Embodied and experiential immersion into transculturality: learning Italian thorough ethnography and translation

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1. Introduction

Published in 2019 by a pool of UK researchers at the intersection of Modern Languages and ethnography[1], the article 'Ethnography and Modern Languages' remains inspirational and forward-looking. It illustrates the transformative potential of ethnographic research within Modern Languages as a multidiscipline by outlining interdisciplinary outcomes and benefits for present and future linguists, researchers and undergraduate curricula. Ethnographic theories and methods have informed approaches to the practice of language teaching and learning for decades, but, as these researchers claim, they should be applied more consciously and fully by Modern Languages educators and students. Practising ethnography in Modern Languages teaching and learning allows the discipline to broaden its horizons by encompassing the observation and the study of linguistic and cultural co-creations beyond "forms of print" and within "more ephemeral forms of performance which require us to travel to them" (Wells et al. 2019: 6). Intended as "participatory and collaborative models of engagement" with a real-life scenario (Wells et al., 2019: 1), ethnography enables students and researchers to interact with actors and agents of linguistic and cultural co-production within, outside or at the geopolitical margins of national identity and communities. It also enables them to tap into and replicate modes of individual and group negotiation of meaning and performance while

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[1] The new Subject Benchmarking Statement (2022) refers to the discipline as 'Languages, Cultures and Societies' rather than 'Modern Languages', which makes the need for ethnographic work even clearer.

refining their sensitivity to cultural diversity, polylingual encounters, transcultural interactions and, above all, experiential and embodied learning experiences (Wells et al., 2019: 3).

Wells et al. (2019: 3-4) maintain that the British Year Abroad programme, whereby Modern Languages students spend one year of their degree working abroad or studying at a partner institution in a country other than the UK, is a perfect example. While improving their language skills, undergraduate students have the opportunity to practice "emplaced and embodied forms of language learning which are less easily replicated in the student's home context" (Wells et al., 2019: 3–4). However, despite its significance, Year Abroad programmes in British institutions are not the only 'perfect' example of the extent to which ethnographic immersions in the country of study can enrich and enhance students' experiential learning. For instance, Wells et al. (2019) mention translation as a way of practising language and cultural encounters. However, despite this, they do not offer specific examples of it or of how curricular activities could benefit from it.

The present chapter aims to offer an example of how translation and ethnography can be practiced within and outside the classroom, while drawing on an innovative and pioneering optional course as a case study. The course, designed to deepen University of Exeter students' knowledge of languages, among which Italian, and cultural reality, will be used here to reflect on how translation and ethnography could be incorporated in the classroom. Following Wells et al.'s (2019) recommendations, this chapter also aims to bring to the fore the strengths of translation as a method and framework in embodied and experiential learning and language acquisition. Finally, it aims to respond to the call to afford Modern Languages greater visibility as an interdisciplinary subject and platform used to heighten students' employability skills. As Wells et al. (2019: 7) maintain, "Modern Languages has remained largely invisible and seemingly failed to capitalize on the opportunity to share our unique expertise on the subjects of working across multiple languages in the analysis of cultural texts and materials". A way out of invisibility would be, I believe, to empower practices of translation and reflections upon translation in Higher Education. Therefore, the results discussed below seek to offer an insight into practices of translation performed by students-ethnographers and advice on how Higher Education institutions and educators could capitalize on them. These capitalizations would encourage the 'ethnographic turn' in Modern Languages acquisition, as a complement or supplement of Study Abroad programmes. Within this framework, Italian Studies is seen as a subdiscipline in constant dialogue with and informed by Modern Languages as a whole. A reflection on the aims and essence of Italian Studies abroad can be found in the conclusive remarks.

2. Translation and ethnography: a composite, long-standing interrelationship

Translation Studies and ethnography have long shared common research methods, objects of study, frameworks and goals (Buzelin, 2022). As Helene Buzelin maintains, translation has appropriated ethnography as a methodology to "document and analyse translation and interpreting events in context" and "to solve translation problems" (2022: 32). Thanks to its polymorphic and empirical nature, ethnography has lent itself to various applications and research methodologies, including translation. As early as 1945, American linguist Eugene Nida, for example, proposed biblical translations based on a dynamic-equivalence theory designed to respond to the cultural needs of specific audiences, audiences who had to be ethnographically observed and framed (Wolf,

2002: 185; Buzelin, 2022: 32; see also Gentzler, 2001: 32-34; Munday, 2016: 62–70). On the other hand, translation has offered ethnography food for thought, warranting serious consideration for the work and research carried out by cultural anthropologists in multilingual and multicultural settings (Wolf 2002; Buzelin, 2022). Translation has also been used by cultural anthropologists to reflect on their linguistic experiences and on how translation, interpreting and intercultural mediation can be benefitted from in ethnographic research (Wells et al., 2019: 7).

