

# The Discourse of Philanthropy in Italy and The United States:

## A Case Study of Interparadigmatic Translation

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### Abstract

This paper discusses translation of texts about nonprofit organizations from English into Italian as a case study of intercultural communication. Firstly, we note the importance of adaptation as a valuable strategy for translation of nonprofit texts from English into Italian. Secondly, we describe the intercultural difference between the nonprofit sector in Italy and the United States in terms of paradigms, following Kuhn's theory of interparadigmatic translation and Gramsci's idea of translatability. Thirdly, we show the connection between these epistemological frameworks of translation and interlinguistic translation by selecting a number of keywords in the language of American philanthropy which do not have a direct equivalent in Italian, or whose equivalent may prove to be a "false friend" if translated literally (stewardship, philanthropy, charity): we show that despite the alleged "incommensurability" between Italian and American philanthropy, translation is still possible, and we suggest practical strategies that translators may adopt. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Joint ACLA/ AAAL Conference in Montréal (Canada) in June 2006.

**Keywords:** philanthropy, translatability vs. untranslatability, paradigms, Kuhn, Gramsci

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### 1. Introduction

In the last three years, I was engaged in a doctoral research project in Intercultural Communication concerning the language of nonprofit organizations, especially fundraising ones in Italy and the United States. The choice of this topic was directly connected with my interests as a translator, in that I had worked as a freelance translator for nonprofit organizations for three years while and after earning my M.A. in Translation. In my PhD research work, I focused mainly on direct mail (Fusari 2005a) and built my own corpus of Italian direct mail letters, the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, which I compared with an existing American corpus, the ICIC Fundraising Corpus, with an eye to the relevance of this comparison for translation practice<sup>1</sup> (see paragraph 2.1. below).

During this process, it soon became clear that one potential objection to this kind of comparison was the homogeneity of data. The rhetoric of Italian fundraising, not to mention the structure of fundraising letters, is quite different from what you have in North America. Whereas Italian fundraising tends to focus on the selflessness of donors and on the fact that they give with no interest for themselves, American letters typically concentrate on the new society that donors believe in, and on their investment in a better world: American nonprofits, unlike their Italian counterparts, often write about the tax benefits that philanthropic investment entails for the donor, an aspect that very few Italian organizations mention in their promotional materials, even when they are indeed capable of offering tax incentives to contributors. In addition, there is considerable difference between the role of the nonprofit sector in Italy and the US: if we look at the specialized literature, and talk to fundraisers, we realize that American organizations are considered as dispensers of public services in their own right, whereas in Italy, despite ongoing privatizations, the state is still widely regarded as *the* public sector. No-one denies that nonprofits in Italy can complement state-run public services, and sometimes provide better services, but the idea that there should be fully-fledged competition between these two sectors is largely seen as something "from abroad", i.e. from America. In a nutshell, many people - including a number of

advocates of the nonprofit sector - believe that, although public services can be delivered both by public and private-sector actors, essential services that fulfill the rights of all individuals should in any case be provided to all by the state.

In this paper, I analyze the nonprofit sector in Italy and the United States in terms of paradigms (following Kuhn's theory of paradigms and Gramsci's idea of translatability), and show the relevance of these considerations for translation purposes. Secondly, I argue that, despite sizeable conceptual differences, comparison, intercultural communication – and, for that matter, translation – are still possible, and I cite a number of resources – especially corpus resources – that can be useful in this respect. Finally, I illustrate some examples of concepts in the nonprofit sector (philanthropy, charity, stewardship) that cannot be translated literally from English into Italian, but need to be adapted.

## 2. Adaptation as a translation strategy for translation in the philanthropic sector

An intercultural analysis of the nonprofit sector in Italy and the United States has a number of applications for translation, most notably as concerns the need to resort to adaptation. However, when translating academic books on nonprofit organizations from English into Italian, it is quite common to be asked by publishers to "adapt" the text, and the translation contract usually specifies this. This is not infrequent also for translation of direct marketing materials, for example fundraising letters, that need to be adapted to other national giving markets.

In translation theory, adaptation has often been relegated to a minor role, neglected or even considered to be a sub-product of *real* translation. In fact, the aspects of adaptation which tend to be privileged in translation studies are intrinsically linguistic and centered on the identification of cross-cultural differences in linguistic expression (Thatcher 2000) or on the influence of English on other languages, especially in technical domains (Montero-Martinez, Fuertes-Olivera & García de Quesada 2001; Tammaro 2001). On other occasions, adaptation is seen as a process of "revision" where contents remain the same – except for some minor adjustments – and changes concern mainly the structural, syntactic and genre-based dimensions (Scarpa 1992; Boothman 2001).

