Translating Cultures

This bestselling coursebook introduces current understanding about culture and provides a model for teaching culture to translators, interpreters and other mediators. The approach is interdisciplinary, with theory from Translation Studies and beyond, while authentic texts and translations illustrate intercultural issues and strategies adopted to overcome them.

This new (third) edition has been thoroughly revised to update scholarship and examples and now includes new languages such as Arabic, Chinese, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish, and examples from interpreting settings. This edition revisits the chapters based on recent developments in scholarship in intercultural communication, cultural mediation, translation and interpreting. It aims to achieve a more balanced representation of written and spoken communication by giving more attention to interpreting than the previous editions, especially in interactional settings. Enriched with discussion of key recent scholarly contributions, each practical example has been revisited and/or updated.

Complemented with online resources, which may be used by both teachers and students, this is the ideal resource for all students of translation and interpreting, as well as any reader interested in communication across cultural divides.

Additional resources are available on the Routledge Translation Studies Portal: http://routledgetranslationstudiesportal.com

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When Routledge asked me (David) if I wanted to work on a third edition, 15 years after the original publication of the second edition, I was clearly flattered. What had begun as a local project for my own students at the Interpreters’ School in Trieste had now been adopted by two international publishers. First, St Jerome, to whom I owe an enormous debt of gratitude, mainly in the name of Mona Baker, who continued to support my writing, asking for encyclopedic entries on culture and translation and for a second edition of this volume. Routledge took over, and quite soon afterwards, started discussing a third edition. I was very uncertain given Routledge’s simple but exhaustive requirements: to update and make more international. Updating work on ‘culture’, and in particular intercultural communication, was one area that was needed. But also, ‘culture’ was no longer an exotic or an optional add-on to Translation Studies. A large swathe of scholars were already integrating ‘culture’ into its ever-broadening field, from audiovisual to public service translation; quite apart from the development of ‘cultural translation’ whose remit, though, has little to do with interlingual translation.

What was necessary now was to anchor the edition more firmly within the new fields, and I also needed to move from a bicultural to a multicultural viewpoint, especially with regard to the practical examples, which were not only very local to the UK and Italy but were also very dated. Many were taken from (paper) news articles concerning events that even the British and the Italians would have difficulty in relating to 20 years on.

I began thinking of sharing what was looking like an enormous task. Routledge meanwhile were sending questionnaires to a number of academics who were using Translating Cultures, asking about the feasibility of a new edition. By happy chance, the respondent who replied in most detail, with some extremely useful suggestions, was the same academic who had just published a volume entitled Community Translation, one of a number of new fields in Translation Studies. This field, also known as Public Service Translation, takes for granted that translation is for a particular readership that has particular needs, and consequently a translator’s (or interpreter’s) job is that of ‘mediation’.

Preface to the third edition
To my happy surprise, Mustapha Taibi’s book itself had taken on board many of the ideas present in Translating Cultures, and had made frequent reference to the volume. Not only that. Mustapha was also able to bring in a much more international and intercultural view, having grown up, studied and worked both in the Arab World and in Spain, while now teaching Translation and Interpreting in Australia. I had found my co-author. I must also thank Mustapha for his meticulous attention to coherence and detail, and for insisting on time limits, which meant that this 12-month project took only two years rather than five.

When Routledge approached me (Mustapha) for an opinion, I wrote:

The book provides a comprehensive overview of cultural issues relating to communication in general and translation, interpreting and mediation in particular. It covers a wide range of theories and contributions from different disciplines, which facilitate an in-depth understanding of what cultural differences are based on, how they work in intercultural communication, what challenges they may give rise to, and how these challenges may be overcome, especially in a professional context such as interpreting and translation.

I suggested further elaboration on the notion of ‘mediation’ and clarification of boundaries between roles such as ‘cultural mediator’ and ‘interpreter’. I also thought that interpreting was not given its fair share in the second edition. The different settings for interpreting, and community interpreting in particular, offer relevant and challenging sites for both theorists and language service professionals to grapple with cultural frames and intercultural ‘mediation’. In relation to this, I also suggested that the chapter on Interactional Communication could be enriched with further discussion and examples from community and other interpreting settings.

So, when David invited me to co-author the third edition, I was thrilled at the opportunity to contribute to this seminal work. Together we have updated the book in terms of scholarly literature and alignment with developments in the relevant professions, and we have diversified the examples, drawing on different genres, cultural contexts, institutional settings and languages. We hope the new edition offers readers an even more useful resource.
Preface to the second edition

This book, now in its second edition, has had a long gestation. Many people have helped and given their valuable advice and time along the way. The first edition would never have seen the light of day without the firm guidance of John Dodds. Many other colleagues from the Interpreters’ School in Trieste gave their support in many different ways; in particular, Federica Scarpa, Francesco-Sergio Straniero and Chris Taylor. Eli Rota gave extremely useful feedback regarding Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), and the Meta-Model in particular; while Carol Torsello’s close reading was responsible for the improvements in the linguistic analysis. Many of the newspaper examples have been culled from Pat Madon’s informal but effective cuttings service.

David Trickey has directed my reading in cross-cultural communication and has been a constant sparring partner on all things cultural for well over 20 years.

For the second edition, the book has been almost totally rewritten, and every single figure has been revised. My thanks go to Licia Corbolante for her help on localization, to my dissertation students who have all contributed in some way to the improvements, and I am also truly grateful for Lara Fabiano’s proofreading and studied comments. Inevitably, though, in ironing out inconsistencies, updating, and inserting new ideas, information and examples, new inconsistencies will have crept in. These may be interpreted as ‘breaking news’ in the lively new discipline of intercultural translation.

The book, naturally, is dedicated to Patty, Thomas and Robert.
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all our colleagues who have contributed to the revision of this book, either through insightful discussions or by providing and/or checking examples in different languages. We are unable to mention everybody, but the following people must be acknowledged: Masako Ogawa and Robert Mailhammer (Western Sydney University), Wei Teng (University of Canterbury, New Zealand), and Ludmila Stern (University of New South Wales).

David’s family should be honoured, not only for putting up with the “Dad’s on Skype with Mustapha” syndrome but also for taking an unusually active interest in the project. Thomas, now also a communications coach, in particular meticulously read every page of the draft chapters, adding his own extremely long, but also pithy comments such as “So?”, “Example?” and “Really?”, which riveted us, if not the rest of the family, over many breakfasts. These comments and discussions have enriched the book greatly. We also thank Jonathan Katan (QC) for his help with the legal texts.

A big thank you goes to Jabir, Mustapha’s little son, who helped with printing, fetching books and even typing, and also for his patience while tirelessly asking “What chapter are you up to?”

We both heartily thank Routledge for their unending patience as we unflinchingly broke our own self-imposed deadlines with Swiss-German precision more times than we care to remember. In particular, we would like to thank Louisa Semlyen and Eleni Steck for their support and understanding.