Translation Studies as a discipline has been slow in adopting ethnographic research and methodologies, despite initial attempts carried out by some of the fathers of the discipline (see Nida above). As Buzelin (2022) explains, the reduced pace was tied to a particular moment in the development of Translation Studies, namely the implementation of descriptive approaches to translation by Israeli translation scholar Gigeon Toury. These approaches were imbued with positivistic biases and were based on scientific, systematic and objective observation of reality in translation (Buzelin, 2022; see also Munday 2016: 174–185). Within it, not much space was left to ethnography, including subjective and intersubjective approaches to cultural translation. Today, and especially after the 'sociological turn' in Translation Studies aimed to study translation as a network of agents and agencies responsible for the production, reception and consumption of translation (Wolf & Fukari, 2007; Buzelin & Baraldi, 2016), ethnography has gained considerable ground in translation (Buzelin, 2022: 40).

Prominent Translation Studies scholars have devoted attention to the intersections between translation and ethnography, devising practical strategies and methods aimed at assisting practitioners and researchers in the study of translation from an experiential and subjective standpoint (Wolf, 2002; Hubscher-Davidson, 2011; Saldanha & O'Brien 2013). In particular, Michaela Wolf (2002) and Séverine Hubscher-Davidson (2011) have proved to be useful in pushing the boundaries of ethnography in translation, by placing special emphasis on the intersubjective construction of cultural translation and the significance of intersubjective reflection upon it. Even if they situate their analysis of the interlinks between ethnography and translation within different theoretical and pragmatic stances – whereas the discussion of the former is based on translation products and the making of cultures through translation, the discussion of the latter is based on translation processes and specifically Think Aloud Protocols (TAPs) and interview-TAPS – their reflections are useful in discussing specific approaches to embodied and experiential teaching and learning. In particular, the theoretical underpinnings outlined by Wolf (2002) and Hubscher-Davidson (2011) have framed the design of a fourth-year undergraduate course in Modern Languages at the University of Exeter. These underpinnings will be used below to shed light on the innovative aspects of this course whose strengths lie at the intersection between translation and ethnography in Modern Languages acquisition. For the purpose of this volume, special attention will be devoted to the acquisition of Italian language and the refinement of the students' knowledge of Italian culture and identity.

3. Translation and ethnography: teaching and learning migratory contexts

Driven by the need to enable students to *feel* what it means to speak a second language and to use their senses, bodies and brains to appreciate the usefulness of intersubjective negotiations between multilingual and multicultural speakers, University of Exeter colleagues and I have designed and refined 'Transcultural Devon', a fourth-year

module in the Department of Languages, Cultures and Visual Studies. The module, which aims to collect stories of migration to Exeter, stems from two initial projects, the first called 'Italians in Exeter' and the second 'Transcultural Devon', carried out by Danielle Hipkins, Professor of Italian Studies and Film, Alice Farris, Lecturer in Italian, and Valentina Todino, Italian Cultural Association Event Coordinator and Devon Development Education Cultural Champion at Exeter. Hipkins suggested the project become a Modern Languages and Cultures 'content' module in 2020, drawing on the expertise of Alice Farris, who led its integration into the curriculum with funding from the Exeter Education Incubator, Susana Afonso, Senior Lecturer in Portuguese with research interests in language and self-narratives of migration, David Salas, an internationally award-winning filmmaker and video producer, and Eliana Maestri, Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies, researching the interlinks between migration and translation. The module continues to benefit from the contribution offered by Valentina Todino, who acts as Community Liaison Officer to provide precious links with the Devon community, share valuable examples of ethnographic research and guarantee the success of the module. In order to complete this module, students are required to interview members of the migrant community in Devon via Zoom in their first language (including Italian),[2] video-record their interviews, subtitle their recorded video-interview in English, and upload their subtitled interviews to our 'Transcultural Devon' Digital Archive website bearing testimony to the migration to Devon (https://transculturaldevon.exeter.ac.uk/)[3]. As the website claims, the "videos offer the opportunity to observe how a personal story is told, and how it is shaped or influenced by the way we translate ourselves from one culture to another". In addition to this, interviews are conducted "in each person's mother tongue to facilitate the expression of personal feelings and recognize polylingual Devon" (*Ibid.*). As demonstrated by the recordings that populate the abovementioned website, not only do the interviews show the students' engagement with the migrant community in Devon in the first languages (other than English) spoken by its members, but they also demonstrate the development of their understanding of migration to Devon and the composite, transcultural nature of language communities in the UK.

As implied by the module aims and objectives, undergraduate students are required to act as linguists as well as ethnographers interacting with and collecting qualitative data from selected members of the local community. In other words, their acts are informed by the distinctive features of ethnography, which, as summarized by Saldanha and O'Brien, include the "'engagement with the object of study – going into the field – and a willingness to learn from those who inhabit the culture' (Koskinen, 2008: 37) as well as a focus on the researcher's personal involvement with the data" (quoted in Buzelin, 2022: 39). Acting as ethnographers, the students develop links with the local

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[2] It should be noted that different groups of students interview different groups of migrants every academic year.

