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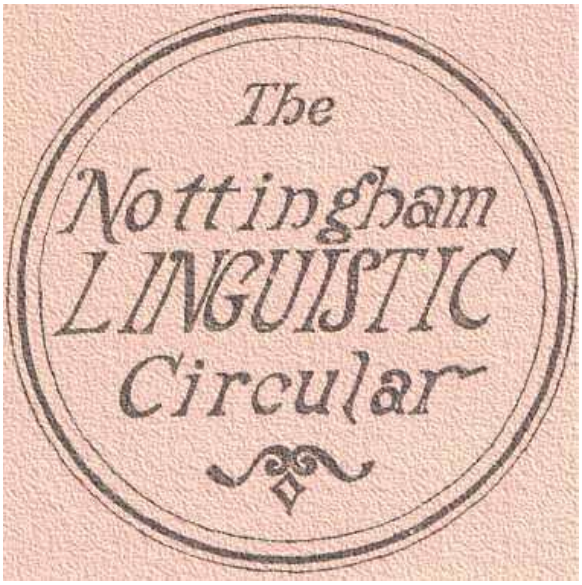

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Editorial Address:

Dr Peter Stockwell
NLC, School of English Studies
The University of Nottingham
University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD
UK E-mail: Peter.Stockwell@nottingham.ac.uk

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Comprehension and Problem-Solving in the Literature Classroom

Alan Durant

1 Introduction

It is generally accepted that understanding a text involves more than simply recognising its words and grammatical structures. It is not enough, therefore, for student readers to learn to decode what a text explicitly says. Indeed, whenever readers find themselves unable to decode some part of what a text explicitly says, then it is other, largely inferential and problem-solving skills which come to their aid, signalling what particular elements in the linguistic code may mean. Because general psychological abilities are involved in understanding utterances, it is possible for a speaker to communicate successfully to some extent even where the language of her or his utterance is not well understood by the hearer. It is even possible for a hearer to make some sense of communicative behaviour where no common language exists between speaker and hearer at all, since coded linguistic communication takes place within a larger field of more general human interaction and cognition.[1]

These points are not particularly controversial. As well as reflecting common experience, they are well established in psychology and in linguistic pragmatics, even if emphasis in those fields is more often placed on what language users routinely do than on how they can manage when things get difficult.[2] Insights about psychological dimensions of utterance interpretation are not always carried over, however, into the literature classroom. There, reading is more commonly taught by means of guided work on a fairly small number of prescribed texts, rather than by encouragement of broad interpretive skills and confidence.[3]

The aim of this paper is to suggest that students should be actively helped to exploit general psychological abilities in support of their linguistic competence. By making this point through discussion of a comprehension activity I have experimented with in ESL and EFL classrooms,[4] I hope also to illustrate how development of reading skills can be supported by close-reading tasks based on unfamiliar and challenging passages, including unseen literary passages such as the short lyrical poem discussed below. Interpretive abilities acquired by means of a task-based approach have a notable advantage: they can be applied to texts other than those directly studied. But whereas the general role played by inference in discourse processing is widely acknowledged, teaching literary interpretation by means of inferential tasks carried out on unseen passages often *is* considered controversial.

2 Decoding and understanding

Why are language abilities alone not enough for reading? Here is a brief reminder.

The vocabulary and grammatical structures of a text provide a basic framework for creating meaning. But certain inferences are also generally essential, even to grasp the

meaning of an isolated, individual sentence. Reference needs to be assigned to any pronouns it contains. Ellipses need to be filled out. Ambiguous expressions must be disambiguated. Only when such operations are carried out do sentences yield propositional meaning, and so indicate specific actions, events or states of affairs.

When successive sentences of a text are read, a cumulative effect of what we might call discourse meaning is created. But such meaning is coherent only to the extent that chains of referents are constructed between sentences, and where the reader successfully handles a sometimes-complex overlap between the senses of repeated and related expressions. In order to complete a mental representation of the text as a situation or represented life-world, rather than as merely a tissue of concepts or images, the text's actual or implied social setting must be inferred. So must the speech act (or acts) that the text is taken to be performing. Stylistically, a relationship of some kind must also be established between the language of the text and the style usually associated with its particular topic or social setting. The reader's broader knowledge and beliefs also come into play, when indirect meanings or significance are derived from whatever is explicitly stated. Together, these various psychological processes show comprehension to be a linguistic activity which is profoundly linked to more general mental processes. Local elements of linguistic meaning combine with frameworks of background knowledge or assumptions to create new kinds of overall significance.

The involvement of psychological processes in comprehension alongside linguistic decoding should not be viewed as bad news for the language learner. It is not just a matter of a lot of extra things to learn. Rather, because text comprehension brings together decoding and inference, students who face difficulties with a text's language are nevertheless not without resources. They have relatively rich, non-linguistic abilities; and, in the case of second language learners, these abilities overlap substantially with skills they routinely use in their first language. Even if such skills turn out not to be helpful in a given case - for example because specific, different cultural assumptions need to be activated as the basis for a particular interpretation - at least acknowledging the helpfulness in general of such psychological abilities can offer reassurance and build confidence.

Beyond simply inspiring confidence, though, how do such skills actually *help* in reading? It is already common in teaching comprehension to insist that individual word meanings can be inferred from context, rather than looking them up in a dictionary. Something similar applies to other aspects of a speaker's or writer's communicative purpose - except that the relevant discourse features in this case (which are typically networks and patterns, rather than individual items) cannot be looked up in a dictionary anyway. Overall discourse meaning is arrived at by using general cognitive abilities in conjunction with whatever mix and level of language-specific linguistic skills is available.

'Reading' – in the general sense of interpreting, which therefore applies to non-verbal forms of communication as well as to verbal discourse – involves attributing significance to intentional behaviour. (Reading signs which are *not* purposefully

communicated also involves attributing significance, but in that case to signs or behaviour which have not been presented in order to communicate.) With verbal discourse in particular, the social psychological process of attributing meaning is supplemented and focused by highly nuanced resources available in the language code. Meanings are nevertheless even in these circumstances not so much retrieved as actively constructed. It is accordingly more accurate to describe discourse meaning not as something narrowly comprehended but as something ascribed in a way that approximates to a greater or lesser extent to what the writer or speaker anticipated. Readings which seek to reconstruct an assumed intention may then be usefully – and less unfairly – compared with a variety of other ways in which readers interpret and use texts, for example when they search for kinds of personal relevance that are not constrained by any necessary connection with what the author or text producer may have intended.[5]

3 The case study

If comprehension takes place along the lines I am suggesting, and if we want to simulate comprehension processes in our teaching, then bringing inference and problem-solving explicitly to bear in the classroom is likely to be helpful. Linking language skills which students are trying to learn with cognitive abilities they already have may help remove inhibitions. It may also reduce the damaging blockage of classroom silence when students are faced with a new or difficult text. If nothing more, these local shifts of emphasis are likely to be beneficial pedagogically, especially where students are encouraged to produce rough interpretations that can be used as a basis for comparison and discussion.

In what follows, I hope to illustrate these points by describing a workshop I have experimented with which is centrally concerned with inferential comprehension. The activity itself is reproduced in Section 4. Section 5 considers how students have tackled the tasks prescribed, and also illustrates some of their responses. Section 6 addresses the issue of how activities such as the one described can contribute to present strategies for teaching comprehension.

In overall design, the workshop discussed follows the pattern of an information gap activity: a sort of puzzle created by deliberately leaving out some essential element of the text or its context, then asking questions about the missing part. Such tasks have a long history in comprehension research, as well as in a number of other fields. In comprehension studies in psychology, information gap tasks are mostly used for experimental purposes: the type and complexity of mental processing required to carry out a given task are carefully monitored (e.g. as between spontaneous comprehension and slower, more deliberate and conscious problem-solving).[6] Pedagogic applications of information-gap techniques, by contrast, tend not to be concerned with measured outputs. Instead they typically focus on the value of discussion during and (mostly) after the process of text interpretation.[7] The activity presented here reflects this tendency. It consists of a short lyrical poem which is reproduced with three of the four words which

make up its title blanked out.[8] The immediate aim of the activity is just to guess what the three missing words of the original title are.

For its educational purpose to be achieved, however, the activity relies on something more: the extent to which attempts to reconstruct the original title involve close reading of, and speculation about, the text as a whole. Readers investigate textual features as possible evidence in support of any candidate title they wish to propose. Since titles usually serve to guide a reader towards a text's overall significance, the task also requires readers to consider what role the title performs in relation to the main body of the poem. Reading a text *without* its title reverses the usual relationship between title and text. With a text's title in place, reading takes cues from, and so is constrained by, the title's wording. With most of the title missing, on the other hand, a complex array of textual details has to be marshalled into an interpretive construct from which a single expression of more general significance is selected.

Viewed in this light, an information gap activity is an indirect comprehension task. Spontaneous or immediate grasp of some aspects of the text gains support from more conscious and deliberate problem-solving. Where spontaneous understanding falters – or even is unable to get started on particular textual features – then problem-solving strategies kick in.

In practice, the activity reported here has been organised in the following way. Students are given a copy of the poem, preceded by a brief instruction that they should try to decide what the three missing words of its title are. The first word of the title ('For') is followed by three blank slots. After a few minutes of unguided reading, students are given a second, 'help' sheet, which combines a brief, selective glossary with a few prompts to shape enquiry and discussion. After a further fifteen or twenty minutes, students are invited to write titles they have thought of on a blackboard or whiteboard, as rows in a grid. Each column in the grid represents one of the three blanks in the title; each row in the grid represents a particular student's (or group of students') title for the poem. Discussion of the various choices which have been made now takes place with the whole group. Such discussion has mostly followed the sequence of prompts on the help page. But there is no reason why it must.

As the end of the class approaches, I have sometimes accelerated the process of arriving at the original title, and the sense of closure it provides, by circling words of the original title which appear in the grid. Occasionally, to introduce a more light-hearted quiz dimension, I have also offered the first letter of any word which still does *not* feature anywhere in the grid. So far, nobody has identified the original title during the main phase of the activity, though quite a number of suggested titles contain two of the three missing words and a synonym or near-synonym for the third. On one or two occasions, students have guessed the title almost instantly, once the first letter of the third missing word – which usually presents the greatest difficulty – has been given.

To lead into discussion of general issues raised by this approach to comprehension, in the next section I reproduce the activity as it has been given out to students.

4 The workshop activity

Here is a complete poem – complete except that the last three words of its four-word title are missing. Your task is: **to decide what the missing three words of the title are**.

To do this, you will need to read the poem closely. Use what you *do* understand in the poem to help you with words and phrases you don't know. And draw on your ideas about how poems work, and how titles work, to narrow down the possibilities.

For help with vocabulary, look at the second sheet, or **HELP PAGE**, when it is given out shortly. You will also find some questions to prompt you on the Help page.

For (1) (2) (3)

To most your dying seems distant,
outside the palings of our concern.
Only to you the fact was real
when the flame caught among the final brambles
of your pain. And lying there
in this cubicle, on your trestle
over the old newspapers and spittoon,
your face bears the waste of terror
at the crumbling of your body's walls.
The moth fluttering against the electric bulb,
and on the wall your old photographs,
do not know your going. I do not know
when it has wrenched open the old wounds.
When branches snapped in the dark
you would have had a god among the trees
make us a journey of your going.
Your palm crushed the child's tears from my face.
Now this room will become your going, brutal
in the discarded combs, the biscuit tins
and neat piles of your dresses.

HELP PAGE:

1. Some initial help with reading the poem:

line 2	‘palings’	fencing made of wooden posts; constructed barrier
line 4	‘brambles’	plants with thorns; prickly plants
line 6	‘cubicle’	small, square room; partially enclosed section of a room
	‘trestle’	simple table-top, made of a board with supporting legs
line 7	‘spittoon’	receptacle for spit, usually in a public place
line 10	‘fluttering’	flapping
line 13	‘wrenched’	forcefully pulled or twisted; injured, especially by parting
line 14	‘snapped’	broken suddenly
line 17	‘palm’	inner part of the hand; tree-like tropical plant
line 18	‘become’	develop or grow into; be appropriate to
line 19	‘discarded’	thrown away

2. Now consider the following questions, which should prepare you for the discussion stage of the session. Make a note of words or phrases which provide evidence for your responses.

2.1 What types of phrase (or sentence) can the title belong to, if it begins with ‘for...’? To help you decide, make up some four-word phrases or sentences beginning with ‘for’.

2.2 What different meanings does the word ‘for’ convey? Do these different meanings suggest anything about the possible function the title is likely to serve?

2.3 The poem contains a number of second-person terms: ‘you’, ‘your’, etc. Who or what do you think the poet is addressing? If you think it is a person, what clues are provided concerning the identity of that person (in terms of age, gender, social position, etc)? What relationship do you think exists between the poet and the thing or person being addressed?

2.4 Does the second-person mode of address suggest anything about the likely function or significance of the title?

3. When you have decided on the three missing words, compare your proposal with other people’s. Discuss evidence for and against different possibilities.

4. Finally, consider how far it is possible to identify the poem’s author, setting, and approximate date of composition. Compare your own responses with information about the poem provided at the end of the session.

5 Patterns in classroom response

In this section, I discuss briefly some patterns which have emerged in students' responses. In doing so, I highlight aspects of the poem which prompt interesting or useful directions for follow-up work, as well as details which may be significant as regards the overall approach. Note that discussion only takes place after students have committed themselves to at least one version of the poem's title on a blackboard or whiteboard. It is an important feature of the activity that a substantial number of alternative possible titles are on display during reconstruction of thought-processes which may have prompted them. It is also important that most or all students have an investment in the discussion as a result of offering a title of their own.

4.1 What types of phrase (or sentence) can the title belong to, if it begins with 'for...'? To help you decide, make up some four-word phrases or sentences beginning with 'for'.

In most sessions, students quickly indicate - as often by means of their examples as through the metalanguage they adopt - that they think three main patterns for the title are most likely:

- 'For' as a connective introducing a sentence ('for God is great'; 'for squirrels eat nuts'; 'for she is gone'; 'for death brings grief...')
- 'For' as a connective introducing a non-finite clause ('for mowing the lawn'; 'for everyone to see'; 'for flying to Mars'; 'for saying our goodbyes...')
- 'For' as a preposition introducing a prepositional phrase consisting of the preposition itself and a noun phrase ('for next Monday's meeting'; 'for Martin Luther King'; 'for fear of retribution'; 'for a painful journey...')

Each of these title-types is readily illustrated. Students are encouraged to produce examples of their own which are not related in sense to the poem, in order to separate formal possibilities at this stage from questions of meaning.

Typically a small amount of follow-up work can take place at this stage. Sometimes it is noticed, for example, that formulaic expressions beginning with 'for' mostly consist of only two or three words, including the 'for': 'for certain', 'for good', 'for a start', 'for all that', 'for one thing', etc. This seems to rule out most such idioms. One or two students have commented that, when 'for' is used as a sentence connector, it is mostly in a formal or literary style, and seems to have some but not all of the grammatical properties of prototypical items of that class: the coordinating conjunctions 'and', 'or', and 'but'. On some occasions it has been noted that different sorts of non-finite clause can be constructed, differing between those with an *'-ing'* participle ('for growing up tall') and those involving an infinitive construction ('for God to bestow').

More general grammatical issues are also sometimes raised. Are noun phrases always short, for instance, or (if not) then what range of grammatical structures (e.g. post-modifying relative clauses) enable them to be longer than about three or four words? What range of determiners is possible in the initial position of a noun phrase ('one', 'each', 'some', 'the', 'a', 'this', etc.)? What word classes can supply a single word to follow a noun and complete a noun phrase?

4.2 What different meanings does the word 'for' convey? Do these different senses suggest anything about what meaning the title is likely to have or function it is likely to serve?

Unsurprisingly, most students soon acknowledge that, although the word 'for' is short and apparently simple, it is used in a variety of senses which are not in all cases easy to gloss. Students are again encouraged to produce examples of their own, especially ones in which the word 'for' has distinguishably different meanings. Some usages signal duration: 'for about three weeks'; 'for the whole period'; 'for years and years'. Others signal concession: 'for all that'; 'for all his faults'. Others again signal expected standard: 'for a complete novice'; 'for a youngster'. Others again signal destination: 'for John Stuart Mill'; 'for tomorrow's young children'. Many involve causation, and have the sense of, 'in order to', 'for the purpose of', 'on account of', or 'as a result of'.