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Copyright permission has been sought from Macmillan regarding the novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Wolfe 1990), from which there are a number of short extracts quoted.
Horatio
O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

Hamlet
And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

‘Translating across cultures’ and ‘cultural proficiency’ have become buzz words in translating and interpreting. Back in 1996, Mona Baker warned that many scholars had already begun to adopt a “‘cultural’ perspective ... a dangerously fashionable word that almost substitutes for rigour and coherence” (Baker 1996:17). Anthropologists, who were the traditional custodians of the field, complained that “Everyone is into culture now” (Kuper 1999:2). Indeed, ‘culture’ became “top look-up” in 2014, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2021). Its (over)use has led some anthropologists to seriously jettison the term (Agar 2006). As one anthropologist stated, “studying culture today is like studying snow in the middle of an avalanche” (cited in Agar 2006:2).

In translation, the term took centre stage with “the cultural turn in Translation Studies during the 1980s” (Snell-Hornby 2006:47; see also 47–67). The ‘cultural turn’ itself began life much earlier in the field of Cultural Studies, a discipline focussing on contemporary ideologies, politics and how the media manipulates thought. For this discipline, ‘cultural translation’ involves analysing the dynamics of conflicting models of reality and how they effect or suffer change as a result of contact both at an individual level and at the level of communities. Translation Studies also began to interest itself in the effects or changes as a result of intervention on the text, as well summed up by translation theorist Susan Bassnett (2014:25): “In the same way that the surgeon, operating on the heart, cannot neglect the body that surrounds it, so the translator treats the text in isolation from the culture at his or her peril”.

For linguists this means that understanding the text in question, whether original (source) or translated (target), is not only a question
of vocabulary and the grammar, but also a question of assessing
the nature of the situation; accessing and understanding what is
implied or referred to, in what way, by whom and so on. This is the
focus of *Translating Cultures*. Interestingly, Bassnett is also equally
a Comparative Literatures scholar, and hence equally at home
discussing cultural translation, which occurs in literature when novels
are written by what Indian-born author Salman Rushdie (1991:17)
called “translated men”. In this case, the ‘translation’ is to do with the
intralingual usurping of the colonial language by a subject of coloni-
alism for a post-colonial readership.

Our focus here is on interlingual communicating of meanings
across language and cultural divides. Hence translation is understood
as Intercultural Communication, an often-used epithet; for example,
in 2012 by the International Federation of Translators to promote
International Translation Day. The simple question is, what is the ‘cul-
tural’ that affects communication in translation?

The aim of this book, then, is to answer this question, and in so
doing to put some rigour and coherence into this fashionable word.
It explains what translators, interpreters and other mediators should
know about the cultural factor and its importance in communication,
translation and interpretation. As such, it aims to provide the con-
text of culture marginalized or missing in books or courses focussing
on either translation theory or translation practice, and to provide an
understanding of translation theory and practice for those working in
intercultural communication. Most importantly, in clarifying ‘culture’,
it aims to raise awareness of its role in constructing, perceiving and
translating reality.

This book, then, should serve as a framework for interpreters and
translators (both actual and potential) working between any languages,
and also for those working or living between cultures who wish to
understand more about their intercultural successes and frustrations.

The book is divided into three main parts:

Part I: Framing culture: the culture-bound mental map of the world
Part II: Shifting frames: translation and mediation in theory and
        practice
Part III: The array of frames: communication orientations.

Framing culture: the culture-bound mental map of
the world

Part I outlines the complexity of translation, and shows how even
simple technical language can easily create problems that Google
Translate cannot cope with, given its limited analysis and understand-
ing of context. Differences across languages, as will be seen, often
have their roots in differences across a variety of contexts, ranging from those of the immediate situation to those involving culture. We begin by discussing how the concepts of context, community and culture have been approached.

We then move on to organizing ‘culture’ – and approaches to teaching it – into one unifying framework of Logical Levels, which will then form the backbone of the book itself. Throughout this book, culture is perceived as a system for making sense of experience. A basic presupposition is that this organization of experience is never an objective representation of ‘reality’. It is instead a simplified and distorted model that makes sense to one group of people but should not be expected to be universal. So, cultures act as frames within which external signs or ‘reality’ are interpreted. Logically then, we should not expect that the language used to express these culture-bound models of reality may be directly translatable. We then discuss how and in what ways those who interpret and translate should intervene on the text, and the subtly separated roles of the translator/interpreter and the cultural mediator.

Part I concludes with an in-depth analysis of how individuals perceive, catalogue and construct reality, and how this perception is communicated through language. The approach is interdisciplinary, taking ideas from Anthropology, such as Gregory Bateson’s Logical Typing and meta-message theories; Bandler and Grinder’s Meta-Model theory; Sociolinguistics; Speech Act Theory; Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory; and Hallidayan Functional Grammar.

**Shifting frames: translation and mediation in theory and practice**

Part II begins with a discussion of the strategies a translator, interpreter or cultural mediator needs to adopt to account for culture-bound frames. It includes a brief overview of how culture has been associated with translation. Translation itself, following Nida (1976:65), is here viewed as “essentially an aspect of a larger domain, namely, that of communication”. Steiner (1975:47) in his aptly titled book *After Babel* takes an even wider view of translation: “inside or between languages, human communication equals translation”. Hence, translation is discussed within the wider context of communication.

This stance entails making the basic differences in translation theory clear. Either translation is principally an activity of transferring or converting text from one language to another, or as we propose, a service with the aim of ensuring communication for people who do not have the necessary language skills. We focus on a number of procedures (such as chunking and use of the Meta-Model) designed to account for and mediate the context of culture and (re)frame the
language for the new listener or reader. In all cases, practical examples of translations with commentary are provided.

**The array of frames: communication orientations**

Part III provides an outline of the major influences that cultural orientations can have on communication. It begins with an explanation and taxonomy of cultural orientations. The main thrust concerns the communication orientation, and Edward Hall’s Theory of Contexting. This theory discusses the changing importance of implicit and explicit communication between cultures in the transmission of a message. Communication itself is divided into transactional (the transmission of information) and interactional (relational) types. Cultural orientations are then discussed according to their relevance in either transactional or interactional communication. As a result, commonly understood pragmatic features of languages, such as lexical density, clarity, (in)directness and politeness, are linked to culture. Examples are given, and mediation procedures are discussed. Generally, indicators are given as to likely linguacultural orientations, as well as the pan-cultural situational factors. Emphasis is placed on the variety of factors that may affect communication style or response and the motivations that logically may give rise to those behaviours. Paralinguistic and non-verbal features of languacultures are touched on, and again are linked to cultural orientations.

Apart from our own input, regarding our own spheres of experience, the main sources in the literature come from interculturalists, such as Hofstede, Lewis and Trompenaars, who provide a mixture of qualitative and quantitative information regarding cultural motivations and communication. Practical examples are also taken both from the press and from published translations.
Part I

Framing culture

The culture-bound mental map of the world
1 The translator, interpreter and cultural mediator

The aim of this chapter is to:

• Discuss some of the difficulties involved in language transfer;
• Introduce translation and interpretation as activities that involve more than language transfer;
• Introduce the concept of cultural mediator;
• Discuss the nature of mediation in translation, interpreting and cultural mediation;
• Clarify the boundaries between the roles of translators/interpreters and cultural mediators.

1.1 Translation ... and culture

1.1.1 Technical translating

“Google’s free online language translation service quickly translates web pages to other languages. Use this web site translator to convert web pages into your choice of language: ...”