[3] When the module was created, students chose to record their interviews using audio-recorders or video cameras. During the Covid-19 pandemic, in-person interviews were not allowed and students were required to interact with interviewees only via Zoom. During the period of transition to a post-Covid-19 pandemic, online activities (such as students' interviews) were maintained in place as safe measures. This chapter has been written in the midst of hybrid approaches to teaching and learning (allowing combinations of in-person and online activities). Online interviews have been maintained because they are less time-consuming and practical. They allow students to establish good working relations with interviewees, while maintaining safety and the comfort of everyone's personal space. They also allow students to video-record their interviews using digital devices, which are more efficient to use than video cameras (often requiring training). Comparing the effectiveness of in-person ethnography *versus* virtual ethnography is beyond the scope of this study. For more information regarding virtual and hybrid ethnographies, see Liz Przybylski (2021)

community in Devon, raise awareness of key issues surrounding migration across the wider student community and online and reflect on the dynamics of writing history through the production of a historical video-archive. In addition to this, acting as ethnographers, the students are required not only to engage with the Other (the migrant at the periphery of culture and society) in their source languages but also to subtitle their source languages into English, as the target language of the Transcultural Devon video-archive. As Hubscher-Davidson maintains: "They [ethnographers] represent society and cultures through the act of writing, thereby performing and constructing ethnography through translation processes" (2011: 3). Sensitive to the production and consumption of cultures outside national borders, students are exposed to personal stories of migration and the importance of retaining their distinctiveness and uniqueness. The need to subtitle videos obliges students to think more thoroughly about the nuances of specific word choices, i.e. language in context. This need encourages students to do justice to the stories and, more generally, to contribute to the advancement of British culture and society. Presentations, currently being given in local secondary schools in Devon, on the value of Transcultural Devon showcase not only the students' linguistic abilities but their empathic skills in teasing out the migrants' solidarity and positive involvement with the local community. Finally, the online publication of the interviews offers students the unique opportunity to demonstrate their acquired language skills and cultural competences to the public, generating a lasting legacy for future students and providing a model for collaboration and memory.

Links between translation and migration have been discussed at length by various Translation Studies scholars, among whom Michaela Wolf (2012), Michael Cronin (2003; 2009; 2013) and Loredana Polezzi (2006; 2009; 2012). In particular, as Polezzi argues, the etymology of 'translation' captures and reveals, at the same time, aspects of mobility and movement encapsulated and generated by the very act of translation, unveiling translation as "the movement or transfer of objects and people across space" as well as "a form of transportation or appropriation of the foreign within the language and culture of the nation" (2009: 172). Migratory contexts, such as Devon, bring about, as Paul Bandia puts it, "intersection or encounter between disparate cultures" (2014: 273). Devon, a British county situated in the South West of the United Kingdom, hosts migrants from European and non-European countries, fostering the interaction between and among a diversity of languages and communities whose centres and cultural associations are right in the heart of the region: Exeter. Due to the cultural and linguistic pluralism characterizing, solely from a touristic perspective, one of the most attractive regions in the UK, the Devon migrant communities depend heavily on translation and, in particular, self-translation expressing themselves in English as their 'second' language. In light of this, it was deemed important to develop a project and a module that could enable Higher Education students to use their language skills and become more knowledgeable about the demographic and linguistic complexity of the South West of England. The project and the module also wanted to counteract the need for migrants to always express themselves in a second language, giving them the chance to present themselves in the language with which they are most comfortable and familiar.

According to the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford (https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk), which has released online a wide-ranging demographic analysis of the South West based on the 2011 UK census, the racial composition and complexity of the South West, including Devon, remains undoubtedly attractive. The South West has "one of the smallest foreign-born populations of any of the ten regions of England and Wales" (Ibid.) but, despite this, it has attracted particular

attention due to a population increment by 62 per cent between 2001 and 2011. The increment, unevenly spread from a geographical viewpoint, has affected such areas as Bristol and Bournemouth, which have seen "the foreign-born population increase by more than 100 per cent" (Ibid.). The number of foreign-born residents in the South West, as illustrated by the Migration Observatory website, has continued to grow, reaching in 2017 "a total of 513,000 people born in other countries", namely "an estimated 9.4% of the South West's population of 5,448,000" (Ibid.). Italy continues to remain among the top ten countries of origin for the UK, and the South West hosts 2 per cent of the UK's Italian-born residents. Many of these Italian migrants display a strong sense of national identity, cherishing, as our Transcultural Devon website bears testimony, their 'foreign' language skills. They apply what Cronin would call "translator-nomad" strategies – typical of travellers (Cronin 2013: 194) – resisting the "homogeneity" of languages and displaying "different accents, lexical variations, dissimilar patterns of language usage" along with "lexical exoticisms and the invocation of translation as intertextual presence" (Cronin 2013: 195). While refining the Transcultural Devon project, it was deemed imperative to give Italian language students the opportunity to devote time, energy and attention to the linguistic and cultural exploration of 'transcultural Italies' and Italian communities, communities scattered around Great Britain and, as *Transnational Italian Studies* also discusses, the globe.