One of the reasons why adaptation has rarely been analyzed as a translation strategy in its own right is probably that "translation is characterized by a highly specific linkage and commitment to the source text, which the traditional discussion of translation theory attempts to capture in the concept of *translation fidelity*" (Koller 1995: 202). Adaptation, by contrast (especially adaptation of the data that are presented in the source text through insertion of correspondent data in the target-language country, as required by some translation contracts), has a tendency to make the text "unfaithful", in an attempt to produce a more reader-oriented target text. This explains why "the phenomenon [of adaptation] has frequently been approached from a prescriptive point of view, and many comments have been pejorative", as Shuttleworth & Cowie (1997: 3-4) point out, also noting that adaptation has often been considered as "unfaithful" or even as "pseudo-translation" by source-text oriented commentators. It is clear how from an even mildly source-text oriented perspective, such a linguistic product might indeed be described as an "unfaithful" translation. However, it should be noted that fidelity is not necessarily a positive characteristic of all translations: as Henry highlights, "les notions de fidélité, d'humilité ou de trahison, très marquées, font également peu de place à la liberté du traducteur, à son sens de responsabilité et à son professionnalisme. Elles évoquent encore une image médiévale de notre métier, celle du copiste courbé sur sa feuille" (Henry 1995: 370). Barbe (1996: 329) also presents the distinction between free and literal translation as a "false dichotomy", and Pym declares that "translators should be prepared to do more than just translate. If they are in a position to carry out other mediatory tasks they should do so. This could involve things like preselecting information, advising on how a particular text should be translated, and suggesting how best to act in order to attain cooperation" (Pym 1995: 600).

The key element to deciding to what extent and in what ways it is reasonable to adapt a text is asking the crucial question, "fidélité à qui et à quoi?", as suggested by Ricœur (2004: 51), who believes that fidelity to the source text is a vague concept, based on "une équivalence présumée, non fondée dans une identité de sens démontrable" (Ricœur 2004: 40). According to Ricœur, other ideas of fidelity are equally legitimate in the process of translation: the real objective that a translator should pursue is not fidelity in itself, but "hospitalité langagière", i.e. a form of "hospitality" that makes it possible for the target culture to acquire new concepts. Translation itself, according to him, is a paradigm of hospitality: in his own

words, "C'est elle [translation] qui fait modèle pour d'autres formes d'hospitalité que je lui vois apparentée: les confessions, les religions, ne sont-elles pas comme des langues étrangères les unes aux autres, avec leur lexique, leur grammaire, leur rhétorique, leur stylistique, qu'il faut *apprendre* afin de les pénétrer?" (Ricœur 2004: 43). Especially in technical domains, editorial pressure in favor of domestication may be particularly strong, insofar as texts that deal with new concepts in the target culture (for example venture philanthropy in Italy) may be discarded as "not marketable". However, it is clear that resorting to adaptation entails a number of risks: for example, an excess of domestication might completely prevent new concepts from being transferred from the target to the source language. The task of the translator therefore lies in finding the right balance between reader-friendliness and introduction of new concepts - in a nutshell, the right balance between translation and adaptation. However, this can be particularly difficult and arbitrary if done without the right tools.

## 2.1. Lexical choices

The use of corpus resources can be very effective for lexical choices, because it allows translators to look at a variety of different linguistic realizations in a given word environment and decide which is most appropriate to the given context. Furthermore, in domains such as the language of philanthropy, corpora may sometimes be the *only* reliable resource available, given the lack of specialized dictionaries and bilingual glossaries. A valuable resource for translation of philanthropic texts from English into Italian is the use of the ICIC Fundraising Corpus and the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, two specialized corpora of nonprofit discourse.

These corpora were not built specifically for translation purposes, but for linguistic analysis. However, comparison between them can indeed yield useful findings for translation: for example, if we look up the Italian equivalent of the word "donor" ("donatore") in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, we realize that this is not the typical way in which Italian organizations address their donors. Italian organizations largely prefer the word "sostenitore" (lit. "supporter") in the same word environment where we have "donor" in the ICIC Fundraising Corpus. Once again, the reason is probably connected with the idea of selflessness that characterizes the rhetoric of nonprofit organizations in Italian, as we noted earlier on in this paper: by emphasizing "support" rather than "giving" in their direct address to the public, Italian organizations probably want to underscore the fact that donors uphold their entire value set, and not just their economic stability<sup>2</sup>. If we had to translate (and possibly adapt) an American fundraising letter for the Italian market, for example, we should be aware of this feature of fundraising rhetoric in the target language and take it into account in the translation process.