At first glance it would seem that technology, such as Google Translate, can seamlessly do the job for us. Google translates the proposition or the dictionary denotative meaning, and little or no loss or distortion of meaning need ever occur. Second, there is no doubt that, today, technical terms are becoming easier to translate. Concerted international efforts are now being made to harmonize legislation and codes of practice across borders (the European Union being just one case in point) and dramatic improvements are being made through ever-expanding online solutions, such as search engines, specialized glossaries, corpus-based tools, Computer-Aided or Machine Translation (CAT/MT) tools, and translator forums (see, for example, ‘The Translator’s Research Toolbox’, Ted Translators 2019). Multiterm Glossaries, in particular,
working in tandem with Translation Memory programs mean that a car manual, for instance, will already be 50–75% translated before the translator even lays hands on it. Machine Translation systems, such as Moses, SYSTRAN or DeepL, provide a first draft that bureaucrats and others can then decide to bin, take essential notes from or have properly translated.

Communication at this level has no extra-linguistic context: The text is the authority, and it is clearly spelled out. Anthony Pym (2000:189) calls translation at this level “NANS” (“no-addition-no-subtraction”). It is the type of translation that would be subsumed under effortless communication as described by Reddy’s (1993:295) “conduit metaphor”, which suggests that understanding language is a process of encoding and decoding, like “a marvellous technological duplicating machine”. This form of culture is indeed now global, with business and industry working to the same standards throughout the world. Negotiation of meaning is reduced to the minimum. The language provides, as far as possible, its own context. In fact, Peter Newmark (1988:6) was entirely correct when he stated: “No language, no culture is so ‘primitive’ that it cannot embrace the terms of, say, computer technology”. The fact that it might be necessary to use more text to explain the concept, because the world is categorized in different ways, is certainly not a problem, neither for the translator nor for the target language reader. For example, “to watch sheep by night” sounds perfectly natural in English, yet requires five words. In the Quiché language (Guatemala), however, only one word is necessary (Beekman and Callow 1974:54–55). It is also at this technical level that the client is most aware of and notices the shortcomings of a translator/interpreter. An interpreter or translator without the technical language of, for example, aviation insurance, will clearly not be effective. As a result, many companies are improving their in-service language training instead of hiring external language professionals (Kondo and Tebble 1997:161–162; Olohan 2016:18–19).

The translator, too, is fully aware of having the same problems, as any native speaker called upon to translate patent law, industrial plant specifications or medical papers will know. What can the non-specialist translator make of the following opening sentence from an article on computer systems, entitled ‘Location Awareness in Community Wireless LANs’ (Ferscha et al. 2001:1)?

We have developed a multi-user team awareness framework, Campus Space, that on-the-fly and transparently collects and interprets position information of mobiles from the signal to noise ratio of IEEE 802.11 radios, and cartographically mapped RFID tags respectively.
There are a number of terms here that are polysemous, and whose meaning changes according to whether the term is being used in a specialist sense. The first is the idiomatic expression “on-the-fly”, which might mean (general sense) that the “position information of mobiles” is collected quickly, or (specialist sense) that the information is collected without interrupting a computer program that is already running.

The second is the nominalized adjective “mobile”. The most usual general meaning is ‘mobile phone’; but in the text, we have 11 references to ‘mobile devices’, five to ‘mobile users’ or ‘clients’ and two each to ‘mobile objects’ and ‘mobile stations’. In these cases, a professional interpreter or translator will not only need to have a near-native command of both languages, but also need to know how best to find equivalences. The internet has been of phenomenal assistance in providing not only online translation assistance in a variety of forms, but also immediate access to almost unlimited supplies of similar texts (or genres) written in the target language by native-language speakers. The assistance, though, comes at a price. It will take time for the non-specialized translator, compared to the non-English-speaking IT specialist, who will already have learnt the English terms.

The extract below poses further problems. It is taken from a steel rolling mill brochure, and is a fairly literal translation from the original (in Italian), but whether it is an appropriate translation is another matter:

One of the main features of the complete machine are cantilevered tundish cars running on tracks on an elevated steel structure for rapid change of the tundish ‘on the fly’.

Grammatically it is correct. However, very few native speakers of English would understand the meaning, and more importantly, they would not know if any faux pas had been made in the translation process. Comparison with other, well-written, technical texts would tell us that the translation at the level of discourse is not appropriate. An improvement would be to break the sentence into two and at least add a verb:

One of the main features of the complete machine are the cantilevered tundish cars. These run on tracks on an elevated steel structure, which ensures a rapid change of the tundish ‘on the fly’.
However, the native speaker, having decided that ‘complete’ could be omitted and having simplified the sentences to a perfectly cohesive piece of discourse in English, will still have problems with “tundish ‘on the fly’”. ‘Tundish’ is easily found. It is a large funnel with one or more holes at the bottom, used especially in plumbing or metal-founding. A quick internet search will show us that ‘on the fly’ collocates with tundish, but so does ‘fly’ – neither of which require inverted commas in English. Also, from this extract, neither ‘fly’ nor ‘on the fly’ has a transparent meaning for the non-specialist. It would then take much more further reading to be able to decide which ‘fly’ is more appropriate, whether “rapid” is tautologous (due to ‘on the fly’) and whether “the tundish” is preferable to “tundish” or “tundishes”.

The real problem of understanding the meaning remains. A non-native speaker fluent in metallurgy and the continuous cast steel process will almost certainly be able to comment on the translation at the level of meaning, and may well be able to provide a less accurate but more meaningful translation. Indeed, as Scarpa (2020:146) notes, “translators who are not already expert in a specialised domain … run the risk of translating a concept in the TL imprecisely or even downright incorrectly”. Challenges arise not only as a result of terms specific to a discipline which are normally used only by domain specialists (e.g. lathe, calcium oxide, polymer etc.) but also general-language words that are used with a more restricted meaning (e.g. in physics the adjectives ideal, significant and effective).

(Scarpa 2020:146)

Table 1.1 is an example of a further problem for the aspiring translator. It is a relatively simple translation of food labelling. Received wisdom would tell us that harmonized European Union (EU) regulations and the labelling of ingredients would be a simple case of word-for-word translation. We would naturally expect the same type of lexical problem as we found above with translation at the technical level. However, the problems at this level are that each country has its own preferred way of doing things, in this case labelling.

The differences between the technical labelling required are notable, as are the numerical discrepancies. Even though all countries follow the European food labelling laws and technical requirements, only some of the items on the label are compulsory at an EU level, such as date of expiry. How countries deal with technical information, and what they deem to be important, is certainly not pan-cultural.

The extent to which translators need to know about cross-cultural differences in legislation regarding food labelling, marketing and promotion is discussed by Candace Séguinot (1995). She notes (65–66), for example, that in Quebec, ‘infant formula’ is known as ‘lait maternisé’. However, the Food and Drug Act specifies that the term has to be
'préparation pour nourrissons’, “which no speaker actually uses”. In this case, the dictionary correctly cites the term used by speakers, but the term itself is forbidden by legislation. This is part of the ‘something extra’ a translator or interpreter will need to know. Not for nothing is the internet replete with language providers specializing in “Food Labelling”. As one provider points out, “A label cannot simply be translated literally, substantive knowledge is required” (Labelchecks 2017). While Séguinot (1995:56) focusses on the translator’s need to understand the cultures towards which they are translating, De Mooij (2004:196) states that “if advertising is translated at all, the translator should closely co-operate with the copywriter/art director team and not only translate but also advise about culture-specific aspects of both languages”.

