

TRANSLATING NON-FICTION PICTUREBOOKS FOR CHILDREN ACROSS AGE GROUPS AND LANGUAGES: THE CASE OF INFORMATIVE BOOKS ON GEOGRAPHY IN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN

Silvia Masi*

University of Pisa

ABSTRACT: The present study explores the role of multimodality in the intralingual and interlingual mediation of a small parallel English-Italian corpus of non-fictional picturebooks on geography addressed to children of different age groups. It proposes a qualitative analysis that builds on preceding research on travel guidebooks for children (Cappelli and Masi, 2019), and integrates different approaches, viz. Painter et al. (2013), Moya-Guijarro (2014), and Goga (2020). The intralingual investigation showed that verbal and visual strategies were co-deployed differently depending on the age of the target readership, while the analysis of the Italian translations confirmed the main findings of previous research, e.g. the preference for a less direct verbal address, a more formal style, a higher degree of specification in the lexical choices, along with other linguistic strategies and trends that inevitably altered the word-image configuration of the original source texts. The ultimate goal of the article is indeed to contribute to the development of an intersemiotic analytical framework to raise awareness of subtleties in these and similar types of ever more popular and highly multimodal non-fiction for children, to be applied in pedagogy and in pre-translational text analysis.

KEYWORDS: Translation, Non-fiction for children, Multimodality, Mediation

1. Introduction

The present study explores non-fiction picturebooks, a recent editorial success as resulting from the “pictorial turn” (Von Merveldt, 2018) in children’s literature since 2010, probably stimulated by the influence of the international market, and the Anglo-Saxon one in particular, via globalisation. This is a phenomenon which, however, has received little attention from the academic world so far (Grilli, 2020). Non-fiction for children is a quite heterogenous area, difficult to make generalisations about, highly hybrid in terms of style, format, activities and approaches, which can be innovative, creative, even subversive at times, demonstrating that different forms of learning about the world are indeed possible. The books under analysis deal with geography and typically focus upon the most curious, dangerous or awesome aspects of the spatial locations in question, which are described verbally and accompanied by striking visuals. Thus, words and images prominently “make different aspects and layers of the world [...] graspable by both hemispheres of our brain” (Grilli, 2020).

More precisely, the books under consideration can be viewed as a form of popular science, or expert-to-nonexpert communication, designed to make specialised knowledge more accessible for a lay audience (Calsamiglia and Van Dijk, 2004; Gotti, 1996, 2013;

*silvia.masi@unipi.it

Myers, 2003). The books are also examples of informative literature for children (see Mallet, 2004), comprising non-compulsory, extra-curricular materials chosen and read for pleasure. Children, of course, have less experience and lower cognitive and literacy skills than adults (on popularisation addressed to children, see Sezzi, 2017; Cappelli and Masi, 2019, Diani and Sezzi, 2019; Bruti and Manca, 2019).

The present study builds on preceding research into travel guidebooks across age groups, approached from a contrastive and translational (English-Italian), but largely verbal, perspective (Cappelli and Masi, 2019). Among the relevant findings that emerged from that work are: the acknowledgement of different accessibility requirements depending on target age group and lingua-culture background; the English texts tended to be more humorous and interactive than the Italian ones; Italian texts tended to be more formal and less direct, also displaying a variety of translation strategies such as explanations through additions, substitutions of culture-specific references and compensation of wordplay, and omissions of metalinguistic information or replacements of familiar subjects to the Italian target audience. Questions still remain as to the validity of such findings for other types of books, and the consequence of linguistic changes in translation for the overall word-image relations of the target texts.

This study then proposes a qualitative analysis of a small sample of parallel-print picturebooks on geography in English and Italian addressed to target audiences of different ages, as part of a work in progress that focuses on multimodality, popularisation and engagement in non-fiction for children, to provide an answer to the questions above and also to the following:

- Do geography picturebooks for children share similar strategies with travel guidebooks?

- What is the role of visuals and of word-image relations across age groups and lingua-cultures?

Some reflections will also be offered about the relations between the trends, on the linguistic and visual levels, and on more general rhetorical preferences in the lingua-cultural systems of English and Italian (in line with what already emerged in Cappelli and Masi, 2019).

