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*Training Students to Interculturally Interact on Perceptions and Identities.  
The Implementation of Multimodal Analysis in a Cultural Approach to Discourse.*

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**Introduction: Educating to understand complexity**

Let me begin with a simple statement that is, in a way, part of my professional creed. Better, future intercultural communicators and decision makers must be trained today. Although this could sound self-evident, it implies the awareness that younger generations share a number of cognitive and technological tools that ease communication, empower the opportunities of generating larger flows of information, but these do not necessarily make it more effective. This is but one of the by-products of globalization that has thus generated ever more rapid flows of cultural artefacts (NOTE 1).

Actually, most of multimedia and mediated communication is used and consumed by youngsters without being able to critically understand what is behind the codes and technologies that carry the message and how the latter is affected by them (Lull, 2000). Intercultural communication is no exception and it represents an opportunity to train students to recognize and manage the problem of mutual perception and identity in the relationship with someone belonging to a different culture. We could refer to this particular process as “globalization as consciousness”. Robertson (1992: 8) writes: “Globalization refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole”. Although information technologies contribute to the compression of the world, I would rather prefer to talk about the issue of comprehension, achieved through intercultural dialogue (Panikkar, 2002). McGrew (1992: 65) maintains that globalization implies a “complex

condition, one in which patterns of human interaction, interconnectedness and awareness are reconstituting the world as a single social space". McGrew may sound too optimistic, but younger generations are experiencing the emergence of "Global Civil Society" (Jacobson et al., 2003), Micro and Public Diplomacy and are trying to learn how to face these challenges. These have, and to a larger extent will have in the future, effects on the way today's students will shape the world society and institutions, figuring out, I hope, better forms of governance. I serve as a Professor of English Linguistics at the Political Sciences Faculty of the University of Turin, BA and MA courses in International Studies. There, we have developed a syllabus that aims at training students to understand today's world complexity. Thereafter, I constantly explore and experiment innovative didactic solutions to improve students' communicative skills while using the English language, adopting a "languages across the curriculum" approach (Adams, 1996). This is the reason why in recent years I adopted Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis (*MMTA*) (Baldry, 2008) as a standard methodology in my BA courses and I consider it a suitable tool to achieve this goal when integrated with a Cultural Approach to Discourse (*CAD*).

Thus, this essay discusses the theoretical principles and the solutions adopted to implement *CAD* within the syllabus as a key element to develop students' awareness of the complexities involved in intercultural communicative processes.

### ***CAD: a Form of Active Cultural Politics***

*CAD* (Shi, 2005) considers knowledge as socially oriented, culturally organised and symbolically mediated. This is a vital standpoint to be made explicit in current higher

education training delivered by means of a dominant foreign language, i.e. English. Actually, this could be the first step of a possible cultural conditioning students are exposed to, but that they do not fully realize (NOTE 2). In fact, this construction of the so called “modern” or “post-modern” identity, frequently realised by means of mediated communication, through social interaction between the subject and the object, reflects the issue of power. In Conoscenti (2008) I discuss why cultural and power issues are other variables over and above interpersonal relations in communication. As a consequence, the goal, again, is to make students aware of these implications with a technique (*MTTA*) that is familiar to them because it includes, as part of the training process, those codes they frequently use, i.e. verbal/visual ones.

Later on I will discuss the implications, at cognitive level, of using *MMTA*. Suffice it to say that with this technique “the focus is on the *meaning* of different kinds of units and their functions in larger-scale patterns of discourse organisation that cannot be described in terms of small scale units *per se*” (Baldry et al., 2006: xv, authors’ emphasis). *MMTA* is then a sort of metacode forcing students to reflect on the metaphor of world’s complexity. When properly analysed, multimodal texts will unroll in front of the viewer as the score of a concertmaster, allowing her/him to fully appreciate the role of each instrument in the symphonic arena of intercultural communication. This is possible because *MMTA* “currently informs and is shaping work in Critical Discourse Analysis, Ethnographically-based Discourse Analysis,...Mediated Discourse Analysis” (Baldry et al., 2006: xvi).