Specific French language requirements for labelling in Quebec include the following:

- Every “inscription” on a product, its packaging, container, leaflet, brochure, or card supplied must be in French
- If there are multiple languages on a product label, French must have “greater prominence” than the other languages
- Toys or games that require the use of non-French vocabulary for their use are forbidden unless there is an equivalent French product available on the Quebec market (Charter of the French Language, Section 54)

Table 1.1 Product labelling in different countries

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<th>Italian</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Portuguese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DESSERT A BASE DI YOGURT E PREPARAZIONE DOLCIARIA ALLA FRUTTA</td>
<td>YAOURT AUX FRUITS</td>
<td>IOGURTE MEIO GORDO COM FRUTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrediënten: yogurt (latte parzialmente scremato, fermenti lattici vivi), preparazione dolciaria alla frutta (24%) (frutta*, zucchero, amido modificato, gelificante: pectina, aromi) *vedi coperchio per la specificazione della frutta.</td>
<td>Ingédients: Lait demi-écrémé, préparation de fruits 24% (soit fruits: 12%), sucre, arômes, ferments lactiques.</td>
<td>Ingredientes: leite meio gordo fermentado (1.8% M.G.), preparado de fruta (11%), aromas, açúcar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prodotto in Germania</td>
<td></td>
<td>Produzido na UE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An even more striking difference concerning consumer protection within the EU can be seen in the following labelling practices for a ‘Whirlpool’ microwave cooker. In ten European languages (excluding French), we have the equivalent of:

```
OPTION: 8 YEAR GUARANTEE FOR SPARE PARTS: details inside.
```

In French, the ‘translation’ tells us that the optional guarantee does not apply in France.

```
CETTE GARANTIE OPTIONNELLE DE 8 ANS NE S’APPLIQUE PAS EN FRANCE — Voir les modalités des garanties légales et contractuelles dans le livret d’information sur le SAV.
```

As a final example, we can see how legal restraints, norms and socio-cultural differences can combine to produce what might, at first glance, seem a bizarre set of (non) parallel texts.

The Super Disc Shot (Figure 1.1) is made in Italy, and carries the usual safety warning in a number of languages. This shot is clearly marked as unsuitable for British or French children under the age of eight (for good measure, emphasized in bold in French), while in the country of production (allowing stereotypes to flourish), children in their 36th month may start shooting.

We then have the Swedish, Finnish, Danish, Norwegian and Dutch versions. Local norms have dictated the fact that the Norwegian, for example, has an extra warning: “INCORRECT USE OF THIS PRODUCT MAY CAUSE PERMANENT HEARING DAMAGE TO CHILDREN”. The Dutch, instead, are warned about throwing the caps into the fire at home. The Arabic text shows no trace or attempt at a translation of the warning, but rather a straightforward marketing message. The suitability of the shot for children is in the context, and can be presumed to be left to the judgement of the buyer. What is highlighted in the Arabic text is that this product can be trusted, through the fact that it is made in Italy and can be vouched for by an exclusive agent. Although we cannot generalize based on one or two examples, these different versions show how socio-cultural norms and practices do impinge on the way technical information is presented, and will determine the aspects to be highlighted.
### 1.1.2 Internationalization and localization

With localization, we move to the boundaries of the traditional definition of “translation proper”, which the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson famously defined as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language” (2012 [1959]:127). ‘Localization’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Warning</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>Do not shoot close to eyes or ears. Do not keep cap loose on your person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Not suitable for a child under the age of 36 months.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Do not fire indoor or near eyes. Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Warning! Do not shoot close to eyes or ears. Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Warning! Do not shoot close to eyes or ears. Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>Warning! Do not shoot close to eyes or ears. Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>Warning! Do not shoot close to eyes or ears. Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>Warning! Do not shoot close to eyes or ears. Incorrect use of this product may cause permanent hearing damage to children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Not recommended for children under 8 years. Made in Italy by Edison Giocattoli S.P.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 1.1 Super Disc Shot](image)

---

**Translator, interpreter and cultural mediator**

---

**ITIAN:**

- Not suitable for a child under the age of 36 months.
- **WARNING:** Do not shoot close to eyes or ears.
- Do not keep cap loose on your person.

---

**FRANCE:**

- Not suitable for a child under the age of 8 years.
- **WARNING:** Do not shoot close to eyes or ears.
- Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.

---

**ENGLISH:**

- Warning: Do not fire indoor or near eyes.
- Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.

---

**SWEDISH:**

- Warning: Do not shoot close to eyes or ears.
- Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.

---

**FINNISH:**

- Warning: Do not shoot close to eyes or ears.
- Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.

---

**DANISH:**

- Warning: Do not shoot close to eyes or ears.
- Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.

---

**NORWEGIAN:**

- Warning: Do not shoot close to eyes or ears.
- Incorrect use of this product may cause permanent hearing damage to children.

---

**DUTCH:**

- Do not keep cap loose in a pocket.
- Do not throw into fireplace.

---

**ENGLISH:**

- Not recommended for children under 8 years.
- Made in Italy by Edison Giocattoli S.P.A.
was originally coined to define the way software needed to be reengineered for different languages and cultures, but now the term is used more generally to describe the tailoring of an existing product to the needs of a specific local market. This might include anything from changing the colour and the packaging design of the product to adapting the language, layout and visuals of the accompanying instructions manual (O’Hagan and Ashworth 2002; Anastasiou and Schäler 2010). Localization is also used to describe any web product which “is designed separately with specific local appeal”, such as local editions of *Time* and *Newsweek* (O’Hagan and Ashworth 2002:67). ‘Internationalization’, on the other hand, is “the design of a product so that it can be easily adapted to foreign markets” (Cronin 2003:13).

India is an interesting example of issues regarding internationalization and localization. In 1995, telecommunications were in the Stone Age, with only one telephone per 200 houses in India, and terrestrial lines were few and far between. India then invested resources in state-of-the-art satellite technology, allowing it to move directly from reliance on public phones to personal mobile phones. The technology and the support infrastructure were delivered mainly from China through an internationalized language (English) that the technicians had learned. However, as late as 2013, while India had the second largest mobile phone ownership in the world, profits from phone use were among the lowest. China Mobile, for example, was making five times as much money because they had localized their software so that users could text and access the internet in Mandarin Chinese (Mirani 2013).

The reason lay in the lack of localization to India. The sub-continent has 23 official languages, with Hindi being the most popular. Though English is the second most widely spoken, the vast majority of the population are not proficient speakers. The problem was that most phones came with an English-only operating system software (i.e. not internationalized), making localization out of the question. As a result, the majority of users only phoned, and operators were unable to capitalize on any of the other features, such as texting, internet searching, etc., which all had to be accessed through a QWERTY Latin-script layout keyboard.