As a matter of fact, the need to redefine literacy in the contemporary age of highly multimodal texts entails the development of analytical tools and of “a metalanguage that will facilitate metatextual awareness of image/text relations” (Unsworth, 2006: 71). This is particularly true for multimodal texts in translation, as the transposition of (typically) the verbal code into another language may bring unexpected results within the target multimodal ensemble¹. The ultimate goal of the present study is indeed to contribute to

¹ For the promotion of a joint semiotic/translation research agenda that takes care of the expressiveness of different semiotic resources and of their consequences for translation needs and practices see Adami and Ramos Pinto (2020).

the development of a multimodal analytical framework and correlated metalanguage, which could be used for the study of different types of non-fiction for children designed to be used for teaching purposes and/or in pre-translational text analysis.

2.Theoretical framework and methodology

The main theoretical references are Painter et al. (2013) and Moya-Guijarro (2014). Both of them base their approaches on the main tenets of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)² and Kress and Van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics (VSS)³, with their three metafunctions as dimensions of analysis (and correlated meaning-making resources), viz. ideational/representational, textual/compositional and interpersonal/interactive.

Painter et al. (2013) is especially interesting as it proposes a quite extended categorization of interactive resources in fictional picturebooks, while Moya-Guijarro (2014) takes the age factor as the determinant of different types of verbal and visual interactions, once again in fictional picturebooks, by making reference to Piagetian developmental psychology.

Another relevant study was Goga's (2020), the first, to my knowledge, to focus on non-fiction picturebooks. In fact, her tripartite analytical categories of "knowledge presentation", knowledge organization" and "reader conceptualization" appear to be in line with the three metafunctions of SFG and VSS, so that I decided to integrate these different frameworks as a toolkit for my analysis.

As for the methodology, I carried out a manual analysis of both verbal and visual codes in the various books. This centered first on intralingual mediation across age groups, considering text types and popularisation strategies at the verbal level, before going on to tackle both word and visual levels and intermodal convergence vs. divergence on the basis of the metafunctions mentioned above. Here are the sub-categories of meaning-making resources that were given attention as they were especially relevant in the data under investigation:

- processes, characters, and setting for the ideational/representational metafunction, with correlated degree of intermodal concurrence and/or complementarity;
- framing, layout, and arrangement for the textual/compositional metafunction, with intermodal extent of synchrony;
- focalization, pathos, power, social distance, involvement (for affiliation), and ambience, affect, and graduation (for feeling), in the case of the interpersonal/interactive metafunction and correlated intermodal degree of resonance or congruence.

The same rationale was then applied to the interlingual mediation, but with a special focus on asymmetries in translation. A fine-grained presentation of findings will be

² Halliday (1978, 1979), Halliday and Matthiessen (2009).

³ Kress and van Leeuwen (2006).

proposed in the sections on the actual analysis of data, after the presentation of the corpus under investigation.

3. The corpus

The parallel corpus comprised:

- 1) a lift-the-flap book (*Look Inside Usborne, Our World – Libri animati Usborne, Il nostro mondo*), addressed to pre-schoolers, roughly 3 to 5 years of age (children in the pre-operational stage of the Piagetian classification),
- 2) an atlas (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World, National Geographic Kids – Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo, National Geographic Kids*), addressed to junior readers and middle grade readers, roughly from 6 to 8 years of age (concrete operations stage I), and
- 3) a more comprehensive reference work (*The Travel Book, Lonely Planet Kids – Il libro dei viaggi, Lonely Planet Kids*) addressed to middle grade readers and pre-teens – 9-12 years old (concrete operations stage II).

Such books are examples of semiotically symmetrical or complementary picturebooks, in which the visuals often add details to the verbal message, and where the most prominent text type is the expository one. Compared to typical travel guidebooks, they are less instructional in type, less hybrid in the disciplinary perspectives touched upon, but more varied in terms of spatial settings covered. They can also be located outside the ideal “tourist cycle” (Cappelli, 2006), as they are likely to be the kind of reading experience that may inspire the idea of a journey, rather than one that precedes or “accompanies” the reader during an actual trip.

4. Data analysis I: Intralingual mediation

As might be expected, the intralingual analysis of the three books revealed the increased prominence of words in those addressed to older children, with the visual code also becoming richer and more diversified in its nuances. At the same time, it also showed similar results across books as far as text types and verbal strategies of popularisation were concerned. They were mainly descriptive-expository in type, displaying definitions, descriptions, denominations and analogies. Visual analogies were also used, reinforcing verbal ones.

