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## ON CROSS-PURPOSES IN CROSS-TALK

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« Gli inglesi sono freddi ». Italians are too emotional. « Gli inglesi sono distanti ». Italians are too personal. « Gli inglesi sono ipocriti ». Italians are untrustworthy. « Gli inglesi sono pignoli ». Italians are devious. « Gli inglesi sono ottusi e ingenui ».

### *1.0 General aims*

I should like to make some preliminary remarks in this paper (pending the results of an on-going larger scale investigation) concerning some causes and effects in cross-cultural interaction of these conflicting and sometimes paradoxically similar negative stereotypes that our respective (English and Italian) cultural and linguistic communities have about each other. The literature on cross-cultural communication stretches back to at least the fifties and its rate of growth in several fields (notably within linguistics itself) has been recently accelerating (my bibliography provides a mere glimpse of its vastness and the diversity of the disciplinary approaches, ranging from the anthropological, psychological, sociological, political science, social psychological, and ethnomethodological to those of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis and finally, to that of applied linguistics and the literature on English as an International Language (E.I.L.) (see also Asante *et al.* eds., 1979;

Sarbaugh & Asuncion-Lande, 1983; Anderson, 1988; Tannen, 1985; Zagrebelsky, 1984; Vincent Marrelli, in press). However, I have not found any comparative study involving Italian and English (except a few remarks in George, 1984 and in her ongoing D. Phil thesis work; and some connected points, in Clyne, 1983).

Moreover, I believe it is revealing to look in this way at two cultures which might not have been assumed to be as mutually exotic or as different [as say the British English and Thai or Japanese (cf. e.g. Sukwiwat, 1981, Richards & Sukwiwat, 1983)] or American English and Lebanese Arabic or Zambian (cf. e.g. in Yousef, 1978); the « tragedy of cross-cultural communication » (Tannen, 1985: 210) lurks the more insidiously for the presumption of universality or similarity of the match between the form and function of our communicative behaviour.

Furthermore, although this is hardly the place to attempt a synthesis nor a review of the literature(s), I hope to indicate a way we might draw together a few loose threads from the various approaches which have hitherto not been, at least, explicitly, connected, to my knowledge. In particular, I should like to indicate a missing link between the anthropological and linguistic approaches, which seems to provide some useful insights.

Finally, let me point out that my data concern interaction involving mainly educated middle-class speakers and hearers from Southern Italy (SI) (in and around Naples and Calabria) and from England (i.e. BE speakers). I am most aware of the simplification perpetrated by my generalizations which emphasize two seemingly neatly polarized and conflicting *basic* cultural styles. To take account of the *social* and *personal* differences in communicative style within both cultures, which undoubtedly exist (see e.g. George, in prep), would complicate a picture which it is my concern here to present as clearly as possible. Systematic investigation and discussion of the variation between, and within, each of the two basic cultural styles would also, needless to say, be impossible here (see Vincent Marrell, 1987, for the general notion of *basicness* and its connections with category « landmarkedness », prototypicality and focality, and Vincent Marrelli, in press, for, among other things, its application to this field).

## 2.0 Some basic notions and background assumptions

I shall be discussing some observed cases of conflict in section 3; the reader may like to skim through the examples (3.1-2) now. But, let me here first introduce some basic notions and outline my background assumption.

2.1.1. Cross-talk is *intra*-linguistic but *inter*-cultural interaction, i.e. native speaker/non-native speaker (ns - nns) interaction (see e.g. Anderson, 1988; Loveday, 1982; Janicki, 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1985; etc.). It is also referred to variously as cross-cultural, inter-ethnic, inter-group, international interaction or communication, each discipline emphasizing different aspects according to its perspective. The expression, « cross-talk » is borrowed from Gumperz *et al.*, 1979, where, as I see it, there is allusive exploitation of the polysemy of « cross », i.e. not just as « between or across », but also in its meanings of « crossed or mixed up », « contrary, opposing or divergent » and eventually « angry ».

2.1.2. The expression « cross-purpose communication » is borrowed from Strawson, via Bennett 1976, where it is opposed to « real » (i.e. successful) « communication ». It occurs when, as I interpret it, for whatever reasons, there is *divergence* of goals, information, opinions, affect, etc.

