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**FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE WINERY: TRANSLATING ITALIAN
WINE CULTURE FOR INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS**

ABSTRACT. The wine sector is one of the areas of excellence in the Italian agri-food sector and Italy plays a leading role in terms of both production and exports. The importance of the sector for the Italian economy requires an effective marketing strategy, which has to be applied to wine as a specific product. In fact, wine is a product with a strong territorial connotation and consumers associate the quality of the product with the quality of the territory which produces it. For this reason, food and wine tourism, increasingly widespread in Italy as well as in other countries, aims to enhance the traditions and culture of the places where wine is produced.

In this context, tourism promotional communication plays a fundamental role as it has to “translate” the character of a unique territory and the specific cultural background of the wine-making process. Effective communication is a fundamental instrument to make Italian small and medium-sized companies competitive in an era characterised by globalisation.

The paper describes a didactic experiment in which postgraduate students enrolled in a Degree Course in Modern Languages have been challenged with the

task of revising a published promotional text about the wine sector, and have shown considerable translating competence as well as a fair amount of creativity.

1. The Italian wine sector

In the global agri-food trade panorama, wine represents one of the products with the widest marketing. Today wine is sold and consumed all over the world and its trade has grown by 390% since the end of the 1980s.¹

Italy plays a primary role both in terms of production and exports, as it is the world's leading exporter of wine per hectolitre and the second position by turnover, preceded in this case by France.²

For Italy, the United States is the leading market in terms of exports, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom. The Netherlands, Austria, China and Russia are also important trading partners for Italian wine.³

The wine sector is fundamental to the Italian economy as far as both exports and tourism are concerned. In fact, international research conducted by Food Travel

¹ D. Pantini D., *La competitività del vino italiano nel mercato mondiale*, "Agricoltura, Alimentazione, Economia, Ecologia", XVII-XVII, 2014, pp. 25-39.

² L. Grassia, *Italia batte la Francia, siamo i primi produttori di vino al mondo*, "La Stampa: sezione economia" (10 luglio 2015).

³ C. Gori and V. Sottini, *The role of the consortia in the Italian wine production system and the impact of EU and national legislation*, "Wine Economics and Policy", III, 1, 2014, pp. 62-67.

Monitor in 2016 showed that Italy was considered the best food and wine destination in the world.⁴ The study showed that "taste" travellers represented an important segment of the Italian tourism industry because they consumed food and wine specialities during their trip and bought typical products even after returning home.

Food and wine tourism has very often proved to be a real driving force behind “Made in Italy” holidays, since Italy is the only country in the world offering as many as 415 wines with recognised DOC/DOCG denominations of origin.

Hence, it seems to be necessary for small and medium-sized Italian wine-making companies to gain visibility in the most effective way both on the Italian and foreign markets. In this respect, effective interlingual promotional communication in this sector plays a fundamental role.

2. Italian wine and the export market

Today quality is a fundamental factor in any activity and wine production cannot be an exception: it is crucial for operators in the wine sector to learn how to advertise their product and their company in the most effective way. Small and medium-sized companies should therefore try to gain visibility on the international market by using

⁴ M. Mollica, *Food Travel Monitor: cresce il turismo del gusto. Italia, prima meta golosa del mondo*, “Corriere della Sera” (23 ottobre 2016).

the “Made in Italy” formula and associate the wine-making processes with Italian culture and lifestyle.

The culture of wine has to be presented in an effective and engaging way, in all its phases and components, starting from the chemical and organoleptic contents of wine (with particular attention to its structure, taste, aroma, colour), packaging (bottle, cap, label) and all the services related to wine production (transport, visits to the cellar, tasting, etc.).⁵ The label plays a particularly important role because of its function in attracting the customers attention. It is through the label, in fact, that the company tries to convey the unique value of its product.

Another element that is becoming increasingly important for consumers concerns sustainability in the wine production process. Companies should highlight this factor as much as possible, so as to create a particularly innovative image (Hall, Mitchell 2008: 98)⁶.