On the ideational/representational dimension, in all the three cases there was a majority of existential and relational/identifying processes on the verbal level, with a varied display of conceptual images, though also images featuring behavioural processes. In more detail:

- 1) the lift-the-flap book showed landscape views of a small selection of cartoon-like images of natural settings swarming with little animals, people, buildings, and other elements as distant characters, the actual protagonists being the settings themselves.

2) The atlas for junior-to-middle grade explorers was organised by continent and contained maps and photos of real landscapes, people(s), animals, and sights. It contained some brief narratives too, about ancient people and explorers, also alternating informative sections (as *Fact-Boxes* and *Pop-up-Facts*) to more instructional ones (cf. sections with *Questions*, engaging ones entitled *Let's go* also occasionally including more dynamic images, and *Parent Tips*).

3) The *Travel Book* proposed a round-the-world journey for older children, and was verbally much richer, with a strong evaluative component, as well as an eclectic iconic apparatus (typical for the audience of this target group, see Cappelli and Masi, 2019) featuring place details, people(s), animals and objects, and some game-like activities more instructional in type.

Intermodally, the three books displayed overall ideational concurrence via instantiation, with occasional complementarity, as the significance of details and their reciprocal relations were magnified on a more holistic visual level. For example, in the lift-the-flap book, the various stages of the water cycle are presented both verbally and visually, while in the atlas, the significance of the items identified on the maps is strengthened by their being positioned side by side on the page.

On the textual/compositional dimension:

1) the lift-the-flap book consisted of double-page spreads with unframed images presupposing an involved reader/viewer, and in which images tended to have more semantic weight than words. Words and images tended to be integrated, as words were often on flaps and subsumed into the images themselves, sometimes separated out into their own experiential space (e.g. a leaf in the forest). The arrangement of elements followed an organic organisation, in that it iconically reflected entities in natural settings.

2) In the atlas addressed to juniors and middle-grade readers, there was an alternation of unframed images (at the beginning of each major section) and framed ones, correlating with different presuppositions of the reader/viewer as “involved explorer” and more ‘detached observer’, respectively. Each introductory section included an initial double-page spread with a large unframed photo (with the page edge as the only limit in the upper part). The unframed image seemed to mesh with the viewer’s world, setting the stage for the experience of the virtual journey to come. The following pages then showed sections as colourfully framed circles and squares and framed photos of different size, as delimited windows for a ‘curious observer’, with some of them occasionally breaching the margins between pages. Images tended to be privileged, especially on the recto page. Words and images were integrated and often reinstated, i.e. words were presented within framed coloured blocks – as a visual element in their own right. The arrangement of elements was varied and scattered.

3) In the reference work addressed to older children, both unframed and framed images were present. They had an integrated layout and a scattered arrangement.

Intermodally, the three books displayed word-image synchrony, with each flap and/or image being accompanied by the corresponding captions. Some recurrent items within books, in terms of shape and position (e.g. *Pop-up-Facts* in the lift-the-flap book or *Country Cards* in the more comprehensive reference work for older children), appeared to contribute to visual cohesion on a more global level.

For the category of affiliation of the interpersonal/interactive dimension:

1) the lift-the-flap book sometimes used focalisation by means of inclusive “we” and questions on the verbal level, while a direct gaze of characters towards the viewer was difficult to ascertain because of their small size, being depicted as socially distant through very long shots. Because of that, other variables such as power or orientation appeared as less relevant than others. As for pathos, the minimalist style used presupposed the viewer as a detached observer of characters as types, rather than as individuals. The category of feeling was mainly conveyed a) via ambience – through varied colours, b) via affect – through some evaluative lexis and jocularity in alliterative titles rather than hardly perceivable participants’ face expressions, and c) via graduation or upscaled qualification – e.g. through the relatively large quantity of leaves constituting the flaps that unexpectedly led into the forest in the forest section, or the surprisingly large proportion of blue space in the progressively more open flaps of the watery world.