I, thus, see cross-purposes in cross-talk generally as a lack of communion, agreement or convergence, or of common attribution, in other words, as a *mis-matching*, at any level. These range, not necessarily in hierarchical order, *from* the ideological plane of opinions, world views, values (cf. Sitaram & Haapanen, 1979) etc.; the cultural one of « behavioural sets » (Hall, *passim*) and « frames » (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1979); « cognitive schemes » (see Applegate & Sypher, 1983); « schemata » (Freedle, 1979); « structures of expectations » (Ehrenhaus, 1983: 262); « frames of reference » (Yousef, 1978), *to* that of discourse or conversational styles (see Tannen, *passim*), *through* the social and psychological one of mutual face wants, goals (whether affective, informative, instrumental (Condon, 1966) transactional or interactional (see e.g. in Aston, 1988), assumptions and pre-suppositions (cf. e.g. in Oh & Dineen, 1979), *to* rhetorical functions (e.g. joking, irony etc), intended conveyed meaning or

illocutionary force and intended perlocutionary effects, and, finally, literal meaning (see Austin, 1976; Searle, 1975, and Gordon & Lakoff, 1971, See also Clyne, 1983: 147-8).

2.1.3. I assume that we must distinguish: 1. *intentionally competitive* i.e. *non-cooperative* (including *insincere* or *deceptive*) interaction, on the one hand (see e.g. Vincent & Castelfranchi, 1981); from 2. *unintentional* mismatching of communicative goals, [by either speaker or hearer (S and H)], i.e. *miscommunication*, or unsuccessful (failed or wrong) communication, on the other. In *intentional* conflict, CP [the Cooperative Principle (see, e.g. in Leech, 1983)] is exploited competitively and insincerely by one of the speakers (S): a) S assumes H is cooperative/sincere; b) S assumes H assumes S is cooperative/sincere; c) H assumes S is cooperative/sincere; d) S assumes S is *not* cooperative/sincere (i.e. sets of assumptions c) and d) are in conflict) [see also George, in prep., for a discussion of H's (or S in third turn) deliberate manipulation of ambiguity for conflicting attribution or mismatching]. *Unintentional* conflict arises, notwithstanding the fact that S and H may share sincere and cooperative mutual assumptions; something goes wrong (and this is my concern here) in the matching process between S's intentions or communicative goal and H's reconstruction or interpretation of them (i.e. their « attribution », cf. Ehrenhaus, 1983).

2.1.4. A spiral may be set up where a pre-existing negative *stereotype* (due to an individual's or the group's previous unsuccessful experiences of inter-group interaction) about one's interlocutor's cultural community can lead to conflict (i.e. mismatching or misinterpretation) which in turn serves to reinforce the negative stereotype (cf. also Gudykunst, 1986, *passim*; Vassiliou *et al.*, 1972).

2.1.5. We must also distinguish 1. *overt* from 2. *covert* conflict: 1. a. that which is obvious to both from the outset, b. that which S and/or H intentionally communicates to other, c. that which S and/or H unintentionally signals to other; 2. a. that which only S or H is aware of and intentionally hides from other, b. that which either S or H becomes aware of and may

or may not (want to / be able to) communicate to the other, c. that which neither H nor S is aware of. The distinction cuts across the intentional / unintentional one; and refers to results or perlocutionary effects (intended or not by S), as well as to mistaken attributions of illocutionary force.

2.1.6. Implied in all the above is consideration of the *mutual assumptions* and *perceptions* of S and H. So we can distinguish, within intentional conflict, between that which is *communicative* (i.e. intentionally communicated, with S intending H to understand that S intends to communicate S's intentions), and that which is *non-communicative* (intentionally hidden from H) (see again Vincent & Castelfranchi, 1981).

2.1.7. *Miscommunication* is my general term for unintentional communicative conflict.

Miscommunication is overt when it results in negative feedback of some kind by S or H in the course of the interaction, feedback, i.e. which the other can interpret as negative; and some repair work may be attempted by either. It is covert when the interaction continues happily (usually *unhappily*) without either interactant becoming aware that something has been misinterpreted.

2.1.8. We must also distinguish between the sending and receiving poles in miscommunication, (calling them perhaps *mis-giving* and *mis-taking*), i.e. whether the cause lies, with the ill-formation of the message by sender (the Speaker; a mismatching on whatever level) or with its faulty reception or attribution by receiver (the Hearer).