Internationalized software is now available, which means that smartphone touchscreens can display Devanagari script keyboards for the Hindi speakers, a Bengali keyboard for the Bengalis and so on. So, while at a purely technical level, globalization is pushing successfully to an internationalized English, “Local languages are … key in convincing the next billion users to come online” (Bhattacharya 2017:n.p.). Indeed, just one year later, the country had nearly half of its 1100 million mobile subscribers already online (COAI 2018:n.p.).

Those involved in GILT “Globalisation, Localisation, Internationalisation and translation” (Anastasiou and Schäler 2010:n.p.)
use the term ‘locale’ to distinguish one language-culture combination from another, whereas linguists and anthropologists tend to use the term ‘linguaculture’ or ‘languaculture’ (Agar 1994). GILT has now become a multi-million-dollar industry (Lommel and Ray 2007), with relatively small individual multinationals spending up to $500,000 or more annually on content localization, and expecting to spend more in the future (Smartling 2017).

Localization is seen by some to go beyond ‘translation proper’ because it focusses on difference rather than ‘invariance’ (see Mossop 2017; Katan 2018a). Yet localizing is the only way to translate when it comes to helping people get online. What we will be suggesting here is that all those involved in translation, interpretation and mediation should become aware of ‘the locale’ and consider the fact that in all probability they will be dealing with a classic localization situation, that of “the Receiver who does not share the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds as the Sender” (O’Hagan and Ashworth 2002:66–67). Let us look at an early example of what we now take for granted, our localized devices, and the amount of translation which accounts for difference that went into creating the seamless interfaces with which this book also was revised. The example (Table 1.2) is taken from internal Microsoft documents warning localizers of typical localization problems when translating software and manuals from (American) English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of problem</th>
<th>Microsoft comments on (US-based) culture-bound language or icon which will need to be localized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fonts, sizes</td>
<td>Keyboard layouts, default paper and envelope sizes, character sets, text directionality (left-to-right; right-to-left; horizontal; vertical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format of technical strings (word order)</td>
<td>Street name and number: US: 7 Kennedy Rd Italy: Via Garibaldi 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date format: UK/France: 17/03/05 US: 03/17/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time format: UK/US: am/pm France/Japan: 24-hr clock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separators: UK/US/Japan: 1,247.7 Italian/Arabic: 1,247.7 France: 1 247,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple problems linking programming language to explanation in the text</td>
<td>Written text not necessarily related to keyboard actions: e.g. “Press the Assistant button” or “Press CTRL + U to underline”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Framing culture: the mental map of the world

**Table 1.2 Cont.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Templates (e.g. CV)</th>
<th>Date and place of birth</th>
<th>Default UK/Italy; US optional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport and hobbies</td>
<td>Default US/UK; Italy optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Elegant’ accompanying</td>
<td>Italy optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Icons, artwork**

Artwork should be adapted to local markets; e.g. pictures of baseball players should be replaced with pictures of soccer players; other recurrent pictures to be localized include pictures of US school bus, Shakespeare.

**Culture-specific names**

Localize names: e.g. “The update is filled with colourful themes … from Cathy to Doonesbury”

**Cultural (US)-specific information**

Delete country-specific information: e.g. “All you need to do to get your local weather from MSN is insert your zip code”; “These Microsoft products are available at Shop.microsoft.com, or from a licensed reseller”

**Local (market) practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product comparisons</th>
<th>Legal in UK and the US but not in all other countries: e.g. “the most powerful browser” should be changed to “a powerful browser”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family name</td>
<td>Avoid “Use your mother’s maiden name as password” – in many countries, there is no change of name on marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Live to work’ orientation</td>
<td>Not all cultures find a “four-day holiday with an intercontinental flight” plausible: change to eight days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Style and register:** “is the US style suitable to the TL market (direct versus indirect; personification of applications; colloquialisms, etc.)?”

Make the style more formal or eliminate (for Italy in particular): e.g. Clippit (Microsoft’s first Office assistant) F.Y.I (for your information) Post Mortem Sites that you’re not so sure about go into another bucket Make your gaming experience a blast! Say cheese! Simple tools make it easy to import photos from scanners and cameras Take the Web by storm!
Translation is clearly more than just a conduit process of decoding and encoding. And it is not only software and web page designers that have realized this. As the Economist Intelligence Unit (2012:n.p.) affirms, the corporate world “has at least recognised a new reality in which the right products and services must also now be allied with the necessary cultural sensitivity and communication skills in order for companies to succeed in markets away from home”. The culture “away from home” is but one facet, and we will investigate many others in the following chapters. Remaining in the world of business, The Economist (2017:n.p.) notes that “Mergers and acquisitions often disappoint” due as much to “clashes of culture” as to aligning of systems. Each company – indeed each branch or department – has its own accepted set of priorities. This means that accepted business practices vary not only at a national level and between companies (such as Apple and Microsoft or Huawei) but between individual offices as well. So, a useful way of thinking about ‘culture’ is in terms of a “community of practice” (Wenger 2010), whereby seemingly similar groups may work in very different ways.

Translating for communities of practice requires language professionals with the necessary cultural sensitivity and communication skills to intervene and negotiate the cultural gaps. Indeed, while the European Union’s “etranslation” service already provides instant translation for 26 languages, Project Director van Genabith (2018:n.p.) made it clear that Machine Translation (MT) provides only a raw translation that will always need human intervention because “translation is not translating some words with other words but is also cultural transfer, negotiating between one culture and another culture”.

At a global level, the historian Carlo Ginzberg (1999:21) raises the issue of what he called “cohabitation between cultures”, asserting that the more cultures are rooted within their own realities, the more knowledge and social life are fragmented “into a series of incommunicable points of view, in which each group is enclosed within its own relationship with the world”. He then quotes a feminist scholar, Donna Haraway (1988:589), who sees the solution in translation. But the type of translation she focusses on to help cultures cohabit is neither objective nor technical, but “interpretative, critical and partial”.

Pym (2000:190), in discussing cooperation, comes to a similar conclusion: “In short, our training programmes should progressively be oriented to the production of intercultural mediators, people who are able to do rather more than just translate”.

The next sections, in fact, discuss the potential role of a translator or interpreter as a cultural mediator, able to mediate the non-converging
worldviews or maps of the world, so allowing the participants to cooperate to the degree they wish.

1.2 The cultural mediator

The term ‘cultural mediator’ was first introduced in Stephen Bochner’s (1981) *The Mediating Person: Bridges between Cultures*. Three decades later, the Council of Europe (2011) defined (inter)cultural mediation as follows:

Intercultural mediation is a multifaceted role in which the mediator acts essentially as an outside third party and cultural intermediary between a person or community and an institution’s departments. Mediators are often referred to as “go betweens”, “facilitators”, “conciliators” or “negotiators” because of their interpersonal skills and their abilities to bring people together around collective issues.

(Council of Europe 2011:40)

Recently, the (inter)cultural mediator has been particularly associated with the phenomenon of global migration, the settlement of groups of people in new social and cultural environments, and ensuing interpersonal and public service needs. As Francisco Raga Gimeno (2011:3) puts it, the *raison d’être* of intercultural mediators “is to contribute to improving the communication of foreigners, especially migrants from developing countries, with the local community in general and with public service professionals in particular” (our translation from Spanish).