The sales price has a decisive influence on the entire marketing process. Usually the price level corresponds to the positioning of the company on the market. It should be noted, however, that the price can often become an obstacle to the export market because very often wines of less than excellent quality are available at very low prices. Italian wine is not generally considered a "luxury" commodity, as is the

⁵ M.C. Hall and R. Mitchell, *Wine Marketing. A practical Guide*, Elsevier, Oxford 2008.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

case with French elite wine, yet, at the same time, it does not fall into the category of wines at low prices.⁷ Consequently, Italian wine tends to convey the image of an "average" product. It is precisely for this reason that promotional communication plays a crucial role in this sector.

As a consequence, Italian companies should be prepared to invest more in promotional communication, so as to be able to convey the specificity of "Made in Italy" products in terms of savoir-faire and culture.⁸ As a product, wine is not only able to satisfy a material need, but also an intellectual one, linked as it is to the history, tradition and culture of its place of origin.⁹

Communication is at the heart of all wine promotional activities: a flavour of Italian culture must be conveyed by stressing the link of the product with its territory, so as to create a unique experience for the consumer, involving all her/his senses with positive impressions.¹⁰

⁷ G. Azteni, *Marketing del vino. Il ritardo dell'Italia*, "Tre Bicchieri, il settimanale economico del Gambero Rosso", VI, 40, 2015, pp. 12-14.

⁸ S. Lorusso, *Orientamenti strategici e aspetti di Brand Management nel settore vitivinicolo italiano*, "Rivista piccola impresa Università di Urbino", I, 2008, pp. 137-155.

⁹ M. V. Ciasullo and G. Festa, *La reputazione del territorio nella comunicazione del vino*, XXIV Convegno Annuale di Sinergie: il territorio come giacimento di vitalità per l'impresa, Università del Salento, Lecce 2012, pp. 563-577.

¹⁰ L. Galletto and F. Bianchin, *L'enoturismo tra vecchio nuovo mondo*, in V. Boatto e A. Gennari, a cura di, *La roadmap del turismo enologico*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2011, pp. 24-57.

3. The language of wine

Wine is a product full of emotional characteristics: consumers get sense experiences they want to share with others, using all the linguistic strategies necessary to describe specific aromas and flavours. However, the language of wine and tasting is not always easy to understand or to translate.

From a linguistic point of view, when we speak of the language of wine as a specialized language, we refer to a domain-specific language related to wine making processes.¹¹ In order to describe the characteristics of wine, one has to convey the complex properties that emerge from the observation of its colour, appearance, and the taste of its flavours.¹²

Generally speaking, most of the terms that make up the lexicon of wine are common words that are redefined in a technical sense, and enriched with new meanings by means of rhetorical and linguistic strategies.¹³ The language of wine often uses figurative language to express the emotions deriving from the multisensory experience of wine tasting. Examples of figurative language are metaphors (wrinkled, severe wine), synaesthesia (velvety wine, pungent taste), metonymies (fresh nose,

¹¹ L. M. Villa, *Reading the wine: capire e comunicare il vino attraverso le sue parole*, “English for: la rivista di inglese per scopi speciali”, 2007.

¹² S. Gilardoni, *Strategie di marketing e strategie testuali: il caso del vino*, “Mediazioni”, VII, 2009, pp. 1-16.

¹³ G. Poncini, *The challenge of communicating in a changing tourism market*, in O. Palusci and S. Francesconi, a cura di, *Translating Tourism. Linguistic/Cultural representations*, Editrice Università degli Studi di Trento, Trento 2006, pp. 137-153.

fruity mouth) and similarities (smell of violet, taste of honey).¹⁴ A predominant use of synonyms, especially in the area of taste sensations, has also been noticed.¹⁵

In fact, terms that belong to different semantic fields are applied and used to describe phenomena associated with wine. This is the case with words that attribute anthropomorphic characteristics to wine, referring to people's physical appearance (robust wine, slender wine), personality traits (powerful wine) age (early wine), or even moral characteristics (authentic wine). The language of wine makes use of expressions borrowed from the domain of music whenever terms such as notes, nuances, echoes, tones are meant to describe the character of this product.¹⁶

The main task of wine promotional communication is to express the multifarious experience of wine tasting adopting highly evocative language. Consumers often seem to be more attracted by the linguistic refinement with which wine is described than by its physical and chemical characteristics. The complex vocabulary and syntax used to convey the style associated with this type of product is also a persuasive means to favour consumers' identification with a certain sophisticated social background.