2.1.9. Within miscommunication (i.e. unintentional mis-matching by either S or H), one might also distinguish terminologically between *misunderstanding* and *misinterpretation*. The former refers to equivocation on the semantic level of literal meaning, the latter to the pragmatic levels of attribution of intended illocutionary force and communicative goals. I shall be focussing on this latter level (see also Thomas, 1984) in mostly covert circumstances, and connecting them to mis-matching at the higher cultural « frame » level). I shall thus not be concerned

with miscommunication due to surface linguistic incompetence nor (as I have mentioned) to a native-speaker's (ns) perception of his interlocutor as a non-native speaker (nns) [where benevolence and sometimes accomodation can also occur (see Anderson & Vincent, in press; Varonis & Gass, 1985; Simard, 1981; Thakerar *et al.* eds., 1982)], but mainly with miscommunication which can occur especially when the nns linguistic competence is high and the nns is thus usually taken by his ns interlocutors to be fully responsible for his linguistic acts.

...difficulties are not generally recognized as communication breakdowns. Judgments, rather, are made on the mistaken assumption that intent is understood (Gumperz, 1978: 29).

It is then that:

Cross-cultural communication is like trying to follow a route on which someone has turned the signposts round. The familiar signposts are there, but when you follow them, they take you in the wrong direction (Tannen, 1985: 211-2).

2.2. Central to my approach here is that our linguistic and non-linguistic communicative behaviour is to be seen within its total cultural framework or matrix (see e.g. Hall, 1959; 1966; 1976); this soft version of Sapir-Whorfianism which has always essentially been tended towards, and is increasingly explicit (see Fishman, 1982) in the sociolinguistic stress on context, is very much apparent in all the cross-cultural communication literature (cf. also Cooley, 1983). It has continued unbroken alongside the universalist current (see e.g. in Vincent Marrelli, 1987 on colour categorization studies), in anthropology, as far as I can see, but only recently, after the overwhelmingly universalist 60's and 70's, is it, finally, reappearing as apparently respectable again in mainstream linguistics (see e.g. Wierzbicka, *passim*), facilitated also by the pragmatics *zeitgeist*.

The paradigm shift is discernible in that, most linguists concerned with problems of mutual understanding between different languages / cultures, are now looking to see how we might negotiate around or cope with our differences, in order that we respect and conserve them, rather than effectively ignoring them or implicitly denying their existence (as the enthusiastic search for universals seemed to be leading to); in

the field of E.I.L., however, the two approaches to international communication are still engaged in hot debate (to oversimplify: cultural uniformity vs. cultural plurality; cf. Vincent Marrelli, in press; Bickeley & Philip, 1980; Fishman, 1982; Quirk, 1981).

2.3. Let me pass now to a necessarily brief hint of some of those elements within the various disciplines which could profitably, in my opinion, be brought together.

2.3.1. I shall start with the distinction made by Hall (1976), between *High Context (HC)* and *Low Context (LC) Cultures*, (HCC and LCC) and their consequent HC and LC discourse or communication styles. With all due caution, it seems to provide a fruitful, general framework within which to combine the separate insights from the other disciplines (to my knowledge it has been referred to only by Yousef and Ehrenhaus in the cross-cultural literature, but theirs were not linguistic studies, and they, in turn, (let alone Hall, 1976) (have not been referred to by linguists working on closely connected problems. What we seem to lack, as I have said, is the missing link).

In HC cultures people are intensely aware of each other and greatly involved with each other, while in LC cultures relationships between people and their expectations of each other are less intense and are governed by rather clearly defined rules. People's patterns of communicative behaviour in high-context cultures are not usually spelled out. A lot of the on-going exchanged messages in such cultures are preprogrammed and internalized in the people's minds. (this)... is related to the emotional, psychological, and physical proximity in which members of high-context cultures are reared... The intense interpersonal relationships and one's heightened awareness of mutual dependence on one's household, extended family, tribe, or clan are important factors in that process (Yousef, 1978: 58-9, reporting Hall's 1976 distinction).

Connected to the cultural structure is the information structure of messages:

A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context (LC) communication is just the opposite, i.e. the mass of information is vested in the explicit code. Although no culture exists exclusively at one end of the scale, some are high while others are low (Hall, 1976: 91).



Within cognitive anthropology, Ehrenhaus uses Hall's distinction dynamically as he explores cultural influences on the attribution process:

... In HCCs considerable information to *focus expectations* and guide the *attribution* of meaning is embedded in the physical context or is internalized in the person (i.e. the person has internalized the culture's presuppositions). For such a system to be effective its users must become *highly sensitive to situational features* for guiding their own behaviour and for making predictions about other person's behaviour. In HCCs communicative behaviour is proportionally more a product of situational forces than of the internal characteristics of interactants. Relatively less information needs to be explicitly encoded. ... In LCCs relatively little information to focus expectations and guide the attribution process is available in the physical context or is *presumed to be shared* by the interactants [see also 265 on self-reflexivity of assumption in HCC]. Limited contextual information requires messages to be high in information value. Communication is presumed to reflect more the character of the interactants than the nature of the situation, since constraints on their behaviour are fewer than in HCCs. ... Consequently the predictability of an individual becomes contingent upon acquiring information specific to that individual. Social background information becomes relatively trivial... (Ehrenhaus, 1983: 263-5, emphasis added).