Raga Gimeno (2011) notes that the profile of an intercultural mediator is far from being consistent in terms of training, working conditions or expected role: Cultural mediation is still an emerging activity that draws upon and overlaps with other professions such as social work, social mediation, psychopedagogy, translation and interpreting. TIME Project Partnership (2016:20–34) also provides an overview of the overlap and inconsistency surrounding the concept in the European Union. In a general sense, however, the cultural mediator’s role touches on the role of a mediator in any other field, from arbitrator to therapist. Taft (1981), in his contribution to Bochner’s volume on the subject, defines the role as follows:

A cultural mediator is a person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture. The role of the mediator is performed by interpreting the expressions, intentions, perceptions,
and expectations of each cultural group to the other, that is, by establishing and balancing the communication between them. In order to serve as a link in this sense, the mediator must be able to participate to some extent in both cultures. Thus, a mediator must be to a certain extent bicultural.

(Taft 1981:53)

According to Taft (1981:73), a mediator must possess the following competencies in both cultures:

- **Knowledge about society**: history, folklore, traditions, customs; values, prohibitions; the natural environment and its importance; neighbouring people, important people in the society, etc.
- **Communication skills**: written, spoken, non-verbal.
- **Technical skills**: those required by the mediator’s status, e.g. computer literacy, appropriate dress, etc.
- **Social skills**: knowledge of rules that govern social relations in society and emotional competence, e.g. the appropriate level of self-control.

Similarly, Raga Gimeno (2011) identifies three types of communicative activities and related skills required of cultural mediators:

1) Linguistic (including translation and interpreting of verbal communication, knowledge of terminology, appropriate register, etc.);
2) Explicitation (e.g. of cultural beliefs, interactional patterns, administrative norms and procedures);
3) Negotiation and conflict resolution techniques.

In relation to knowledge and explicitation of interactional patterns, Raga Gimeno stresses the need for robust training in intercultural communication (politeness-related behaviours and communication styles, paralanguage, perception and management of time and space, social values, role of gender, social class and so on).

The mediator needs not only “two skills in one skull” (Taft 1981:53) but “in order to play the role of mediator, an individual has to be flexible in switching his [sic] cultural orientation”. Hence, a cultural mediator will have developed a high degree of intercultural sensitivity and will be able to judge the success of translation solutions according to particular cultural situations. We will return to these issues when discussing belief systems, particularly in Chapters 4, 7 and 8; but now we should look more closely at the translator and the interpreter as ‘cultural mediators’.
1.3 The translator and interpreter

Theories of the translation process itself are discussed in Part II. Here, we will concentrate on what being a ‘cultural mediator’ means for those involved in translating texts or interpreting for people.

1.3.1 The interpreter

The interpreter has long been thought of as a discreet, if not invisible, black box and as a walking generalist translator of words. As Sandra Hale (2014:322) notes, this view is untenable “because language and culture are intertwined and accurate interpreting cannot be achieved at the basic word level. ... words in interaction only take on meaning according to context, situation, participants and culture”. As a ‘cultural mediator’, the interpreter will need to be a specialist in negotiating understanding between cultures.

A move in this direction has already been made. Masaomi Kondo, who was president of the Japan Association for Interpretation Studies and senior member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters in Geneva, already concluded in 1990: “essentially speaking, the debate is closed. The word-for-word correspondence between the source and the target has virtually no place in our work” (Kondo 1990:62, emphasis in the original). This was the first move towards the more extreme communicative role of a cultural mediator who “may never be called upon to engage in the exact translation of words, rather he [sic] will communicate the ideas in terms that are meaningful to the members of the target audience” (Taft 1981:58).

However, the essay Kondo wrote is entitled ‘What Conference Interpreters Should Not Be Expected to Do’ (emphasis added). He makes the point that very often some cultural mediation is necessary to account for the cultural gap between interlocutors in intercultural negotiations and diplomatic encounters; but that the interpreter also risks overinterpreting or misinterpreting – and, as a result, even losing their job – if they take on the role of a cultural mediator who reads messages culturally and provides clarificatory comments so that the addressee better understands the culturally encoded messages of the speaker. Kondo argues that the responsibility for the success of communication lies with the primary parties themselves, including having to spell out what they need to convey, being aware of cultural differences and variations in corporate practices, formulating their messages based on that awareness, and assuming responsibility for what they believe to be shared knowledge. Though Hale agrees that the interpreter must be aware of contextual issues, she aligns strongly with Kondo’s belief that “Professional interpreters are impartial mediators, interested in the communication process rather than the outcome of
the interaction” (Hale and Liddicoat 2015:19). And this is still the professional conference interpreter view (Setton and Dawrant 2016:359). (See the last section in this chapter for a discussion of role boundaries.) In line with the above, interpreter (and translator) codes of ethics often stress the requirement that interpreters (and translators) act with a sense of detachment and neutrality, limiting themselves to the transfer of messages, and abstaining from any alteration, softening or strengthening of messages. These codes derive from The International Federation of Translators’ Charter, which (apart from small amendments) goes back to 1963. Much more recently, the Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT) drew up a new Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct – the result of intense discussions between academics and practitioners (Katan 2018b:19–20). However, as is illustrated in the following excerpts (AUSIT 2012), if anything, ‘non-intervention’ is even further underlined:

4. IMPARTIALITY

Interpreters and translators observe impartiality in all professional contacts.

Interpreters remain unbiased throughout the communication exchanged between the participants in any interpreted encounter. Translators do not show bias towards either the author of the source text or the intended readers of their translation.

**Explanation:** Interpreters and translators play an important role in facilitating parties who do not share a common language to communicate effectively with each other. They aim to ensure that the full intent of the communication is conveyed. **Interpreters and translators are not responsible for what the parties communicate, only for complete and accurate transfer of the message. They do not allow bias to influence their performance; likewise, they do not soften, strengthen or alter the messages being conveyed.**

6. CLARITY OF ROLE BOUNDARIES

Interpreters and translators maintain clear boundaries between their task as facilitators of communication through message transfer and any tasks that may be undertaken by other parties involved in the assignment.

**Explanation:** The focus of interpreters and translators is on message transfer.

**Practitioners do not, in the course of their interpreting or translation duties, engage in other tasks such as advocacy, guidance or advice.** Even where such other tasks are mandated by particular
employment arrangements, practitioners insist that a clear demarcation is agreed on between interpreting and translating and other tasks. For this purpose, interpreters and translators will, where the situation requires it, provide an explanation of their role in line with the principles of this Code.

(AUSIT 2012:5–6, emphasis added)

Many scholars, on the other hand, have been advocating a more active and visible role for interpreters, including as agents who mediate between the different worldviews of the interlocutors. The American interculturalist Richard Brislin (1981:213) was an early proponent. He expanded the role of the interpreter, suggesting, for example, that the interpreter should inform the participants before the meeting to clarify the proceedings. His specific suggestions regarding “speculative strategies” (slightly adapted here) revolved around the interpreter as chair or referee:

- The interpreter works with all parties before the event to be interpreted. This means, for example, going through any texts to check for any possible cross-cultural problems;
- Interpreters [are] to be given explicit permission to stop a conference if they feel a misunderstanding is causing difficulty;
- Interpreters [are] to prepare materials for cross-cultural meetings for participants to read, including desirable behaviour, and intercultural communication points.