Discussion may develop from such insights in a number of different directions. Apparent discrepancy between 'purpose' meanings and 'result' meanings can serve as a useful discussion point. Or students may wish to explore the idea of image schemas which can be used to account for sense variation in prepositions.[9] Beyond evident usefulness in creating a teaching opportunity, however, each sense introduced for 'for' generates a fresh possible direction as regards the poem's title. This is especially the case where a particular sense applies to the poetic utterance as a whole, for example as something to be given; or as an effect or consequence of something; or as something to be used in some event or action for a particular purpose. What is important about follow-up work at this stage is that it explores how context-sensitive the meaning potential of prepositions can be. In doing so, discussion inevitably also highlights an important aspect of choosing a title: the need to fill out inferentially an implicit ellipsis in any candidate title for the poem which takes the form of a phrase, reinstating a more complete imagined utterance. Even without explicit guidance, students assimilate new possibilities and constraints on choice into their evolving, overall interpretations.

4.3 The poem contains a number of second-person terms: 'you', 'your', etc. Who or what do you think the poet is addressing? What clues are provided concerning the identity of the person being addressed, if you think it is a person (in terms of age, gender, social position, etc)? What relationship do you think exists between the poet and the person or thing being addressed?

Narrowing down what sort of person or other being the addressee is likely to be involves inferences which combine details in the text with material from the reader's background knowledge and beliefs. Such background knowledge and beliefs vary from reader to reader, and show greater variation between readers from different social groups. Inferential processes can open up a degree of interpretive variation which serves as an additional stimulus to classroom debate.

To contribute to an interpretation, textual evidence is inferentially developed. Most readers of this poem (minus most of its title) have felt that the addressee is a person, rather than an animate but not human being, or an inanimate entity. Occasional suggestions have represented the addressee as animate but not human, as in, 'For the dying oak' or the metonymically animate, 'For my old garden'. What is more significant than the fact of variation between readings – which is to be expected, given the partial removal of the title – is the possibility of tracing readings back to textual details which inspired them.

Consider in this light the textual evidence likely to be brought to bear on the gender of the addressee. The phrase 'neat piles of your dresses' invites an inference that the addressee wears, or at least owns or is in some way associated with, some dresses. This inference combines with a cultural assumption that dresses are usually (though not exclusively or necessarily) worn by women. Combine this supposition with the earlier inference that the addressee is in some way associated with dresses. A further inference is now warranted: that the addressee is likely to be a woman. This inference can then be tested for consistency with other textual details, and the inferences *they* prompt. For example, another cultural assumption commonly drawn on by readers is that a woman is more likely to have 'discarded combs', 'biscuit tins', and 'old photographs' around her deathbed than a man. This notion is often taken to corroborate the inference about the addressee based on the dresses. Discussion should focus, nevertheless, on how reliable such inferences are, as well as on how far particular combinations of inferences are compatible. Perhaps equally important is the issue of what culturally specific viewpoint, or even prejudices, may lie beneath specific cultural assumptions being activated by any given reader.

Corresponding procedures may be followed as regards textual evidence for the age of the addressee relative to that of the speaker. The word 'old' occurs three times in the poem. But it does so in contexts where its sense has to be calibrated relative to some assumed, relevant time span. 'Old newspapers' may be anything from a day or two old. 'Old photographs may generally need to be slightly older than this to be described as 'old'. 'Old wounds' become 'old' either after a period of time varying with the type of wound, or alternatively when they are superseded by new wounds – even if the new wounds are inflicted soon after the old ones. Although repetition of the word 'old' is suggestive, the inferences it stimulates are by no means definitive.

Other textual details, however, are often claimed to reinforce an accumulating impression of old age. The phrase 'crumbling of your body's walls' is commonly taken to suggest either death in old age or earlier degenerative illness. Because the second of

these possibilities would be highly relevant to other aspects of the poem but is not mentioned anywhere else, the assumption about old age seems to be strengthened rather than weakened by this competing possibility. The line 'your palm crushed the child's tears from my face' also seems to suggest that the addressee – however old – is older than the speaker, and that the addressee has been in some broadly nurturing role in relation to the speaker when the speaker was young. But again, such inferences are probabilistic rather than definitive.

When it comes to estimating the social status of the addressee, the evidence is similarly suggestive – but also similarly indeterminate. The addressee is 'lying there in this cubicle, on your trestle / over the old newspapers and spittoon'. The words 'cubicle' and 'trestle' may suggest a hospital or similar temporary accommodation; yet this suggestion has to be reconciled with the idea of the room being partly decorated with old photographs on the wall.

Inferences about social status prompted by words such as 'spittoon', 'cubicle' and 'trestle' become directly relevant, and are inevitably activated, when possible evidence is looked for in order to establish the speaker's relationship with the addressee. Again the line, 'your palm crushed the child's tears from my face' seems important, suggesting a nurturing relationship. In addition, the complex lines, 'When branches snapped in the dark / you would have had a god among the trees / make us a journey of your going' seem to reinforce this impression, appearing to allude to a reassuring story which, at some earlier time, may have helped the speaker (and unspecified others) cope with a sudden, frightening experience. Yet the emotional closeness implicit in the nurturing relationship clashes with the first two lines, which are given special prominence by their position at the beginning of the poem: 'To most your dying seems distant, / outside the palings of our concern.' For whatever reason, the death of the addressee would normally be considered of little significance to the speaker and whichever social group he or she identifies with.

4.4 Does the second-person mode of address suggest anything about what function the title is most likely to serve?

Commonly at this stage of the activity, many students decide that the title is likely to be a dedication or tribute. Given that someone appears to be dying or to have died, the likelihood arises that the title signals some kind of final communication to the dying or recently deceased person. Versions of the title now become more prevalent in which noun phrases indicate a particular person, and designate the relationship between the poet and that person.

Titles which focus on the addressee in this way have included:

4.4.1 Titles in which the addressee is a male parent or grandparent

For my dying grandpa
For my dying papa

4.4.2 Titles in which the addressee is a female parent or grandparent
For my dying grandma
For my dying mother

4.4.3 Titles in which the addressee is an employee, employer, or sponsor
For my dying nanny
For my famous patron

4.4.4 Titles which use pronouns, sometimes circumventing the issue of the addressee's gender
For he who was
For the going one
For one who's dying
For one who's going

Note in these titles how frequently the adjective 'dying' appears as pre-modifier of the noun which is the head of the phrase (other frequent pre-modifiers include 'departing' and 'old'). A further sub-class of proposed titles explicitly indicates an emotional content for the relationship, for example by including the word 'love' (e.g. 'For an old love').

4.5 When you have decided on the three missing words, compare your proposal with other people's. Discuss evidence for and against different possibilities.

Many different possible titles have been produced on the various occasions on which I have used this activity. But patterns in those titles are at least as striking as differences between them. The variety is hardly surprising. Apart from the open-endedness of deciding on a title for any text, the poem in this activity presents special challenges. It is not only necessary to establish who 'you' and 'your' refer to, and who 'I 'and 'we' may be. Other difficulties with referring expressions also arise, for instance with the pronoun 'it' in line 13, 'when it has wrenched open the old wounds'. Uncertainty in the textual evidence elsewhere in the poem can also be unsettling. Has the addressee already died (as seems suggested by the past tense of the verbs 'was' and 'caught' in the first few lines)? Or is the addressee still in the throes of dying (as seems to be suggested by the modal 'will' in line 18, a view which fits readily with the vague meanings of 'flame' and 'final brambles' in line 4, since these words may denote dying pains rather than death as an event)? The word 'dying' itself, prominent in the poem's first line – and carried over into many of the suggested titles – can indicate either an event which is already complete, or an event which is still in progress.

Besides titles which identify an addressee, and imply a particular relationship between addressee and poet, the other main pattern in titles suggested for the poem is that of characterisations of death as an event. Suggestions of this type have included:

4.5.1 Titles which draw on the metaphorical field LIFE IS A JOURNEY, with birth as an arrival and death as a departure[10]

For your last journey
For your distant journey
For the final departure
For the last farewell
For your going away

4.5.2 Titles which focus on the temporal aspect of dying

For the last hour
For ever and ever

4.5.3 Titles which focus on the circumstances or manner in which the addressee dies

For dying in pain
For dying without concern

Textual details which support each of these proposals can be found in the poem. Besides these sub-classes of titles, which have been exemplified on each occasion that the activity has been used, less predictable titles are also occasionally suggested. These include:

For your love only
For your lost childhood
For my famous past
For those memorable moments

It may be less easy to see supporting details in the poem for these titles. But follow-up work tracing suggested titles back through inferences and textual details on which they rely can be rewarding irrespective of whether a title fits a common sub-class or whether it signals a new and possibly more idiosyncratic reading. In the first case, the challenge lies in explaining how certain features in the poem are sufficiently salient to generate a commonly-perceived pattern. In the second case, the challenge is to find new patterns in the network of expressions, cultural assumptions and inferences which inspire the individual insight.

4.6 Finally, consider how far it is now possible to identify the poem's author, setting, and approximate date of composition. Compare your own responses with information about the poem provided at the end of the session.

In this final phase of the task – which echoes a task once common in practical criticism[11] – students focus on evidence in the poem about social setting and period as clues to the time and place of the poem's composition. Evidence of setting is not evidence of time and place of composition, of course, and students are encouraged to think about issues of poetic persona and the creation of imaginary contexts for a poetic speech event.

Among the expressions and images commonly drawn attention to at this stage of the session are again 'the cubicle', 'the trestle', and 'the spittoon', none of which are presented in the poem as unusual or deserving extra explanation. Such features of the world modelled in the text are generally taken to connote either a slightly earlier historical period or an economically poor social setting. Sometimes the electric bulb is cited as evidence that the poem must be a 20th century work, and the old photographs are occasionally presented as support for this approximate historical placing. The allusion to 'a god' – implicitly one god among others, and so possibly part of a polytheistic mythology – has sometimes been suggested as evidence for the poem being Asian in origin.

6 And the title of the poem?

What *is* the original title? I have been left in no doubt on several occasions that students would be disappointed, even annoyed, if I did not produce the original title at the end of the session. I should not disappoint any readers by now similarly involved. The title of this powerful and moving poem is, 'For My Old Amah'. The poem was written by the contemporary Malaysian poet Wong Phui Nam.

As part of a generation of Chinese Malaysians born in the 1930s, Wong came to maturity and studied at a university with a marked European cultural bias at the end of the 1950s. Bridging the divide between colonized and post-colonial cultural formations – and paving the way for later generations of Malaysian writers – the celebrated group of 'university poets' of which Wong Phui Nam was part (Edwin Thumboo, Ee Tiang Hong, and Wong himself) first published together in the collection *Litmus One: Selected University Verse, 1949-1957*. Wong himself remained silent through the 1970s and most of the 1980s. But he returned to public prominence with the collection 'Remembering Grandma and other Rumours' in 1989.[12]

Quite a number of students, when they see the poem's title for the first time, are either amused or query its fourth word, 'amah'. Some have been noticeably relieved that their failure to identify the title is now explicable by the fact that one of its words is a geographically-specific dialect term. After all, 'my' is commonly chosen as the first selected word; and 'old' is not uncommon as the second (it forms part of a cluster of frequent choices, including 'dying' and 'departing'). Consistently, it is this third missing word which presents the greatest difficulty. So is my choice of poem and title fair on students?

The entry for 'amah' in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) describes the word as an Anglo-Indian term meaning nurse or wet-nurse. It suggests that 'amah' is derived from the Portuguese word 'ama', and that the word is common in South India (some other dictionaries say simply 'the Orient'). To exemplify usage, the OED gives two quotations, both from the mid-19th century. One includes mention of Madras, the other mentions the former Portuguese colony of Macau. Given Portuguese influence on

Malaysia historically, especially southern Malaysia, and also the number of Tamils with family origins in South India who make up the Malaysian population, the appearance of the word 'amah' in this poem's title is perhaps not so surprising after all.

But that hardly matters. The activity, after all, is not really about correctly identifying a title. In fact, the way that even the puzzle's solution introduces fresh issues (e.g. about how the poem's variety of English can signal a set of social relationships) should be recognized as an asset, and a stimulus to further follow-up work. Interestingly, too, given the sense of disadvantage some non-Asian students feel when the title is disclosed, it is worth noting that deciding on the missing title is not necessarily easier for students in Asian countries. The word 'amah' overlaps in sound and meaning with several other words in some Asian varieties of English, including 'amma' meaning 'mother' and 'ammai' meaning aunt - with the latter term sometimes also used as a respectful name for a nanny or servant. Language use rarely turns out to be simple; and knowing locally varying terms for nannies and relatives may actually complicate the issue of how well 'amah' fits the textual evidence presented in the poem.

7 Conclusion: Do task-based inferential activities help comprehension skills?

My discussion so far has focused on specific details of the poem. It may be useful, therefore, to restate my more general educational point: that activities of the sort I am illustrating use classroom interaction and problem-solving in order to make comprehension practice not only more enjoyable but also more effective.

What reason is there to believe this happens? My experience of using the 'For My Old Amah' activity suggests that even the expectation that students will complete a specific but open-ended task can be highly motivating, especially if they have to account for how they arrive at the choices they make. The prospect of a specific solution to a puzzle is tantalising enough to keep students on track – even if their own, invented versions of the poem's title may be as rich as the original, or even more aesthetically pleasing. But students' evident enjoyment raises a related question. Is enjoying a puzzle the same as learning?

My description of using the 'For My Old Amah' activity offers at least a sense of how task-based work of this kind can stimulate discussion and help introduce material in a number of areas: phrase and sentence structure, formulation and evaluation of semantic intuitions, reflection on different roles played by poem titles, and how textual evidence can support personal response. In each area, the teacher leads discussion and introduces new concepts and terminology as appropriate; but it is students who produce and compare examples, and who comment on intuitions about changing meanings and effects when different expressions are substituted for one another.

Such a division of labour between teacher and student reflects the participative nature of the approach more generally. Students' work is 'interactive' in the basic sense that they talk together, write possible titles together, and consider the merits of other possible

titles in discussion. It is also interactive in a more abstract sense: that new ideas and questions emerge, forming their own connections and contrasts, through discovery and dialogue, rather than according to a strictly pre-planned agenda. What constrains students' work – and stops them going off in all directions – is that their efforts to read and respond to the text are focused by a clearly prescribed purpose: deciding on the three missing words. That objective, which can initially seem to be problem-solving as a kind of entertainment, develops during the session into problem-solving as a catalyst to more general learning. Additional material which is introduced, including examples, counter-examples and broad comparisons, is assimilated and tested for its helpfulness to this objective. The task focuses and gives new impetus to students' interpretive strategies.

I am of course aware that these brief comments do not amount to evidence for a the effectiveness of the approach. Experimenting further with the 'For My Old Amah' activity (as reproduced in Section 4) may be as effective a test of my claims as evaluating the commentary offered here. But remember: the activity illustrates a general approach; I do not claim that the 'For My Old Amah' activity is faultless as a lesson plan. In using it, it is important to keep some underlying principles in mind.

- Classroom learning consists of events, rather than ready-made materials to be transmitted.
- Writing classroom resources should therefore aim less at an ideal of composition than at a sufficiently structured notation for an interactive classroom event.
- Sessions work better when they are flexible enough to incorporate earlier student comments, issues raised in recent student work, and known student interests or enthusiasms.

If a comprehension task stimulates inquiry and discussion that can be extended and enhanced by focused improvisation, then it has a good chance of being effective. With the task in place, it is generally better to move on to creating new lesson plans, rather than to go on polishing up an old favourite. It is not only students who learn by trying to solve new problems.

Notes

1. A detailed description of the different ways information can be conveyed in what is usually called 'communication' is offered in Wilson and Sperber (1993). The distinctions they develop in this article reflect the more general theoretical framework known as Relevance Theory, fully presented in Sperber and Wilson (1995).

2. Typical topics in pragmatics include presupposition, implicature, deixis and speech acts, among others. For detailed exposition, see for example Levinson (1983). A useful general introduction which draws extensively on examples from media and other kinds of public discourse is Thomas (1995).

3. An important exception to this general tendency is the field commonly known as 'language through literature' (a field especially associated in Britain with writing by Ron Carter, John McRae and others). Such work emphasises the pedagogic potential of stylistics (c.f. Short, 1989; Widdowson, 1992). Collections of work along such lines in which I have been involved include Durant and Fabb (1990) and Montgomery and others (2000).

4. I have experimented informally with this activity with student groups in Spain, Switzerland, India, Pakistan, Japan, Brazil, and Argentina, as well as in Britain itself. I am grateful to students and teachers for comments and suggestions. There is not enough space to comment here on distinctive responses in different countries and at different levels. In any case, I have not collected data in enough detail for such an analysis. In a future study, however, I do intend to incorporate feedback on sample classroom trials of this activity, conducted both by myself and by other teachers.