He goes on to discuss the correlation of these points « in a general sense » with conversational styles; however, those aspects he chooses to correlate (relative pertinence of contextual availability of social information from which to predict attribution on the one hand, with relative cautiousness in initial interaction by HCC members and relative openness and verbosity of LCC speakers, as they gather non-predictable information on the individual, on the other), do not appear to me to be applicable to Southern Italian HCC as I have experienced it. Let me suggest (tentatively) that there is a gross distinction to be made between say Far Eastern and South East Asian HCCs (as studied e.g. in Young, 1982; Richards & Sukwiwat, 1983), on the one hand, and Mediterranean, Eastern European, Middle Eastern, (Indian?) and Latin American HCCs, on the other, where different contextual dependencies and discourse styles appear to have developed, and, anyway, that some caution must be exercised to avoid sweeping application of Hall's model.

Furthermore, although Ehrenhaus comes the closest, as far as I can see, to making a connection between Hall's cultural

plane and the linguistic, he remains at too general a level; he, thus, stops short of the possibility of making a connection, for instance, with the directness/indirectness distinction which seems to me a most promising link to the «pragmalinguistic» level (see e.g. Thomas, 1984) where generation of conversational intent of speaker's meaning (see Grice, 1968) occurs.

2.3.2. Let us consider now the following points made by Wierzbicka while discussing Polish, and Australian English:

...English compared with Polish places heavy restrictions on the use of the imperative and makes extensive use of interrogative and conditional forms. Features of English (such as these) which have been claimed to be due to universal principles of politeness are shown to be language-specific and culture-specific. Moreover, even with respect to English they are shown to be deeper than mere norms of politeness. *Linguistic differences (such as differential use of imperative and politeness) are shown to be associated with cultural differences such as spontaneity, directness, intimacy and affection vs. indirectness, distance, tolerance and anti-dogmatism* ...certain influential theories of speech acts (based largely on English) are discussed and shown to be ethnocentric and dangerous ... (Wierzbicka, 1985: 145, emphasis added).

The HC / LC distinction is surely begging to be connected to this. Hall himself in 1959 had already connected himself, albeit critically, before explicitly formulating the LC / HC distinction [at the time with other goals in mind (viz. the formulation of the «major triad» of cultural knowledge and behaviour «formal, informal and technical»)] to such binary distinctions:

Freud distinguished between conscious and unconscious; Sullivan between the in-awareness and out-of-awareness. Anthropologists like the late Ralph Linton spoke of overt and covert culture; others (Kluckholm) used terms like implicit and explicit, which were applied to the assumptions underlying behaviour as well as the patterns controlling it (Hall, 1959: 63).

A correlation is discernible with the distinction between *directness* and *indirectness* (of illocutionary force) (cf. Tannen, 1981a), and, furthermore, with aspects of Bernstein's controversial *elaborated / restricted codes* distinction (see e.g. Bernstein, 1973: 222-3), not to mention that between *literacy* and *orality* (see e.g. Tannen, 1980). Space limits again permit no

more than a brief hint of how we might see the links: explicit, overt conveying of information, as opposed to implicit or covert (i.e. understood, presupposed, assumed, conveying of information or sharing of assumptions) is appropriate in contexts where interlocutors are aware of sharing little, of having little in common, in the way of knowledge, experience, assumptions and/or values (LCC), or where their « *expectations* for action and language use are informed (less) by their reliance on the immediate context and on the implicit, shared presuppositions of the culture » (Ehrenhaus, 1983: 283). Furthermore, explicitness of information, higher degrees of redundancy and lower economy of expression are among the characteristics of most written communication (less so in say personal letters between intimates). The so-called restricted code is fully efficient in close-knit or dense « networks » (Milroy), sub-cultures, or « speech fellowships » (Firth) where high levels of common context (shared knowledge, assumptions, values) is characteristic. The elaborated code may be viewed, thus, as relatively appropriate in a LCC or community, even in informal situation; the restricted code in HCCs or sub-cultures (see also Vincent Marrelli, in press for further discussion).