4. Translation and ethnography: towards an embodied and experiential immersion in language acquisition

As one of our fourth-year Italian language students states: "There is no doubt that the Transcultural Devon module gave me the chance to use theories of applied linguistics and translation, that are studied on the compulsory advanced language modules, in a context that is real and meaningful"[4].Therefore, what translation strategies do students display and enact? What does it mean for them to do ethnography in/and translation? And, specifically, what do they discover about Italy? What heightens their understanding of Italy outside of Italy? I will answer these questions by analysing some of the video-interviews that populate our Transcultural Devon video-archive published online. The following analysis aims to shed light on the strengths of this project as well as its innovative aspects, in the hope that it can offer educators new ideas and strategies for teaching Italian in a contextual and meaningful environment.

The first discovery that the Transcultural Devon project allows students to make is related to the asymmetries of power relations between cultural stances. Wolf, for instance, states that "it should be stressed in this context that ethnography as well as translation are inevitably positioned between systems of meaning which are marked by power relations" (2002: 183). "Relat[ing] this *dépaysement* through the eyes of different migrants with stories that should be told to the greater public"[5] encourages in-class reflection on the position of minorities in the world, including Italian migrants. It also encourages in-class reflection on the active use of linguistic choices to redress power imbalances or address "culturally constructed senses of belonging"[6] with care. Students, who, throughout the module, become familiar with Wolf (2002), Hubscher-Davidson (2011) and Shu-Hsin Chen (2011), learn that the "interviewer is more likely to have more

[4] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022.
[5] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022, italics in original.
[6] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022.

power than the interviewee" (Chen, 2011: 120) and that, in any face-to-face communication, power means manipulation, control and influence. Being in a teaching and learning environment, they become mindful of the fact that their aim for good grades or their fear of failure could lead them sub/consciously to exercise more or less power over their interviewees. They also learn that linguistic imperfections in the practice of a second language are not symptoms of weakness to be ashamed of but signs of strength as "being a non-native interviewer [...] makes it easier to elicit information from native interviewees" (Chen, 2011: 120). They therefore learn to experience their linguistic limitations as an advantage and a golden opportunity to devise suitable strategies of data collection and production in ethnographic research (Chen, 211: 132). Their enacted experiential learning leads them to embrace alterity, disempowered by socio-cultural normative discourses and dynamics including old-fashioned ways of conducting ethnographic research (Buzelin, 2022; Wolf, 2002: 184). The power they would usually have as the British native is taken away and balanced out by them being non-native speakers of the language used for the interview. Speaking the language of their interviewees enables students to overthrow binary oppositions and "feel equally one of many people that have become culturally adopted and accepted in and outside of Italy [and] as someone *touched* by Italy"[7].

Students are encouraged to conduct semi-structured interviews despite and because of their linguistic limitations. Syntax and registers are explored fluently and, dynamically, serving as tools to rephrase or retranslate information about key linguistic and cultural concepts to be grasped in conversation. What could be seen as a cultural gap or, simply, a doubt in conversation triggers the desire to seek explanations or retranslations for the sake of 'harmony' (Chen, 2011: 126) or empathy, which allow for the refinement of students' linguistic skills. Due to limitations of space, the interviews discussed below represent a limited – even if enlightening – set of examples. More can be found by consulting the Transcultural Devon website, which hosts new video-recordings continually. The student interviewing Valentina (who migrated to Devon in 2012 from the North-East of Italy, https://transculturaldevon.exeter.ac.uk/), for example, displays excellent translation skills which enable her to ask questions or rephrase statements when needed. For example, the student corrects her translated Italian with no hesitation, rewording sections of her questions and stressing, in one instance, the last vowel ending the adjective 'semplici' to mark her awareness of correct gender agreements: "Il fatto che non sei più legata all'Italia ti ha reso le cose più semplice ... o più semplici" (20:00 mins). The student also shows excellent retranslation techniques not only when she corrects linguistic errors, but also when she tries to enhance cohesion in conversation, clarifying possible misunderstandings. While discussing the reasons for Valentina's moving to Devon, the student reiterates, summarizes and retranslates Valentina's argument well before asking her following question: "È vero, Exeter è una piccola città ma bellissima ma per tante persone che si trasferiscono in Inghilterra la scelta più ovvia, come hai detto tu, è Londra o Manchester" (14:21-14:40 mins). This well-phrased observation, however, is followed by a faulty question (probably due to the fact that more complex syntactic structures – for example comparatives – should have been used) which makes the student's information-seeking probe unclear: "Era più difficile che Exeter è una città piccola, è una piccola città?" (14:40-14:51 mins). The variation of the position of the adjective 'piccola' hints at a possible desire to rephrase or expand the student's question beyond its limitations, which remain apparent. The student is in fact able to reply to the

interviewee's need for clarification ("In termini di lavoro o di integrazione?" [14:52-14:59 mins]) with confidence, linking the information offered previously by the interviewee and the current one in a cohesive manner: "Le due" (minute 15:00).