5. Perhaps the richest theoretical study of how attributing speaker intention contributes to utterance interpretation is Sperber and Wilson (1995). A highly interesting exploration of such arguments, drawing on psychological research and exploring a range of public contexts of interpretation, is Gibbs (1999). A collection of essays which explores the relationship between literary interpretations that seek to reconstruct intention and interpretations which use the text for other purposes is Eco (1992), perhaps especially the essay, '*Intentio Lectoris*: the State of the Art' (1990:44-63). Powerful discussion of the relationship between these interpretive modes in literary studies and interpretation in film studies can be found in Bordwell (1989).

6. For a critical review of, and significant contribution to, one major tradition of discourse research along experimental lines, see Kintsch (1998). An important collection of essays by Kintsch's collaborators is Weaver, Mannes, & Fletcher (1995). Detailed investigation of a small number of highly specific comprehension tasks can be found in Brown (1995).

7. Among the best examples of this type of resource remains Grellet (1981).

8. In this respect, the task described here resembles a psychological experiment in which a passage was given to readers with its title, 'Christopher Columbus discovering America', removed. For discussion, see Johnson-Laird and Wason (1977:344).

9. For discussion of the use of image schemas in understanding the meaning of prepositions, especially locative propositions, see Ungerer and Schmid (1996), especially chapter 4.

10. For discussion of metaphors less as individual ornaments than as coherent systems (including a number which take the form 'X is a journey'), see Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

11. I.A.Richards was explicit about the aims of his study *Practical Criticism*. Early on, he describes the book as 'a record of a piece of field-work in comparative ideology' (1929:6). In the book's first paragraph, he specifies three main aims: to establish a new method of cultural inquiry; to identify new means of discovering how people feel about poetry in particular; and to establish a basis for more effective ways of teaching reading. As practical criticism developed in classrooms, however, it evolved into three, only loosely connected strands: impressionistic response to texts or extracts taken out of context; informal application to short passages of linguistic terms and concepts; and the (now far rarer) dating and naming of unidentified authors. As its emphasis makes clear, this article is more sympathetic to Richards's own aims than towards some of the subsequent developments.

12. See K.S.Maniam's 'Foreword' in Wong Phui Nam (1993).

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Linguistic Relativity And The Translation Dilemma: Reading Between The Lines In Malay Literatures In English

Ida Baizura Bahar

1 Introduction

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has generated great interest among linguists as to whether 'linguistic relativity' can be accountable as a tool to compartmentalise human's capacity to express themselves in various modes. From another questionable standpoint altogether, this hypothesis is utilised to provide some illuminating observations on the dilemma concerning the issue of translations. This paper looks at how linguistic relativity can be linked to the notion of translation in Malay literatures published in English.

2 The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

The hypothesis first derived from the seminal work of Edward Sapir (1884-1939) who provided a definition of language as follows:

> Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntary produced symbols.
> (Sapir 1921: 8, cited in Bloor and Bloor 1995: 243)

This assertion distinguishes him as an empiricist who sees language as a social and arbitrary communication system. Sapir also contrasts language with the human capacity for walking; perceived as 'an inherent biological function of man'(1921: 8).

Sapir's theory was then developed by his student, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), whose own work has since evolved into what is now known in the language field as 'the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis'. His most crucial contribution is the emphasis 'on the importance of the transfer of elements of meaning within linguistic analogies for the individual interpretation of experience which, in turn, shapes specific cultural patterns of behaviour'(Lucy 1992: 67).

It is Whorf who places great importance on the role of language in culture. He argues that the language of that society determines a society's perception of reality. Therefore, a person who speaks one language will experience things differently from a person who speaks a fundamentally different type of language. This was derived from his own extensive research on the Native American language called 'Hopi'. According to Whorf, Hopi creates or interprets the world differently from the languages of 'Standard Average European' (SAE).

Cited examples relating to Whorf's works are (a) the big range of expressions for different kinds of snow in Eskimo ('Inuit') language compared to SAE which has fewer;

and (b) the method which different languages use to distinguish the spectrum of colours at different points so, as Bloor and Bloor explain:

> that the speakers of one language may describe two objects as, say *red* and *orange* (English) where those who speak another will describe them with the same term, say *kai* (Amharic)…
>
> (Bloor and Bloor 1995: 246)

Drawing on the idea proposed by the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt, referred to as his 'Weltanshauung' (world-view) hypothesis, Sapir-Whorf advocated the theory that the language we speak influences the way we think and act. Therefore, our view of the world is dependent on the structure of the language we speak. As stated by Gumperz and Levinson (1996: 1): 'the essential idea of linguistic relativity [is] the idea that culture, *through* language, affects the way we think, especially perhaps our classification of the experienced world'.

Penn (1972) suggests that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis can be perceived as two different hypotheses. She contends that the 'extreme' view asserts the dependence of thought on language while the 'mild' one suggests some influence of linguistic categories and cognition. These views are also known as the 'firm' and the 'softer' version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Indeed, questions have arisen over what the hypothesis actually advocates; Penn further (1972: 14) asks:

> Does the hypothesis mean to assert that the grammar of a language *determines* ideas and *limits* the range of mental activity?
>
> or
>
> Does the hypothesis mean to assert that the grammar of a language merely *influences* an individual's ideas, mental activity, analysis of impressions?

In looking back at the distinctions between the 'firm' and 'softer' hypotheses, Lustig and Koester (1999) believe that the 'softer' version propagates a less causal view of the nature of the language-thought relationship. To them, this version advocates the idea that language shapes how people think and experience their world, but that the influence is not unceasing. Therefore, 'it is possible for people from different initial language system to learn words and categories sufficiently similar to their own…'(Lustig and Koester 1999: 185). Here, their ideas correlate with those proposed by Penn (1972) as mentioned previously.

In contrast, the 'firm' view sees language functioning 'like a prison' - people are irrevocably affected by the particulars of a language once they learn it. It is further stated that: '… it is never possible to *translate* effectively and successfully between languages; which make competent intercultural competence an elusive goal' (Lustig and Koester 1999: 185, my italics). This is an issue that has been greatly debated in the field of language relating to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

3 The Translation Dilemma

The most critical aspect of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis relates to the 'firm' version: that if the grammar of one's native language is deterministic, then Whorf could never have been able to learn Hopi, let alone translate Hopi grammatical patterns into terms which could be comprehended by a native English speaker. This is supported by Schultz:

> The persuasiveness of this argument lies on the assumption that translation and understanding are identical, and can be accomplished only via language.
> (Schultz 1990: 98)

Schultz further suggests that Whorf's ability to convey the meaning of Hopi patterns to English-speaking readers has almost nothing to do with literal word-for-word or sentence-for-sentence translation. She is also critical of Whorf's method; to her Whorf has simply presented 'juxtaposed Native American data and carefully-phrased English glosses…he then relies on his readers' presumed capacity for figurative understanding to do the rest'(Schultz 1990: 98). Her observation, in fact, corresponds to an earlier proposal by Lakoff (1987) on 'translation' and 'understanding'.

Since issues of translation and understanding emerge constantly in debates on relativism, Lakoff (1987: 311) proposes the basis of such discussions:

1. It is claimed that if two languages have radically different conceptual systems, then translation from one language to the other is impossible.
2. It is often claimed that if translation is impossible, then speakers of one language cannot understand the other language.
3. It is often claimed that if the languages have different conceptual systems, then someone who speaks one language will be unable to learn the other language because he lacks the right conceptual system.
4. It is sometimes claimed that since people *can* learn radically different languages, those languages could not have different conceptual systems.

He believes that 'differences in conceptual systems do create difficulties for translation' (Lakoff 1987: 311). A distinction is thus made between translation and understanding: translation requires mapping from one language to another. Understanding is something that is internal to a person. It is also here that I support Lakoff's contention that translation can occur without understanding, and understanding can occur without translation.

Indeed, some people are not able to share the world's basic experiences. Some experiences may be acquired by living in the culture where the language is spoken; but this does not mean that the language is inaccessible to a speaker. This could be due to some basic experiences that can be universal. Lakoff (1987) identifies among them as the basic-level perception of physical objects and what is called 'kinaesthetic image

schemas', which are structured experiences of vertical and horizontal dimensions, balance and many others.

Feuer (1953, cited in Penn, 1972: 34) states unequivocally that 'linguistic relativity is the doctrine of untranslatability in modern guise'. This means that if an idea; originally the product of one language; can be communicated to members of another culture in their own language, then the gap between the respective categories has been bridged. It is also proposed that if anything in one language can be translated into any other language, then thought cannot be relative to the language of the thinker.

Hence we come back to the core question: can indeed anything in one language be translated into any other? To a certain degree, I would support the fact that we are able to translate the basic meanings and understanding that exist and can be shared between the two respective languages. Examples of these include scientific journals translated from English into Chinese, the translation of the Al-Quran from the Arabic patterns to the Roman as well literary texts - to name just a few.

Hockett (cited in Penn 1972: 35) argues that 'some types of literature…are merely impervious to translation'. He adds, though, that 'the types of literature that cannot be adequately translated are not descriptions of phenomenal tangible reality, but rather statements reflecting cultural differences'. I would support both views then, based on my own personal background as a bilingual speaker. There are some elements that are more difficult to express in some languages than in others. This can be observed, though not as a representation of a whole presupposition, from the following discussion.

4 The Relation Between Linguistic Relativity, Translation and Culture.

4.1 Culture and Linguistic Relativity

Culture is defined in many different ways - most of them are highly controversial. I have chosen a definition that is of relevance to the topic in question i.e. language and literary texts. Brown (cited in Valdes, 1986: 45, my brackets) states that:

> Culture is really an integral part of the interaction between language and thought (where) cultural patterns, customs, and views of life are expressed in language; culture specific world-views are reflected in language.

McCarthy and Carter (1994: 150) define culture as 'the rest of values and beliefs which are prevalent within a given society or section of a society'. They further distinguish at least three main meanings of culture as follows:

(1) culture with a capital C
(2) culture with a small c
(3) culture as social discourse

An interesting aspect highlighted by McCarthy and Carter, which can be linked to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, is the argument that 'the ability to comprehend a range of different kinds of jokes in any language, especially in a foreign language, marks an ability to fuse linguistic and cultural understanding' (McCarthy and Carter 1994: 153). This means that their argument is on a par with that of the 'softer' view of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis - that language *influences* thought, and subsequently, culture.

Hockett (1977) explains that jokes in straightforward punning can be translated while puns depending on homophones are less translatable. Compare:

Example A : 'Mummy, Mummy, I don't like Daddy!'
'Then leave him on the side of your plate and eat your vegetables'
with:

Example B: 'Is the tomb of Karl Marx just another Communist plot?'

Similarly, in translated literary texts, the most notable problems occur when translating 'metaphor'. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose that

> the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture.
> (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 22)

It has been said that our values are deeply embedded in our culture. Therefore, it is only natural and unavoidable that translation also takes these into account. Lakoff and Johnson further assert that our values are not independent; they must form a coherent system with the metaphorical concepts we live by. They argue that they are *not* claiming 'that all cultural values coherent with a metaphorical system actually exist, only that those that do exist and are deeply entrenched are consistent with the metaphorical system' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 22-23).

4.2 Malay Literatures in English

Over the past few years, a large number of literatures written in the national language of Malaysia i.e. 'Bahasa Melayu' or the Malay language, have been translated into English. The literary texts are commissioned for translation by the National Language Academy. These are texts that have either won the National Award Competition or written by National Figure Award winners.

I have selected 4 novels that have been translated into English and originally written in Malay. Further analysis has shown that some of the titles have not been translated word-per-word:

Table 1

Novel	Translated Title	Original Title	Word-Per-Word Translation
Novel 1	Jungle of Hope	*Rimba Harapan*	Jungle of Hope
Novel 2	Stumps	*Tunggul-Tunggul Gerigis*[i]	Sharp Stumps
Novel 3	The Morning Post	*Hujan Pagi*	The Morning Rain
Novel 4	Wheels Within Wheels	*Lingkaran*	Circular Motion

Out of the 4 translated titles, only Novel 1 has a title that matches the original version. Novel 4, especially, has been translated as according to the translator's own interpretation. I would argue then that the translator of Novel 4 had relied on her 'understanding' of the original title, and thus translated it as per according to her *own* conceptual system.

Here, I am supported by Lakoff:

> Accurate *translation* requires correspondences across conceptual systems: *understanding* only requires correspondences in well-structured experiences and a common conceptualising capacity.
>
> (Lakoff 1987: 312)

The translator is believed to have mapped her understanding of a 'circular motion' onto a projection of 'wheels' - a basic experience shared by both speakers in the Malay and English cultures. This means that her language is *shaped* by her cultural knowledge and world-view; a proponent then of the 'soft' version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.

Another noticeable feature when translating common phrases in Malay into English deals with descriptions pertaining to the notion of love. 'Terms of endearment', in particular, are not translated per se but, rather, based on understanding. An example is the term 'sweetheart' which has been translated for the word '*buah hati*'. A word-per-word translation would, more accurately, be 'the fruit of my heart'. This, of course, renders the term unromantic and is impossible for us to connect it to a concept of love - it is more suitable then for a phrase in a medical journal. Other examples are as follows:

Table 2

Malay Word	Word-Per-Word Translation
a) intan payung	the umbrella of my gem
b) pengarang jantung	the composer of my liver
c) cahaya hati	the light of my heart
d) mahkota hati	the tiara of my heart
e) mata hati	the eye of my heart
f) cinta hati	the love of my heart
g) jantung hati	the liver of my heart

Except for examples (c) and (f), which have been translated word-per-word and are more commonly found in English, the rest of the terms do not sound as 'romantic' and 'fanciful'. This is especially true for the 'liver' connotations. The only possible explanation for using the word 'liver' is due to the fact that in the Malay culture, the 'liver' is considered as a special delicacy and only served during wedding ceremonies.

In addition, when describing the process of falling in love or being in love, some translated phrases are found to be inaccurate sentence-by-sentence translation. A common phrase is:

Example C: *Dari mana datangnya sayang?*
Dari mata turun ke hati.

which has been translated as:

Where does love come from?
From the eyes down to the heart.

Interestingly, this is a phrase generally found in English. This is also one that has been translated word-per-word. Thus, it obviously does not take the linguistic relativity notion into consideration due to the universal nature of the conceptual systems of both languages.

Other examples, which corroborate how linguistic relativity is virtually inapplicable and thus impossible, are as follows:

Example D: *Lidah kelu untuk berkata,*
Bila mata bertentang mata.

The phrase has been translated into 'I become tongue-tied whenever our eyes meet', a familiar expression in English. However, a word-per-word translation would be: 'My tongue is tied to say anything when the eye meets the eye'. In

Example E: Bila mata bertentang mata, mulut membisu,

the word-per-word translation would be 'When the meets the eye, the mouth becomes dumb'. The more acceptable phrase found in English is 'When our eyes meet, I become dumbstruck'.

Obviously, the translator is able to understand the language even if she had opted to use a different kind of vocabulary - one that can be fitted into the target language. This observation then corresponds to the assertion by Lustig and Koester in relation to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis:

> The influence of a particular language is something you can escape; it is possible to translate to or interact in a second language. But as the categories for coding or sorting the world are provided primarily by your language, you are predisposed to perceive the world in a particular way, and the reality you create is different from those who use other languages with other categories.
>
> (Lustig and Koester 1999: 191)

To them, the Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis, which asserts that language determines our thoughts and culture, is false.

5 The Translation Dilemma

All the given examples deal with the concepts of 'imagery' and 'metaphor'. Translating the metaphors from Malay into English means relying not only on the conceptual and cultural system, but also on whether or not the cultural systems in Malay corresponds to that of English. Although this is done at the expense of losing the essence and the flavour of the original version, this is not the core issue. In fact, when translating, we always bring forth foreign terms and try to explain what they *mean* in our own language. Rossi-Landi explains:

> Every culture is capable of being informed IN its language as to the limitations of its own experiences, including those OF the language itself; and it is also possible to complete any language and thus any culture with certain aims in view.
>
> (Rossi-Landi 1973: 54, original capitals)

To translate is also to take into account not only our understanding and knowledge of words but also the cultural frames of reference and meanings. McCarthy and Carter (1994: 155) state: 'Implicit in our analysis was a view that language is not unproblematically transparent and neutral; language is a site in which beliefs, values and points of view are produced, encoded and contested'.

This then relates to the dilemma in question: is translation possible? If so, what does this say about the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? In looking at the examples given, the

possibility of translation of any description of reality from Malay into English is justifiable. Even though some aspects of reality may be more difficult to describe in one language than another; this line of thinking supplies another argument *against* the 'firm' view of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. It is suggested therefore that translation of metaphors from Malay into English, as exemplified above, supports the 'softer' version of the hypothesis - that language *shapes* and *reflects* our thought and culture.