## 2.2. Issues of register

Another issue to be considered when looking for the right balance between translation and adaptation is that of register. If we look at the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, we realize that about 80% of the fundraising letters in the corpus address their donors by using the honorific pronoun "lei" (the equivalent of "vous" in French), and only two categories of organizations, Environmental and Human Rights, tend to use the informal pronoun "tu" (perhaps because they typically target younger donors). A previous study of the generic move structure of fundraising letters in Italy and the United States (Fusari 2005b) revealed that, despite remarkable similarities, Italian letters resort to pressure tactics (e.g. emotional) much more than American ones: in fact "Pressure tactics" was found to constitute a rhetorical move in its own right only in Italian fundraising letters. In some cases, such pressure tactics were so strong as to border on face-threatening acts: for example, a letter by a well-known humanitarian medical aid organization reads "Come milioni di altre persone nel mondo, vittime dell'indifferenza e della disinformazione, anche lei non ha reagito a questa situazione catastrofica"<sup>3</sup>

The presence of pressure tactics in philanthropic persuasive discourse seemed to contradict Bhatia's argument according to which pressure tactics are not needed in philanthropic direct mail, as opposed to commercial direct mail, given "the assumption that we have self-interest in the establishment and maintenance of community values" (Bhatia 1997: 39)<sup>4</sup>. However, a more thorough analysis of the rhetoric of philanthropic direct mail in Italian showed that the presence of pressure tactics should actually be seen against the backdrop of greater social distance between donors and organizations in Italian culture. Whereas in American direct mail "a full 'intimacy cline' is covered", so that each letter can be placed on a continuum between very detached and extremely friendly (Miller 2006), Italian organizations

have a tendency to address the donor in more formal ways<sup>5</sup>, and to use fewer politeness markers<sup>6</sup>. Notwithstanding the presence of - often quite direct - pressure tactics in 50.5% of the letters contained in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, negative politeness strategies were found to be favored in Italian direct mail letters (Fusari, unpublished PhD dissertation). In fact the donor is often represented as a powerful person who can "save the lives" of the beneficiaries just by "sacrificing a cup of coffee", and several organizations use expressions such as "mi perdoni se insisto, ma la situazione è disperata" ("I apologize for urging you but the situation is desperate"), "mi scuso ancora se sono costretto a disturbarla" ("I apologize once again for being forced to disturb you"), etc. By contrast, in American philanthropic letters analyzed by Upton (2002), politeness strategies include the use of "pleasantries" like "have a nice day" and "(God) bless you" whose literal translation would be completely out of place within the context of an Italian fundraising letter.

These examples may be taken as emblematic of the issues of register and social distance to be considered when translating letters or other direct marketing materials from English into Italian, in order for the target text to be fully acceptable and effective in terms of fundraising.

### 3. Interparadigmatic translation (conceptual and linguistic)

The intercultural differences that lie at the basis of many translation difficulties in the language of nonprofits from English into Italian could be explained in terms of different visions of the same phenomenon (i.e. giving, but also, more generally, contributing to make the world a better place) in the two cultures. One way of framing this comparison is to look at it in terms of paradigms, for example by suggesting that there might be different ethical paradigms of giving, and that different cultures may be placed on a continuum between the two extremes of "compassion-oriented" and "investment-oriented" giving paradigms. In Italy, for example, the notion of investment seems to have been recently introduced in appeals to donors<sup>7</sup>, thus marking what may be interpreted as a paradigmatic shift under way between a predominantly compassion-oriented approach to giving and a more welfare-oriented paradigm.

The notion of paradigm in the philosophy of science was widely discussed in the second half of the twentieth century, as the well-known polemic between Popper and Kuhn on hypothesis falsification and paradigm changes clearly illustrates<sup>8</sup>. By paradigm, philosophers of science usually mean "scientific paradigm" or, in Kuhn's words, "a theory [that] must seem better than its competitors, but ... need not, and in fact never does, explain all the facts which can be confronted" (Kuhn 1970: 17-18). Brownlie also describes Kuhnian paradigms as "a model (including laws, theory, application and instrumentation) for scientific research from which a coherent tradition springs" (Brownlie 2003: 94), and specifies that, according to Kuhn, this definition applies only to exact sciences. In the humanities, by contrast, "there is a tradition of claims, counterclaims, and debates over fundamentals. But we can still use the concept of paradigm for the humanities as a conceptual network which forms a coherent whole" (Brownlie *ibidem*). However, since the 1960s when he first developed his notion of paradigm, Kuhn admitted that it was possible to extend it to other domains<sup>9</sup>, insofar as the most generic definition of paradigm is "an accepted model or pattern" (Kuhn 1970: 23).

Applying the notion of paradigm to (inter)linguistic theory is possible, and there are several examples of scholars who have done so over the years, especially in the context of LSP: for example De Mauro (1994: 317) analyzed the relevance of Kuhn's theory to the differences between the language of hard and soft sciences in relation to everyday language; Rossini Favretti (1988: 7-8) focused on the relationship between writers and their object of study in scientific languages, especially as concerns the difference between "normal" science (i.e. accepted) and "extraordinary" science (i.e. innovative, having a tendency to generate new paradigms).