2) In the atlas, interpersonal/interactive meaning was especially conveyed by visuals. As for affiliation, the book occasionally used forms of direct address and questions on the verbal level, along with frequent images involving direct visual address as a demand for reaction and empathy from the viewer, rather than a simple offer of information. Some cases of mediated focalization were also found, e.g. in the *Let’s go* section where a photo portrays the hands of a participant as a potential metonymic representation of those of the viewer’s, involved in a more “hands-on” type of activity as a “co-creator”. The numerous real photos foregrounded a naturalistic style which contributed to the engagement with characters as individuals, as if they were evidence that invites a more mature response from the reader/viewer. Eye-level angle for identification, close-ups or mid-shots for proximity, and frontal perspectives for involvement (with and of the viewer) were often used, too, representing the categories of power, social distance and orientation, respectively. As for the category of feeling, the colours of images tended to be bright, intense, awe-inspiring and conveyed excitement and vitality, with a high degree of differentiation that enhanced their familiarity. Affective components were occasionally expressed through facial expressions of characters, while upscaled qualification also played a role (e.g. the extensive variety of colours and shapes constituting the coral reef).

3) The reference work addressed to older children offered a variety of patterns and configurations on the dimension of interpersonal/interactive meaning. Affiliation was displayed through frequent direct verbal and visual address, with both minimalist and naturalistic styles of images, which often featured an eye-level angle and a frontal

perspective, in close-ups or mid-shots. Images in a naturalistic style also showed a high level of differentiation. Expectedly, the verbal code played a more prominent role there than in the preceding cases, both for description and evaluation (cf. esp. positive modifiers, e.g. *incredible, amazing, crazy, beautiful, remarkable, paradise-perfect, powerful, awesome, great*, as in *nature's greatest spectacles*, or *cool*, as in *coolest extreme sports*, or *tasty, delicious* or *scrumptious* food), with a consequent higher extent of intermodal resonance as far as the expression of feeling through affect was concerned.

5. Data analysis II: Interlingual mediation

The interlingual analysis identified fewer instances of verbal markers of direct engagement such as the pronoun “you”, questions and inclusive “we”/ “us” in all the Italian target texts, in which they were replaced by passive or impersonal structures, as shown by the examples below:

1) The weather can be very different depending on where you are in the world (*Our World*, p. 1)
1a) Il clima della Terra cambia a seconda della zona (*Il nostro mondo*, p.1)
1b) (Approximate backtranslation: The climate of the Earth changes according to the zone)

2) Where is the world's largest island? It's icy Greenland to the northeast of Canada (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 12)
2a) In questo continente si passa dai ghiacci della Groenlandia [...] (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 12)
2b) (Approximate backtranslation: In this continent one moves from the icy areas of Greenland [...])

3) What About Us? (which is the title of section n. 10 in *Our World*, p. 10)
3a) Risorse Naturali (*Il nostro mondo*, p.10)
3b) (Approximate backtranslation: Natural Resources)

4) It's home to the ancient ruins of Rome, and has brought us some of the greatest thinkers, artists and explorers that have ever lived. Italy – *grazie mille!* (*The Travel Book*, p. 82)
4a) Ospita le rovine dell'Antica Roma e ha dato i natali a pensatori, artisti ed esploratori tra i più grandi che il mondo abbia mai visto! (*Il libro dei viaggi*, p. 82)
4b) (Approximate backtranslation: It's home to the ruins of Ancient Rome and has given birth to some of the greatest thinkers, artists and explorers that the world has ever seen!)

Example 4a displays another trend of these target texts, namely their occasional use of more precise and formal lexis (cf. *Antica Roma* for *Rome* and *ha dato i natali* for *it's home*

to), along with the deletion of items that may be regarded as obvious or superfluous for the target audience (cf. *grazie mille* in the source text).

Another instance of the latter strategy can be found below, where the omission causes a redistribution of information (notice the lower number of sentences in 5a):

5) Carsten Peter wears a heatproof suit. He follows scientists into the mouth of Mount Etna. It's one of the world's most active volcanoes. Mount Etna is on the Island of Sicily, in Italy (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 56)

5a) Carsten indossa una tuta a prova di calore. Si reca con gli scienziati all'interno dell'Etna, uno dei vulcani più attivi al mondo (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 56)

5b) (Approximate backtranslation: Carsten wears a heatproof suit. He goes with scientists inside Etna, one of the most active volcanoes of the world)

More specialised terminology can also be found in translation, as shown by the following (esp. consider the verbs "orbita" in 6a for "moving around" and "mietete" in 7a for "cut down"):

6) Earth has a smaller, rocky ball moving around it, called the Moon (*Our World*, p. 1)

6a) Attorno alla Terra orbita una sfera di roccia più piccola: la Luna (*Il nostro mondo*, p.1)

6b) (Approximate backtranslation: A smaller rocky sphere orbits around the Earth: the Moon)

7) Wheat is grown on farms. It's cut down by big machines...(*Our World*, p. 11)

7a) Quand' è maturo, il grano si mietete (cioè si taglia)... (*Il nostro mondo*, p. 11)

7b) (Approximate backtranslation: When it is ripe, one harvests/reaps wheat (that is, one cuts it down).