¹⁴ R. Cavalieri, *Sinestesia della degustazione. Appunti sulle parole del vino*, "XAOS. Giornale di Confine", 2012, pp. 1-6.

¹⁵ A. Lehrer, *As American as Apple Pie- and sushi and bagels: the semiotics of food and drink*, in T. A. Sebeok and J. Umiker-Sebeok, a cura di, *Recent development in theory and history. The semiotic web*, Mouton, New York 1991, pp. 389-401.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 130-31.

4. Translating wine from Italian into English

The specific terminology related to wine production does not generally seem to be a problem from a translation point of view. In fact, there is a large degree of correlation between the two languages in this respect¹⁷. On the other hand, the level of syntax appears to be more problematic, as it is always considerably elaborated in Italian and must be simplified in English. Moreover, translating the creative language typical of wine tasting, with its emotional load and an almost literary style, appears to be a challenging task for translators.¹⁸

Slogans in this field tend to make extensive use of word games that link wine to the name of the company and to the territory, and therefore require a considerable effort from a creative perspective. The link between this product and its territory is so strong that in some cases translators are faced with regional terms that are almost impossible to translate without losing their connotative value¹⁹.

The domain-specific language of wine in English makes extensive use of foreign languages loans, especially from Italian and French: in fact, there is a wide presence

¹⁷ Poncini, *The challenge*, p. 140.

¹⁸ C. Nord, *Traduciendo el vino: problemas y dificultades*, in G. Bazzocchi, P. Capanaga and S. Piccioni, a cura di, *Turismo ed enogastronomia tra Italia e Spagna. Linguaggi e territori da esplorare*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2011, pp. 235-255.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 243.

of terms borrowed from these languages in the description of wine-making processes.²⁰

It has already been pointed out that the quality of wine is generally associated with the quality of a territory which stands for the cultural, ethical and moral values that link wine to the people producing it.²¹ Cultural components play a fundamental role in translation not only because the landscape is an integral part of the emotional representation of wine, but also because consumers are invited to visit the place of production, and thus are effectively turned into tourists.

5. A classroom experience: revising wine promotional literature

Tourism promotional texts are especially fruitful as didactic material either for language learning, ESP, translation or intercultural communication.²² Translation scholars, such as Kelly²³ have argued that these texts can be extremely productive in

²⁰ F. Perissinotto, *Meal in Italy. Italianismi nel linguaggio gastronomico inglese ed angloamericano*, “Italiano LinguaDue”, I, 2015, pp. 265-295.

²¹ E. Croce and G. Perri, *Il turismo enogastronomico. Progettare, gestire e vivere l'integrazione tra cibo, viaggio e territorio*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2015.

²² M. Agorni, *Tourism across languages and cultures: accessibility through translation*, “Cultus”, II, 9, 2016, pp. 13-27; L. Fodde and O. Denti *Il discorso turistico: peculiarità linguistico-comunicative nella didattica dell'inglese specialistico*, in M. Agorni, a cura di, *Prospettive linguistiche e traduttologiche negli studi sul turismo*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2012: pp. 23-46. G. Cappelli, *English for Tourism: Using translated texts in the classroom to improve writing skills*, “Lingue e Linguaggi”, XVII, 2016, 21-38.

