intercultural mediators and translators during the earlier stages of their training, to focus on how to cope with—and therefore avoid—cases of misinterpretation or misunderstanding, due to the different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Besides the production of language variations in source scripts, also their translations can be explored from a number of linguacultural, cognitive and communicative perspectives. The adaptation or omission of the original linguistic features are in fact connected to the translators’ interpretation of the source versions as well as to their expectations in terms of target receivers.

Indeed, the analysis will show that the Italian scripts are rooted in cultural and cognitive constructs, such as film genre, or implied audience. For example, according to the genre, the original variations may be rendered into Standard Italian by means of a neutralisation process, or they can be replaced by a scripted type of Italian lingua-franca variation. The latter is characterised by specific linguistic features, such as the selection of specific verb tenses like the present simple and the past simple, or syntactic deviations, from the lack of subject-verb agreement, to the fragmentation of sentences. In general, however, the main approach to translation is still represented by neutralisation, and if this may be justified by accounting for the time and cost requirements of the dubbing process, as well as for the implied audience's expectations, it is contended that the omission of scripted lingua-franca variations in target versions causes semantic shifts or loss, and does not contribute to the production of equivalent renderings.

The very process of translation can be seen as affected by the “entextualization” procedure (Urban 1996) mentioned above (Section 2.1), since the audiovisual translators that do not possess a specific competence to appropriately identify and adapt the scripted lingua-franca variations tend to decontextualise and recontextualise discourse, in order to convey their “preferred” interpretations of the source versions (cf. Urban 1996: 21; Guido 2008: 75). In other words, the audiovisual translation of migration movies—just like their production—seems to be grounded in the translators' socio-cultural and cognitive dimensions, and it is also for this reason that it is important to carry out more investigations into the linguistic and extralinguistic adaptations of the source semantic dimensions, to contribute to the production of equivalent scripts, as well as to develop the current research in ELF and audiovisual translation studies.

In order to outline the communicative framework for the audiovisual analysis and translation of migration movies (also cf. Section 1.3 above), this book shall consider now the four dialogic parameters which Guido (2008: 251-253) proposes for the identification of the rules that should govern cross-cultural interactions. Such parameters—namely, “implicature”, “inference”, “negotiation” and “acceptability”—are adapted to suit the interaction between senders (namely, film authors and translators) and receivers (namely, the audience).

The basis of the adaptation of the parameters above is the consideration of film production and reception as cross-cultural activities, since even though they are generally produced in Western countries, the current technological development and scenarios allows viewers to receive such films virtually anywhere. Then, it is stated that such scripted lingua-franca variations are connected to the pragmatic principle of “implicature” (Levinson 1983). In this light, the senders choose specific linguistic and extralinguistic features to mark some represented participants as non-native

and high-/low-status participants. Furthermore, the receivers are expected to recognise the author's intentionality by means of the mental process of "inferencing" (Yule 1996; Guido 2004), which allows them to activate the appropriate interpretations of the multimodal stimuli (i.e., to identify some represented participants as non-native speakers). The successful communication of such intercultural and linguistic characterisations depends on a specific form of "negotiation" between senders and recipients. In this perspective, the multimodal construction of the selected corpus of films is the result of a compensation between the former's and the latter's socio-cultural and experiential schemata in selecting the properties that would lead to the identification of the represented participants' status and roles. Finally, the audiovisual and verbal strategies to represent non-native speakers and cross-cultural interactions in films should be accepted by both senders and recipients, who resort to their socio-cultural and experiential backgrounds in order to convey and activate the appropriate illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect.

In the analytical chapters, the indication of the linguistic dimensions in the selected corpus of migration movies will be integrated by an investigation of the structure of the most relevant interactions, in order to identify the conventional moves representing the status asymmetries, as well as a number of new moves accounting for the cross-cultural specificity of the interactions under analysis.

### ***2.3 Conversation Analysis in Migration Movies***

Conversation Analysis is the discipline that investigates the socio-cultural conventions within human interactions. It is generally associated with two main models, the "US one", proposed by a group of ethnomethodologists (Firth 1957; Gumperz and Hymes 1964), and the "UK Model", developed by discourse analysts such as Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), Stubbs (1983), and Coulthard and Brazil (1992), both aiming to study natural occurring conversations.

According to the UK Model, conversations are structured into frames, which reflect the socio-cultural pattern internalised and "shared by the participants involved in an interaction, enabling them to communicate successfully" (Guido 2004: 346), and which are characterised by an internal organisation "within which every unit of each rank is composed by elements of the next smaller rank" (Guido 2004: 343). The smallest unit is the "act", and more acts are combined into "moves". The latter provide a primary structure to conversations, and for this reason they help to identify the differences of socio-cultural knowledge at the basis of miscommunication or non-expected responses to the interactions. As for the US Model, it defines the turn-taking system, and conversation is seen as a process whose

participants are supposed to respect the structure of turns, to contribute to successful communication. Obviously, different types of conversations, as well as different types of relationship between participants, may lead to several turn-taking patterns, one of which is represented by the principle of Adjacency Pairs, when turns are characterised by the alternation between expected (or even unexpected) cues. Finally, even though the Models were created to study natural-occurring conversations, they are adopted for the investigation of scripted interactions because the latter are actually influenced by the authors' linguacultural backgrounds (cf. Section 2.2.1 above). At the same time, the adoption of the conversation analysis models will provide a more appropriate analytical approach to the analysis of dialogues in film studies.

Due to the cross-cultural dimension of the interactions in the selected corpus of migration movies, some new moves shall be proposed. Their identification is meant to foreground the peculiar dynamics of the exchanges, in particular the speakers' confrontations generally based on culture-bound notions and constructs:

- **cross-cultural challenging.** This new move preserves the basic dynamics entailed by the "challenging" one, which is activated when one "asks for or defies a previous statement" (Guido 2004: 344). This basic application is now developed to account for the cross-cultural dimensions of the interactions, and in particular the attempts at downgrading the higher-status participants, or protesting over their leading roles in conversations, by means of references to the interlocutors' cultural background;
- **fake eliciting.** This new move develops the basic "eliciting" move, which may be generally identified when posing questions. The modification by means of the adjective "fake" is meant to exemplify the speakers' actual intentionality, when they are not really interested in knowing the interlocutors' responses. The move is generally adopted by high-status participants;
- **obeying/ordering.** This new pair of moves, which reminds a sequence of adjacency pairs, represents the sequence of turns in an interactional frame that is characterised by the alternation between the high-status participants' requests and the low-status ones' fulfilment of the interlocutor's demands, after acknowledging their subordinate roles;
- **raising.** Drawing upon the semantic dimension of gambling, this new move aims at representing the sections of conversations when speakers do not accept the imposition of the interlocutors' wishes. Such a move is generally identified in asymmetrical interactions, when participants aim to prevail and lead the conversation. In the

selected corpus of migration movies, the outcome generally depends on socio-cultural conventions, since the high-status participants are determined by means of the context in which the interactions develop, or by some properties in terms of economic or social power, which eventually contribute to the confirmation of the higher status.

The type of conversation analysis described here completes the multidisciplinary and theoretical framework that allows the investigation of the influence of the socio-cultural, cognitive and communicative dimensions in the production, reception and translation of migration movies.