Example 7a shows the strategy of added explanation (in between parentheses), too, which is at work in several instances in the texts under analysis. Below is another case in point, in which the English source text relies more on the deictic function of "this", pointing to the corresponding image, while the translation verbally explains the notion in question (through a longer and more complex sentence):

8) It's hottest around the middle of the Earth. This is the Equator (*Our World*, p. 1)

8a) Il clima più caldo si trova in corrispondenza dell'Equatore, una linea immaginaria che divide la Terra in due emisferi (*Il nostro mondo*, p.1)

8b) (Approximate backtranslation: The hottest climate is in the area that coincides with the Equator, an imaginary line that divides the Earth into two hemispheres)

In other cases, substitutions of culture-specific elements were found, cf.

- 9) ... where it's [flour] made into bread, cookies and cakes (*Our World*, p. 11)
9a) ... e usata per produrre pane, biscotti e pasta (*Il nostro mondo*, p.11)
9b) (Approximate backtranslation: ... and used to make bread, cookies and *pasta*)

Replacements often adapted reference points in analogies anchoring new information to a given and more familiar scenario:

- 10) [Burj Khalifa]...It's the world's tallest skyscraper. It's as tall as nine Statues of Liberty stacked on top of each other (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 73)
10a) ...è il grattacielo più alto del mondo. Misura quasi quanto quindici torri di Pisa messe l'una sopra l'altra (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 73)
10b) (Approximate backtranslation: It's the world's tallest skyscraper. It's almost like fifteen towers of Pisa stacked on top of each other).

- 11) [Costa Rica] ...this beautiful country has more than 1,200km (745mi) of coastline – roughly the same length as Britain! (*The Travel Book*, p. 14)
11a) ... questo bellissimo paese ha oltre 1200 km di costa, più o meno la lunghezza (in linea retta) dell'Italia! (*Il libro dei viaggi*, p. 14)
11b) (Approximate backtranslation: ...this very beautiful country has more than 1,200 km of coastline, more or less the same length (in a straight line) as Italy!)

Another remarkable trend concerned the translation of titles of sections or of paragraphs, whose expressive potential was often downplayed in the passage from source to target texts, thus proving to be less jocular and less potentially involving. Almost all the titles of the different content sections of *Our World*, for example, contained alliteration and some included evaluative adjectives (e.g. *Running Rivers*, *Fascinating Forests*, *Watery World*, *Extraordinary Earth*), while their translations did not maintain such features to the same extent (only one instance of alliteration was kept, i.e. *Il mondo marino*, and no evaluative adjectives were retained). However, loss of expressivity especially affected the translation of *The Travel Book*, for older children, where the original titles were quite rich in allusions to intertextual references and wordplay. Only some of the many cases available are reported below as examples:

- 12) *Big Friendly Giant* (p. 156), reminiscent of the BFG by R. Dahl, translated as Gigante Buono instead of *Il Grande Gigante Gentile or GGG*, which is the official Italian translation of the famous book for children;

13) *Oil Be Rich!* (p. 153), pun on “I’ll be rich”, translated with a fixed expression as *Petrolio a Fiumi* (approximately “rivers of oil”);

14) *Falling for Niagara!* (p. 6), replaced by *Non Cascate nel Niagara* (“do not fall into Niagara”), with a pun based on the polysemy of the word *cascate*, which can refer to “falls” as plural noun or “to fall” as verb, here indeed used in the imperative form;

15) *See you soon, Monsoon* (p. 175), quite evocative on a phonological level thanks to alliteration, assonance and consonance, translated literally as *A Presto, Monsone*.