Semi-structured interviews are conducted without the use of prearranged scripts or questions, but with the freedom for the interviewer to adapt and respond to the interviewee's reactions and sensorial observations. Linguistic interaction, whose major components are improvisation and the reading of corporeal gestures, thus gains ground establishing itself as the key mode of communication. In these instances, translations happen across sensory borders, enriching the student's experiential learning event. When Valentina, for example, explains the challenges that the Italian job market poses, she accompanies her statement ("La situazione lavorativa in Italia è molto difficile. [...] Anche volendo trovare un lavoro normale ... non si trova" [23:22-23:34 mins]) with a typical Italian gesture shaking her thumb and index finger up in the air. Seeing the lack of appropriate response from the student, Valentina translates her gesture into words, an interlingual translation, into English, of her bodily posture: "This means: you can't find it... there's no luck" (23:36-23:40 mins). Words and languages fluctuate from Italian to English and vice versa[8] and oscillate between the physical and the verbal domain, adding complexity to the meaning-making exercise between Valentina and the Exeter student. Photographs are shown as objects of cultural memory (5:06 mins), "function[ing] metonymically to afford presence to a home experience in a distant place" (Burns, 2020: 182). They elicit the imagination – as interviews are conducted online – of a tactile and affective dimension key to ethnographic research (Hubscher-Davidson, 2011: 2), stimulating the student's visual experience and sustaining the pace of the ethnographic interview. Like Valentina, participants are often asked to bring to their interview meaningful objects that would serve as a prompt and metaphor of feelings and emotions attached to their migration experience. While securing a sensory experience, objects contribute to the transcending of possible barriers erected by the computer screen. In other words, they contribute to what Koskinen calls "contextualised and situated observing" (quoted in Hubsher-Davidson, 2011: 5), which is an essential practice in ethnographic research. In this light, video-interviews, therefore, do not represent a limitation to ethnographic fieldwork, but a potential. They become a means to "better tap less tangible aspects of the translation process, such as visualisations or emotional and intuitive behaviours", to use Hubscher-Davidson's words (2011: 2).

When the conversation pertains exclusively to verbalization, code-switching and translanguaging performed by the interviewee add an extra layer of complexity to Valentina's interlingual translations. Valentina often punctuates her explanations in Italian by short and punchy phrases in English. These phrases supplement Italian expressions, such as 'fare un catch up' or 'work-in-progress', translate interlingually what Valentina expresses in Italian, such as 'la vita di paese' along with 'village life' or 'oddio' along with 'God forbid', complementing her argument with a plurality of languages. Unsurprisingly, the student does not react to any of them. She nods by welcoming Valentina's urge to translate, retranslate and back translate, in and out of English as well as in and out of Italian. In short, this video-interview is testament to the fact that ethnography, namely the required core activity of the Transcultural Devon project and module, helps students appreciate the fluidity of languages and the unavoidable construction of identity and culture through translation. Translation is not an easy task here. It does not entail any 'direct' rendering of messages from a language A into a

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[8] Interviewees do not often switch to English, but they sometimes do, demonstrating the rich linguistic repertoires of the speakers.

language B, by falling back on idealistic or untenable symmetries between systems of sings and symbols. It is instead a multidirectional transfer of images, meanings, values, beliefs, intentions and emotions across boundaries-on-the-move, shifting continuously negotiations of meaning and the centres of culture. As eloquently explained by Polezzi quoting Asad:

> If we assume that the translator/ethnographer can treat an entire culture as a self-contained text and "translate" it by "matching written sentences in two languages, such that the second set of sentences becomes the 'real meaning' of the first", then the results of that translation process will only reinforce unequal relationships of power between those who translate and those who are translated. (2012: 104)

What other translation strategies do students learn? How do they engage with in-class discussions pertaining to Italian culture, language acquisition and knowledge production? By default, the Devon-based Italians interviewed by the students are prismatic characters to tap into: polyglots travelling between languages and cultures in a permanent flux of self-translation and subverting hierarchies of source texts and target texts. Within these contexts, notions of fidelity and equivalence in translation are questioned, overthrown and, eventually, blown apart, making video-subtitling challenging (even if stimulating). Students learn that translation does not happen between monolingual realms, but rather within monolingual realms as Meylaerts teaches them (2013). How do students subtitle the co-presence of two or more languages in conversation? Do they understand their significance? Do they want to disclose to their audience (the viewers of the Transcultural Devon website) the linguistic complexity constituting the beauty and the foundation of these multicultural speakers' language abilities? As educators, we encourage them to give visibility, when possible, to the linguistic plurality that characterizes these instances of transcultural Italies and that enriches the linguistic landscape of such a small South West region of England. We encourage them to challenge viewers' expectations and translation 'norms' (Wolf, 2002), running counter to national requirements of social and linguistic cohesion and assimilation into one language, one nation and one culture. As Bandia maintains: "Migrants are expected to negate or minimize their own history in order to fit better into the sociohistorical context of the host country in a way evocative of an ethics of domesticating or assimilationist translation" (2014: 275). Bandia raises students' awareness of the ideological risks of subtitling interviewees' speeches into a homogenizing, standardizing and normalizing English.