Verbal/Visual Narrative Text analysis foregrounds and highlights what emerged in my previous research (Conoscenti, 2004b and 2008), i.e., participation within intercultural

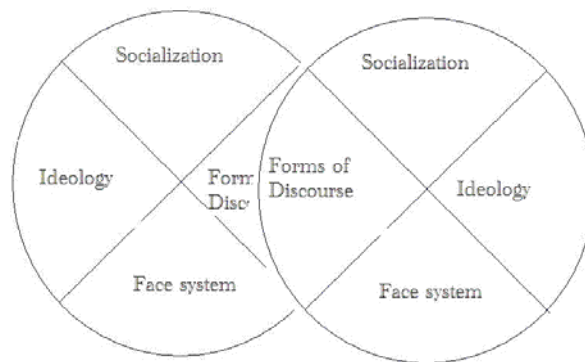
groups is frequently polarised along an English Native Speakers (*ENSs*)/*Non-ENSs* continuum pointing to a pattern of power relations generated by one's ability to control the language and cultural norms attached to it. As these patterns and the continuum itself are transparent in the process, specific training is requested to detect them. In fact, *Non-ENSs* declared they were unable to adjust their traditional, everyday cultural background to the group because of the dominance of *ENSs* in terms of topic introduction and control of the production code. Consequently, *ENSs* were unable to feel and perceive the display of different cultural behaviours as instantiated by other *Non-ENSs* participants, putting the latter at disadvantage. Interestingly, neither of the two groups, nor individuals, equally distributed along the continuum, were able to identify what elements disrupted communication, if not during post-event structured feedback interviews.

Interacting, interculturally or not, is always complex, and intercultural communicators, whether properly trained or not, will soon or later face the dilemma: "Why, if our values are so good, do others reject them?" Younger generations seem to perceive this problem as a sort of puzzle that cannot be easily solved. We cannot blame them. The complexity of today's conflicts narrations is such that discerning biased points of view is not easy at all (NOTE 3). Furthermore, as these generations are heavy multimedia contents' consumers, they are particularly exposed to the effects of language engineering and media management (Conoscenti, 2004a). The construction of an informed and unbiased personal perspective of current affairs is thus a real problem. Globalisation, and the language it has developed to achieve an effective communication of its own ideology, is posing an old problem rephrased with new words (NOTE 4). Once, Westerners were treated as normal, i.e. not deviant from

the established norm, and thus worthy of “civilised” treatment, while non-members of the group were treated as ethnics, barbarians and pagans. In more recent terminology members of the Utilitarian Discourse System (Scollon et al., 1997: 98), perfectly overlapping with the Westerners, are judged to be progressive, democratic, free, developed and non-members are judged to lack these assumed qualities. These particular lexical associations generate specific deep mental frames (Lakoff, 2008: 22-24) that will enact specific neural circuitry. This, once established, will generate a biased way of thinking that is mainly based on stereotypes and, as such, difficult to be neurally discarded. This is so because metaphors, the key constitutive element of mental frames, physically modify the brain by means of neural binding. “This allows us to bring together neural activation in different parts of the brain to form single integrated wholes...Binding is one of the most important and most commonplace of all brain mechanisms...Binding circuitry consists just of neurons and connections, but has a special effect: it creates new experiences. Neural binding is also crucial to the time structure of a narrative” (Lakoff, 2008: 25-26). Then, the only way to discard neural circuitry activated by erroneous biased metaphors or language engineering is by means of a detailed identification of all the communicative steps within the process itself. It will be then possible to create a contrasting mental frame enacted by a new metaphor. *MTTA*, because of its methodological characteristics, is ideal to solve this task. Once the latter is achieved, we can proceed to the re-narrativization of the analysed event and modify neural binding circuitry.