#### 3.1. Thomas Kuhn and the issue of translatability

In his theory of scientific revolutions<sup>10</sup> brought about by paradigmatic changes, Kuhn made direct reference not only to *commensurability*, but also to *translatability*. It is important to mark this distinction, because commensurability and translatability are indeed different concepts. The term "incommensurability" comes from mathematics, where it stands for the absence of a common unit of measurement (but not for the impossibility of comparison): for example, the hypotenuse of a right-angled

isosceles triangle is incommensurable with its catheti, but it is still possible to compare them (i.e. find a mathematical relation between them). Likewise, in the theory of paradigms, the term "incommensurability" refers to the impossibility to define a scientific theory by using methods, standards and frameworks that are typical of another, usually older, theory. However, as Kuhn specified later on (1977, 2000), incommensurability does not imply incomparability<sup>11</sup>. Translatability, on the other hand, is restricted to subgroups of terms that form the backbone of a certain theory, e.g. "principles" and "elements" in chemistry: these two terms have been in use among scientists since the eighteenth century, but they obviously had a very different sense before the advent of Mendeleev's periodic table.

Another difference that needs to be underscored in Kuhn's theory of paradigms is the one between translation and interpretation. Despite a certain degree of overlap between the two processes, Kuhn believes that translation is essentially a linguistic practice, consisting in the substitution of words and phrases in the source language with words and phrases in the target language; interpretation, by contrast, is considered by Kuhn to be a deeper epistemological task, similar to the one Quine (1960) attributes to the translation of the indigenous term "gavagai" by a Western anthropologist. Kuhn argues against Quine's argument that interpreting "gavagai" is impossible for an English-speaker due to different conceptualizations of the world, but he does believe that "gavagai" is an untranslatable term: in fact, non-indigenous people have to resort to an indigenous word or concept to define it ("gavagai", or "part of rabbit") even if they have interpreted the meaning correctly and understood it perfectly well. According to Kuhn, this is a case in which interpretation is possible, but translation is not, thus marking the distinction between the two processes<sup>12</sup>.

If we look at the vocabulary of the nonprofit sector in Italian, we realize that there are a number of words and phrases that derive from American philanthropy and are kept in English: one of the most striking cases is probably "venture philanthropy", a practice that is not very widespread in Italy, but is perfectly understandable and "reducible" to Italian. In fact, it would be entirely plausible in Italian to talk about "filantropia di ventura"<sup>13</sup>, and an attempt in this sense can indeed be found in the title of a recent book by Gemelli 2004 (*Filantropi di ventura*). We may therefore conclude that if a concept can be "reduced" from one culture to another, the presence of a one-to-one equivalent in the vocabulary is not strictly necessary for communication to work effectively: for example, the word "computer" remains "computer" in Italian and becomes "ordinateur" in French, but the concept remains the same and can be understood perfectly well both by Italian and French speakers.

### 3.2. Antonio Gramsci and the issue of translatability

It is interesting to notice that, well before Kuhn, another scholar, Antonio Gramsci<sup>14</sup>, developed a similar view of conceptual translatability, which is also relevant to interlinguistic translation in domains - such as nonprofits in Italy and the US - where an intercultural gap makes it difficult to find direct equivalences. According to Gramsci, two paradigms that aim at explaining the same phenomenon, even at different times in history, are mutually translatable due to the possibility to re-interpret their constituting concepts based on the other paradigm. Despite Gramsci's keen interest in linguistics<sup>15</sup>, most of the remarks on translation in his *Prison Notebooks* are actually referred to conceptual, rather than interlinguistic translation: however, Gramsci also "tried to make it possible to translate the culture of one country into that of another country, i.e. to achieve *inter-cultural* translation" (Boothman 2004: 114, my translation). This is especially true of the section of the *Notebooks* entitled "Translatability of scientific and philosophic languages" (*Notebook* 11). However, in this section, "Gramsci tackles the problem at a different level, that of 'translatability' of languages: not historically-defined languages, but the cultural-linguistic legacy of a particular discipline, a vision of the world, a specific area of knowledge" (Jervolino 2005: 3, my translation). The text of the *Notebooks* (*Notebook* 11, 48), makes this quite clear: "Just as two 'scientists', who owe their cultural formation to the same background, think they are upholding different 'truths' just because they employ a different scientific language (and we do not say that there is not a difference between them or that this difference is not without significance), so too two national cultures, the expressions of fundamentally similar civilizations, think that they too are different, antagonistic, one opposed to the other, one superior to the other because they use languages that come from different traditions, formed through activities characteristic of and particular to each: a politico-juridical language in France, a philosophical, doctrinal and theoretical one in Germany. For the historian, in actual fact, these civilizations can be mutually translated, the one reduced to the other"<sup>16</sup> (Gramsci

1995: 209). As Boothman notes in the preface to his English translation of the *Notebooks*, "Through this approach, which roots language firmly in social praxis, Gramsci establishes a fundamental plank in any realist-materialist theory of translation, rejecting the work of the more extreme interpreters of anthropological linguistic theories (typified by the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) or of philosopher-linguists like W. V. O. Quine who claim that a perception of the world possessed by one social group cannot be translated into the language of a radically different one. For Gramsci the 'exactness' of a translation between cultures or philosophies depends on how similar they are" (Boothman 1995: 3).