Tannen (1985: 304-5) refers to research on communicative style (Robin Lakoff's 1970's work), on politeness phenomena (Brown & Levinson, 1978), Goffman (1967) on deference and demeanour, Searle (1975) on indirect speech acts, to remind us that « most communication is characterized by indirectness » (see also Tannen, 1984: 193-4):

As the work of Lakoff demonstrates and explains, social requirements are too pressing for people to barrel ahead with their thoughts and ideas. Rather, there are two main benefits to indirectness. The first is rapport: it is better to be understood, to get what one wants, without saying what one means. Then the very fact of mutual understanding is proof of rapport, of sharing background and style. The second is defensive: in case one's intentions are not received well, one can avoid outright disagreement by not having gone « on record » (Brown and Levinson, 1978). *Cultures differ with regard to whether speakers would rather risk threatening rapport, and therefore appear distant, or risk threatening independence, and therefore appear imposing.* There are cultural differences with respect to how much and what type of indirectness is expected in particular settings (Tannen, 1985: 205, emphasis added).

Although she too makes no reference to Hall's (1976) LC / HC distinction, it seems fair to say that the cultures she broadly describes, with their respective preference for independence and rapport, correspond to Hall's basic description of LC and HC cultures, respectively.

E. M. Forster (1982: 88) in his *Passage to India*, provides an exquisitely sensitive literary hint of the question of the two cultures [where « verbal truth » and « truth of mood » are in conflict (see also George, 1984: 15-7)]. De Crescenzo (1977), too, [probably influenced by Allum's (1973) use of Tönnies *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* distinction (Sue George personal communication)] seems to have come to another independent but similar conclusion with his distinction between cultures or societies valuing and based on « libertà » (typified by Northern culture, specifically England, and Northern Italy) and those based on « amore » (Southern Italy, specifically Naples).

### 3.0. Discussion of cases: Introduction

Let me now attempt informally to use the above as a potential explanatory framework for a few selected cases of crossed-purpose cross-talk, mainly between B. English and S. Italian, exemplars as I see it of relatively LCC and HCCs, respectively, or between speakers who are adopting behavioural sets and/or frames of reference from one or other of them.

I have chosen to focus on the two major areas of a) *interactional or affective meanings or rapport*, such as the expression of *solidarity*, the attribution or perception of other's *politeness and rudeness* etc, and b) that of the *transactional or information* content concerning questions of *truth, sincerity, trustworthiness* etc. So, mismatches will be seen as occurring between what « counts as » a) solidarity and rudeness (section 3.1), and then b) truth and sincerity (section 3.2), in the respective cultures. Furthermore, I hope to show how the two dimensions mesh.

But, let me return momentarily to the crucial and pivotal notion of *indirectness*. It is also essentially what each culture often *accuses* the other of although on different dimensions: hypocrisy [the English indirectness in politeness norms (see e.g. Wierzbicka, *passim*; and Thomas, 1984: 97)], untrustworthiness

or deviousness [the Indian, the Italian, the Greek stereotypical indirectness with truth (see Tannen, 1985: 205-6)]. They both also *accuse* the other of directness too, not unexpectedly on the opposite dimensions: over-familiarity, invasion of privacy, uninhibited expression of emotions etc. (the Latin or Mediterranean in general); childlike inability to see subtleties, blurting out without understanding consequences, inflexibility, inability to do things other than by the book etc. [the (W.A.S.P.) Americans, the Germans etc.].

### 3.1. What « counts as » solidarity and impoliteness

In the first selection of sample cases, « what counts as » impoliteness and/or solidarity is at issue, i.e. directness on the two dimensions mismatches as to its communicative and interpersonal function. Furthermore, with reference to Hall's LC/HC distinction and to some of the correlates we have discerned in Yousef, Wierzbicka, Tannen (see also Verschueren, 1984), we can see that the relative cultural values of intimacy, freedom, independence are, indeed, at stake:

*i.* Neapolitan friends of *J* (British-French ex-patriate academic in Naples for past 14 years) greet her regularly with « ma stai malissimo! » « sei sciupatissima! » or « ma come ti sei conciata? ». *J* retorted the first time with a hurt « ma ti sei guardato allo specchio! »: their reaction was hurt puzzlement.

*ii.* *E* is 30yr-old Neapolitan domestic help. *A* is 18yr-old middle-class from academic family N. British au pair who has just started working in same household (mixed British-S. Italian) in Naples, where *E* has been for past 3 yrs. They have no lingua franca. *E* comes in door loaded with shopping bags, as *A* lets her in she takes some of the bags off her. *E* does not smile, nor say anything. *A* later reports that she doesn't understand why *E* was so rude to her why she should be angry with her.