Annelie Knapp-Potthof and Karlfried Knapp (1981:183), in their contribution to Bochner’s volume, were among the first to suggest that the interpreter should become a visible third party, and “within certain limits may develop his or her own initiatives, introduce new topics, give comments and explanations, present arguments, etc.”. Since then a host of terms have been used to refer to a profession based on “more than a focus on language and discrete interpreting skills” and which “needs to take account of the wider context of practice, expectations of interlocutors, professional ethics and institutional, domain-specific and lay language use” (Tipton and Furmanek 2016:2).

As we have seen, this interventionist stance not only goes against interpreter codes of ethics such as AUSIT’s, but against a general Western orientation with regard to the meaning of ‘professional’ in ‘professional interpreter’. In some other cultural contexts, on the other hand, some types of interpreter intervention and initiative are not only acceptable but also expected. Takimoto, for instance, reports
that the Japanese business interpreters in his study recognized the importance of the Australian code of ethics, but thought more flexibility was needed. They perceived themselves as “active participants in intercultural communicative situations” and “more dynamic and proactive than the traditional stereotype towards interpreters implies” (Takimoto 2006:47). Examples of active participation included voicing an opinion, advising on business protocol, selective or summarized interpreting, and interrupting or seeking clarification on behalf of the client (because, it is argued, Japanese businesspeople are less likely to do so).

Research into interpreting in other domains such as community settings (e.g. in hospitals or immigration centres) and in the media (e.g. talk shows) shows quite conclusively that interpreters consistently intervene proactively, to ensure that communication continues smoothly across the interpersonal and cultural divides (e.g. Roy 1993; Wadensjö 1998; Mason 2000; Katan and Straniero-Sergio 2001; Davitti 2013; Tipton and Furmanek 2016; see also Cultus [2015] on ‘The Intercultural Question and the Interpreting Professions’).

Back in 1996, Humphrey and Alcorn drew a “philosophical shift in the history of sign language interpreting”. The barometer needle on the front cover was shown as shifting from ‘machine conduit’ towards ‘bilingual/bicultural mediation’. Another book, *Sign Language Interpreting*, by Melanie Metzger (1999) actually had *Deconstructing the Myth of Neutrality* as its subtitle. The 2000s presented us with a well-documented interpreter’s “zone of uncertainty” (Inghilleri 2005; Merlini 2009), whereby the interpreter is torn between institutional norms and more human and communicative values.

A further disarming issue, which can only exacerbate uncertainties, is that the majority of the interpreters involved are still non-professional, barely visible, and are still treated as conduit messengers. There are few high-profile role models to look to. One particular exception that we know of is the Italian–English media interpreter, Olga Fernando (Katan and Straniero-Sergio 2001). She is a professional university-trained interpreter. Not only has she been praised in the Italian national press for her “sensitivity”, but she also received an MBE from Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of her work in 2005 (Caprio 2020). Much more importantly, she is always addressed by her name – and never as “the interpreter”.

Also well known, and by his name, is Jack Jason, an American sign interpreter who interprets for deaf actress Marlee Matlin. According to her, and to a number of others (e.g. Kelly and Zetzsche 2012:167–170), Jason is the best interpreter in the world; they give similar reasons: “His voice is pleasant and confident but can convey a tremendous range of emotion” (Kelly and Zetzsche 2012:170), which includes the ability to convey the subtext and cry.
1.3.2 The translator

The idea of a translator as a mediating agent is not new. George Steiner (1975:45) pointed out that “The translator is a bilingual mediating agent between monolingual communication participants in two different language communities”. Taft (1981:58) asks whether a mediator is a translator. His own answer, as we have already seen, is that translating is one of the skills, but that a mediator is more than a translator. Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (2013 [1990]:223–224) also use the term mediation, suggesting that: “The notion of mediation is a useful way of looking at translators’ decisions regarding the transfer of intertextual reference” (p. 128).

They continue, in the chapter entitled ‘The Translator as Mediator’, with the following:

The translator is first and foremost a mediator between two parties for whom mutual communication might otherwise be problematic and this is true of the translator of patents, contracts, verse or fiction just as much as it is of the simultaneous interpreter, who can be seen to be mediating in a very direct way.

(Hatim and Mason 2013 [1990]:223)

Hatim and Mason conclude with two specific ways in which a translator is a ‘mediator’:

- **Bi-cultural vision**: the translator is uniquely placed to identify and resolve the disparity between sign and value across cultures.
- **Critical reader**: the translator is a ‘privileged reader’ of the source language (SL) text. She or he will have the opportunity to read the text carefully before translating, and therefore is in a position to help the target reader by producing as clear a text as the context would warrant.

Lance Hewson and Jacky Martin (1991), in their *Redefining Translation: The Variational Approach*, agree that the translator is also a critic. As they say,

Certain texts have been subjected to what one might call an intense and loving scrutiny, producing a ‘hyper-reading’ (Ladmiral 1979) of the original to the extent that people might well consult a translation in order to have a better (or more complete) understanding of the original.

(Hewson and Martin 1991:143)
One particular example is the translation of Shakespeare, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Albrecht Neubert and Gregory Shreve (1992:54) went one stage further with the concept, suggesting that translations should serve as “knowledge breakers between the members of disjunct communities”. Edwin Gentzler (2001) adds to this idea with the point that a text is always a part of history. He points out that the student of contemporary translation

is enmeshed in the entire network of multiple languages, discourses, sign systems, and cultures, all of which are found in both the source and translated texts and which mutually interact in the process of translation. The number of borders being crossed in one translation are always multiple.

(Gentzler 2001:203)

With regard to who the translator is, Hans Vermeer (1978) described the translator as “bi-cultural”, and Mary Snell-Hornby (1992) described him/her as a “cross-cultural specialist”. Hewson and Martin talk of ‘The Translation Operator as a Cultural Operator’ (1991:133–155) and discuss “the identity and motivations of the translation operator” (1991:160). Though they do not provide details, they are clear on one point: “Our aim is simply to underline once again the [Translation Operator’s] socio-cultural identity as being one of the many factors which account for translation being what it is” (1991:161). Hatim and Mason (2013 [1990]:11) make the same point: “inevitably we feed our own beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and so on into our processing of texts, so that any translation will, to some extent, reflect the translator’s own mental and cultural outlook, despite the best of impartial intentions”.

Artemeva (1998:287) describes the difficulties she had, as a “writing consultant”, working with technical (Russian to English) translators who first “expressed surprise at, and then rejected, my explanations about differences in the structure of English and Russian texts, different rhetorical patterns, and different emphasis on reader awareness”. She concludes by saying “they need to be taught how to adapt to different ways of writing, how to learn on the job, how to understand other cultures, and the like to become better communicators”.