Titles were sporadically changed altogether by describing the content of the verbal segment they announced:

16) *Water Good Idea* (p. 177), pun on “What a good idea”, translated in a more objective style, by identifying explicitly what the relevant verbal segment is about, as *Mercati Sull’Acqua* (“Markets on water”);

17) *Big Feast* (p. 153), translated as *Una Matrioska di Carne* (“a meat matrioska”).

Furthermore, the translation of the open-the-flap book for pre-schoolers and of the atlas for juniors and middle grade readers, in particular, showed frequent fronting of spatial information (see e.g. 18a) and a lower number of longer and more complex sentences than their respective source texts (see esp. 19a and 20a):

18) It’s very cold at the top and bottom of the Earth (*Our World*, p. 1)

18a) Al Polo Sud e al Polo Nord fa molto freddo (*Il nostro mondo*, p. 1)

18b) (Approximate backtranslation: In the South Pole and in the North Pole it’s very cold)

19) It’s hot and rainy in the northern half of South America. The Amazon rain forest is here. Parts of the forest get up to nine feet (2.7 m) of rain a year (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 33)

19a) Nella parte settentrionale del Sud America il clima è caldo e piovoso. Qui si estende la Foresta Amazzonica, dove possono cadere fino a 2,7 metri di pioggia all’anno (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 33)

19b) (Approximate backtranslation: In the northern part of South America the climate is hot and rainy. Here lies the Amazon rain forest, where it can rain up to 2.7 metres a year)

20) The southern tip of South America is very cold. That's because it's so far away from the Equator. Giant ice sheets cover some parts of the land there (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 33)

20a) La parte meridionale del continente è invece fredda perché è molto lontana dall'Equatore. Giganteschi strati di ghiaccio ricoprono il terreno (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 33)

20b) (Approximate backtranslation: The southern part of the continent is instead cold because it is far away from the Equator. Giant ice sheets cover the land).

The excerpt in example 20 (which soon follows the paragraph in 19) highlights another preference in the Italian text, i.e. a connective (*invece - instead*) is added to make coherence within the slightly longer passage more explicit. The following display similar cases of added connectives (see *tuttavia – however* and *infatti – indeed*) for more explicit coherence,

21) Aboriginals first came to Australia from Asia about 40,000 years ago. They have one of the world's oldest cultures. Storytelling, painting, and dance are all important parts of their lives. [...] Today, most Australians are related to settlers from Europe who first arrived about 200 years ago (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 102)

21a) Gli aborigeni arrivarono in Australia dall'Asia circa 40.000 anni fa. Custodiscono una delle culture più antiche del mondo, Raccontare storie, dipingere e ballare sono aspetti fondamentali della loro vita. [...] Tuttavia oggi la maggior parte degli australiani discende dai colonizzatori europei, che arrivarono nel continente circa 200 anni fa (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 102)

21b) (Approximate backtranslation: Aboriginals first came to Australia from Asia about 40,000 years ago. They guard one of the world's oldest cultures. Storytelling, painting, and dance are important aspects of their lives. [...] However, today most Australians descend from European settlers who arrived on the continent about 200 years ago)

22) In the coral reefs of the Great Barrier Reef, crown-of-thorns sea stars have become a problem. They hurt the underwater environment by eating corals (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 105)

22a) Lungo la Grande Barriera Corallina la stella marina corona di spine è diventata un problema. Queste stelle marine, infatti, danneggiano l'ecosistema sottomarino mangiando i coralli (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 105)

22b) (Approximate backtranslation: Along the Great Barrier Reef, the crown-of-thorns sea star has become a problem. Such sea stars, indeed, hurt the underwater ecosystem by eating corals).

Last but not least, a few Italian translations took their cue from the images to present a different or more accurate rendering. Both the following examples were found in the lift-the-flap book:

23) The Sun is a massive ball of incredibly hot gases. It gives Earth all its light and heat (superimposed on the bright yellow and orange image of the Sun) (*Our World*, p. 1)

23a) Il sole è una gigantesca sfera di gas incandescenti. Fornisce alla Terra luce e calore (*Il nostro mondo*, p. 1)

23b) (Approximate backtranslation: The Sun is a giant sphere of incandescent gases. It supplies the Earth with light and heat)

24) Camels live in the desert (under the small image of two camels with one hump) (*Our World*, p. 13)

24a) I dromedari vivono nel deserto (*Il nostro mondo*, p.13)

24b) (Approximate backtranslation: Dromedaries live in the desert)

In 23a the adjective *incandescenti* (*incandescent*) was used instead of *incredibly hot* to emphasise the colour rather than the temperature of the gases, probably inspired by the bright image in question. In 24a a more precise rendering is given, in line with what is proposed on the visual level.