*iii.* *M* and *P* are two little boys (5½ and 2½ yrs old) English/Italian bilinguals, with Italian dominant, living in household mentioned in (ii). They are always calling to their nanny « Alison! », « Alison, come », or « Alison, look here » or « Alison, water », with low pitch and level or falling intonation (instead of high pitch and sing-song intonation), *M* and *P* also regularly 'omit' « please » and « thankyou ». The au pair was noticeably irritated and often scolded them for being rude.

*iv.* *J* [as in (i)] to a couple (she French, he German-English) who have just moved to Naples from Britain offers help, information and « survival » hints etc. These are received coldly and even contradicted; she is interfering; they know/ better, they are able to fend for themselves.

### 3.2. What « counts as » the truth: saying what you mean and meaning what you say?

In the following encounters what « counts as » *sincerity*, and trustworthiness is at issue.

*v. N*, a N. Italian academic (working in Calabria) invites local colleagues to dinner. She prepares an expensive fish dinner. They do not turn up. When she later brings herself to talk to them and asks them what happened they are surprised (she hadn't rung up to confirm) and very embarrassed since they hadn't wanted to put her to so much bother and expense in the first place.

*vi. M* is a S. Italian academic. On leaving for Italy after a period spent working in a British university *M* tells several British colleagues, of whom he is sincerely fond, to come and stay « any time ». Within a few months each has phoned to say that he (and his family) is about to book a flight and that they are arriving on such and such a day « if that's OK? ». *M* feels he can't put them off although the visits each unerringly involve giving up some alternative family holiday plans or clash with some work deadline.

*vii. R*, middle-class S. British husband of *A*, Neapolitan, in great distress on his avowed final visit to Naples, accuses her of « always lying to me », « because she says she is going to find time for us to be alone together when we come to Naples (to visit the family) but she never does ».

3.3. In HCC Naples, « personal comments » and even « negative personal remarks » [see (i)] are not necessarily rude, but may have a solidary interactional function (cf. Lakoff, 1973) in that they imply something like « you look as if you need help, I'm worried, let me help you ».

The typical situation for negative personal remarks with unequivocally solidary function is certainly that between close friends, as reported in (i) above. Yet it also occurs in other social situations not reported here for lack of space, e.g. lower middle class female student to female professor, lower middle class female administrative staff to female academic, taxi-driver to regular female customer he had not seen for a while. In conditions of mutual friendship or true intimacy it is easier for the LC expatriate to adapt to. But we can nevertheless discern from the generality of its occurrence how invasion of personal privacy may be valued differentially within the two cultures. In the Neapolitan HC culture, as I have mentioned, intimacy, interdependence, concern for other's welfare and mutual help

are highly valued and taken for granted\*, in LC society, on the other hand they have a negative value since privacy, independence and initiative are highly valued. Thus personal comments, especially negative ones, *can* mean « solidarity, concern, wishing to help, kindness » in HCC (by also providing perhaps an opening for joint cathartic « troubles talk » cf. Jefferson & Lee, 1981), while in LCC, they can mean « invasion of privacy, interference, rudeness, as well as unkindness or tactlessness » [cf. Leech, 1977 on tact; and as Walt Disney teaches children through Bambi's friend Thumper and his mother « if you can't find anything nice to say... don't say nothing! », not forgetting that solidarity can be achieved by the very flouting of the convention, between close friends, through, i.e. « bantering » (see, also Lakoff, 1973)]. To continue, and by also keeping the intimacy aspect attached to personal comments, out of it, we can still see how offering of help can be differentially valued from many cases I have witnessed or experienced with English people coming to Naples to either live or visit. Concern for their welfare and that they enjoy themselves, which involves « learning the ropes » as soon as possible and acquiring some fundamental survival tactics, is often translated by Neapolitans or HCC-converted expatriates into complex sets of instructions and restrictions on the movements of their guests unless accompanied, etc. Although some foreign guests have come away with a rosey sensation of the wonderful hospitality (a positive rather than negative, attribution, see also Tannen, 1985: 210) others may become intensely irritated and feel that their sense of initiative, independence, adventure, freedom, and self-reliance, is being intolerably questioned and curtailed [see e.g. (iv)].