There have been debates that the linguistic relativity is dismantled by the paradox of translatability - an oft-cited example is Whorf's own work on Hopi language where his own categories on English did not stand in the way of learning or translating Hopi. Thus, linguistic relativity is a fallacy. In relating this to the above examples, the translatability paradox is not in accordance with or refutes the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. This is because both languages are loaded with their own cultural resources for building bridges to the other language, and to the speakers, As Schultz contends:

> One has to grasp the *situation* before one can make sense of words and sentences, or know which words and sentences in one language can be used to gloss which words and sentences in another language.
>
> (Schultz 1990: 126)

It is assumed that to translate from language A to language B on a word-per-word or sentence-by sentence level is not acceptable simply because it is based on the foundation that one language can be mapped onto another by disembodied, decontextualised notions. I would agree with this view then as it is quite unrealistic to rely on a word-per-word translation without taking contexts into account. Bearing in mind issues like cultural assumptions and differences, translation then should be carried out based on the 'softer' version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis; most importantly via *understanding.*

The onus eventually lies on the translator whose task seems paradoxical: how do we highlight the cultural values of those who speak the language we are translating without obscuring the very real differences in the way we use our language to talk about the world? It is believed then that translation does, and *needs,* to take thoughts and cultural norms prevalent in a particular language into consideration. This is verified through the 'softer' version of linguistic relativity - that language reflects and shapes our culture and how we perceive the world.

To support the 'firm' view of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is to deny that translation is possible - that people do not have access to another's language and that we perceive the world differently. Perhaps we do differ in certain areas but, in general, we do share the same basic experiences. This can be seen through the rise of many speakers who are not only bilingual, but also multilingual. It is *because* we are able to share and encode certain basic experiences that we use our language - in order to intermingle with other aspects of our culture or to reinforce the cultural patterns we learn.

6 Conclusion

In retrospect, I am certain that differences in the words and concepts of a language do contribute to the process by which one person can shift from one language to another. This is due to the existence of the vital interrelationship among linguistic relativity, translation and culture. The paramount understanding is best summarised by Lustig and Koester:

> Because language shapes how its users organise the world, the patterns of a culture will be reflected in its language and vice-versa.
>
> (Lustig and Koester 1999: 188).

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Uses of the imperative with the progressive form in English

Christopher Williams

While it is true that much research has been carried out by linguists into the question of non-progressive and progressive aspect in English, one area that has so far received relatively scant attention, as Hirtle rightly observes (1995: 275), is that of the imperative form. In an article of mine (Williams 2001a) on non-progressive and progressive aspect in English in general, I briefly outlined one or two of the aspectual features characterising the imperative form. In this present article I wish to explore the question of the progressive imperative in rather more detail.

As a preliminary observation, we must make a distinction between *perfectivity* and *imperfectivity* as this will help us to define the issues concerning the progressive imperative with greater clarity. Perfectivity has to do with situations that are perceived as being essentially complete and are thus viewed in their entirety, to which, as they stand, nothing more can be added. They present the totality of the situation referred to 'without reference to its internal temporal constituency: the whole of the situation is presented as a single, unanalysable whole, with beginning, middle, and end rolled into one; no attempt is made to divide this situation up into the various individual phases' (Comrie 1976: 3). An imperfective situation is perceived as being in some way incomplete, i.e. something can always be (potentially) added to the situation in order to make it complete; it makes 'explicit reference to the internal temporal constituency of the situation (…) Another way of explaining the difference between perfective and imperfective meaning is to say that the perfective looks at the situation from the outside, without necessarily distinguishing any of the internal structure of the situation, whereas the imperfective looks at the situation from inside, and as such is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation' (Comrie 1976: 4). On the basis of the hypothesis that I shall be proposing in this article, non-progressive imperatives in English always imply a situation of perfectivity, while progressive imperatives always imply a situation of imperfectivity. Thus, as far as the imperative is concerned, the non-progressive form refers to situations that are seen in their entirety, while with the progressive form situations are always perceived as being in some way partial and incomplete.[1]

Another preliminary observation is the fact that 'imperative sentences by definition express an event yet to be actualized. This points to the fact that its event time is represented as prospective' (Hirtle 1995: 275). Put in very elementary terms, the imperative form uses a present tense construction but refers to commands, invitations etc. which can only be carried out at some moment in the future subsequent to speech time.

It should be pointed out that while the second person imperative can have either singular or plural reference, I shall be using the term 'second person imperative' without making any further specification as to whether the situation refers to one or more persons since such specification would appear to be completely superfluous for the purposes of this article.

Finally, I shall be referring to the simple form as the non-progressive form, while I shall be referring to the continuous form (sometimes known as the expanded form) as the progressive form.

As is well known, the imperative in English can refer either to the second person imperative, as in

(1a) *Go away*
(1b) *Please sit down*
(1c) *Don't make a noise*

or the first person plural, as in

(2a) *Let's go away*
(2b) *Let's sit over there*
(2c) *Don't let's be late* (or *Let's not be late*).[2]

So infrequent is the use of the progressive form of the imperative in English[3] with respect to its non-progressive use that some grammarians have tended to ignore those relatively rare cases where progressive imperatives can be found.[4] The reason for the marked predominance of the non-progressive form is self-evident insofar as, when we use the imperative form, we are thinking about an action which must be performed in its entirety in order to be carried out correctly. When used in the non-progressive form, the situation – as has already been stated – is clearly viewed as being perfective, precisely because it is perceived in its entirety, from start to finish, without reference to its 'internal temporal constituency'.

However, in certain grammatical studies we find (generally brief) references to the possibility of using the progressive form of the imperative, though in most cases examples are given only of second person progressive imperatives, while instances of the progressive imperative in the first person plural are generally not taken into consideration – paradoxically, as we shall shortly discover, insofar as the progressive imperative would appear to be more widely used with the latter than it is with second person imperatives.

Generally speaking, then, the imperative is not used with the progressive form, though there are limited contexts where its use is possible. We shall now be taking a look in more detail at the contexts in which the progressive form can be used. My analysis will be based on two different types of situation in which the progressive imperative can be found:

a) *where the event described by the progressive imperative is perceived as either occurring simultaneously with some other situation or as being in progress at some moment in the future*;

b) *where the event described by the progressive imperative refers exclusively to the present state of affairs and is not necessarily perceived as occurring simultaneously with some other situation.*

The difference is a crucial one which has repercussions in terms of restrictions on the usage of the progressive imperative. As we shall see shortly, progressive imperatives in type **a)** may be used freely both with the second person and with the first person plural, while progressive imperatives in type **b)** would appear to be more widely used with the first person plural.

We shall begin by studying cases of the type **a)** variety, as in:

(3) *Be reading the paper when your sister comes home. She'll never suspect anything's wrong*.

In this situation the hearer is urged by the speaker to perform the action of reading the paper, but the progressive form is used because the speaker perceives the action as already being in progress at the time of the sister's return. If we put the imperative into the non-progressive form, i.e.

(4) *Read the paper when your sister comes home. She'll never suspect anything's wrong*

the perspective is rather different in that, in (3) it is implicit that the hearer is not being asked to perform the action of reading the newspaper in its entirety – even a 'partial' performance of the action of reading the newspaper would suffice to satisfy the demands of the speaker – while in (4) the implication is that the activity must be carried out in its entirety. Obviously this should not be interpreted in the sense of reading the entire newspaper from start to finish but in the sense that the activity of reading the newspaper should constitute a 'complete event', i.e. it is perceived perfectively as a situation that is 'homogeneous and self-contained' (Bache 1995: 74).

Bertinetto (1997: 73) provides the following example of a progressive imperative of the type **a)** variety:

(5) *Be working when the boss comes!*

where, once again, the imperative situation is perceived as merely being in progress at the time some other situation comes into being without implying that the hearer must carry out the order to work in its entirety.

Davies observes that the progressive imperative 'allows the speaker to tell the addressee, not merely to do something, but to be in the process of doing it at some particular moment' (1986: 15-16), and includes a sentence using the progressive imperative situated at a moment in the future without reference to any other situation occurring simultaneously:

(6) *Be waiting on the corner at six.*

It is worth observing immediately that the progressive imperatives in (3), (5) and (6) can be applied not only to the second person but also to the first person plural, i.e.

(7) *Let's be reading the paper when your sister comes home. She'll never suspect anything's wrong*

(8) *Let's be working when the boss comes!*

(9) *Let's be waiting on the corner at six.*

As far as I can see, in type **a)** situations with the progressive imperative there would appear to be no restrictions on using either the second person or on the first person plural. In other words, wherever the second person is used it is also possible to find contexts in which the first person plural could be used, and vice versa.

Besides cases in which a situation is perceived as being in progress prior to the time when some future action (i.e. the one referred to with the progressive imperative) comes into being – as in sentences such as (3) and (5) in which the subordinate clause is generally introduced by 'when' – it is also possible to find type **a)** situations using the progressive imperative which run parallel with some other situation but where the two activities come into being at (roughly) the same time. These sentences are generally introduced by 'while' in the subordinate clause, as in

(10) *Be doing something useful while your father goes round to the post office.*

Here the logic is similar to the point we discussed previously in relation to (3): the progressive form is used to indicate an action in progress while some other event takes place. The only difference is that, in (10), the two actions (i.e. that of the hearer doing something useful and that of the father going round to the post office) are presumably seen as beginning at the same time and as occurring simultaneously, while in (3), as we have already remarked, the action of reading the paper will have already begun before the sister has returned home. In (10) we can freely substitute the second person imperative with a first person plural imperative. Conversely, a sentence such as

(11) *Be getting on with this report while I go to the meeting*

can, of course, be replaced by a first person plural imperative only if we change the subject of the subordinate clause, as in

(12) *Let's be getting on with this report while our boss goes to the meeting.*

In all the cases we have seen so far relating to type **a)** situations, with the exception of sentence (6), the progressive imperative has been used in sentences which also contain a

subordinate clause starting with either 'when' or 'while' (of course, it may be possible to use other time adverbials such as 'until', as in *Be working until I tell you to stop*). However, it is perfectly feasible to find sentences referring to type **a)** situations which do not contain a subordinate clause if the context makes the 'simultaneity reading' perfectly clear, as in

(13) *Right. I've just got to go to this meeting for an hour. Be getting on with the report, will you?*

In this particular context the inclusion of a subordinate clause such as 'while I go to this meeting' becomes clearly superfluous.

One other feature which turns out to be of decisive importance and which characterises all the situations of the type **a)** variety is that they may refer either to the immediate present or to some other moment in the future that is *completely detached from the present moment*.[5]

In order to clarify just how crucial this point is we shall now turn to certain instances of type **b)** situations, i.e. where the progressive imperative form refers to a present situation requiring immediate action, as in

(14) *Let's be going, it's late.*

Unlike most cases of the type **a)** variety which contain subordinate clauses with 'when' or 'while' etc., here there is no idea or implication of simultaneity, i.e. of the situation referred to with the progressive imperative form running parallel with or beginning before or after some other situation has come into being. In (14) it is the present situation which calls for immediate action.

As is well known, the non-progressive imperative form can always be used in contexts that refer to situations completely detached from the present moment,[6] e.g.

(15) *'There's a free jazz concert on in town tomorrow'. 'Great. Let's go'.*

In this case the progressive imperative

(16) *'There's a free jazz concert on in town tomorrow'. *'Great. Let's be going'*

would be quite inappropriate, precisely because the imperative refers to a situation that is located in a future time that is detached from the present moment. Conversely, if we re-examine sentences (3), (5), (10) and (11), we may note that the situations may refer either to the immediate future or to some other time hours, days or even weeks ahead. For example, sentence (11) could refer to the immediate future or it could be an instruction given to a secretary concerning the following day's work schedule.

On the contrary, it would appear that (once again, taking for granted the proviso made in note 5) *where there is no idea of an event occurring simultaneously with the exhortation expressed by means of the progressive imperative, progressive imperatives can only refer to a present situation – i.e. to a situation that is already 'in progress' – requiring immediate action*. Another example could be as follows:

(17) *Let's be getting on with correcting these papers, otherwise we'll be here all day.*

A closer examination of sentences (14) and (17) highlights the fact that while it is possible to substitute the first person plural imperative with a second person imperative in (17), thus yielding

(18) *Be getting on with correcting these papers, otherwise we'll be here all day*

the same substitution in (14) leads to the distinctly odd-sounding

(19) *??Be going, it's late.*

There would therefore appear to be greater restrictions on the use of progressive imperatives of the type **b)** variety with the second person than there are with the first person plural. Such restrictions would seem to be connected to the general incompatibility of using second person progressive imperatives with intransitive verbs when not followed by some subordinate clause (as we have said, type **b)** situations tend to be found where there is no idea of another event occurring simultaneously, i.e. where there is no subordinate clause). For example, (5) is perfectly acceptable, while the straightforward

(20) *??Be working*

without the subordinate clause sounds as unacceptable as (19).[7] If we invert (5) by putting the subordinate clause before the main clause, the result would seem to be equally unacceptable:

(21) *??When the boss comes, be working.*

However, as we have already seen, it is possible to find cases where the progressive imperative in the second person may be used transitively without there being any suggestion of simultaneity with some other situation. One example can be found in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* in the Book of Revelation, 19:5:

(22) *Also, a voice issued forth from the throne and said: 'Be praising our God, all you his slaves, who fear him, the small ones and the great'.*[8]

One final paradox remains to be solved. In my introductory remarks I stated that all progressive imperatives are imperfective because they imply a situation of

incompleteness insofar as they are perceived as being in progress. The imperfective nature of progressive imperatives with regard to type **a)** situations has already been clarified; in other words, in sentences such as (3), (5), (6), (10) and (11), the speaker is not implying that the activity referred to in the imperative form need be carried out in its entirety. What is important is that it should be in progress simultaneously with some other situation or at some given moment in the future. In this respect there are close analogies with certain uses of the future progressive where the latter is used purely to indicate that some future situation will be in progress at a given moment in the future, as in

(23) *This time tomorrow I'll be sunbathing on some beach on Corfu.*

On the other hand, in type **b)** situations, i.e. where there is no suggestion of simultaneity with some other situation or reference to some future time as in (6), the progressive imperative refers to cases requiring immediate action, as in (14), (17) and (22). Yet in each case the speaker is not necessarily implying that the activity should not be carried out in its entirety. For example, when the speaker in (14) uses the imperative form, the activity of going can only be carried out in its entirety – either one goes or one does not go. If one is to fulfil the speaker's request or exhortation there can be no half measures or 'partial' performances as there can be when one is invited to 'be reading the newspaper'. So how can such a situation be viewed as being imperfective? And in what sense can it be viewed as being 'susceptible to change' as I claim all progressive situations to be (Williams 2001a)? In attempting to solve this 'imperfective imperative paradox' I believe that we are forced to arrive at a rather startling conclusion which has repercussions reaching far beyond the imperative form.

As we have already seen, with non-progressive imperatives it is possible to refer to some moment entirely detached from the present moment. The same also applies to the present progressive with future time reference, the future progressive, and the 'going to' form, e.g.

(24a) *Let's go to a free jazz concert tomorrow*
(24b) *We're going to a free jazz concert tomorrow*
(24c) *We'll be going to a free jazz concert tomorrow*
(24d) *We're going to go to a free jazz concert tomorrow*

But we cannot say

(25) **Let's be going to a free jazz concert tomorrow*

precisely because – as we have just observed – the progressive form here, which comes within the type **b)** variety, is only compatible with a present situation that requires immediate action, while we *can* use the progressive imperative in sentences such as

(26) *Come on. The jazz concert starts in half an hour. Let's be going*

because *the situation necessitating the immediate action of going to the concert is perceived as having already come into existence before the moment of speech*. In (26) we are already 'in the middle' of the imperative situation, as it were, even if speaker and hearer have not yet started to move. The situation that the speaker is 'in the middle of', namely that of the arrangement to see the jazz concert, has thus already begun, and the act of going – which in this case must be carried out in its entirety – *refers to the activity which has yet to be actualised and which is an integral part of the wider situation already in progress*. The use of the non-progressive form of the imperative, i.e.

(27) *Come on. The jazz concert starts in half an hour. Let's go*

implies that the exhortation to go is viewed perfectively as a complete, self-contained situation and *not* as the yet-to-be-actualised part of a wider situation already in progress.

The logic is basically the same here as it is if we analyse sentences (24b), (24c) and (24d). In all three cases we find progressive forms being used when referring to some future situation where there is the idea of some prior arrangement or of certain already existing circumstances heavily determining the situation specifically referred to by the verbal expression. In (24b) and (24d) the situation is strongly anchored to the present (Wekker 1975: 5; 128; 133), hence the use of the present tense: the speaker is primarily concerned with – and therefore focuses on – conveying that the future event has been planned, while in (24c) the speaker is focusing more on the future activity itself than on the actual arrangements that have been made. But in all cases here the use of the progressive form implies the existence of some prior arrangement that had already come into being before the moment of speech.