Students' reflections on foreignizing *versus* domesticating strategies of translation and subtiling are also informed by Cronin's recommendations: "In the context of powerful, hegemonic cultures to advocate a foreignizing, refractory or abusive approach to translation could be seen as a subversive, progressive practice which undermines the homogenizing pretensions of the dominant languages and cultures" (Cronin, 2009: 170). Cronin's recommendations are often applied to the translation of Italian speakers that draw from multiple linguistic repertoires (dialect and regional Italian), such as Claudia who left Florence for Exeter more than 7 years ago. This justifies why Claudia's playful use of the Italian regional adjective 'sudicio' to describe her moka coffee pot is not 'formally' translated or domesticated in her video-interview (minute 26:06), but retained and framed by inverted commas. The Italian adjective is also preceded by the English 'a

bit dirty' and then explained/translated by the student's added comment 'as we say in Florence…'. This polylingual form of writing and translating aims to provide special value to an Italian object that, as Claudia says, is not just a cliché, being one of the most popular Italian icons, but the symbol of her cultural memories of migration. It also aims to introduce Anglophone viewers to Claudia's rich linguistic repertoire and multiple regional, national and international linguistic identities, which, as she maintains, are situated partially here (Devon) and partially there (Italy and the specificity of her region) (22:14 mins). Finally, it aims to translate into words Claudia's resistance to Brexit and her disappointment from an unexpected 'low blow' (minute 15), which has shaken her sense of belonging to the UK. In this light, the student's foreignizing strategy of translation aligns with Cronin's interpretation of translation as a form of resistance:

> For political or other reasons speakers of minority languages may have a perfectly good knowledge of a dominant language (Catalans knowing Spanish) but still insist on translation from and into that language. Translation in this instance is not about making communication possible but about establishing identity or enacting a form of resistance to the claims of the hegemonic language. (2009: 171)

Claudia's interview is used in class as a prompt for further discussion and reflection. In it, students see an attempt to maximize the singularity of the participant's voice as well as that of the student-interviewer.

5. Translation and ethnography in the classroom as the Third Space

As discussed above, translation takes place at various levels in the Transcultural Devon project. Students are exposed to an array of emotions, values and beliefs translated into words by the interviewees and retranslated into subtitles by the students. Because of this, students are given the space and time to co-reflect on their own emotions and affective engagement with the Other. As Hubscher-Davidson claims: "It can be a challenging task to shed light on often confusing, contradictory or seemingly nonsensical data" (2011: 5). No immediate answer can be produced and for that, they, once again, act as 'professional' ethnographers. Wolf reminds us of Margaret Mead's argument in favour of lengthy reflections in anthropology: "I should like to be able to interpose between my statement and the reader's consideration of that statement a *pause*, a realization not of what authoritative right I have to make the statement I make, but instead of how it was arrived at, of what the anthropological process is" (2002: 187, my italics). Time and reflexivity are therefore factored into the classroom, in line with ethnographic requirements, as Hubscher-Davidson explains: "Ethnography recognizes the importance of reflexivity and the researcher's role as participant in the research process" (2011: 7). Following Hubscher-Davidson's recommendations, the student-researcher's reflection on the study "forms part of the collected data and is an integral part of the analytical process" (2011: 7).

Explorations of the data and the student's intersubjective relation with them take place both in students' reflective written statements and in the classroom. The majority of the module classes and workshops are designed to reflect on translation. Students express the need to be faithful to their data, especially in subtitling, demonstrating respect

for their interviewees' values and displaying ethical responsibilities towards their Anglophone audience (see Pym, 2012). They are undoubtedly driven by the ambition to obtain a good mark and impress their assessors, but they are also motivated by genuine ethical principles. Students often problematize subtitling techniques which, in order to comply with audio-visual constraints, require summarizations or crystallizations of messages, by falling back on "omission or simplification"[9]. Students question the practicality and the effectiveness of subtitling techniques or 'etiquette' at the expense of the interviewees' authenticity and voice. They want "to balance the demands of linguistic and emotional implications of conveying an accurate transcript of what the interviewee offered in the medium of" their first language[10]. Through subtitling, students experience one of the most prominent challenges met by translation and ethnography: "The persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience" (Clifford quoted in Wolf, 2022: 185). Wolf's assertion that "Meanings are no longer perceived as being roughly the same across different cultures, but as something to be represented in codes and symbols linked to the translator's and the ethnographer's subjectivity and background" (2002: 185) acquires weight in language acquisition classes such as Transcultural Devon. Critical thinking is applied by students on the module who enrich their language acquisition by raising crucial questions. They concur with Husbsher-Davidson who claims that "institutional patterns of behaviour become practices that organize discourse, and convert it into another discourse during which the participant loses his [sic] voice" (2011: 9).