Furthermore, as I said before, the use of English as an International Language, or if you prefer, as *Lingua Franca*, generates a number of false assumptions, reinforcing binding circuitry. The most important one, equally distributed among *ENSs* and *Non-ENSs*, is: if we

speak the same language and use the same tools and information technologies to communicate, we understand each other; hence, we share the same worldview. This is a typical case of Solidarity Fallacy (Scollon et al., 1997: 159) and the use of English as a Foreign/Second Language together with broadband communication technologies favours and amplifies this misperception (NOTE 5). As Singer (1998) points out, groups and individuals communicate expressing their own culture and are perceived in these terms. The risk, then, lies in the underestimation of the role of the form of discourse adopted by a group, or individual, in relation to the other variables of a discourse system. According to Scollon et al. (1997: 97) these consist of Ideology, Socialization, Face Systems and Forms of Discourse. Thus, if two different groups or individuals are interacting and one of the two uses the other's language (forms of discourse), the group/individual expressing themselves in their own language will tend to perceive, for psychological reasons (Clark, 1996), that the two groups' values and ideologies overlap and consequently share the other variables of the discourse system. This is a risk affecting mother tongue speakers, difficult as it may be to define anyone as a mother tongue speaker, especially an *NSE*, on account of the whole issue of variability. This false assumption can generate quite frustrating attitudes in the communicative process. The following figure illustrates the ideas discussed above.



We thus need to develop a “Third Language” approach (Scholl, 2008) and to get future generations used to it. In other words, we need to realise the dimensions and implications of perceptual space (Ochse 2008a). It is interesting to note that these ideas generate from a research area (English in International Deaf Communication) where people are forced to realise the overlapping of “different” cultures. Nowadays, thanks to the advances of sociolinguistics, we accept and consider as self-evident that many aspects of linguistic form depend on the speakers making some analysis of the relationship among them. Speakers, when interacting, need then to understand how participants decide what their relative statuses are and what language they use to encode assumptions about such differences. Nonetheless, given these accepted presuppositions, every intercultural communication trainer is aware that these basic pillars of communication cannot be taken for granted when dealing with a generation that is “fast-fooding” mediated communication without questioning its quality.















## **An Agenda of Liberating Tasks for the CAD Analyst**

This problem can be solved with what Ochse (2008b) has defined as “a liberating task” and I would call an Agenda of Liberating Tasks for the *CAD* Analyst. Her/His first goal is to promote a view that language is oriented towards action. This draws attention to the fact that people do things with language (Austin, 1962) rather than merely describing the world as it is. This runs counter to the perspective that language is an abstract system of reference. Such perspective is even more important in a globalised world where ‘others’ are challenging, legitimately and openly, not only the Western concept of power, but its very representation of the world – “the tendency to disregard the context (for example, social and institutional positions) of speaking actors in favour of their words” (Shi, 2005: 25). Some of these tasks have been well articulated by Klyukanov (2005) and I present them here with the adjustments I introduced to adapt them to the concept of *CAD* as a form of active cultural politics.

These tasks are gradually developed, and their relative communicative goals achieved, during the 5-year BA/MA course in International Studies. The first step of this syllabus is a course on intercultural communication in English, the second a course on language engineering and media management and the last a detailed *MMTA* of verbal/visual texts carefully selected to show the implications of each task described here below.

The first task consists in charting out a cultural map. Students learn at this stage the basic principle of positionality. They are stimulated to be aware that “it all depends”. The positionality principle is thus linked with the concept of perception and authority. The desired effect is students should perceive intercultural communication as a process whereby





people from different cultures claim authority for their vision of the world. The following figure shows an example of one of these comparing activities taken from a student's work on BBC World and CCTV9 (the Chinese Government English-speaking Satellite TV Channel) news programs broadcast at the same time, the same day (NOTE 6). Here the student compares the introduction of themes in the news and focuses on the selection criteria adopted by broadcasters in defining their view of reality and, consequently, their agenda.