This would appear to lead us to the remarkable conclusion that all such cases of progressive sentences with future time reference (with the exception of 'pure' future sentences such as (23)), as well as all progressive imperatives referring to type **b)** situations, implicitly contain 'a piece of the past', as it were.[9] Of course, some situations may only contain a very small 'piece of the past', as in (14) where the situation of being late may have come into existence not long before the moment of utterance. Here we must distinguish between the moment of *realisation* of the lateness of the situation, which may be virtually simultaneous with the moment of speech, as in

(28) *Gosh, is that the time? Let's be going*

and the actual *start* of the situation of being late which must necessarily have begun (probably a few minutes) prior to the moment of speech. Conversely, other situations may contain a rather larger 'piece of the past' insofar as they are clearly perceived as having come into being some time well before the moment of utterance, as in (17) where, from our pragmatic knowledge of the world, we may presume that the awareness of having to correct the papers has already existed for some time (this could be a question of a few minutes, or a few hours, or even days).

Thus, the use of the progressive form in imperative situations of the type **b)** variety implies two things at the same time:

1) that present circumstances, which came into being before the moment of utterance, lead the speaker to believe that the situation requires immediate action;

2) that the situation of the present circumstances necessitating immediate action is perceived 'from the inside' while it is still in progress, and not 'from the outside' as a situation to be considered in its entirety. In other words, *the situation that is already in progress at the moment of speech is the one that starts with the coming into being of the prerequisite conditions for the performance (actualisation) of the exhortation made using the progressive form.*

Seen from this perspective we would appear to have solved the paradox of a sentence containing the progressive form of the imperative without excluding the implication that the activity must be performed in its entirety.

Of course, this idea of progressive situations implicitly containing 'a piece of the past' also applies to the present progressive, as in

(29) *We're having a cup of tea at the moment.*

While the situation being described clearly refers to the present moment, it is also equally clear that the situation began at some point prior to the moment of speech, even if only shortly beforehand. Indeed, any present situation that is in progress is automatically perceived as including some portion, however brief, of that same situation prior to the moment of utterance. This becomes self-evident if we consider a situation where, for example, someone suddenly thumps a person on the shoulder. The person that has just been thumped may well cry out

(30) *That hurts!*

In this situation the sensation of being hurt has only just come into existence, i.e. almost simultaneously with the moment of speech, thus excluding the possibility of resorting to the progressive form

(31) **That's hurting.*

In (30), then, we are dealing with an immediate and unexpected sensation of pain that has just come into being. But if the thumping were to continue, that same person might say

(32) *Stop it. You're hurting me*

where the progressive form sounds much more natural than the non-progressive form

(33) *??Stop it. You hurt me.*

On the other hand, not long after being thumped on the shoulder (pragmatically speaking, at least a few seconds afterwards), that same person may say either

(34) *My shoulder hurts*

or

(35) *My shoulder's hurting*.

In the first case the situation is perceived as a contingent state that holds at the present moment, while in the latter it is seen as a sensation that is still in progress. But one of the crucial factors in using the progressive form is that the pain has already commenced at least several seconds before the moment of utterance.

It would appear to be the case that *all* uses of the progressive form in English refer to situations that are in progress, i.e. they all have progressive aspect. This statement might appear to be a truism until one starts observing the comments of linguists of the calibre of Renaat Declerck who affirms (1991: 165), in relation to the progressive future tense, that 'The future continuous can be used to refer to the post-present *without implying progressive aspect'* (my italics). I hope that the observations I have made here should now clarify in what way such situations do in fact imply progressive aspect.[10] In cases of 'pure future events' (Declerck 1991: 165), as in sentence (23), the situation of lying on the beach is imperfective and thus has 'an internal situational focus' (Bache 1995: 74), i.e. it is being viewed 'from the inside' and is not seen in its entirety. In other words, the situation of lying on some beach on Corfu may have already begun before and may continue for some time after the time specifically referred to by the speaker. But in my view this imperfective aspect also applies to those future situations that are 'seen as forming part of the normal or expected pattern of events' (Bache 1995: 74). The examples of future progressives of the latter type given by Declerck, e.g.

(36) *He won't be defending his title this year, because he is injured*

or

(37) *It's a holiday tomorrow. Everybody will be going to the seaside*

do in fact have progressive aspect in that (as I have already stated in relation to progressive imperatives of the type **b)** variety) it is the wider situation which began with the coming into existence of the prerequisite conditions for the performance – or non-performance in the case of (36) – of the future activity specifically referred to that is already in progress at the moment of speech. It is worth pointing out, once again, that the actualisation of the activity specifically referred to (i.e. where the progressive form is used) still has to begin, but the speaker's decision to use the progressive form here implicitly informs the hearer that the speaker has in mind a more general situation that

came into being before the moment of utterance, and *it is that situation which is still in progress*. If the speaker is not interested in conveying that the overall situation being taken into consideration contains a 'piece of the past' and involves some prior arrangement or some already existing state of affairs that crucially impinges on the verbal situation specifically being referred to, then it is more likely that the non-progressive form will be used. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that the specific situation referred to using the non-progressive form is not strictly related to the existence of some previously existing state of affairs. For example, if we say

(38) *It's a holiday tomorrow. Everybody will go to the seaside*

this could either be interpreted as an example of 'pure' future tense or (much more feasibly) in its epistemic sense as a prediction that is based on one's knowledge of the overall situation. The crucial difference here with respect to (37) (which, according to one possible interpretation, could also be represented as a prediction) is the speaker's perception of the general situation: in (37) the speaker views the overall situation imperfectively, i.e. 'from the inside' as something in progress that still requires the actualisation of the situation specifically referred to in the second sentence, while in (38) the speaker views the situation specifically referred to in the second sentence perfectively, i.e. 'from the outside' as a complete event that is 'self-contained' and 'homogeneous'.[11]

After this lengthy digression, let us return more specifically to the question of the imperative form. While on the subject of future progressives, it is worth underlining the close connection between the imperative form and the future tense. This emerges clearly if we consider the tag forms generally used with imperatives where, irrespective of whether the progressive form or the non-progressive form is used, the second person imperative generally takes the 'will' tag while the first person plural imperative generally takes the 'shall' tag:[12]

(39a) *Get on with this exercise, will you?*
(39b) *Be getting on with this exercise, will you?*
(39c) *Let's get on with this exercise, shall we?*
(39d) *Let's be getting on with this exercise, shall we?*

Indeed, there would often seem to be little difference, pragmatically speaking, between the first person plural imperatives given in (39c) and (39d) and their equivalent forms in the future tense, i.e.

(40a) *Shall we get on with this exercise?*
(40b) *Shall we be getting on with this exercise?*

In general, the interrogative form of the future continuous, as Declerck (1991: 165) rightly points out, is 'often used as a polite way of asking about someone's plans', as in

(41) *Will you be going into town this afternoon?*

Once again, the progressive form here suggests some implicit reference to the possibility of an arrangement already in existence before the moment of utterance.

The inclusion of tag forms with imperatives, both with non-progressives and with progressives, tends to reinforce the idea of asking about the hearer's *availability to perform a certain task.* The presence of tag forms with first person plural imperatives may in some (but not all) cases have connotations of politeness insofar as the tag form, with its interrogative structure, often implies tentativeness. In such cases the progressive form, as in (39d), may sometimes sound slightly more 'casual' with respect to the non-progressive form, as in (39c).[13] But with second person imperatives, in certain contexts such connotations of politeness may be wholly absent:

(42) *Turn that bloody radio off, will you?*

The fact that we find a future tag form while the main verb is located in the present is a clear illustration of the essentially hybrid nature of the imperative form in terms of its temporal collocation, hovering as it does midway between present and future. As regards the progressive form, as we have already seen, the type **a)** variety may often tend to be projected more strongly towards the future, while the type **b)** variety is invariably anchored very strongly to the present.

Notes

1. The question of perfectivity and imperfectivity in relation to non-progressive and progressive aspect in English is analysed more exhaustively in Williams (2001b).

2. For the purposes of this article I shall be ignoring all other forms which have strong imperative connotations, such as *'Why don't you be quiet ?'*, *'You'll do as I say, or else'*, etc. For an exhaustive account of the syntactic characterisation of the imperative, see Davies (1986). For reasons of space I shall also be largely (though not entirely) ignoring the semantic differences between second person imperatives and first person plural imperatives.

3. In many languages, such as French and Italian, it is impossible to use the imperative with the progressive form.

4. For example, Davies's 275-page monographic study of the imperative contains references to the progressive form on only four pages.

5. It goes without saying that sentences such as (6) which contain some future time reference must necessarily be detached from the present.

6. Hirtle (1995: 275) observes that 'any verb in an imperative use is referred without constraint to a place in time beyond the present of speech, to whatever future moment

suits the particular experience the speaker wishes to express. This contrasts sharply with most other uses of the simple form.'

7. Of course, most intransitive verbs without a subordinate clause are unacceptable in the progressive imperative with both the second person and the first person plural, but there are certain cases, e.g. *Let's be moving*, *Let's be getting on*, which sound fine in the first person plural but would be unacceptable in the second person.

8. *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures: Revised from the Original Languages by the New World Bible Translation Committee*, (1961, revised 1970), Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York Inc. Publishers, pp. 1336-7. I would welcome from readers other documented examples of such cases of second person progressive imperatives where there is no suggestion of simultaneity.

9. This 'piece of the past' feature of progressive aspect has occasionally been noted before by grammarians. For example, with reference to 'Progressive aspect referring to temporary happenings', Leech observes that 'With the Progressive Tense, the event (…) stretches into the past and into the future' (1971: 15). But the implications of this characteristic do not seem to have been fully appreciated by linguists.

10. Bertinetto, like Declerck, also suggests that there are cases in English where the progressive form is perceived perfectively, e.g. when he refers to sentences such as *'Mary was dancing for two hours'* and *'Mary was painting the wall for two hours'* where he hypothesises that such sentences are grammatically acceptable if they receive a prospective (i.e. future-in-the-past) reading. He then states that 'this would clearly be a terminative reading' (1997: 38) where 'terminative' is to be taken as being equivalent to 'perfective' (1997: 31). On the basis of my observations, however, this 'prospective' reading does not essentially alter my conclusion that *all* progressive situations are 'in progress' and hence imperfective insofar as they implicitly include some prior situation already in existence before the specific situation referred to came into being, regardless of whether the end of the situation is either known or knowable.

Wekker and Close likewise reject the idea of progressive aspect with reference to future progressive sentences such as *'She says: 'When he goes, I'll be going with him'*, where Wekker states 'In cases like these, as Close (1975: 257) points out, 'the usual meaning of progressive aspect is not intended.' There is no implication of an action in progress' (1976: 116).

11. As is well known, this aspectual difference concerning the non-progressive and the progressive form and the future tense clearly emerges in cases where a 'spur of the moment' decision is taken, as in

(i) *'The phone's ringing.' 'Don't worry. I'll go'*

or

(ii) *'What are you having to drink?' 'I think I'll have a dry Martini'.*

In both cases here the non-progressive future tense is used because the decision is made instantaneously, i.e. it comes into being simultaneously with the moment of utterance. Neither statement contains a 'piece of the past'. The future progressive form would be inappropriate here precisely because it would imply that the decision had already been taken some time before the moment of speech. (Of course, the future progressive form *'What will you be having to drink ?'* would be perfectly acceptable in the interrogative sentence in (ii) as an alternative to the present progressive insofar as both progressive forms relieve some of the pressure on the hearer who may feel slightly uncomfortable about having to make a snap decision on hearing the simple future form *'What will you have to drink ?'*).

12. See Swan (1997: 269, 466) for other variants of tag questions with imperatives. It is worth noting that while it would always seem to be possible to use the 'will' tag with second person imperatives even in the negative form using the progressive, e.g. *'Don't be reading the paper when your sister comes back, will you?'*, there appears to be no tag form available with first person plural imperatives in the negative form either with the non-progressive, e.g. *'Don't let's go just yet'*, or with the progressive, e.g. *'Don't let's be going just yet'*.

13. In his observations on 'distancing verb forms', where he provides (among others) the example *'I'm afraid we must be going'*, Swan remarks that the progressive forms 'sound more casual and less definite than simple forms because they suggest something temporary and incomplete' (1997: 159). Leech observes that 'the Progressive is a more tentative, and hence more polite method of expressing a mental attitude' (1971: 24).

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Modality and Ideology in Translated Political Texts

Dany Badran

Introduction

This paper explores the relationship/s between modality and ideology in two versions of the same political text: one in Arabic, the other, a translation of it into English. The main argument springs from the premise that the speaker's choice of modal expressions signals both the *degree* and *type* of involvement a speaker has in the content of her/his message, and consequently her/his ideological stance/s. In this sense, translation becomes a particularly delicate process which requires a high level of precision since any looseness in translating modal expressions can run the risk of presenting a possibly variant, even a radically different ideological stance than that in the original text. As a result, this paper attempts to provide empirical evidence of how looseness in translating modalised expressions does in effect present two different ideological positions in the texts analysed, an issue of extreme seriousness and of potentially grave repercussions in politics. This is done in the light of a revised approach which examines the relationship/s between the two main types of modality (deontic and epistemic) on the one hand, and ideology on the other.

Modality in English and Arabic

During the last few decades, several approaches springing from various perspectives have tried to provide a systematic account of modality in English by defining the term as well as categorising modals in general. These have based their accounts on a number of criteria: formal/syntactic, semantic, distributional, functional, pragmatic, and/or cognitive. Yet each approach has faced its own difficulties and has produced a more or less narrow and positioned account of what modality entails and which expressions to be included under the heading of modality. Their main drawbacks lie in the fact that most approaches have focused either exclusively or mainly on modal auxiliary verbs as the one class comprising, representing and summarising modality in general. Also, most approaches have aimed at presenting modality as a *neat* system, and this resulted in overemphasising one or another criterion which helped towards that goal. With some predominantly 'semantic' approaches, this precision in categorisation often led to an unrealistic view of modality which is not only decontextualised, but is also quite distant from the general intuitions of native speakers. On the other hand, some purely syntactic accounts (and by far the most popular) have viewed modality as a purely grammatical category, while the issue of meaning lay in the background.

Even some of the less restrictive accounts carry internal contradictions. For instance, Palmer's description of modality as an essentially 'semantic-grammatical' category (1990:1) is potentially paradoxical unless 'modality' refers to a very restricted set of modal auxiliary verbs. Even within this set, there are cases where semantic *and* grammatical criteria are of conflicting rather than complementary nature[1], and trying to account for modality within both the semantic and syntactic frames creates a dilemma.

Consequently, in a more inclusive account of modality, neither syntactic nor purely semantic criteria are appropriate. In fact, any practically useful account will have to be pragmatic in the sense that it would account for the possible range of interpretation. Such an account would have to sacrifice 'neatness' for 'inclusion'.

This position is indirectly reflected in Palmer's (1986) position when discussing modality cross-linguistically. Although he has reservations concerning his mentioned criterion (mainly because it lacks a structural foundation), that suggested in his account and which reflects a combination of semantic and pragmatic features is 'subjectivity'. A similar position is adopted by Coates (1983) whose main criterion for categorising modal auxiliary verbs is 'indeterminacy' with its three sub-factions.

These two criteria are explained and justified in the following manner. Firstly, Palmer argues that modality in language is 'concerned with subjective characteristics of an utterance' and could thus be defined as 'the grammaticalization of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions' (1986: 6). It is essentially 'the qualification of the categorical and the absolute as realized [in linguistics] within the code of language' (Perkins 1983: 18). This 'qualification' is the main indication of subjectivity since it represents an involvement of the producer of an instance of language in his/her production. More specifically it is an indication of the producer's point of view in terms of types and degrees of involvement. Secondly, as Coates argues, indeterminacy which is characteristic of all natural languages is of particular relevance to modal auxiliary verbs. Her three different types of indeterminacy exemplify various ways through which modals seem to have more than one sense of meaning in which the same forms are used (1983: 9). Indeterminacy, she argues, lies at the heart of the meanings and interpretations of modal auxiliary verbs and is therefore an indispensable criterion for categorising and sub-categorising such auxiliaries.