²³ D. Kelly, *Text Selection for Developing Translator Competence: Why Texts from the Tourist Sector Constitute Suitable Material.*, in C. Schaffner and B. Adab, a cura di, *Developing Translation Competence*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia 2000, pp. 157-67. D. Kelly, *The Translation of Texts from the*

translation classes.²⁴ In fact, tourism is a field in which a lot of translation work is carried out, but this job is very often commissioned to amateur linguists. It goes without saying that a more professional involvement would produce better-quality promotional communication.²⁵

Tourism translation is part of the employability prospects of students in Modern Languages, particularly at postgraduate level. In their capacity as professional language and cross-cultural experts, they will probably be commissioned to translate informative and promotional texts. For this reason, it is crucial to provide these students not only with specialized training in foreign languages, but also with “intercultural mediation” skills.²⁶ Such a competence will not necessarily equal the highly specialized skills of professional translators in such specific fields as law, medicine or technology, but will allow graduates in Modern Languages to cover part of the market needs in tourism promotional communication.²⁷

Tourist Sector: Textual Conventions, Cultural Distance, and Other Constraints, “Trans”, II, 1997: pp. 33-42.

²⁴ M. Agorni M, *Tourism communication: the translator's responsibility in the translation of cultural difference*, “PASOS”, X, 4, 2012, pp. 5-11.

²⁵ M. Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam & Philadelphia 1998.

²⁶ E. Calvo, *Translation and/or translator skills as organizing principles for curriculum development practice*, “The Journal of Specialized Translation”, XVI, 2011, pp. 5-25.

²⁷ B. Whyatt, *Translation as a Human Skill. From Predisposition to Expertise*, Adam Mickiewicz Press, Poznan 2012; C. Peverati, *Translation in University Foreign-Language Curricula: An Analysis of Teacher's Attitudes, with Reference to Vocational and Transferability Criteria*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona 2014.

For this reason we would like to describe an activity carried out with postgraduate students in Modern Languages, in a translation class focusing on tourism promotional communication, which offered students real texts to work on. In particular, students were asked to translate and produce revisions of wine and food tourism communication in English, with special attention to the literature published in the Lake Garda area.

In this geographical area promotional communication about wine- and olive oil-related products plays a fundamental role. In fact, almost all the wineries operating in this area must offer translations of printed material and websites in a number of foreign languages. However, a quick survey demonstrated that translations into English do not always prove to be up to the task, as versions of questionable quality are extremely common.

Students were given a brochure entitled *Garda, Guida al territorio* (“Garda, a Guide to the territory”) describing the geographical region of the western shore of the Lake Garda and promoting the wineries in the area. Texts were graphically presented in a bilingual version in English and Italian.

Students were asked to analyse the quality of the translation, then revise it and finally produce their own version. The following section includes a transcription of a short extract from the original brochure published by the “Consorzio Lago di Garda” in 2018, followed by some considerations that emerged from the analysis carried out

with students. The chosen excerpt concerns the description of a local winery, specializing in the production of wine and olive oil.

<p>1 CANTINE FRANZOSI</p> <p>2 Dal 1938 produciamo vino e olio con amore e passione a Puegnago del Garda, tra le verdi colline nel cuore della Valtenesi, affacciato sull'incantevole lago di Garda.</p> <p>3 Oggi la cantina è guidata dal papà Bruno e dai figli Paola Giovanni e Luigi, la terza generazione, un talento ereditato dal nonno Giovanni che ha trasmesso con passione l'amore per la natura e il rispetto dell'ambiente.</p> <p>4 Gli ettari vitati sono 30, il suolo di origine morenica consente alle radici dei ceppi più vecchi di attingere in profondità ai sali minerali della terra. Ci sono anche 6 ettari coltivati a oliveto con</p>	<p>1 VINEYARDS FRANZOSI</p> <p>2 Since 1938 we produce wine and olive oil with passion and love in Puegnago del Garda, among the green hills, in the heart of the Valtenesi, overlooking the beautiful Lake Garda.</p> <p>3 Today the winery is run by father Bruno and his sons Paola, Giovanni and Luigi, the third generation, a talent inherited from grandfather Giovanni who transmitted passion and love for nature and the environment.</p> <p>4 There are 30 hectares of vineyards, the ground moraine allows the roots of the oldest vines to tap deep into the mineral-rich land.</p> <p>There are also 6 hectares of olive</p>
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<p>più di 2500 piante tra Leccino e Casaliva che producono olio extravergine di oliva.</p> <p>5 Attendiamo con gioia la gradita visita di tutti gli enogastro-appassionati di fronte al nostro bellissimo lago, circondati dalle verdi rigogliose colline per degustare i nostri vini e oli.</p>	<p>groves with more than 2500 plants of Leccino and Casaliva producing extra virgin olive oil.</p> <p>5 Visit us, enjoy our wines and olive oils in front of our gorgeous blue lake, surrounded by the green hills.</p>
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The English translation (TT henceforward) is very close to the Italian original version (ST). We won't analyse the grammatical mistakes on this occasion, as we