<i>Tav. 7.1.1</i>	<i>11-dic-07</i>		
<i>CCTV9 News, gmt+1: 17-17,30</i>	<i>BBC World News, gmt+1:18-18,30</i>		
	1. "Bilateral meeting to boost ties" (1'00), [China-ROK meeting]		1. "Algeria Explosions" (1'00)
	2. "Collaboration for stable trade ties", (2'00), [China-USA]		2. "CIA tape controversy" (6'00)
	3. "US confident in Chinese Products", (4'21)		News in brief: 3. "Putin could be Prime Minister" (9'14)
	4. "China reaffirms stance on South China sea", (7'23)		News in brief: 4. "Ahmadinejad hails US report" (9'32)
	Still to come: 5. "Algeria bomb blast", 6. "Russian next Prime Minister", (8'16)		News in brief: 5. "Former PM is attacked" [Iraq attack] (9'53)
	(5.) "Algeria blasts kill 67", (10'10)		6. [Israeli and Palestinian, after Annapolis] (10'36)

Once this goal is achieved students are encouraged to compare cultural maps according to the commensurability principle. *MTTA* at this stage helps them to investigate the

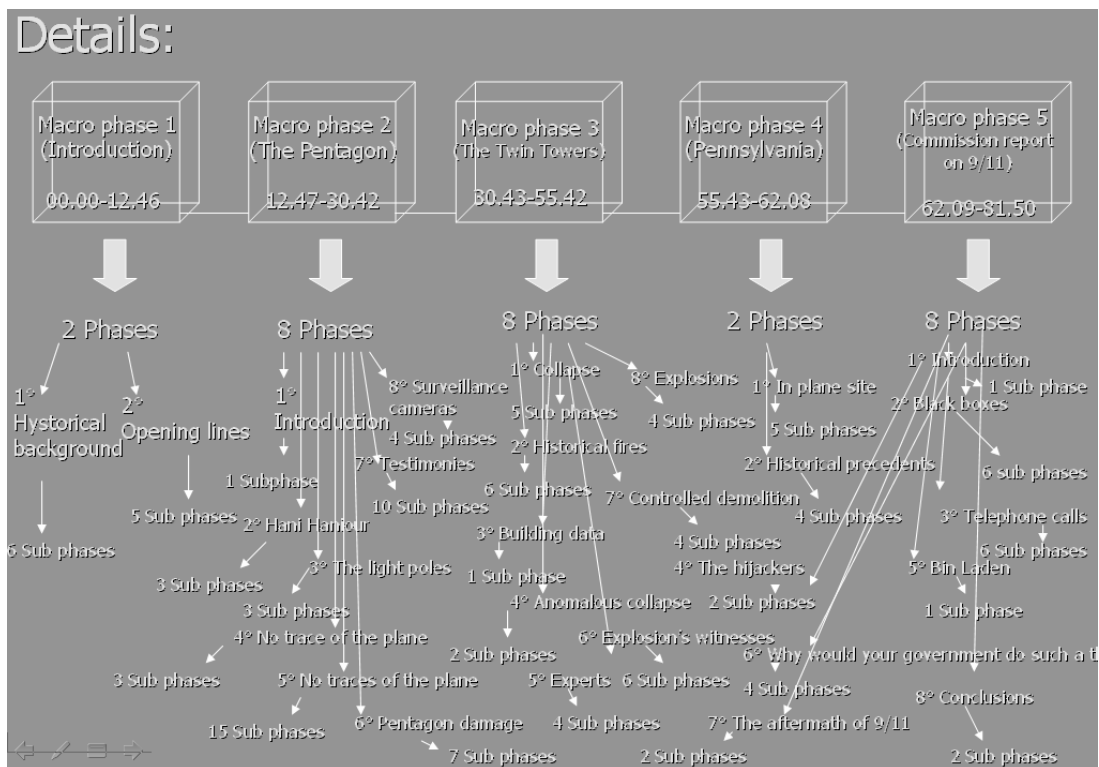
ways meanings are constructed and then narrated in intercultural communication. The principle of commensurability is realised at three levels of meaning representation thanks to its dynamic nature. This is possible because commensurability is a general human capacity that is realised in every act of intercultural communication. Students pass from a careful analysis of the cultural content of singular words to the cultural representations of the world/s through an investigation of what is in the speaker's mind and theirs, following a principle of mental and cognitive reframing as described in Feldman (2007: 2-11). Thus, the semiotic, cognitive and corporeal levels are respectively "anchored" to the formal aspect of symbols, concepts and image-schemas.

