Translation and Discourse in Multilingual Journalism: a corpus-based approach.

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Abstract

My Ph.D. project is concerned with the investigation of multilingual discourse(s) and translational features in international journalism.

The theoretical frameworks I refer to are to be found at the intersection between Translation Studies (TS) and (Critical) Discourse Analysis (CDA). My project is therefore an interdisciplinary one and uses a twofold methodology, Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Discourse Analysis (DA). News translation can be considered a branch of TS that has been given significant research attention only during recent years (see Bassnett and Bielsa, 2009), because translation in this context occupies a rather peculiar position and the boundaries between translation and originally produced text are often characterised by fuzziness and extreme flexibility. Starting from the assumption that translation is considered in a flexible manner that goes beyond the binary oppositions of ST and TT and SL and TL, I seek to analyse translational features in multilingual journalism and how multilingual news creates narratives and discourses that involve some kind of language-transfer activity. To do so, I built two sets of corpora of the news: a parallel one made of news articles in English and their Italian translations taken from a citizen journalism website (www.globalvoices.org); one comparable bilingual corpus of web-newscasts in English and Italian from the website of Euronews channel; and two comparable monolingual corpora of newscasts aired by the British channel BBC One and the Italian channels Rai Uno and Rainews24.

These corpora are the main evidence providing tool of my research, which, however, also includes a more detailed text and context oriented analysis of these texts, taking on a critical discursive approach towards both translation (as a product and process of the news making activity), and the changes and shifts in discourses across different media and languages represented in these corpora.

Channels and Newscast typologies			
Time-span 9-22/02/2016 + 6-16/08/2016	RAI Uno: Tg1 h. 20 Rainews24: Tg h. 13 e h.15	Euronews: video news online	BBC One: Tg h.18 e h.22
Type of corpus	Monolingual (ITA) Comparable	Bilingual (ITA, EN) Comparable	Monolingual (EN) Comparable

Table 1: Audio-visual corpus: sources and corpus typologies

Time-span	Sources and corpus typology
16/06/2016-07/06/2016	Global Voices website - English STs and Italian TTs **GlobalVoices** The world is talking. Are you listening? Bilingual Parallel Corpus

Table 2: Written corpus: sources and corpus typology

Mixed-methods and *convergence* explained

I chose to adopt the term *convergence,* as I consider it as binding factor between the different methodological and theoretical inputs used in this Ph.D. project.

Convergence covers in this sense a twofold methodological function. Firstly, it establishes a clear intertextual connection with the well-known and namesake phenomenon of *media convergence* which we have been witnessing during the past decade.

Secondly, as a metaphor, it describes how the above mentioned theoretical and methodological inputs converge into an organic framework that allows the researcher to gain multiple perspectives on written and audio-visual news, on their contexts and languages, and on the discourses and narratives they envisage, promote and finally deliver to their audiences.

In this sense the term convergence includes the concept of methodological synergy (cf. Baker et al. 2008) and it expands on it, in that contributions by different research fields all point to and actively bestow on the understanding of multilingual news discourse and of the meaning making activity of translation in this context.