6.Wrap-up and concluding remarks

Overall, the intralingual analysis highlighted different types of interaction between semiotic codes depending on the age of the target readership of the books in question, in line with Moya-Guijarro (2014). The books addressed to older children displayed a more prominent role played by the verbal component and wordplay, the presence of framed images, naturalistic and eclectic styles, a correlated higher degree of intermodal resonance on the interactional/interactive level. At the same time, the interlingual investigation confirmed several of the translation strategies emerged from previous research on travel guidebooks for children. Such strategies brought about a number of consequences both from intercultural and multimodal points of view.

The Italian target texts tended to be less direct, less involving and expressive than the original English texts, more specific in terminology, more formal and accurate in their verbiage, especially the ones addressed to pre-schoolers and middle grade readers. As communicative strategies are here believed to be influenced by cultural orientations, the majority of the preferences above appear both to depend on and to confirm the association of Italian with a High Context Culture as opposed to the English association with a Low

Context one.⁴ From a multimodal perspective, the reduced use of verbal markers of engagement in translation inevitably brought about an alteration of word-image relations on the interpersonal/interactive level, with a lower degree of intermodal resonance in the target texts, in which interactivity was guaranteed almost only by visuals.

Furthermore, the frequent fronting of spatial information at sentence level – in the book for junior and middle grade readers in particular – reinforced the familiarity of the setting, which was indeed the main topic of the book, a trend which complies with the higher flexibility of Italian as far as word order is concerned (Pierini, 2012), which allows for the thematization of circumstantial information by proposing it as “given” at sentence level⁵. This, however, brought about the alteration of the word-image interface of the English source text, where the setting was more often thematised primarily via images.

More work on data from different texts is required to make stronger generalisations, also covering comparable corpora comprising authentic English and authentic Italian texts, and from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Despite its limitations, the present account has nevertheless shown the subtle consequences of intralingual and interlingual mediation for the books under observation, due to linguistic and cultural preferences of various types. Furthermore, target multimodal texts may assume a different and partly unexpected profile via translation, as the translated verbal resources establish new multimodal configurations in the target context. This is something which we need to be aware of and to keep under control in the attempt to develop an analytical framework that is more sensitive 1) to intersemiotic mediation, i.e. the negotiation of all the relevant semiotic resources involved and their reciprocal relations across lingua-cultural systems, and 2) to the correlated final impact of texts on reception, while also complying with the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the target system. Such an intersemiotic framework can hopefully be of greater use in pedagogy and in the pre-translation text analysis of diverse products, with their multimodal features, in a way that is appropriate to the multimedia world of 21st century children.

REFERENCES

Adami, E. and Ramos Pinto, S. (2020) ‘Meaning-(re)making in a world of untranslated signs: Towards a Research Agenda on Multimodality, Culture and Translation in Boria’, M.,

⁴ In high-context cultures, where in-group dynamics carry a lot of weight, non-verbal aspects of communication, such as facial expressions, body language and tone, are particularly important for the communication of the message. This contrasts with the more individualistic low-context cultures, where people verbalise in a more direct explicit way (see Hall 1990; Hofstede 1991, 2001; Katan 2006; Manca 2012, 2017). Also, in a high-context culture, the form in which the message is given is as important as the message itself. Hence, texts tend to present information in large chunks and long sentences, with a formal and indirect style. By contrast, in low-context cultures, the information encoded tends to be more important than the form used to encode it, texts tend to be shorter and simpler, and communication tends to be direct and rather informal (Cappelli and Masi 2019: 127).

⁵ On the frequent fronting of temporal information in Italian sentences, see Faini (2004: 61).