Going back to our original topic, the language of nonprofit organizations in Italy and the US, it is clear that Gramsci's remarks pertain more to an intercultural comparison between different conceptual models than to the specifically linguistic problems that translators may encounter when working in a given specialized area, such as that of nonprofit organizations. However, this does not make his considerations less relevant to the practice of interlinguistic mediation, especially when it comes to choosing a translation strategy that requires adaptation, as we will see later on in this paper. In other words, according to Gramsci, just as two languages express the same concepts in different ways, different paradigms shape the world in different ways. Therefore, translation may not be perfect, but it is still possible<sup>17</sup>, providing that there are enough points of contact between the cultures involved: "the more similar the bases of the two societies, the more precise and convincing the intercultural translation" (Boothman 2004: 133). Gramsci's interest in interlinguistic translation is particularly evident in his letter to his wife Giulia (September 5, 1932), a translator into Russian. According to Gramsci, "a skilled translator should be able not only to translate literally but also to translate the conceptual terms of a national culture into the terms of another national culture, that is, such a translator should have a critical knowledge of two civilizations and be able to acquaint one with the other by using the historically determined language of the civilization to which he supplies the informative material"<sup>18</sup> (Gramsci 1994: 207). This view of the translator as faithful *to the reader* is particularly relevant to the translation of nonprofit texts from English into Italian, as we will see shortly.

### 3.3. Is the discourse of nonprofit organizations "paradigmatic"?

Against the backdrop of this theoretical framework, one may wonder whether the discourse of nonprofit organizations in Italy and the US can be considered to be paradigmatic, and if so, whether translation is really possible. From the functional viewpoint, it is clear that the American nonprofit sector is not equivalent to the Italian one, due to considerable differences in economic dimensions and in scope<sup>19</sup>. If we took the notion of paradigm in the narrower sense, this kind of discourse would not be paradigmatic: economics (despite its systematic use of mathematics) is not a hard science and therefore does not fall within the realms of paradigmatic discourse as intended by Kuhn in his earliest works. However, the notion of "paradigm" in this context should be understood in the extended sense of the term, whereby the Italian and the American nonprofit sectors are two different models which share as their main purpose that of managing public services in a free society. In this sense, their discourse can indeed be considered paradigmatic, and the American nonprofit system is socially, culturally and historically different from its Italian counterpart. However, it is debatable whether they could be considered to represent different "stages" in a hypothetical "nonprofit science", as the classical theory of paradigms would suggest: it seems more appropriate, in my view, to consider the Italian and American nonprofit sectors as two different actualizations of a particular (i.e. ethical and socially oriented) way to conceptualize the science of management and economics.

There is also another fundamental reason why the notion of paradigm should be understood in a broad sense if applied to the nonprofit sector in different countries: whereas the terminology of nonprofit economics has reached a high degree of standardization (see e.g. the glossaries of Rosso & Associates 2003, for English and Rosso, Tempel & Melandri 2004, for Italian), this is not the case with the different tendencies and approaches to the third sector in America and across the Atlantic. In particular, the Italian scenario is characterized by a few large organizations that adopt a managerial approach to what they describe as "il mercato delle donazioni" ("the giving market") and many, typically small-sized<sup>20</sup>, grassroots organizations that have a skeptical approach to scientific, professional fundraising. These organizations often believe that the essence of the nonprofit sector is to be found in voluntary, non-professional action, and refuse the idea of soliciting gifts based on scientifically rigorous gift range charts, profiling donors and hiring paid professionals instead of volunteers.

It should also be noted that even within the United States alone, it would be misleading to think of *one* conceptual paradigm for the entire nonprofit sector. Fogal (2002) collected a series of articles focusing on different areas of American philanthropy, thus demonstrating that this sector is a kaleidoscopic landscape that shuns all sorts of "accepted models or patterns" in the Kuhnian sense of the term. Therefore, even within the same national culture, different kinds of nonprofit organizations constantly engage in processes of mutual comprehension and interpretation, and even within organizations of the same kind (e.g. religious), the cause has to be explained in different ways to different constituencies. Therefore, although the discourse of nonprofit organizations cannot be interpreted in terms of paradigms in the narrower sense, it still represents an interesting testing ground for intercultural translatability, in both the interlinguistic and the intralinguistic sense.

### 3. Translating the "untranslatable": a few examples from nonprofit texts

As mentioned earlier on this paper, several terms in the discourse of Italian nonprofits are in English. This is in line with the tendency in specialized languages in Italian to borrow many terms from English, especially as concerns Economics and Computer Sciences (Garzone 1998: 105). However, is this only a convention, or are these terms really "untranslatable"?