In written and audio-visual news translation, carrying out a comparative analysis of a source text (ST) and a target text (TT) is almost never feasible. In order to analyse how translation is carried out and which translational processes underlie the production of a news text, the analyst has to step out of the texts (i.e. from the corpus) and consider other non-linguistic or non-verbal features, which are especially important in research about audio-visual media. This is where a CDA-oriented approach is most useful, allowing the analyst to evaluate and ascertain the multiplicity of complexities that characterise translation in contexts where the boundaries between ST(s) and TT(s) are essentially blurred (see Federici 2011).
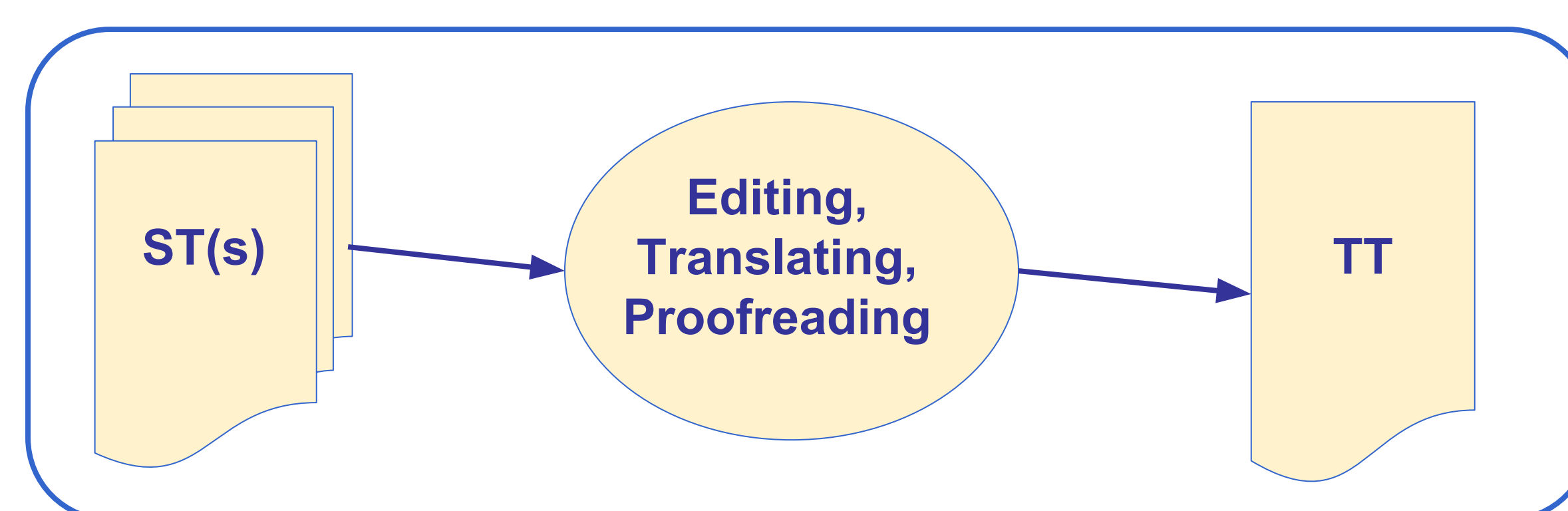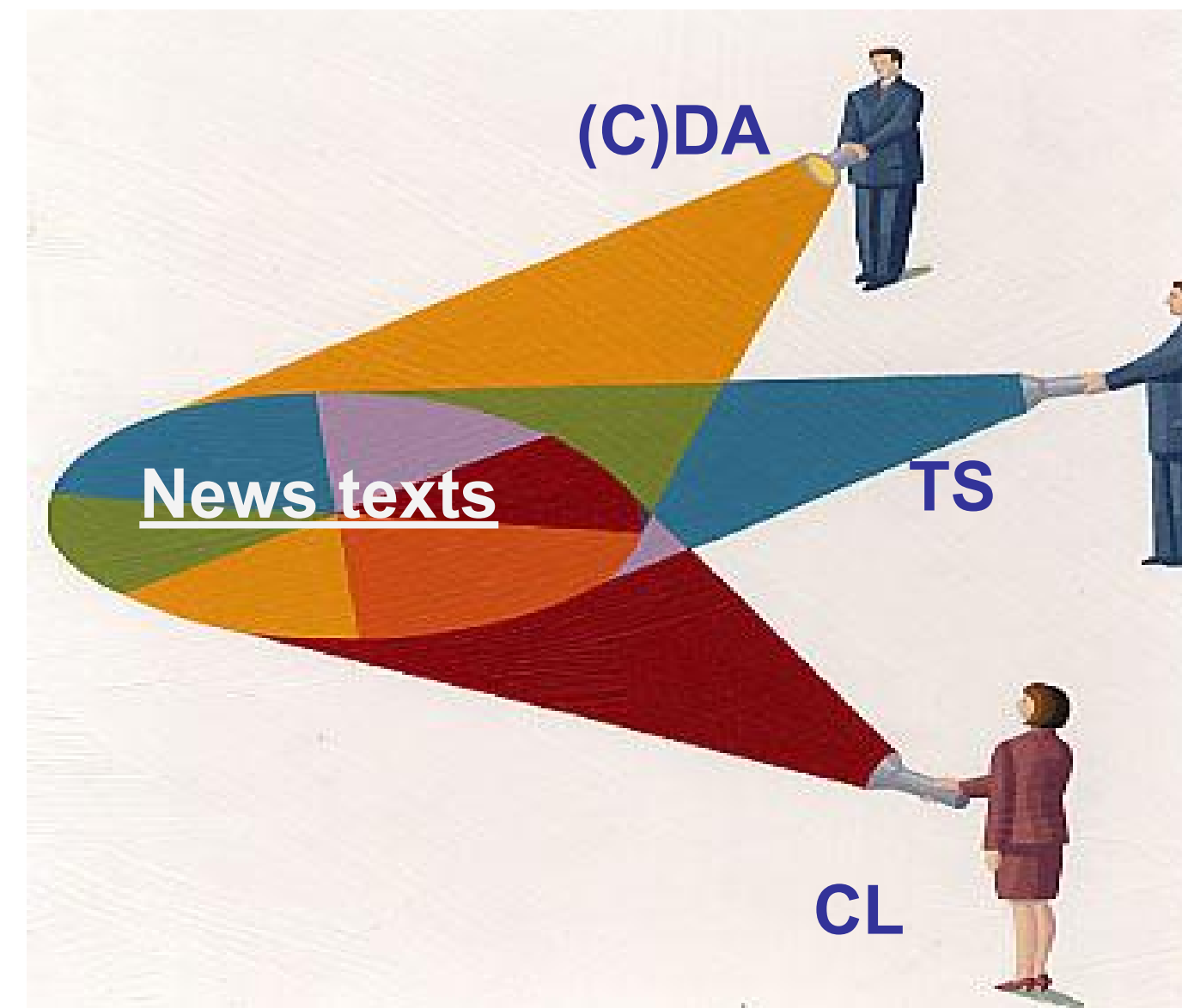
Corpora and CL are an ideal tool to provide reliable evidence and to guide the researcher's attention to peculiarities or repeated patterns of discourse(s). The role of CL in this approach to multilingual journalism is both of providing the starting point for the analysis (i.e. corpus-driven) and of substantiating and/or reject hypotheses made a priori by the analyst (i.e. corpus-based).