want to focus on the specificity of tourism translation, with special attention to the promotional strategies to be used in this process.

Starting from the title, students analysed the term "vineyard" in the title (1) and found the following definition in the Cambridge Dictionary : "a piece of land on which vines are grown". The TT solution cannot be considered a mistake, but students wanted to add a further specification which would improve the promotional quality of the text. It was therefore decided to opt for a title with two terms, "Vineyards & Winery", the Cambridge Dictionary definition for "winery" being: "a place where wine is made, especially from grapes that are grown there". It was pointed out that wineries often offer guided tours with tastings taking place in their cellars as well as in their vineyards. To further support this strategy, students searched Google UK and noticed that these terms appeared on numerous English language sites.

A few grammatical errors are apparent in the first paragraph (2) and they were immediately detected by the students, who however focused their attention on the promotional effect of the first part of the text. In particular, the expression "we produce wine and olive oil with passion and love" was deemed not persuasive enough, and was therefore changed into "we have been driven by our love and passion for producing wines and olive oil".

The following sentence (3) is too long and complex to be understood by English-speaking readers, accustomed as they are to shorter sentences and in active form. Moreover, the expression "father Bruno" may lead the reader to think that the winery is run by a religious orders. Students decided to replace the verb "transmit" with "pass on", which has a strong connotation of the passage of values from father to son. Taking parallel texts, originally produced in English, as a model, students revised paragraph 2 at the level of both syntax and style, and produced the following version: "Our estate is a family-run winery with the second and third generation of the Franzosi family managing the estate. The founder Giovanni Franzosi passed on his love for nature and care for the environment to his son Bruno and his grandchildren Paola, Giovanni and Luigi".

In this passage few details, detected on the company website, were added in order to attract the reader's attention. The role of the founder was highlighted together with his desire to pass on his passion for nature and for the environment to his children and grandchildren. Students were particularly aware of the persuasive effect of an emphasis on the environment, as this is becoming a most sensitive topic nowadays. Therefore, attention to readers' response was the most important factor in guiding students' choices.

Another element which was given special attention was the units of measure mentioned in the brochure. In Great Britain it is customary to express the size of the land in acres rather than in hectares (4), although reference to hectares was noticed in

a few English websites. The most important consideration for students, however, was that the translation was intended to reach a wide foreign audience, which could potentially include a number of different nationalities, and therefore was not exclusively aimed at British tourists. For this reason it was considered appropriate to maintain the measures in hectares.

The expression "the ground moraine" (4) does not convey the meaning of the ST, which indicates a particular type of moraine formed by the debris dragged by the glacier along its bed. Therefore, in this case a solution such as "moraine soil" was deemed more suitable than the TT one.

The expression "tap deep into the mineral-rich land" (4) was difficult to evaluate. In fact, no detailed descriptions of the soil were found in the parallel texts in English. However, thanks to a Google UK search, which produced examples mainly from semi-specialized texts in the domain of geology, a rather effective solution was suggested: "plunge deep down into the soil".