This has its opposite reflex in the sense that Neapolitans may have when they visit Britain of the cold, indifferent, non-caring selfishness of the British when, say, they are left to fend for themselves in London by a British host (or husband or son-in-law) cases which have been referred to me, by Neapolitans, used to a HCC city (with its concomitant lack of explicit orientation schema, e.g. no signs over bank « sportelli » telling you which one deals with foreign exchange; the unwritten queuing system of putting one's form under the growing pile on an unspecified point of the counter, etc, etc.), and who did not know how relatively easier it is for strangers and new-

comers to fend for themselves in a LCC city where everything is labelled and arrowed, i.e. explicit.

Situation (iii) illustrates how *linguistic* elements may be differentially read and generate a feeling of rudeness on the part of one of the interlocutors (see Gumperz *et al.*, 1979 for a systematic treatment of this aspect). The intonation of my two little boys as they called their English babysitter was extremely irritating to her, as it also shocked me when I heard them, although I realized that they were merely transferring from Italian where they would not have been offensive. They compounded this by their use of imperative forms where English would use interrogatives or conditionals, or certainly more indirect means of requesting her to come or do something for them; the Italian versions of which these are literal translations (« vieni », « guarda » etc.) are not correspondingly perfunctory nor inappropriate.

Apart from the fact that there is cross-linguistically no one-to-one correspondence between intonation patterns or other prosodic elements and their function (cf. Gumperz *et al.*, 1979; 1982; chap. 5), as I have mentioned earlier, Wierzbicka correlates this preference in English of indirect modes of asking people to do things with the English values of freedom, respect for privacy, and the principle of negative politeness, not wishing to impose. One must, it seems, prepare an English speaker by reassuring them that you respect their independence by leaving their options open, before disturbing them (asking them to do something for another). However, to an HC speaker, asking an intimate (and obligations may even extend (although with diminishing strength) through a « network » to intimates of intimates of intimates etc) to do something for you is totally natural — mutual service, help being *expected*. In England there is almost a taboo about taking other people's trouble to help you for granted, even within the close family; I have heard my little English niece prompted by her English mother to say « Thankyou for having me, Me'me' and Pep'e' », to her French grandparents living in England, which, they admit, always slightly jars them a little even after 40 years in England. This brings me to a further linguistic correlate. The relative incidence of « please » and « thankyou » and « grazie » and « per favore » [not to mention that of smiling; see e.g. (ii), where



the contextually relevant element for HCC *E* is the bond formed by the household and their position within it; this presumably obviates the need for overt solidarity markers; see also Vincent Marrelli, in press & in prep]. Middle-class English children are, of course, explicitly taught to say « please » and « thankyou » and are expected to do so very early on; the British Health Visitors' developmental test at 18 months includes the child's use of « ta ». S. Italian children are not *expected* to say « per favore » and « grazie » (especially in the family), if they do, it is somehow marked (cf. Gumperz *et al.*, 1979: 12 — in Indian languages « their use implies some social inequality and a high degree of formality »). Indeed the relative morphological complexities of « per favore » and « please » (considering the correlation between frequency of use, markedness etc., may well be indicative (see Vincent Marrelli, 1987: 196). S. Italians often comment on the « hypocritical » British « overuse » of « please » and « thankyou » (not to mention that of « sorry » which is too complicated a story to go into now). Child-rearing customs (i.e. what is taught *explicitly* to children), incidentally, might be profitably studied to see what exactly are those aspects of culture which become eventually part of *implicit*, covert, internalized, « pre-programmed » « cultural presuppositions » or « frame »(s) of reference » (see Hall, 1959, *passim*), for LCC and HCC cultures alike.

3.4. Let me briefly now discuss the sample cases illustrating the potential for unintentional mismatching in cross-talk which concern the other's sincerity or trustworthiness.

In situation (v), the N. Italian (relatively LC) speaker was disgusted at the apparently total lack of respect for what she saw as their contract. It is she who reported it to me, but without knowing exactly what they said to each other I can only make an « educated guess » and hazard that they mistook her intent, did not take what to her was an actual invitation, as such, but merely as vague expression of intent, or simply, politeness. The implicit code (in the HC culture) requires further turns than she seems to have given it, involving anyway a confirmation, or reiteration nearer the date (less than a week? see Hall, 1959: 140ff.) when a precise appointment would be given and only then is the invitation taken as formally issued. Otherwise it is seen merely as a statement of intent, which may

have the sole function of expressing interpersonal solidarity, a feeling of closeness with the natural desire to see each other again. An LC speaker on the other hand, « means what he says and says what he means » [as the S. British male turbulently married to the Neapolitan woman in (vii) once proudly announced to me]. The situation in (vi) is a case possibly of double covert cross-talk in that when *M.* realized they had taken him literally on the « any time » aspect (*they* had misinterpreted *him*) he did not let this be apparent and could not put them off since he did not want them to think he did not want them (turning down of invitations too in HCC is thwart with indirectness in the attempt to save other's face by not implying disinterest in other, thus giving offense and losing rapport); what he did not realize was that his British friends may actually have been literally inquiring if the dates they proposed were « O.K. » and would have been prepared to change them if they had known they were impinging on *M.*, indeed that is the very last thing they as LCC members would wish to do even to a friend (*he* misinterpreted *them*).