On the one hand, corpus evidence from the audio-visual corpus described in Table 1 is compared across the sub-corpora and also against other larger general and specialised corpora, contextualising the results of such comparisons into a wider frame, which allows for a more qualitative con- and textual analysis. On the other hand, the parallel corpus of written news could instructive of both translational trends in the news and of the language and discourses featured in this peculiar type of news, i.e. citizen journalism.

Pros

- Shortcomings from one method/theory can be made up by other methods/theories;
- Flexibility when facing unexpected difficulties in the research;
- CL: avoidance of *cherry-picking*;
- CDA: extensive contextual analysis;
- TS: bi- and multilingual perspective and sensitivity.

Cons

- Risky and challenging: insecurity of venturing into unknown academic fields;
- CL: building a corpus (especially if audio-visual): time- and energy-consuming;
- Journalism: newness is a thorny issue;
- TS: traditional binary concepts not applicable.

Conclusions

It is believed that this approach would help deconstructing the multiple layers of complexities, which are indeed common features of all discourses permeating our societies, and are particularly powerful and relevant in journalistic genres.

Moreover this framework could provide an original and effective method to investigate also other under-represented areas of TS research, especially concerning those texts that are considered to lie somehow on the borderline between translation and originally produced texts, such as advertising texts or corporate multilingual communications among others. Finally, criss-crossed theoretical and methodological inputs can create virtuous circles of knowledge and research, where "theory, description, methodology and applications interact with one another on an equal basis, [...] giving rise to a sort of serendipity process of discovery which continually throws up new data which, in turn, lead to new hypotheses" (Laviosa, 2002: 118). This serendipitous method of researching is then only achievable by means of converging theories and methodologies, shaping knowledge through different case studies and framing results in a flexible yet valid manner.
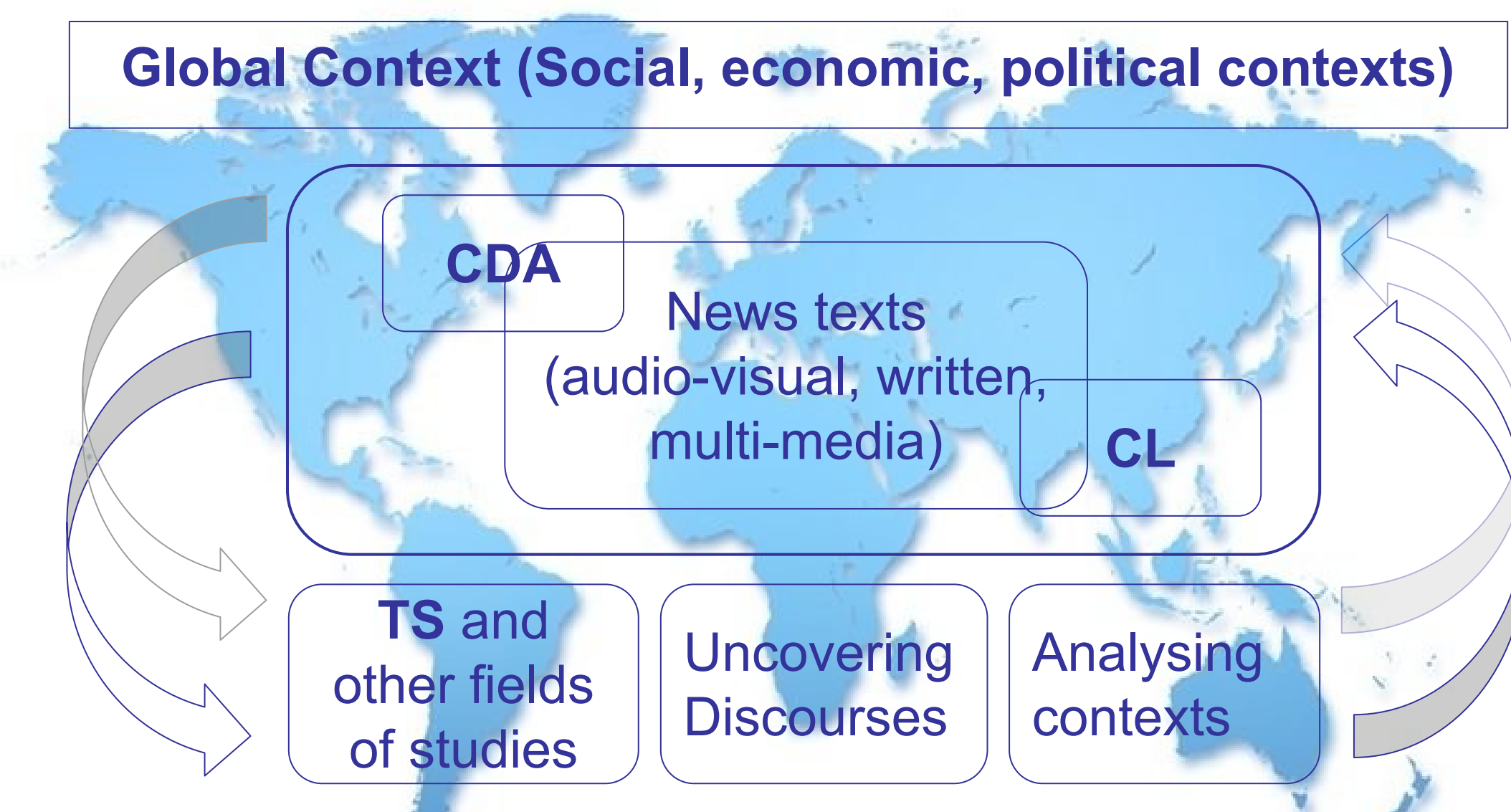
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