Let us take the example of the word "stewardship", a keyword in the language of American philanthropy. Rosso & Associates (2003: 505) define "stewardship" as "the philosophy and means by which an institution exercises ethical accountability in the use of contributed resources and the philosophy and means by which a donor exercises responsibility in the voluntary use of resources; the guiding principle in philanthropic fundraising". In the language of nonprofit organizations in Italian, this term is usually either kept in English or translated into the more prosaic "amministrazione etica delle donazioni" (ethical gift management). Before we discharge the word "stewardship" as "untranslatable" into Italian, however, we should note that this is a keyword not only in the language of nonprofits, but also in the language of the Gospels<sup>21</sup>. "The ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" in Corinthians 4,1 is "ministri di Cristo e amministratori dei misteri di Dio" in the Italian Episcopal Conference's (CEI) version of the Bible, the "faithful and wise steward" in Luke 12, 42 is "amministratore fedele e saggio", and the parable of the unjust steward in Luke 16 becomes "la parabola dell'amministratore infedele" in Italian. It therefore seems that "amministrazione etica" can be a correct rendition of "stewardship", but if we delve deeper into the analysis of the word "stewardship", we may wonder what its Greek original was in the Gospels. Interestingly, the original word in the Gospels is οἰκονομία (*oikonomía*), the word from which both the English word "economics", and its Italian counterpart, "economia", stem: in fact, in Ancient Greek, the word οἰκονομία literally meant "good management of the household" (from the fusion between the two words οἶκος, *home*, and νόμος, *law* and connected concepts). The two languages have obviously chosen different words to translate the same concepts, but the "commensurability" between the two could not be demonstrated more clearly. In a nutshell, οἰκονομία / stewardship stands for "ethical economics", and the evangelical concept cannot but be understood as such in both civilizations, although Italian and English biblical translators have chosen to render it with different terms.

Another example is the word "philanthropy" itself. In Italian, as demonstrated in an earlier study (Fusari, to appear 2008), the word "filantropia" has radically different connotations from its English (apparently literal) equivalent. In the language of American nonprofits, "philanthropy" may be described as an umbrella-term, indicating the whole charitable sector, the patterns of donation, the ethics (or "stewardship") of gift management, as well as the attitudes surrounding the action of giving. American philanthropists are people who practice philanthropy at various levels, from giving and volunteering to other activities within foundations and charities. A typical philanthropist is a well-off person who decides to share a part of his/ her resources with the community, for religious, moral or other reasons. In Italy, by contrast, there is still a widespread notion that giving is an act of compassion towards the needy, and if a donor gives, s/he is assumed to do so out of piety and good heart, and not really because it is her/ his social, moral or personal duty to do so, even less so because s/he may receive some (tax or other) benefits. Despite the recent increase in philanthropic endowment-building by rich Italian families<sup>22</sup>, their fundraising discourse has not concentrated explicitly on the social, moral or personal duty to share personal and/ or family wealth. In fact, "filantropia" is hardly seen as an economic concept in Italian, and it is more connected with the idea of "doing something without payment" as an act of piety towards the poor: this is why, in economic contexts, the English "philanthropy" tends to be translated as "nonprofit"

or other terms currently used in economics which are devoid of the idea of "alms-giving" in Italian. However, if we look at etymology, we discover once again that both words come from the Greek  $\phi\lambda\alpha\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , which indicated an interest (literally, *love*) for all aspects of human life<sup>23</sup>. Once again, the two words stem from the same Greek etymology, and although they have taken different meanings and connotations in Italian and English, they remain nonetheless comparable.

Similar considerations apply to "charity" and "charitable organizations": in Italian, "carità" would be a false friend in this context because the word mainly stands for the theological virtue of "charity", the third and greatest of the divine virtues enumerated by Paul in Corinthians, XIII, 13, and corresponding to love for God in Christian theology. In Italian, "carità" can take other, non-religious senses, especially that of an undifferentiated love for all human beings, in partial overlap with the notion of "filantropia". This is particularly evident in expressions such as "fare la carità" and the now slightly outdated<sup>24</sup> "dame di carità", which are not used in the language of nonprofit organizations, probably because of the paternalistic associations that these phrases would trigger. Economists who study the language of philanthropy thus advise against using the word "carità" and its derivatives in the language of nonprofits (see Melandri & Vittadini 2004). Interestingly, however, the adjective "caritativo" survives in Italian: although very rare (77 occurrences out of 110 million words), this word can still be found in the CORIS Corpus in the context of philanthropic discourse<sup>25</sup>.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have looked at some issues in interlinguistic and conceptual translation that are relevant to the discourse of nonprofit organizations in Italy and the United States. We framed the issue of adaptation as a translation strategy within the Kuhnian concept of paradigm, especially as concerns the possibility or impossibility to compare and translate different systems in different cultures. We then made a connection between Kuhn's reflections and Antonio Gramsci's theory of translatability, especially his comparison (*Notebook 11*) between different schools of thought and people who speak different languages. The relevance of the notion of paradigm to the study on interlinguistic translation has also been shown by Ricœur (2004), who connected translation with the idea of "hospitality" of the other's ideas and traditions into our own culture.

The philanthropic sector in Italy and the United States offers an interesting case study in this respect, although, as we have seen, its discourse can only be understood as paradigmatic in the broader sense of the term: there is no "theory ... better than its competitors" (Kuhn 1970: 17) in either countries as concerns nonprofits, but only different ways of understanding philanthropy. However, different visions of philanthropy in Italy and the United States seem to have enough points of contact (as the common origin of the words "stewardship", "philanthropy" and "charity" in both languages demonstrates) to make translation possible.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The ICIC Fundraising Corpus and the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus were developed respectively by the Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, USA, and by the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies on Translation, Languages and Cultures (SITLeC) of the University of Bologna, Italy.