Finally, the last part of the text proved to be particularly complex (5). Parallel texts were not helpful in this case, as they presented a large variety of expressions used to invite customers to winery visits. However, students noticed that a highly persuasive tone characterized most of the examples, particularly those taken from tourism British brochures and website descriptions. In the end the students proposed a solution with a considerable alluring force: "We warmly invite you to visit our

winery and enjoy our unique products, with an amazing view on our lush green hills and our wonderful Lake".

6. Discussion

The revising activity illustrated above enabled students to experience the rather poor quality of translations in the tourism promotion sector, where professional skills are still rarely taken into account. As pointed out in the previous section, the experiment took place in a translation class of a Modern Languages Degree course, hence, not in a School for Translators and Interpreters. Students attending this Degree course are not expected to have a highly specialized knowledge in Translation Studies, apart from practising translation mainly as a language-learning activity. The shift from a language-based approach to a more vocational view of translation is not easy to achieve, and yet most students reach a rather satisfactory degree of competence in the field of intercultural communication, particularly if they are exposed to «authentic professionally translatable and translated material, and not artificial exercises»²⁸. For these reasons, courses should aim at a kind of interlinguistic and intercultural mediation profile based on the acquisition of skills in the area of cross-cultural communication by offering translation practice on a variety of semi-specialized texts, possibly responding to market needs.

²⁸ Kelly, *The Translation of Texts*, p. 161.

Tourist texts present a variety of topics, ranging from gastronomy, architecture, history, art history, geography, economics and, obviously, cultural traditions. Such a variety enables students to experiment with an extremely diversified terminology, which is rather specific, on the one hand, and yet still accessible to non-specialized readers, on the other.²⁹ Similar considerations apply to variation in terms of style and text structure to be found in tourist texts.

By approaching tourism translation students are asked to exercise a high degree of linguistic, textual and cultural manipulation, in other words, an active form of intercultural mediation. They have to leave behind mechanic processes of linguistic substitution, in order to experiment with a variety of resources at their disposal (linguistic and cultural), in order to create effective communication.

The students who experienced the activity illustrated in the previous section had developed a certain degree of autonomy at the stage of the course in which the assignment was given, and paid special attention to the needs of the recipients', a readership made up of international tourists, potentially very different culturally from their Italian counterparts. The promotional scope of the wine brochure was the principal challenge, and the revised version proposed by the students proved to be

²⁹ M. Agorni, *Translating, Transcreating or Mediating the Foreign? The Translator's Space of Manoeuvre in the Field of Tourism*, in C. Spinzi, A. Rizzo, and M. L. Zummo, a cura di, *Translation or Transcreation? Discourses, Texts and Visual*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle Upon Tyne 2018, pp. 87-105.

more effective than the TT published version, especially from a persuasive point of view.

7. Conclusion

In an era strongly characterized by globalization, skilful and accurate translation is a fundamental component for any company wishing to expand its market at international level. This is especially true for Italian companies, as the "Made in Italy" has always been synonymous with quality, especially in the food and wine sector. Italian wines are well known all over the world and every year they attract more and more tourists, fascinated by a territory capable of producing such a characteristic product.

At a time when exports and tourism are fundamental for the economies in many countries, foreign language communication should be addressed in every detail. Quality in tourism translation, especially in the wine sector, depends on many factors, linguistic as well as cultural. Culture-specific elements are the major obstacles in transferring a text from one language to another, and translators often struggle to find strategies that maintain both the informative and persuasive components of the text which they work on. This is particularly important as far as wine promotional translation is concerned. In this case, translators must convey an idea about the close ties wine-making has with its territory of origin.

The challenge for the translators is even greater if we consider that the Italian language of wine is characterised by a considerable complexity at a syntactical, stylistic and lexical level. And yet linguistic and intercultural competence does not ultimately appear to be sufficient to guarantee the quality of a translation. The translation classroom experience illustrated in this paper has demonstrated that a certain amount of creativity is necessary to convey the promotional scope characterising wine communication. Wine-making in Italy is like a work of art and its translation must be able to reproduce its colour, culture, pleasure and beauty.

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