Yet, similar to the “professional” concerns raised by interpreters, a number of translation scholars have argued that translators should (re)turn to a focus on language (Singh 2007:77–78), or to what Mossop (2017) calls an “invariance orientation”. Mossop (2017:332) believes that practising translators are (and should be) focussed on text wordings that in their opinion mean “more or less the same” as
It has become commonly accepted that translation and interpreting involve and require more than linguistic transfer, though whether translators and interpreters should be involved in these extra activities, as we have seen above, is a moot point. Indeed, it is already the case that many of the more clearly creative aspects of translating and interpreting are being carried out by professional ‘others’. We have already touched on the localization industry and Artemeva’s (1998) ‘writing consultant’. In film translation, the category of ‘dialogue adaptors’ represents “a refusal to be considered translators [due to an] emphasis on the artistic, creative and most prestigious aspects of their professional activity” (Pavesi and Perego 2006:100; see also Zanotti 2014). The same is true for transcreators, who distance themselves from translators (Katan 2016a, 2018b). Given the capabilities of computer-aided translation, it is imperative that ‘translation proper’ does focus on difference, and hence on intercultural communication, if translators and interpreters are to survive as a profession (Katan 2016a). At the same time, a lack of a clear understanding of the nature and limitations of the (cultural) mediation involved in the work of translators, interpreters and cultural mediators often leads to confusion of roles and expectations, and contributes to these professionals’ zone of uncertainty.

The Head of the government’s Intercultural Mediation Unit in Belgium, Hans Verrept (2008), for instance, believes that the intercultural mediator’s duties include not only ‘interpreting’ itself, but many other roles such as acting as a culture broker (explaining the world of one party to the other), providing practical help and emotional support, engaging in conflict mediation when necessary, acting as an advocate, advising professionals on issues facing ethnic minority members, and providing health education to patients.

Tipton and Furmanek (2016:8–9) in their volume subtitled A Guide to Interpreting in Public Services and the Community suggest a number of core competences, which relate closely to Verrept’s views:

**Tipton and Furmanek’s Core Competencies**

**Linguistic** – including strategies for handling culture-specific references;
### Thematic
- including how to identify gaps in cultural knowledge in relation to a limited-proficiency speaker’s country of origin;

### Interpersonal
- including attention to psychosocial support;

### Technological
- including terminology management and use of social media;

### Business-related
- including time and customer relations management;

### Developmental
- including managing working with others and responding to pressure and change.

### Intercultural
- Awareness of different types of social disadvantage;
- Knowledge of cultural changes in service user countries of origin;
- Awareness of the nature of power asymmetries operating in relevant domains;
- Awareness of the nature of the professional intercultures generated between interpreters and institutional service providers.

Pöchhacker (2008) provides an illuminating deconstruction and discussion of the notion of ‘mediation’, especially as it relates to (community) interpreting and, to a lesser extent, translation. Pöchhacker starts from the dictionary meanings of ‘mediation’ as:

1) Intercession between conflicting parties with a view to achieving reconciliation or mutual understanding;
2) Action or function of an intermediate channel of transmission.

The first sense is closer to social and cultural mediation; the other is closer to translation and interpreting, as is explained in the following lines. Pöchhacker then distinguishes between three types of mediation (see Figure 1.2): cultural/linguistic (intercultural relations), cognitive (conceptual relations), and contractual (social relations).

The cultural and linguistic mediation involved in translation and interpreting consists of comprehension of the source text or discourse in its original linguistic and cultural context and rendering it in a manner that is appropriate in the target language and culture. This closely parallels Hatim and Mason’s (2013 [1990]) point above regarding the translator as an agent with bicultural vision and critical reading skills. Cultural mediation in this sense is a process that is quite different from cultural mediation as a profession or activity, as outlined, for example, by Verrept (2008) above.

Pöchhacker’s ‘cognitive mediation’ also resonates with Hatim and Mason’s (2013 [1990]:11) point that text processing for translation involves a level of subjectivity, which consists of or results from
the translator/interpreter feeding their own beliefs, knowledge and attitudes into the comprehension and reformulation of texts.

Finally, ‘contractual mediation’ is understood as the action or role of managing social relations and resolving conflicts or differences, including intercultural ones. Cognitive mediation, and linguistic and cultural mediation (in the communicative sense) apply naturally to interpreting and translation. Contractual mediation, on the other hand, is problematic, as it relates to different professional activities and profiles, including the role of intercultural mediator as outlined above. “Every interpreter [or translator] is a mediator (between languages and cultures), but not every mediator is an interpreter [or translator]” (Pöchhacker 2008:14).

Pöchhacker calls for a distinction between intercultural/social mediators on the one hand and interpreters (and, we would add, translators) on the other. He goes on to state:

The two can be expected to coexist – side by side, most likely in a constructive, complementary relationship, and even in the same person, provided that the dually qualified professional and his or her clients are aware that the service provided in a given interaction is either interpreting or mediation, and in either case founded on a state-of-the-art model of professional practice.

(Pöchhacker 2008:24)
Although we have reservations regarding the “in the same person” part, the idea of two broad fields of professional practice (interpreting/translation versus social/cultural mediation) co-existing and constructively complementing each other sounds reasonable. Martín and Phelan (2010) also agree that the two roles are distinct and complementary, as mediators may speak the relevant languages but lack interpreting skills, and interpreters have the latter but are not equipped to deal with intercultural conflicts.

Translators and interpreters generally ‘mediate’ between cultures in a figurative and implicit sense. Cultural mediators, on the other hand, mediate between people from different cultural backgrounds in a literal and contractual sense: advising, ironing out differences and avoiding and/or resolving conflicts. Translators and interpreters mediate implicitly by aiming for and producing what Hale (2014:328) refers to as a “pragmatically accurate rendition”; that is, a translation or interpretation that takes into account the context, including the cultural background of the speakers or writers, and encapsulates the intended message as part of the translation or interpretation. This does not exclude the option of occasionally (and explicitly) commenting on intercultural issues that cannot be handled in this manner. Indeed, Hale clarifies that even codes of ethics such as AUSIT’s do not prohibit, in extreme circumstances, “alerting parties to potential cross-cultural misunderstandings when they cannot be bridged in a pragmatically accurate rendition” (2014:328).

How much room there is for translator or interpreter intervention will depend on the setting, contractual relations, translation/interpreting brief, mode of translation/interpreting and so on. These contextual factors are sometimes overlooked in the discussion of translator/interpreter leeway and intervention as a language professional with cultural knowledge. For instance, the differences between Kondo’s (1990) cautious stance and Takimoto’s (2006) findings mentioned earlier could have an explanation in the fact that Kondo was referring to conference or diplomatic interpreting for high-profile leaders, while Takimoto’s study was about business interpreting. Among other aspects, conference interpreting involves time constraints, which means that even if the interpreter wanted to clarify or alert participants to cultural issues, they would not have the time. High-profile interpreting has its own limitations (power relations, language sensitivities, real-life stakes, etc.). Business interpreting, on the other hand, may be more relaxed, and the interpreter may be working for one of the parties, unlike a community interpreter, for example, who is hired by a public service.

Again, as Kondo (1990) points out, an interpreter will have to tread very carefully when it comes to active participation in the communication process. However, we would like to add that this word of caution needs to be nuanced and conditioned to the different understandings of active participation and the context in which the interpreter is working.