<sup>2</sup> A previous study with the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus (Fusari, unpublished PhD dissertation) highlighted that "donatore" is also used in the Italian language of philanthropy, but "sostenitore" seems to be more common in communications with donors, probably as a euphemism to try and avoid explicit mention of the "taboo" issue of money.

<sup>3</sup> "... like millions of other people who have fallen victim to indifference and disinformation, you too have failed to react to this catastrophic situation...", my translation. In this sentence, a conventional implicature triggered by the phrases "come ... altre persone" and "anche lei", implies that the donor has also become indifferent and uninformed. Although the acceptability standards of fundraising discourse in Italian do include highly emotional appeals, this may be too strong even by Italian standards, giving rise to unexpected perlocutionary effects: for example, during my study of fundraising letters, a faithful donor to this organization – a medical doctor – informed me that he had decided to withdraw all support after receiving this letter.

<sup>4</sup> In his *Analysing Genre*, Bhatia had defined pressure tactics as "tactics to prompt the already half-inclined customer to take a quick decision ... this is generally realized in the form of an offer of some additional savings and gains if the customer decides to buy the product or use the service before a specified deadline". (Bhatia, 1993: 54-55).

<sup>5</sup>In other genres, for example Requests for Proposals by Italian foundations, this characteristic is accompanied by a similarity with the discourse of governmental agencies (Fusari, to appear 2008).

<sup>6</sup>Typical markers of politeness, such as “per favore”, are very rare in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, with only 10 occurrences in about 100,000 words.

<sup>7</sup>The frequency of the word “investment” and its derivatives is about 0.1% in the ICIC Fundraising Corpus and 0.01% in the SITLeC Fundraising Corpus, and it is only in the most recent letters that the word “investimento” is referred to the donor’s own contribution: in letters before 2003, it was always referred to investments that the organization had made (Fusari 2006: 80). Emotional appeals (defined as “pathos appeals” by Connor & Gladkov 2004) can also be found in American philanthropic letters, but the notions of “dollars” and “investment” play an equally if not more important role in American philanthropic direct mail (Fusari, to appear 2008).

<sup>8</sup>Popper, among others, accused Kuhn of irrationalism. Masterman (1970) developed a compelling argument in defense of Kuhn’s theory, but Kuhn himself clarified his own position in the Postscript to the second edition of *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970: 174-210), and in his own paper at the *International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science*, London 1965, vol. 4 (Lakatos & Musgrave 1970), where many remarks are clearly - albeit not explicitly - directed at Popper.<

<sup>9</sup>However, according to Kuhn, a scientific paradigm, unlike a verbal one, “is rarely an object for replication. Instead, like an accepted judicial decision in the common law, it is an object for further articulation and specification under new and more stringent conditions” (Kuhn 1970: 23).

<sup>10</sup>“A revolution is for me a special sort of change involving a certain sort of reconstruction of group commitments. But it need not be a large change, nor need it seem revolutionary to those outside a single community, consisting perhaps of fewer than twenty-five people”, Kuhn 1970: 181.

<sup>11</sup>“In using the word ‘incommensurability’ Kuhn wants to underscore the immense difficulty of comparison rather than the absolute impossibility of engaging with another theory”. (Brownlie, 2003: 94).

<sup>12</sup>The reason why such an indigenous word is untranslatable into English, and its corresponding concept is incommensurable with equivalents in non-indigenous languages, is that “gavagai” is irreducible to any non-indigenous, e.g. English, concept. These, according to Kuhn’s most mature theory of paradigms (as exemplified, for example, by Kuhn 1977 and 2000) are the only truly representative cases of incommensurability.

<sup>13</sup>The main difference between “venture philanthropy” and “filantropia di ventura” is in their connotation. The phrase “di ventura” immediately reminds an Italian speaker of “capitani di ventura”, the “condottieri” of the Middle Ages, who are depicted as Robin Hood figures in popular legends, but were actually mercenaries. In English, by contrast, the word “venture” evidently refers to “venture capital” (venture in the sense of “a business enterprise involving considerable risk”, as defined by The New Oxford Dictionary of English, edited by Judy Pearsall, CD-Rom 1999-2000 edition). However, as the CORIS corpus (Reference Corpus of Written Italian, a 110-million word corpus developed at the Centre for Theoretical and Applied Linguistics of the University of Bologna) shows, the Italian phrase “di ventura” can also be understood in economic terms if used in the right context. However, the phrase is rare in the CORIS (81 occurrences in the corpus, of which only 8 are used in an economic sense).