These two criteria are essential to point out since the notion of modality in Arabic is different from that in English. At the syntactic level, while there is a relatively neat formal system of modal auxiliaries in English, there are no close counterparts to that in Arabic. The only valid arguments for comparison are therefore the semantic-pragmatic ones since the areas of meaning and notions covered by modality are the meeting points for this category in different languages. Still, that does not imply that the same criteria carry the same weight in all languages. In Arabic, for instance, I argue that the notion of 'indeterminacy' is, although present, less frequent with Arabic modals. Most Arabic counterparts of the English modal auxiliaries are closer to the clearer English paraphrase of these relatively vague terms. Therefore, while this specific set of modal auxiliaries in English can open possibilities for more than one interpretation, their Arabic counterparts rarely do. This adds to the complexity of translating modal expressions and increases the risk potential of misinterpretation.

Consequently, since this predictably problematic area between the two languages, as far as modality is concerned, lies mainly in this set of English modal auxiliaries, this category will constitute the basis of my comparison and the bulk of my analysis. Moreover, in my intention to account for all modal expressions, with special emphasis

on modal auxiliaries in this study, I will be stressing the already discussed semantic-pragmatic criteria to serve as the basis for making the distinctions in the different types of modal expressions. The fact that there is more room for 'indeterminacy' in English makes this notion more fundamental to my analysis.

Where Ideology Fits in

Based on these semantic-pragmatic criteria, modality can be related to the notion of ideology. Ideology, according to Hodge and Kress (1993: 6) can be defined as 'a systematic body of ideas organized from a particular point of view', and this definition places considerable emphasis on the notion of subjectivity. Although the point of view referred to could be the aggregate sum of different sources of presenting reality, the role of the immediate producer's point of view is recognised as the last filter through which ideology is 'organised' and ultimately presented.[2] Here modality represents one way through which the speaker's point of view can be detected in an utterance. As Perkins (1983: 34) explains, modal expressions can be regarded as 'a realisation of a semantic system which intervenes between the speaker and some aspect of the objective world'. This interesting metaphor of intervention represents modality as some sort of a link, a mediation (or even an obstacle) between the speaker and reality and is thus a carrier of at least part of the speaker's meanings or intentions. In short, subjectivity is regarded as an indispensable notion which is associated with the use of modality, which in turn is associated with ideology.

Moreover the 'engagement' of the speaker in the content of his/her speech is a vague notion. To clarify it, we speak of different *types* and *degrees* of engagement which modality can reflect. This is an area where indeterminacy is the norm, and quite often, it is not in the least a straightforward task to decide on the sense in which modal expressions are used before they can be translated. At the same time, the effectiveness of this indeterminacy works hand in hand with one of the main objectives of ideology as defined by critical linguists. As Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Fairclough all agree, 'ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible' (Fairclough 1989: 85). In this sense, 'hearers can be both manipulated and informed, preferably manipulated while they suppose they are being informed' (Hodge and Kress 1993: 6). Here, through these less visible workings of ideology, modality plays a decisive role. It serves as a linguistic instrument which, in line with their ideological stance, language users can resort to in order to *reflect, refract* or totally *obscure* their views of reality. As a result, I argue that a reading of modality in a text can give us a clearer and more accurate idea about where the speaker really stands, at the ideological level.

Based on our semantic-pragmatic criteria, modal expressions in English fall mainly under the two main types or systems of modality. These are the epistemic and deontic which roughly speaking are concerned with 'language as information' and 'language as action' respectively (Palmer 1986: 121). The epistemic system, according to Simpson (1993: 48), is associated with 'the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence' (i.e. subjectivity) 'in the truth of a proposition expressed' and includes different types of

epistemic expressions like modal verbs, modal lexical verbs and epistemic modal adverbs, phrases and expressions. He adds to those a set of perception verbs which, following Perkins, he argues also achieve the same effects. He concludes that explicitly modalised utterances would signal the speaker's 'commitment' to the truth of the proposition in these utterances and would generally reflect (and usually undermine) the certainty and authority of these propositions.[3]

The second set is the modal system of duty since 'it is concerned with a speaker's attitude [again subjective] to the degree of obligation attaching to the performance of certain actions' (ibid. 47). This includes modal verbs and deontic expressions reflecting this attitude along with generic sentences which express categorical, timeless truths that are generally recognised and which the speaker does not expect to be disputed on, and evaluative adjectives and adverbs, the effect of which being a categorical assertive presentation of events and propositions on behalf of the speaker. Also, certain verbs describing thoughts and feelings related to the senses (verba sentiendi) are associated with deontic modality. All of these, along with boulomaic modality (indicating the wishes and desires of the speaker), Simpson argues, tend to have a strong assertive effect especially within literary styles of writing.

Consequently, the following basis for analysis are set. First of all, there are two different systems of modality reflecting the *type* of authority in an utterance. Secondly, each type of modality may vary on a scale determining the *degree* of authority and subjectivity in an utterance. Finally, both these characteristics are crucial in determining the speaker's position or ideological stance. As a result and for practical purposes, the most efficient way of fitting these variables in a working model is through the use of two continua. The advantage of using a continuum for categorising and analysing modal structures is that it gives us a chance to look at not only the *type* of involvement that a speaker has in his communicated message, but also the *degree* of involvement. Under the epistemic system then, the continuum reflecting degrees of certainty would include notions like **possibility, probability, necessity, prediction** and **factuality** ranging from the lowest to the highest degrees. Under the deontic system, the scale of obligation would range from **permission** to **command** including **duty, obligation and insistence.**

What is apparent from the following categories is that I have included those expressions of 'neutral modality' like 'factuality' and 'commands' in the continua. There are two reasons for that. First, I believe that the absence of explicit modality does not render such expressions 'unmodalised' or 'neutral' since they still express the speaker's highest degrees of certainty or obligation. In effect, they do communicate the ideological position of the speaker, and not accounting for them would present an incomplete picture of the degrees of strength and subjectivity of the ideologies involved. Second, this allows me to account for cases where statements of fact are translated as modalised ones. This is where the approach I follow is much more pragmatic than strictly semantic in nature since the goal is to see how different types of modalised utterances function in a variety of contexts of use in terms of strength and consequently, ideological effects.

In Halliday's view of modality as referring to 'the area of meaning that lies between yes and no' (1994: 356), such an analysis would be of paramount importance especially when applied to political discourse. Since language is a highly committing medium of communication, one way for language users to hover in this 'area of meaning between yes and no' is by using modalised expressions. Therefore, it is not in the least surprising to see a relatively higher frequency of such expressions in political discourse, and this is the case in the selected text. This type of foregrounding constitutes the basis for my selection.

The Background of the Text

The text under study is a political letter written by Gibran Tueni, the managing editor of al-Nahar, a leading Lebanese daily newspaper, to the son of the Syrian president at that time, Dr. Bashar Assad. The letter tackles an extremely sensitive political issue regarding the Syrian presence in Lebanon which was an undeclared taboo as far as political discourse was concerned. Indeed, this speech marked the beginning of a similar set of discourses by different prominent Lebanese figures[4] who reside in Lebanon. The sensitivity of the situation can be inferred from the following brief description. Lebanon is a very small country (about one third the size of Belgium and 25 times smaller than the UK) with an estimated 35 to 40 thousand Syrian troops in it who have been there (in varying numbers) since 1976.

Based on the extreme sensitivity of the issue, one would expect a high level of caution in the use of language and in selecting those expressions in which the room for misinterpretation is kept to an absolute minimum. This is a typical context where a loose translation of modal expressions can present a different ideological position regarding the issues involved and might, in the worst scenario, lead to disastrous consequences.

In order to analyse the effects of a loose translation of modal expressions, I propose to do the following. First, I will start by comparing a sample set of modal expression in the original Arabic text (AT1) with their translated English counterpart (ET) making amendments whenever deemed necessary and explaining these amendments. The sample would be indicative of the different types or patterns of deviation made in ET. Second, I will place the modal expressions in each text on the epistemic and/or deontic scales of modality based on the type of information they convey. The possible variance in terms of where the different sets of modal expressions cluster, under which category in which scale, will help draw a picture of the different types and degrees of involvement the producer (as opposed to the translator) has in the content of his text. This I argue will provide a reading of the ideological-political stance which the producer of the original Arabic text assumes, thus highlighting the dissimilarity between the Arabic text (AT1) and my own translation of it (AT2) on the one hand, and its English translation (ET) on the other. Finally, in the light of our findings, the consequences and implications of these differences are discussed in detail.

A More Accurate Translation of Modality

Comparing the original Arabic text to its English translation, we begin to see some patterns of discrepancy. These fall into three main categories. Modal expressions translated are either *stronger* or *weaker* on each scale, or they are placed on a different scale representing a different system of modality. This discrepancy starts with the first modal expression in AT1, /IsmEh li/ which should be translated as 'Allow me' but is translated as 'Please forgive me'. Ironically, this first modal is the least accurate translation in the whole text. As far as modality is concerned, 'allow me' is not a straightforward expression. In fact, it can have numerous interpretations which in turn reflect various degrees of power on behalf of the writer. Yet my argument is that these interpretations are, although quite varied, consistent.

Firstly, 'allow me' can be interpreted as a statement of **permission** falling under the least powerful category on the deontic scale. Looking at the mood of the sentence, however, we see the structure of an **imperative** which forms the most powerful category on the same scale. This presents a conflicting situation. Yet considering the fact that the producer of the text does not really wait for permission, (he goes ahead and writes the letter anyway), and considering the lower socio-political status that he occupies (as opposed to his addressee), it seems to me that neither permission (alone) nor command (alone) is communicated in this utterance. This is truly one of the more complex of utterances as far as modal analysis is concerned. However, it is one of the most communicative utterances and the most representative of the writer's ideology comprising many of the essential elements of what to me lies at the essence of political language, if such a category exists. This utterance I believe projects both that *lower socio-political status* of the writer as well as an element of *politeness* under **permission**. But is also foregrounds a very strong position (under **command**) in which the producer of the text considers it rightful for him to be able to express himself and is thus in no way guilt-driven. In this sense it is communicative, forceful and not offensive. This is in sharp contrast with the English translation which is not only weak, but also appears to be guilt-driven, thus foreshadowing the possible offensive content of the letter.

The second modal expression in AT1 is /jEstawZIbu/ which is derived from the verb /wEZEbE/ or the noun /wΘZIb/ meaning 'duty'. This is translated as 'necessitates' in ET. Although the meaning of each appears to be quite close, the controversy is that while a more precise translation of the modal in AT1 falls under the deontic scale, that in AT2 falls under the epistemic scale thus communicating a different type of information and commitment. In AT2, the moment 'requires' or even 'demands' frankness, while in ET, it 'necessitates' it. Here, the first is a more direct call for action.

The next modal expression translated in ET as '…politicians who have *perhaps* told you what (a) you *want to hear*, not what (b) you *should hear*…' suggests the following. Considering the political situation in Lebanon, the message put forward seems that of an implicitly direct relationship between what the addressee *wants* to hear and what he does hear as a result. This suggests the force of his desires which are eventually

transformed into reality. What he *should hear*, however, is in direct contrast with what he wants to hear. His 'duty' is to hear them but he does not 'desire' that. This is his fault, and it would be amended by the addresser. AT1, on the other hand, presents a different picture. First the verb of desire 'want' is absent in (a), and (b) is in the passive form. These are translated as follows: '…politicians who have *perhaps* reported to you what *makes you happy to hear*, and not always what *should be reported* to you…'. The effect of this change is that the ones blamed for not getting the information across are the Lebanese politicians rather than the addressee himself. Here, it is *their* duty to report to him the relevant information and not *his* duty to desire what he does not know. It is *their* judgement of what makes him happy to hear that constitutes the basis for what they report and not what *he* wants them to say.

In the second paragraph, similar translations are made. The expression /nE√tEbIru/ in AT1 is translated as 'believe' in ET. However, the literal meaning of this Arabic verb is 'consider' and not 'believe'. The verb 'believe' reflects some kind of emotional, faith-related commitment while 'consider' a logical, rational one. On the epistemic scale, the latter verb would be a much stronger one than the first. While 'consider' is almost a statement of **fact**, 'believe' is probably that of strong **possibility**.

In the fourth paragraph, we encounter a different type of looseness in translation in the utterance 'I *must tell* you quite frankly that many Lebanese *feel* that Syria's presence in Lebanon completely contradicts the principles of …'. The Arabic text puts forward two different modalised expressions. The first is /↔?ulu/, properly translated as 'I *tell* you'; the second, /jE√tEbIru/ again to be translated as '*consider'* rather than 'feel'. Practically speaking, what this means is that while in AT1 the expression is stated as a **fact**, in ET, it is some sort of self imposed **obligation**, or possibly, a socially imposed obligation. Moreover, the Lebanese position in ET is interpreted as a matter of *feeling*, a translation which indirectly puts forward the suggestion that what the Lebanese *feel* is unreliable and can **possibly** go either way; i.e. it could be real or unreal, right or wrong. In this sense, doubt is shed on their very position while in AT1 their position is a logical one. AT1 then presents a completely different picture where the information communicated is almost **factual** since it represents what the Lebanese *consider* to be the case. As discussed above, this is a *decision* based on a rational process.

Similar instances of translation are found throughout ET. Some of the most variant ones are the expressions translated as 'you *must* understand', 'Syria *must* recognize', 'we *must* be convinced' and 'it (Syrian) *must* deal with us'. In AT1, these expressions are either those of a straightforward statements of fact: 'you know', 'you know', or a much polite but strong form of request, 'what is *requested* is that Syria deal with us…'. The differences here have drastically variant effects. While in the first instance in ET there is 'indeterminacy' of meaning since the auxiliary 'must' can be interpreted as an instance of deontic or epistemic modality, this is not the case in AT1. But generally speaking, these four instances of the use of 'must' in this specific context are interpreted as part of the deontic system falling under **obligation**. In the light of this interpretation, the relationship between the addresser and addressee becomes that of the more powerful to the less powerful with the first telling the latter what he must do. The effect produced

here would be offensive to the addressee considering the reversed power relationship. The addresser in AT1, on the other hand, by using straightforward statements like 'you know' and a form of request such as 'what is requested', is not only being more polite thus preserving the status quo of the power relations, but he is also giving more credit for what his addressee knows for a fact. He is neither informing his addressee nor telling him what he must do in these statements. In fact, these statements serve as the common grounds of knowledge on which other more important requests are based.

After analysing a sample of different types of modal expressions and how these are translated, we can confirm the following patterns in translation, or rather, mistranslation. Mistranslated modals are either a) stronger or b) weaker than the original ones on either scale, or c) they can fall under a different modal system. Therefore, the next step is to see what the overall effects of these translations are and how this makes the original Arabic text and the translated English text so different. When grouping the modal expressions in each text under the epistemic and deontic scales, we get the following picture.

Under the epistemic scale of modality, we notice that modalised utterances in ET are grouped mainly under **possibility** or **necessity** (see table 1). The utterances under possibility predominantly address the Lebanese position with respect to the Syrian presence. The utterances under necessity, on the other hand, chiefly address the issue of what the addressee knows concerning the situation in Lebanon. In either case there is a problem. In the first, the Lebanese position is presented as a weak one, and in the second, the addressee's knowledge is presented as a matter of conclusion, not fact. What makes this even more problematic is the use of verbs like 'realize' and 'understand' (which represent internal processes arrived at through exerting effort at the personal level) the effect of which is quite condescending for the addressee when compared to those in AT1 (mainly, the verb know).

possibility (7)	**probability** (5)	**necessity** (8)	**prediction** ()	**factuality** ()
- politicians who have *perhaps* told you - we *believe* that fear can never help in uncovering the truth - What *would* the Lebanese reaction be following a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon? - How *would* this affect the	➔➔➔➔ ➔➔➔➔ ➔➔➔➔ ➔➔➔➔	- a moment that *necessitates* the utmost straightforwardness and candor. - You must realize that many Lebanese are not at ease -You must understand that there is bad blood between some Lebanese and the Syrian army, - ∅ that our generation inherited the civil war, but did not initiate it, - ∅ that we are not		

development of relations between the two countries? -*Would* Syria still have any true allies in Lebanon? - many Lebanese *feel* that Syria's behavior in Lebanon completely contradicts the principles of sovereignty - *it is essential* that our Lebanese generation *feels* reassured of Lebanon's independence	➔➔➔➔	warmongers, and - ∅ that there are no such things as eternal wars and eternal enmities. - You *must have undoubtedly realized by now* that the Lebanese are utterly devoted to their dignity … ➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔		

Table 1 representing ET's position on a scale of certainty.