- Carreres, Á., Noriega-Sánchez, M., Tomalin, M., (eds.) *Beyond Words: Translation and Multimodality*. London: Routledge.
- Bruti, S. and Manca, E. (2019) 'The popularization of environmental issues in children magazines: A cross-cultural corpus analysis' in Ji, M. (ed.) *Translating and Communicating Environmental Cultures*. London: Routledge, pp. 183-201.
- Calsamiglia, H. and Van Dijk, T. A. (2004) 'Popularization Discourse and Knowledge about the Genome', *Discourse and Society* 15(4), pp.369-389.
- Cappelli, G. and Masi, S. (2019) 'Knowledge dissemination through tourist guidebooks: Popularization strategies in English and Italian guidebooks for adults and for children' in Bondi, M., Cacchiani, S. Cavalieri S. (eds) *Communicating Specialized knowledge: Old Genres and New Media*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 124-161.
- Diani, G. and Sezzi, A. (2019) 'The EU for children: A cross-linguistic study of web-mediated & dissemination' in Manca, E., Maci S., Sala, M. (eds.) *Representing and Redefining Specialised Knowledge: Variety in LSP*. Bergamo: CERLIS Series, pp. 203-223.
- Faini, P. (2004) *Tradurre. Manuale teorico e pratico*. Roma: Carocci.
- Goga, N. (2020) 'Verbal and visual informational strategies in non-fiction books awarded and mentioned by the Bologna Ragazzi Award 2009-2019' in Grilli, G. (ed.) *Non-fiction picturebooks. Sharing knowledge as an Aesthetic Experience*. Pisa: ETS, pp. 51-67.
- Gotti, M. (1996) 'Il linguaggio della divulgazione: problematiche di traduzione interlinguistica' in Cortese, G. (ed.) *Tradurre i linguaggi settoriali*. Torino: Edizioni Libreria Cortina, pp. 217-235.
- Gotti, M. (2013) 'The analysis of popularization discourse: conceptual changes and methodological evolution' in Kermas, S., Christiansen, T. W. (eds.) *The Popularization of Specialized Discourse and Knowledge across Communities and Cultures*. Bari: Edipuglia, pp. 9-32.
- Grilli, G. (2020) *Non-fiction picturebooks. Sharing knowledge as an Aesthetic Experience*, Pisa: ETS.
- Hall, E. (1990) *Understanding Cultural Differences, Germans, French and Americans*. Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1979) 'Modes of meaning and modes of expression: types of grammatical structure and their determination by different semantic functions' in Allerton, D.J., Carney, E., Holdcroft, D. (eds.) *Function and Context in Linguistic Analysis: A Festschrift for William Haas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 57-79.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2009) *Systemic Functional Grammar: A First Step into Theory*. Beijing, China: Higher Education Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1991) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (2001) *Culture's Consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Katan, D. (2006) 'It's a question of life or death: Cultural differences in advertising private pensions' in Vasta, N. (ed.), *Forms of promotion: Texts, contexts and cultures*. Bologna: Patron Editore, pp. 55-80.

- Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading Images – The Grammar of Visual Design*. Second ed. London: Routledge.
- Mallet, M. (2004) 'Children's information texts' in Hunt P. (ed.) *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London: Routledge, pp. 622-630.
- Manca, E. (2012) 'Translating the Language of Tourism across Cultures: From Functionally Complete Units of Meaning to Cultural Equivalence', *Textus XXV 1*, pp. 51-68.
- Manca, E. (2017) 'Verbal techniques of the language of tourism across cultures: an analysis of five official tourist websites' in Bielenia-Grajewska, M., Cortés de los Ríos, M. E. (eds.) *Innovative Perspectives on Tourism Discourse*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, pp. 91-110.
- Moya-Guijarro, A. J. (2014) *A Multimodal Analysis of Picturebooks for Children. A Systemic Functional Study*. London: Equinox.
- Myers, G. (2003) 'Discourse studies of scientific popularization: questioning the boundaries', *Discourse Studies 5(2)*, pp. 265-279.
- Painter, C., Martin, J.R., Unsworth, L. (2013) *Reading Visual Narratives. Image Analysis of Children's Picturebooks*. Sheffield, Bristol: Equinox.
- Pierini, P. (2012) *Comparing Italian and English. An Introduction*. Roma: ARACNE Editrice.
- Sezzi, A. (2017) 'History is Horrible. Especially in Schools: Remediating History Books for children in Translation' in Canepari, M., Mansfield, G., Poppi, F. (eds.) *The Many Facets of Remediation in Language Studies*. LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, pp.447-466.
- Von Merveldt, N. (2018) 'Informational Picturebooks' in Kümmerling-Meibauer, B. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 231-245.