<sup>14</sup>Antonio Gramsci is one of the leading scholars of Italy’s twentieth century. He was arrested and committed to solitary confinement by the fascist regime (1926) for his political activities within the Italian Communist Party, which he had co-founded in 1921. While in jail, Gramsci wrote *The Prison Notebooks*, a heterogeneous work which, among other things, illustrates Gramsci’s interpretation of Marxism. Gramsci died of a stroke on April, 27, 1937 in a hospital in Rome, where he had spent the last two years of his life always under guard by fascist policemen. In theory, Gramsci died as a free man, since his sentence had expired on April, 21. However, his health conditions made it impossible for him to leave the clinic, and his funerals were held under fascist police surveillance on April, 28, 1937.

<sup>15</sup>In the 1910s, Gramsci was a student of Linguistics at the University of Turin, under the supervision of Matteo Giulio Bartoli, the scholar who first conceived the *Italian Linguistic Atlas* (ALI), a project mainly concerned with the diatopic variation, which was published in a partial form in the 1990s. Despite his being a very promising student, probably headed for a brilliant career as an academic, Gramsci dropped out of university to become a political leader and journalist.

<sup>16</sup>The Italian original reads: “Come due ‘scienziati’ formati nel terreno di una stessa cultura fondamentale credono di sostenere ‘verità’ diverse solo perché impiegano un diverso linguaggio (e non è detto che tra loro non ci sia differenza e che essa non abbia il suo significato) scientifico, così due culture nazionali espressioni di civiltà fondamentalmente simili, credono di essere diverse, opposte, antagonistiche, una superiore all’altra, perché impiegano linguaggi e tradizioni diverse, formati su attività caratteristiche e particolari a ognuna di esse: linguaggio politico-giuridico in Francia, filosofico, dottrinario, teorico in Germania. Per lo storico, in realtà, queste civiltà sono traducibili reciprocamente, riducibili l’una all’altra”.

<sup>17</sup>This Gramscian theory echoes Ricœur’s argument against the impossibility of translation. According to Ricœur, linguistic relativity is impossible to support (“c’est une idée à mon sens insoutenable”, Ricœur, 2004, 29), unless one believes that “la mécompréhension est de droit ... et que les individus bilingues ne peuvent être que des schizophrènes. On est alors rejeté sur l’autre rive: puisque la traduction existe, il faut bien qu’elle soit possible” (Ricœur, 2004: 29).

<sup>18</sup>The Italian original reads: “un traduttore qualificato dovrebbe essere in grado non solo di tradurre letteralmente, ma di tradurre i termini, anche concettuali, di una determinata cultura nazionale nei termini di un'altra cultura nazionale, cioè un tale traduttore dovrebbe conoscere criticamente due civiltà ed essere in grado di far conoscere l'una all'altra servendosi del linguaggio storicamente determinato di quella civiltà alla quale fornisce materiale d'informazione”.

<sup>19</sup>In its analysis of volunteering and giving as a share of GDP in different countries, the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (1995-2002) calculates that philanthropic gifts amount to 1.85% of GDP in the US (which ranks first out of 36 countries that were analyzed) as against 0.11% in Italy (which ranks 33rd). As concerns the category “all private giving”, the percentage on GDP is 3.94 for the US (third place after the Netherlands and Sweden) and 0.91 for Italy (23rd place). See <http://www.jhu.edu/%7Ecnpc/compdata.html>.

<sup>20</sup>Even larger organizations are not exempt from a certain distrust of the role of professional fundraisers. One of the best known Italian organizations, Emergency, has expressed its skeptical views on fundraising as a managerial activity in an interview presented in Melandri et al (2003): 121-135. Emergency has recently opened a local chapter in the United States, raises funds in America through its website, <http://www.emergencyusa.org>, and has contact-persons in 13 cities in the US. Emergency USA is a public charity 501 (c)(3) and has been granted tax exempt status by the United States Internal Revenue Service.

<sup>21</sup>I am grateful to Derek Boothman for pointing out this connection.

<sup>22</sup>For example, *Mediafriends ONLUS*, chaired by the eldest son of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and *Milano Young*, a philanthropic club originally founded to raise funds for the victims of the tsunami in South East Asia, chaired by offspring of rich Milanese families. Their discourse does concentrate on the need to “do something for the poor”, but not on redistribution of family wealth. In the US, by contrast, use of personal wealth to make the whole world a better place is usually included in the mission of this kind of organizations.

<sup>23</sup>This is especially true of the literary genre of Latin literature known as the “New Comedy”, where the notion of “humanitas” is considered as the correspondent of *φιλανθρωπία*, in Greek Comedy. Not by chance does Harper's Latin Dictionary define humanitas as “liberal education, humane and gentle conduct toward others, philanthropy, kindness, politeness, and elegance of manner and language”.

<sup>24</sup>In the CORIS Corpus, only 2 occurrences can be found, and one of them is used ironically.

<sup>25</sup>Acknowledgements go to an anonymous reviewer for encouraging me to analyze the use of the word “carità” more thoroughly. In the first draft of my paper, I had considered it mainly as a religious word, without realizing that it also has a non-religious sense and, what is more, it is still used in the language of nonprofit.

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