This is totally different in Table 2. The clusters of modal expressions are a lot stronger falling mainly under prediction and factuality. The Lebanese position is a lot stronger since it is a rational matter (we *consider*) rather than (we *feel* and we *believe*). Moreover, the addressee is presented as someone who knows the situation pretty well. This achieves a different effect since the goal of the letter would not be an exhaustive lesson in the history of Lebanon, but rather a request for a re-evaluation of the situation in light of the Lebanese wishes and based on what the addressee already knows.

possibility (1)	**probability** ()	**necessity** (3)	**prediction** (5)	**factuality** (11)
- politicians who have *perhaps* reported to you …		- we *consider* that fear can never help uncover the truth … - many Lebanese *consider* the Syrian	➔➔➔➔ - What *will* the Lebanese reaction be following a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon?	➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔ - all there is to do is perform a simple and honest cost benefit mathematical operation - I *tell* you quite frankly that many Lebanese *consider* the Syrian performance in Lebanon - You *know* that there is blood between some Lebanese and the Syrian army in Lebanon.

		performanc e in Lebanon to be in complete opposition with the principles of sovereignty - *it is essential* that our Lebanese generation *be* reassured of Lebanon's independ-ence	➔➔➔➔ - What *will* the relationship between the two countries be like then? - *Will* there remain any true Syrian allies in Lebanon?	- And you *know* that our generation inherited the war and did not cause it, ➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔ - ∅ that we are not fans of eternal wars - and ∅ that there are no such things as eternal wars or eternal enemies. - And you *know* that the Lebanese hold on to their liberty - We address you to tell you that *it is essential* that our Lebanese generation *be* reassured of Lebanon's independence … - that this mentality *forms* the basis of its future policies

Table 2 representing AT2's position on a scale of certainty

Looking at Table 3, we see that the majority of the deontic modalised expressions fall under obligation. As already discussed above, the relationship between the addresser and addressee becomes that of the more powerful to the less powerful with the first telling the latter what he must do. This is both offensive and condescending considering the reversed power relationship, and it is consistent with the effect achieved under Table 1. Not only does the addresser doubt the addressee's knowledge of the situation (Table 1), but he also tells him what he is obliged to do (Table 2). What is also noticed is that most of these same expressions in AT1 are grouped under factuality in the epistemic scale. This of course presents a different position. There is no need for any kind of obligation since this is a matter of knowledge or lack of knowledge, not a matter of one teaching the other a lesson.

permission ()	**duty** (3)	**obligation** (11)	**insistence** ()	**command** ()
	- what you **should** hear about the opinions of many	- You must realize that many Lebanese are not at ease - I **must tell** you quite frankly that many Lebanese -You must understand that there is bad blood between some Lebanese and the Syrian army,		

	Lebanese - you **should make** a simple and honest cost benefit analysis - such a relationship **should form** the basis of its future policies	- ∅ that our generation inherited the civil war, but did not initiate it, - ∅ that we are not warmongers, and - ∅ that there are no such things as eternal wars and eternal enmities. - a generation that *will* someday **have to** shoulder the responsibility of building Syria's future. - Syria **must** recognize the sovereignty of Lebanese territory… - We **must be reassured** that Syria will not continue treating Lebanon with a victor's mentality - We **must be convinced** that Syria has decided to start dealing with free Lebanese politicians - it **must deal** with us as allies		

Table 3 representing ET's position on a scale of obligation

It follows then that in Table 4 there are a lot fewer instances of deontic modality than in Table 3. The main reason is that most of them are placed under the epistemic scale. Also, even with those expressions grouped under obligation, only one of them has the addressee as the grammatical subject of the sentence. The effect of this is an avoidance of a direct point of friction through which the addresser would sound too condescending, something which ET does not manage or possibly even try to achieve.

permission (1)	**duty** (4)	**obligation** (5)	**insistence** (1)	**command** (1)
- **Allow me** to address you, without knowing you personally, in this straight-forward article …	➔➔➔➔➔➔ - critical time which the region is going through and which **requires/ demands** of us the utmost straightforwardness - not always what **should** be reported - what is **requested/ asked**	➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔ - You **have to know** that many Lebanese are not at ease ➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔➔ - We **must be reassured** that dealing with Lebanon will not be done with a conqueror-conquered mentality. - We **must be reassured** that Syria has decided to start dealing with free Lebanese politicians	➔➔➔➔	➔➔➔➔

	for is dealing with the mentality of allies			

Table 4 representing AT2's position on a scale of obligation

Based on an analysis of modal expressions in each text independently, and comparing these to each other, there emerge two very different pictures and positions. The translated text, ET, presents a mixed picture. While it starts weak, with an apology, it proceeds to attack the addressee at a more personal level by both giving him no credit in terms of his knowledge as well as by blaming him directly for the situation in Lebanon and for what the Lebanese politicians do. The large number of utterances under **obligation** present a reversed power relation while most of the informative utterances indicating the Lebanese position is weakly placed under possibility.

The original text, on the other hand, presents a consistent picture. It does not launch a personal attack at the addressee as it opens the possibility for giving the Lebanese politicians part of the blame. A lot more credit is given for what the addressee knows and a lot fewer utterances are placed under **obligation**. All the informative parts that communicate the Lebanese position are placed under necessity or factuality thus highlighting a much stronger position than that in ET. Finally, and most importantly, the first modalised utterance sums up the ideological-political position of the addresser with respect to his addressee and all he represents. As argued above, the possible several interpretative dimensions of this utterance projecting both the lower socio-political status of the writer as well as an element of politeness under **permission** together with foregrounding a very strong position (under **command**) in which the addresser considers it rightful for him to be able to express himself is quite unique. In this sense it is communicative, forceful and not offensive. In short, it is very political.

In the light of these differences, and considering that the translated English text is targeted a specifically American audience, one wonders at the extent of divergence between the Lebanese and the American views concerning the political situation in Lebanon and how it is handled.

The way each text handles the issue presented shows the variance in positions and ideological effects. Although one can argue that both the original and translated texts seem to present a similar ideological stance when it comes to issues of freedom and the importance of independence and democracy, the main difference springs from the way in which these issues are tackled. As argued above, the Arabic text is much more cautious considering the extent of damage that can occur if adopting the more aggressive method of the translated text. The Arabic text is consistent in its positions while the English translation inconsistent. This, in effect, does reflect a variant ideological stance.

Notes

1. An example of such a dilemma is the auxiliary 'can' (in reference to ability) which does not strictly fulfil the criteria of a modal from a semantic point of view (mainly in terms of subjectivity) but is still (and arguably so) treated as a modal auxiliary because it fulfils grammatical criteria.

2. In my opinion, ideology can be better understood when defined at two levels: the first is a matter of perception, definition and organisation of different views and ideas; the second, a projection of these defined and organised views and ideas through language and different ways of life and social interaction. Of course, this is not always a conscious process, and this falls in line with the Critical Linguists' definitions of ideology and its effectiveness mainly through the representation of political views and social relations.

3. I believe that the terms 'confidence' and 'commitment' carry a suggestion that the speaker is quite conscious in communicating his position. Of course this need not be the case, and this is why I prefer to use the term 'involvement' which opens the way for the possibility that the speaker's position is not always that conscious.

4. Such figures include the Maronite Patriarch, Cardinal Sfier and the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, Mr Walid Jumblat.

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T2	T1
Please forgive me for addressing you so frankly at this delicate and decisive time in the history of our region -- a moment that *necessitates* the utmost straightforwardness and candor. You have visited Lebanon several times and met with many politicians who have *perhaps* told you what you ***want to*** hear, not what you **should** hear about the opinions of many Lebanese regarding Syrian policy in Lebanon.	ALLOW ME to address you, without knowing you personally, in this straightforward article at this delicate and critical time which the region is going through and which **requires/demands** of us the utmost straightforwardness and candor. You have made several visits to Lebanon and met with many politicians who have *perhaps* reported to you what MAKES YOU HAPPY to hear, and not always what **should** be reported about the opinions of many Lebanese regarding Syrian policy in Lebanon.
Many of these politicians speak more out of fear of Syria than love. However, we *believe* that fear can never help in uncovering the truth and in creating the kind of relationship we want. You must realize that many Lebanese are not at ease either with Syrian policy in Lebanon and or with the presence of Syrian troops in our country.	And many of these politicians fear Syria more than they desire it. As for us, we *consider* that fear can never help uncover the truth and develop the relationship to reach what we want and desire. You **have to know** that many Lebanese are not at ease either with Syrian methods in Lebanon or with the Syrian military 'presence' in Lebanon.
As a man of science, you **should make** a simple and honest cost benefit analysis of your country's policies in Lebanon to find out what these policies entail and what the Lebanese really think about them.	You are a man who believes in education/science. Therefore, **all there is to do is perform** a simple and honest cost benefit mathematical operation of the Syrian policy in Lebanon, study the reality of this policy, and study the true position of the Lebanese towards it.
I wish that you would ask yourself the simple questions: What *would* the Lebanese reaction be following a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon? How *would* this affect the development of relations between the two countries? *Would* Syria still have any true allies in Lebanon? Has the Syrian presence created friends or enemies in Lebanon during the last quarter century? I **must tell** you quite frankly that many Lebanese *feel* that Syria's behavior in Lebanon completely contradicts the principles of sovereignty, dignity and independence.	And if only you ask yourself the simple questions: What *will* the Lebanese reaction be following a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon? What *will* the relationship between the two countries be like then? *Will* there remain any true Syrian allies in Lebanon? Has the Syrian presence created friends or enemies in Lebanon during the last quarter century? I *tell* you quite frankly that many Lebanese *consider* the Syrian performance in Lebanon to be in complete opposition with the principles of sovereignty, dignity and independence.
To people of our generation -- the war generation -- Syria's presence in Lebanon has never meant anything more than periodic military and political disputes. Our only knowledge of Syrian policies we got from political elites that Syria helped install in power, and who did more to distort these policies than serve them.	Many of our generation -- your generation -- the war generation have known nothing of the Syrian presence except 'disagreement', both military and political. This generation has know nothing except what they it has seen, lived through, co-existed with, and heard from the political class which Syria helped install in power, and which distorted these policies more than served them.
You must understand that there is bad blood between some Lebanese and the Syrian army, ∅ that our generation inherited the civil war, but did not initiate it, ∅ that we are not warmongers, and ∅ that there are no such things as eternal wars and eternal enmities.	You *know* that there is blood between some Lebanese and the Syrian army in Lebanon. And you *know* that our generation inherited the war and did not cause it, ∅ that we are not fans of eternal wars and ∅ that there are no such things as eternal wars or eternal enemies.

You *must have undoubtedly realized by now* that the Lebanese are utterly devoted to their dignity, liberty, independence, and sovereignty, and that they are understandably angered when they *feel* that 'Syrian behavior' -- threatens these values. This is why they fought, died, were kidnapped, jailed, exiled, or fled.	And you *know* that the Lebanese hold on to their liberty, dignity, independence, and sovereignty, and *will* revolt when they *feel* that 'Syrian performance' (let us call it such) threatens these values. This is why they fought, were killed, were kidnapped, were jailed, were exiled, or they self-exiled.
We are addressing you as a representative of a new, youthful and progressive generation -- a generation that *will* someday **have to** shoulder the responsibility of building Syria's future. We want to tell you that *it is essential* that our Lebanese generation *feels* reassured of Lebanon's independence and of Syria's recognition of this independence. Syria **must** recognize the sovereignty of Lebanese territory and institutions, as well as the civil liberties that we hold sacred, and for which we have sacrificed so much over the years.	We address you as a representative of a new, youthful and progressive generation, which *might* take the responsibility of building Syria's future. We address you to tell you that *it is essential* that our Lebanese generation *be* reassured of Lebanon's independence and of Syria's recognition of this independence and the sovereignty of Lebanese territory and institutions, as well as the civil liberties that we hold sacred, and for which we have sacrificed so much over the years.
We **must be reassured** that Syria will not continue treating Lebanon with a victor's mentality, as just another Syrian province. We **must be convinced** that Syria has decided to start dealing with free Lebanese politicians who truly represent the people, rather than with those who merely submit to its diktat. We ***want to convince*** Syria that it **must deal** with us as allies, not vassals, and that such a relationship **should form** the basis of its future policies.	We **must be reassured** that dealing with Lebanon will not be done with a conqueror-conquered mentality. We **must be reassured** that Syria has decided to start dealing with free Lebanese politicians who truly represent the people and its history, rather than with those who merely submit to diktat. We ***want*** Syria ***to be convinced*** that what is **requested/asked for is** that Syria **deal** with us with the mentality of allies, and that this mentality *forms* the basis of its future policies.

The original Arabic text can be found at:

http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/nlc/arabic.pdf

Metaphor in Narrative and the Foreign Language Learner

Jonathan D. Picken

Non-native students in departments of English literature around the world face the challenge of developing the knowledge and skills necessary to make sense of literary texts, texts which often stretch the resources of the language to the limit to convey a particular poetic vision. Some students are linguistically well-equipped to meet this challenge when they arrive at university, but others, including many such students in Japan, are not. One way or another, these students have to develop communicative and literary competence simultaneously in the course of their student careers.

Developing appropriate EFL courses for students like this is a daunting task, and teachers are hampered by the fact that there is little research to guide them. Of course, there is a substantial body of publications on the role of literature in language teaching, but very little empirical work exists. Empirical studies on the development of aspects of literary competence appear regularly in journals such as *Poetics*, but most of this work is not primarily concerned with the particular problems of NNS students.[1] The present study aims to contribute to an understanding of these problems by looking at how entry-level Japanese students of English literature process creative metaphor in literary texts. Metaphor was an obvious choice for a study of this nature: As Steen (1994: 241) puts it, 'if literature is the kind of discourse which permits maximal subjective involvement of the reader, understanding metaphor in literature may be the epitome of this kind of reading experience'.

What does it mean to be able to understand metaphor? Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 153) famously claim that 'metaphor is primarily a matter of thought and action and only derivatively a matter of language'. This influential view has motivated a massive research effort by cognitive linguists and psychologists in the past decades, and there is now substantial evidence in support of the role of cognitive metaphor in the processing of linguistic metaphor (Gibbs 1994). The theory has also played an important role in metaphor-related applied linguistics work, from Nattinger (1988) to Boers (2000).

Lakoff and Johnson's approach to metaphor can be characterized as a top-down one: Cognitive metaphors such as ARGUMENT IS WAR guide people's understanding of conventional and unconventional linguistic manifestations of these metaphors. This is an important hypothesis but the emphasis on top-down processing at the expense of bottom-up processing is counterintuitive from the language teacher's point of view. As Goatly (1997: 42) puts it, 'cognitive metaphors have to find expression in some medium, and when that medium is language the form of the expression will have important consequences for their recognition and interpretation'.

These two views also have significant practical implications for the language teacher. The cognitive approach favours top-down methodologies such as awareness-raising or activation/teaching of relevant cognitive metaphors. Goatly's view, in contrast, suggests that teachers should help students by focusing on linguistic cues in the text that will allow them to identify and interpret the metaphors they encounter. Indeed, it may well

be that both approaches are needed: Linguistic cues may be more important for metaphor identification while cognitive cues may be more important at the interpretation stage.

The cognitive metaphor paradigm has dominated the metaphor research agenda for some time, and as a probable consequence of this, relatively little attention has been paid to issues of linguistic form. The present paper provides evidence that this imbalance needs to be redressed. To investigate the effect of linguistic form on the processing of creative metaphor in literary texts by NNS students, a group of 30 beginning Japanese students of English language and literature were asked to write their interpretations of a verbal metaphor located at the end of a very short story. It was found that a small difference in the form of the metaphor had a significant effect on the likelihood that this metaphor would be identified, and that this, in turn, had a major effect on the students' interpretations of events in the story: Those students who did not identify the metaphor invented alternative stories to fit their literal readings of the metaphor into the story as a whole.

Background: Processing metaphor in literature

Language is often considered to be rule-governed, but these rules can be broken, and this raises the interesting question of what happens in language processing when someone uses a metaphor and breaks the rules in the process. Good overviews of the many competing theories of metaphor and metaphor processing can be found in Gibbs (1994) and Ortony (1993), but one central issue that needs to be mentioned here is the question of whether processing involves one stage or two. Classical metaphor theory would suggest that there are two stages: People need to (1) establish the literal falsehood of a metaphorical statement, and (2) process the statement as a metaphor. Researchers in the tradition of Lakoff and Johnson, in contrast, argue that there is only one stage. In this view, the human mind is uniquely equipped to process a metaphor directly and this processing does not require a literal detour. Cognitive metaphors are the processing tool we use for this. Thus, thanks to the fact that we conventionally think that ARGUMENT IS WAR, we automatically understand what is meant when someone is described as being 'annihilated by the opponent' in a debate.