The classroom becomes a valuable forum hosting students' reflections on the interpretation of the ethnographic data and strategies of translation. It can be equated to Wolf's and Shirley Jordan's appropriation of Homi Bhabha's Third Space, namely a fertile in-between space where constant linguistic negotiations are at play. Wolf (2002) and Jordan (2002) give prominence to a space that is neither of the Other nor the Self, but rather an in-between space overflowing with infinite possibilities, combinations and interaction, "the site of the encounter between different cultures" (Wolf, 2002: 188). "This negotiation" – Wolf (2002: 189) continues– "has been interpreted as a synonym for translation, inasmuch as the effort to translate demands the negotiation of cultural contradictions and misapprehension". In the classroom, students assess, evaluate, adapt, adopt and/or discard various translation solutions enhancing its in-betweenness and liminality in a productive way. These negotiations are possible not only because they are required to subtitle European or non-European languages interviews into English, but also because they are required to attend non-language specific classes and workshops, where a plurality of languages and cultures are at work. Linguistic performances are compared, confronted and continuously translated in and out of English as well as between any language combination. Latin and non-Latin languages are compared and specific applications are contextually explained so that students learn from one another moving from one linguistic domain to the other in a fluid way. An issue which is frequently raised in the classroom relates to how interviewers address their interviewees, in terms of register and style. Students of Italian discuss various grammatical scenarios (the Lei form or the subjunctive used as imperative) which support the formality and the respect paid to interviewees. In this context, translation is not just a pedagogical exercise to facilitate students' language acquisition. It becomes 'the' language that students use to communicate and reflect. Thus, centre stage is afforded to translation as well as moments

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[9] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022.
[10] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022.

of translation. These precious moments raise students' awareness of translation as a visible practice and of translators as agents of change and cultural negotiation.

6. Conclusion

This chapter presents the positive outcomes of a project and an undergraduate experimental module that place intercultural contacts and negotiations at the centre of the learning and teaching experience. It gives prominence to the learning objectives of a module that excites students and educators at the University of Exeter. Following in the footsteps of Wells et al., Transcultural Devon draws on the fruitful interplay between translation and ethnography to welcome alterity in the classroom and on the screen. It also tries to expand and support ideas provided by the Subject Benchmarking Statement, which while changing the phrasing from 'Year Abroad' to 'immersive placement' (2022: 15) or 'immersive learning' (2022: 3-4), is looking at options including working with local communities in the UK speaking the target language. Testament to transculturality as a value is the Transcultural Devon short film[11] produced by Todino, Farris, Hipkins, Salas and University of Exeter students at the end of the 2021 academic year with a 2020-21 Education Incubator award. Set in Devon, the film stages a polyphony of European voices which escape confinement and restrictive labels. As this film demonstrates, the course provides useful opportunities for the students to engage with the migrant community in Devon and to do justice to it. Students' ethnographic data (video-interviews) populate a long-lasting video-archive which amplifies the voice of the migrants through the powerful medium of their first languages. Considering the specific historical moment when this project was started, the course enabled UK students to reflect on and better understand what it meant to be a language specialist in the post-Brexit era. It also allowed students to develop first-hand experience with speakers of other languages (including Italian) at a time when contacts were limited and regulated by social distancing and preventative measures for Covid-19. Keen to respond to students' evolving requirements, the project promises to empowers students allowing them to develop employability skills and, as a student of Italian states, "to express our passion of languages in an industry setting (language services and community engagement)"[12]. It also enables students to become independent learners and reflective agents in charge of their own linguistic choices and co-responsible for the making of cultures as well as the setting of the module syllabus. Themes explored to date vary according to interviewees' background and the students' interests and include: cultural belonging, affiliations to cultural groups and communities, language practices, uprooting, homing, gender issues in migration, and so on.