Similarly, when a S. Italian says: « ci vediamo domani », a LC hearer will tend to take this literally, and may feel bound to go and see him or be expecting him all day long and become convinced as to his untrustworthiness [cf. also the English ladies' self-invited, would-be visit to the Bhattacharya's house (in Forster's *Passage to India*: 63, 85)]. S. Italian parents often « promise » things to their children which they do not then later worry about keeping. The children do not seem to be worried. My own children (thus still relatively LC) have been occasionally upset when their Italian grandmother or aunts and uncles have not kept what they the children had taken as binding promises. My own insistence on keeping promises is considered quaintly « pignolo » by my Italian in-laws. It is not that HC speakers do not keep promises but rather that making a promise entails more turns (like the invitation), as well as other markers, than it does in English. A single or unconfirmed saying you will do something in HCC does not « count as » a promise, it is often merely an expression of a solidary intent or, rather, willingness to do something for the other *if circumstances permit*; something which the irreducibly LCC husband in (vii) cannot come to terms with. The promise and invitation, furthermore,

both involve the question of future time and temporal expressions and one might also consider Hall's comments again (1959: 140 ff.) (cf. also Brislin *et al.*, 1986: 272-4) on the cultural relativity of time.

3.5. To conclude, let me put it that LCC speakers and hearers assign truth values more readily to literal meaning than to the pragmatic level of conveyed meaning or illocutionary force and interactional goals. The HCC member typically speaks knowing that what s/he says will be interpreted within the implicit cultural context of interpersonal relations, where affect and emotional interaction may be more important than precise information transaction. What matters to her/him is the sincerity, or truth, or cooperativeness, of the goals, implications and/or presuppositions of the promise (or the invitation, or the acceptance of the invitation), Forster's « truth of mood » rather than « verbal truth » [i.e. (that he wants you to know) that he wants to do something for you, that he wants to see you again, that he wishes to have or consolidate a network bond, in other words, that he feels close (ulterior goals for expressing or signalling solidarity may, or may not be covertly manipulatory, but that is beside the point (see Vincent & Castelfranchi, 1981))].

We can, thus, see how the two dimensions of sincerity and rapport intermesh. Forster, yet again, however, beat us all to it:

Truth is not truth in that exacting land unless there go with it kindness and more kindness and kindness again, unless the Word that was with God also is God (*A Passage to India*, 1982: 245).

#### 4.0. Concluding remarks

I have made an informal and preliminary attempt at connecting Hall's (1976) HC/LC cultures distinction to linguistic questions of directness and indirectness in discourse or conversational style and to literal meaning vs. illocutionary force, showing how politeness and truth *may* be culturally relative and their expression correspondingly so. I have brought a little fresh data from a culture hitherto unstudied in the specialist literature (although see George, in prep.). We have also seen that the main distinction (Hall's HCC / LCC) I have appealed to is not absolute or binding, in that individuals may shift in

their life-times according to their adaptability to their cultural surroundings, and that they will appear more or less HC or LC according to the style adopted by their different interlocutors, and, finally, in that they may even «accommodate» or «diverge» their styles. It is also the case, as I have said that any one main culture or society will contain social and personal variation as regards conversational style; I have merely emphasized here the *basic* cultural styles discernible in BE and SI discourse. Furthermore, let me also suggest that it is likely that any individual will have a *repertory* of different more or less HCC and LCC styles to be used in different cultural and social contexts, e.g. according to «network density» binding S and H (cf. Milroy, 1980). And, finally, although subjective, culturally relative feelings and reactions may not ever fully disappear, as we have also seen, becoming more cross-culturally aware must, nonetheless, surely help in the fight for mutual tolerance against ethnocentrism (see also Aston, 1988b, Gumperz & Roberts, 1980; Sanders, 1987: 224 etc.) and may, we hope, help us all to meet the ever more present challenge of cross-cultural communication successfully, and turn conflict into concord, cross-talk into happy-talk.

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