The discussion about stages in metaphor processing is especially lively with regard to the issue of online processing. Positions appear to be less sharply divided in research on the casual offline processing of literary metaphor. Although research in the Lakoff and Johnson tradition maintains that cognitive metaphor is also of central importance here (e.g., Lakoff and Turner 1989; Gibbs and Nascimento 1996), it also accepts the idea that this processing may consist of a number of stages. Thus Gibbs (1994: 116) argues for a distinction between the online 'immediate moment-by-moment' comprehension of metaphor and the nonobligatory processes of 'long-term reflective analysis': Recognition, Interpretation, and Appreciation. These three processes bear a strong resemblance to the five stages of metaphoric processing distinguished by Steen (1994), which include explicit metaphor identification and metaphor appreciation

At first sight, Gibbs' suggestion that Recognition may be one of the processes involved in the casual, offline interpretation of metaphor in literature appears to contradict the view that there is no literal detour in the processing of metaphor. In practice, however, there is no contradiction, because Gibbs clearly distinguishes between online comprehension of metaphor and the nonobligatory offline processes of Recognition, etc. Thus, when a reader encounters a metaphor in a literary text, there will firstly be 'immediate moment-by-moment' (Gibbs 1994: 116) comprehension, the one-stage process discussed above. After that, if the reader chooses to reflect on the text, there may be conscious Recognition that a metaphor has been used. Further Interpretation and Appreciation of the metaphor may follow.

Gibbs (1994: 109) produces substantial experimental evidence in support of his view that 'figurative language interpretation does not follow after an obligatory literal analysis'. However, linguistic studies of metaphor suggest that caution remains necessary about accepting this position. A variety of linguistic cues are available to draw attention to metaphors, as Goatly (1997) has pointed out. Depending on how these resources are used, some metaphors can be read literally and metaphorically, while others favour a metaphorical reading. Sentences 1 - 3 (below) illustrate the point. S1 could be literal or metaphorical. S2 excludes a literal interpretation thanks to the marker 'metaphorically.' S3 uses a prepositional phrase to mark 'drowning' as metaphorical. Brooke-Rose (1958) has pointed out in her discussion of similar verbal metaphors that 'drowning' could be literal in relation to the subject 'she' but that the grammatical link of 'drowning' with the prepP 'in her heart' renders a literal interpretation impossible. People can drown in the sea, a swimming pool, even a bath, but not in a heart.

1. *She was drowning.*
2. *She was metaphorically drowning.*
3. *She was drowning in her heart.*

Of course, it is unrealistic to discuss sentences 1 - 3 without reference to the context in which they occur. If sentence 1 is used in a context where a literal drowning is physically impossible, this may be enough to trigger a metaphorical reading. Literary texts, however, tend towards ambiguity. Thus, Goatly (1997:318) notes a characteristic 'lack of marking' of metaphor in modern novels and lyric poetry in his genre-based corpus of metaphor. This suggests that it will often be more difficult for readers of literature to decide whether they are dealing with literal or non-literal language. It is likely that NNS readers will face particular problems in this respect.

The study

In order to investigate the hypothesis that inexplicitness of metaphor in literary texts is a potential problem for NNS students of literature, two versions of 'Carpathia,' a very short story by Jesse Lee Kercheval, were prepared (see Appendix). The key difference between these two versions was the metaphorical penultimate sentence: 'She was drowning' in version 1, and 'In her heart, she was drowning' in version 2.[2] These

versions were distributed at random among a group of thirty first-year students of English language and literature at a women's college in Tokyo. The students were given roughly 20 minutes to read the story and to write explanations in Japanese of the story's final two lines. A number of key terms were explained in English and Japanese prior to the reading.[3]

If 'In her heart' were the only explicit indication in the text that 'she was drowning' is not to be taken literally, it could be argued that the experiment made identification rather too easy for the students who worked with this version of the text. Fortunately, there is another clear indication that the drowning is not literal: The text states explicitly that the mother 'was standing next to' her husband, and that they are therefore together at a welcome-home party rather than in the water somewhere. Thus, all students have explicit evidence that the mother is not literally drowning, but the students who got the text with 'In her heart' have more evidence than the students with the other version of the text.

Results

The students' explanations were analyzed for whether they had interpreted 'she was drowning' literally or not, and variation in the form of the metaphor appeared to play a highly significant role: Literal interpretations only occurred once in the group that got the version with 'In your heart,' but there were eight literal interpretations in the group of 15 students that got the story without this cue.[4]

It is important to stress here that these differences occurred even though all the students who went for a literal interpretation appeared to realize that the wife could not literally be drowning at that point in the story. Instead of interpreting the words metaphorically, however, they stuck to a literal meaning of 'drowning' but located the event in the past or treated it as a hypothetical event. Thus, it seems that context-based cues are not necessarily enough to trigger metaphorical readings, at least for students like those used in the study.

These literal interpretations obviously had to be fitted into the story as a whole, and as a result, the students ended up with a substantially different understanding of events in the story. The commonest strategy, used by seven students, involved locating the drowning in the past, the woman's own past in six of these cases. S17 is a good example: 'The heroine, a woman who was a mother, unconsciously turned her face away on remembering how nobody had come to the rescue when a ship had sunk when she was eighteen and even though she was pregnant.' S4 is an interesting case in this group, because her reading seems to have been influenced by the film *Titanic*:[5]

> She also has the experience of [nearly] drowning in the sea, [and] at that time her husband died trying to rescue her, she became a widow, gave birth to a child, [and] suffered terribly. She, who had suffered, and Father got

> married, bringing relief to her, who had suffered. The story emphasizes that women are on their own [and] how demanding it is to bring up a child.

In the film, Leonard di Caprio dies but his girlfriend is rescued. She remarries and has a child with her new husband. The film's story seems to be the source of S4's dying 'husband' and the 'remarriage,' neither of which occur in 'Carpathia' itself.

S15 has a different approach. The event is still located in the past, but this student appears to have decided that there was a real drowning of a pregnant woman that occurred when the Titanic sunk: 'Men should be put in the lifeboats too, the father said. Because when the pregnant mother was drowning there were no men there and so there was nobody to help her, who was drowning.' In this student's reading the pregnant woman seems to be a new character, not the writer's mother.

One student in this group, finally, interpreted the drowning as a hypothetical event. S5 wrote, 'she who was pregnant (the author's mother) felt that if she or her child were drowning they wouldn't be helped.' Thus 'drowning' still means physical drowning rather than something metaphorical such as 'suffering emotionally.' At the same time, because the event is located in a hypothetical future, there is no need to reinterpret the story to make sense of the reading. A similar approach was also found in one case in the 'In her heart' group. S11 wrote, '[She] could not overcome the fearful thought that she could have drowned in the sea. And nobody understood this thought [of hers].' Here, the drowning takes place in a hypothetical past.

While 8 of the 15 students in the group without the 'In her heart' cue took the metaphor literally, the lack of this cue did not prevent the occurrence of metaphorical readings in this group. A nice example of such a reading was provided by S20:

> She did not really drown. However, she, who was already pregnant, experienced a feeling of despair, being unable to escape from a married life with a husband who thought of women as nothing more than instruments for giving birth to children. The women and children on the Titanic were rescued, but nobody extended a helping hand to her.

The students (in both groups) who did not take the drowning literally, were quite consistent in their interpretations of the metaphor, with the vast majority relating it to the mother's emotions (17 students) in terms of despair, pain, shock, sadness, etc. Of the remaining four students, one student used a Japanese expression for sickness that can refer equally to physical and emotional sickness, and the other three were difficult to classify. S21, for example, wrote that 'the wife thought that her husband would go to another woman and child's place [and that] she would probably be left to herself.' It is difficult to relate these words to 'drowning,' and it is also unclear what the wife's feelings are about being 'left to herself.'

Discussion

All in all, then, the picture that emerges is that contextual cues *can* be enough to trigger metaphor processing, but that a grammatical marker is much more effective for this purpose, at least with students like the ones used in the study. When metaphor processing does not take place, as it did with over half of the students who did not get a grammatical cue, the result can be a dramatic reinterpretation of events in the story, even to the extent of introducing new characters.

At the same time, the study also suggests that cognitive metaphor did play a role, at least in the Interpretation stage. The moderately creative 'drowning' metaphor appears to be connected to the SAD IS DOWN metaphor, which is expressed in conventional linguistic forms such as 'I'm *depressed*,' 'I *fell* into a depression, ' and 'my spirits *sank*' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 15). 'Drowning' appears to be an Elaboration (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 67) of 'my spirits *sank*.' Indirect evidence of the relevance of the SAD IS DOWN metaphor can be found in the students' interpretations: As we saw in the previous section, the students who did not take 'drowning' literally overwhelmingly interpreted it as a negative emotional experience. No interpretations along the lines of, e.g., 'feeling stifled in the crowded room,' or 'consuming too much liquid,' or 'having trouble breathing' were found.

These findings need to be treated with considerable caution, however. They tell us something about the products of processing, but they provide no direct evidence of what happened in the actual online processing of the metaphor. Thus, it is perfectly possible that all students entertained the possibility of a metaphorical reading during online processing, but that some students ultimately rejected this possibility. By the same token, the students who ended up with a metaphorical reading may well have entertained, but rejected, a literal reading during online processing. Under the circumstances, the strongest claim that can be made for the present experiment is this: With regard to the *product* of metaphor processing by NNS of metaphor in literary texts, the linguistic form of the metaphor appears to play a highly significant role. Contextual clues alone are just as likely to result in a literal reading as they are to produce a metaphorical one.

This conclusion needs to be further qualified because another obvious limitation of the study is that it only used one story and one group of students. It will be necessary to work with other stories and different nationality groups of students before the findings can be generalized with any degree of confidence.

Conclusions

In L1 research, substantial evidence has been found to support the view that 'figurative language interpretation does not follow after an obligatory literal analysis' (Gibbs 1994: 109). The present study's main conclusion is that this view does not automatically apply to NNS students' interpretations of metaphor in literature. While this study did not

provide direct evidence of what happens in online processing, it demonstrated clearly that the linguistic form of a metaphor was strongly related to the question of whether the NNS used in the study would interpret this metaphor as a metaphor or as a literal event in the text world. A significantly higher number of literal readings of the metaphor occurred when the metaphor was not linguistically marked.

Among the students who ended up interpreting the metaphor as a metaphor, a strong tendency was observed to interpret it in terms of a negative emotional experience, with 'drowning' being interpreted as despair, pain, shock, sadness, etc. This consistency may be accounted for with reference to cognitive metaphor, possibly the SAD IS DOWN metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 15).

Perhaps the most interesting finding of the study was the fact that students who interpreted the metaphor literally ended up inventing alternative stories or story episodes in order to fit their literal readings into the story as whole. These alternative stories sometimes included new characters such as a second husband, who replaced a husband who had drowned, or a pregnant woman who had drowned. While this finding is extremely interesting, it also reveals a weakness of the theoretical framework used. Literal readings of metaphor may have been the trigger for these alternative readings, but metaphor theory in itself does not provide an account for them. Text world theory, which analyses metaphor processing in the context of text processing, may provide a more satisfactory framework for dealing with these particular findings (e.g., Werth, 1999; Semino, 1997).

Because the study only used one group of students, one story, and one metaphor, the findings are of limited generalisability. At the same time, they do suggest that further study with other nationality groups, stories, and metaphors or metaphor types is indicated. Research with other (nonfictional) genres could also be rewarding: Does the literal reading of metaphor occur in other genres and does this lead to differences in the students' overall understandings of the texts in which they occur?

Notes

1. For a study of how advanced EFL students process poetry, see Hanauer (in press).

2. Kercheval's original text reads 'She was the one drowning.'

3. This included the verb 'to drown.' In order to avoid relating a literal explanation of this word to its use at the end of the story, 'drowned' was written into the story at an earlier point (line 13), and the explanation was explicitly related to this line.

4. The differences between the groups are statistically significant: A chi-square test using the Yates correction factor for 2x2 test designs yields the value 5.714, which is significant at the .025 level.

5. I am indebted to my partner in life for this observation.

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Appendix: 'Carpathia'

It happened on my parents' honeymoon. The fourth morning out from New York, Mother woke to find the *Carpathia* still, engines silent. She woke Father; they rushed to the deck in their nightgowns. The first thing they saw was the white of an ocean filled with ice, then they saw white boats, in groups of two or three, pulling slowly toward the *Carpathia*. My father read the name written in red across their bows – *Titanic*. The sun was shining. Here and there a deck chair floated on the calm sea. There was nothing else.

The survivors came on board in small groups. Women and children. Two sailors for each boat. The women of the *Carpathia* went to the women of the *Titanic*, wrapping them in their long warm furs. My mother left my father's side to go to them. The women went down on their knees on the deck and prayed, holding each other's children. My father stood looking at the icy water where, if he had been on the other ship, he would have drowned.

When the *Carpathia* dropped off the survivors in New York, my parents too got off and took the train home, not talking much, the honeymoon anything but a success. At the welcome-home party, my father got drunk. When someone asked about the *Titanic*, he said, 'They should have put the men in the lifeboats. Men can marry again, have new families. What's the use of all those widows and orphans?' My mother, who was standing next to him, turned her face away. She was pregnant, eighteen. She was drowning. But there was no one there to help her.

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Abstracts

Comprehension and problem-solving in the literature classroom
Alan Durant (Middlesex University)

The aim of this paper is to suggest that students should be actively helped to exploit general psychological abilities in support of their linguistic competence. By making this point through discussion of a comprehension activity I have experimented with in ESL and EFL classrooms, I hope also to illustrate how development of reading skills can be supported by close-reading tasks based on unfamiliar and challenging passages, including unseen literary passages such as a short lyrical poem. Interpretive abilities acquired by means of a task-based approach have a notable advantage: they can be applied to texts other than those directly studied. But whereas the general role played by inference in discourse processing is widely acknowledged, teaching literary interpretation by means of inferential tasks carried out on unseen passages is often considered controversial.

Keywords: *comprehension, ES/FL, inference, literature, pedagogy, Wong Phui Nam.*

Linguistic relativity and the translation dilemma: reading between the lines in Malay literatures in English
Ida Baizura Bahar (Nottingham University)

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has generated great interest among linguists as to whether 'linguistic relativity' can be accountable as a tool to compartmentalise humans' capacity to express themselves in various modes. From another standpoint altogether, this hypothesis is utilised to provide some illuminating observations on the dilemma concerning the issue of translations. This paper looks at how linguistic relativity can be linked to the notion of translation in Malay literatures published in English.

Keywords: *culture, Malaysian literature, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, translation*.

Uses of the imperative with the progressive form in English
Christopher Williams (University of Bari)

While it is true that much research has been carried out by linguists into the question of non-progressive and progressive aspect in English, one area that has so far received relatively scant attention is that of the imperative form. In a previous article on non-progressive and progressive aspect in English in general, I briefly outlined one or two of the aspectual features characterising the imperative form. In this present article I wish to explore the question of the progressive imperative in rather more detail.

Keywords: *imperative, progressive, situation, tense and aspect.*

Modality and ideology in translated political texts

Dany Badran (University of Nottingham)

This paper explores the relationship/s between modality and ideology in two versions of the same political text: one in Arabic, the other, a translation of it into English. The main argument springs from the premise that the speaker's choice of modal expressions signals both the *degree* and *type* of involvement a speaker has in the content of her/his message, and consequently her/his ideological stance/s. In this sense, translation becomes a particularly delicate process which requires a high level of precision since any looseness in translating modal expressions can run the risk of presenting a possibly variant, even a radically different ideological stance than that in the original text. As a result, this paper attempts to provide empirical evidence of how looseness in translating modalised expressions does in effect present two different ideological positions in the texts analysed, an issue of extreme seriousness and of potentially grave repercussions in politics. This is done in the light of a revised approach which examines the relationship/s between the two main types of modality (deontic and epistemic) on the one hand, and ideology on the other.

Keywords: *critical discourse analysis, deontic, epistemic, ideology, modality, politics.*

Metaphor in narrative and the foreign language learner

Jonathan Picken (University of Nottingham)

Non-native students in departments of English literature around the world face the challenge of developing the knowledge and skills necessary to make sense of literary texts, texts which often stretch the resources of the language to the limit to convey a particular poetic vision. Some students are linguistically well-equipped to meet this challenge when they arrive at university, but others, including many such students in Japan, are not. One way or another, these students have to develop communicative and literary competence simultaneously in the course of their student careers.

Developing appropriate EFL courses for students like this is a daunting task, and teachers are hampered by the fact that there is little research to guide them. Of course, there is a substantial body of publications on the role of literature in language teaching, but very little empirical work exists. Empirical studies on the development of aspects of literary competence appear regularly in journals such as *Poetics*, but most of this work is not primarily concerned with the particular problems of NNS students. The present study aims to contribute to an understanding of these problems by looking at how entry-level Japanese students of English literature process creative metaphor in literary texts.

Keywords: *EFL, literature, metaphor, pedagogy.*

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Dr Val Durow
School of English Studies
University of Nottingham
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UK

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