The Transcultural Devon project and module are the outcome of a concerted effort of a number of Exeter educators (*in primis* Todino, to whom I am indebted) who believe in people as resources to be cherished, maximized and represented in long-lasting memories of migration. These educators and I wanted to respond to the students' need to "engage with members of the community that valorized our attainment of a language and put its use into the application of intercultural communication"[13]. The approach that I have developed here to explain this project reflects my own research interest (translation, migration and ethnography), contribution and take on the module. The module could also

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[11] Transcultural Devon (7 December 2021). Transcultural Devon - Displaced Belonging. Retrieved May 2, 2022, from www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhoFHugs4Ws.
[12] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022.
[13] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022.

lend itself to other narratives, analyses and perspectives. Equal contribution is provided by my colleagues researching on adjacent disciplines and would deserve further attention and discussion. For example, Hipkins provides valuable input on the significance of digital archives in modern society and oral history as knowledge production, Todino on liaisons with the Devon community, Salas on filming and production, Afonso on self-narratives of migration and Farris on subtitling. In this chapter, insufficient attention has been devoted to a number of these aspects, which deserve to come to light. I therefore invite these scholars to respond to this chapter and continue to participate in intellectual debates on Transcultural Devon while improving the academic objectives of this project.

Finally, the module is situated within a new tradition of 'Transnational' Studies, including Transnational Italian Studies celebrated by Burdett and Polezzi (2020a). This tradition aims to broaden the horizons of a discipline that, by responding to globalization and social mobility, encompasses the study of transcultural phenomena and transnational productions across Italian borders. We, therefore, aim to respond to some of the Higher Education-related questions raised by Burdett and Polezzi, animating the field of Italian Studies to date: "What does 'Italian Studies' stand for in this transforming world? What does it mean to 'study Italian' in today's academic context? And how can we define 'transnational Italian Studies'?" (2020b: 1). Burdett and Polezzi (2020b: 2) note that studying Italian at University level implies the acquisition not only of language skills but also of translation skills, which equip students with the ability to travel across borders and move between languages and cultures. Transcultural Devon aims to do this. It aims to satisfy the students' curiosity for the world, a world in which Italians play a fundamental role, and to "promote the discovery of unique experiences through ethnography or in general through cultural exposure"[14]. The course is modelled on paradigms that situate the study of Italian language and culture within a broader context of transnational migration wherein the local is as important as the global and the circulation of hybridized texts, people and objects is the norm. By raising awareness of Italian culture outside its geopolitical borders, the module also finds its place within a broader multidiscipline, namely Modern Languages, which, in the words of Burdett and Polezzi, "promotes a model of Modern Languages not as the inquiry into separate national traditions, but as the study of languages, cultures and their interactions" (2020b: 0). In this light, the module does not want to rule out any opportunity to investigate first-hand experiences with cultural products generated in Italy. Objects of studies in fact incorporate those whose lives and values are continuously informed by a more or less strong bond with Italy as their country of origin. Conversely, the module considers ties, connections and associations between Italy and other European and non-European group identities as a possible corpus of study, celebrating singularities and transnational contributions to local communities, including the South West of England.

Acknowledgement

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[14] Email correspondence with a student of Italian, 1 May 2022.

Abstract

How can educators contribute to heightening the understanding of Italian culture? How can they improve students' acquisition of the Italian language? How can they increase opportunities for experiential learning? This chapter aims to answer these questions by discussing Transcultural Devon, a project undertaken by students and educators at the University of Exeter as a case study. It also aims to bring to the fore strategies devised to incorporate the interplay between ethnography and translation in the multilingual classroom. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of working collaboratively with local communities and, at the same time, turning community engagement into an opportunity for in-class and out-of-class reflection on the making of cultures, the production of knowledge and the translator's role. Critical attention is devoted to translation as a method for embodied, experiential learning within the broader framework of Modern Languages as a multidiscipline.

Eliana Maestri obtained her PhD from the University of Bath in 2011. She is now Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies and Director of the Centre for Translating Cultures, University of Exeter. Her research focuses on the interplay between translation, mobility and visual culture. She is the project lead of '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27', a project supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England (2022-23) to translate stories on climate change into artwork. Maestri was also the recipient of a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award to co-organize the 2019 Exeter Translation Festival and of a 2019 Europe Network Grant (Global Partnerships, Exeter) with KU Leuven, Belgium, to study street art. Previous awards include a EUOSSIC Erasmus Mundus Post-Doctoral Fellowship in European Studies, University of Sydney and University of Bath (2011-12), and a MEEUC Research Fellowship, Monash University, Melbourne (2014). Together with colleagues from KU Leuven and IUAV University of Venice, Maestri is one of the core faculty members of the Venice International University Summer School: *Linguistic Landscapes: Using Signs and Symbols to Translate Cities*. Maestri has published on visions of Europe among migrants in Australia, on translations of mobile traditions into Italian Australian folk music (with Rita Wilson), on street art in anti-mafia contexts (with Inge Lanslots and Paul Sambre) and translations of languages and cityscapes into the visual, with particular attention to prominent artist Jon Cattapan. With Christina Horvath, Maestri is also co-editing a special issue of *Romance Studies* on female filiations, contributing with an article on mothering, migration and intercultural mediation in Italian Australian literature. Maestri's monograph *Translating the Female Self across Cultures* appeared in the 2018 John Benjamins Translation Library.

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