The following figure shows the next step of the *MTTA* I have shown previously. Here the student compares the lexical maps instantiated by the two institutional actors while reporting the same news item. The student can thus appreciate and make evident the role lexical choice and images play in this portrait of reality and event's narration, thus generating two different worlds.

Tav. 7.2.a.1		CCTV9 News - 13 Dic 2007 - gmt+1: 10,00
phase: "70TH ANNIVERSARY OF NANJING MASSACRE"		
Visual Frame	Visual Image	Content
	(19'25)	<p>Seventy years on, this sound reminds people of Nanjing's darkest days. In 1937, the city serving as China's capital suffered one of its history's most brutal crimes. Over forty days, Japanese invaders butchered more than 300,000 people. Most of them were civilians, many were women and children. This year, the city has expanded the memorial hall of victims, from 2,500 square meters to nearly ten times that. Thousands attended the memorial service for the inauguration. The mourners also passed a declaration, calling on "all the peace-loving people to be united in building a peaceful, harmonious and reconciliatory new world." And in Suqian city, local schools held photo exhibitions on the massacre.</p> <p>[a student:] "I am shocked by these photographs. I think what the Japanese aggressors have done in Nanjing is brutal." Various commemoration activities took place across the province. Organizers want to make sure people will never forget history and will learn from it. (23'50-25'40)</p>
	(19'46)	
	(19'53)	
	(20'21)	

Tav. 7.2.a.2		BBC World News - 13 Dic 2007 - gmt+1: 11,00
phase: "NANJING COMMEMORATION, up to 10,000 mourners gathered"		
Visual Frame	Visual Image	Content
	(12'14)	[lead:](...)A commemorate atrocity over civilian population. The ceremony took place in a new renovated museum dedicated to the dead.(...) [journalist from London]: This is a very important day for China, isn't it? It is still remembered with a lot of heart of that event?[Journalist from Shanghai]: A lot of passion, 10 thousands people attended the memorial today, took place at 10 a.m., back in 1937 in December, on 13th December 1937. The Japanese troops entered in Nanjing. There is any doubt over what happened next 6 weeks conquering the city and the most bloody fashion possible, however there is a great deal of controversial of how many people were actually killed in Nanjing. The Chinese see 300,000, the Alize estimated about half of that, the Japanese sees the figures were much smaller. Whatever the figures agree upon the huge number of people were killed, many women were raped, children were murdered and solders also attacked in one of the most brutal incident in the war between Japan and China.(...).
	(12'20)	
	(12'54)	
	(12'59)	It is just a couple years ago that here the consulate here in Shanghai was stoned by hundred of Chinese protestors. As you can see, seventeen years on, passion still run very high. (14'30-16'57).

Instead of referring to conflicting representations of the intercultural communication process (Lewis, 1997; Kennedy, 1998 and Sen, 2006), students start to consider intercultural communication as a process whereby people from different cultures compare their maps and search for common ground, using the same forms and levels of meaning representation. This is one of the most difficult goals to achieve as common ground is frequently mistakenly identified with the concept of background. Once again, *MTTA* is helpful because its detailed splitting of the communicative act into sub-phases contributes to let emerge all the informative cues that are culturally marked, making the tagging of the possible biased information easier. The following figure shows part of a cognitive map generated during a seminar by some of my students. They compared alternative narratives for 9/11 events presented in "conspiracy theory" documentaries. One can appreciate the complexity of the cognitive network lying underneath the thematic grid students were able to identify by means of *MTTA*. (NOTE 7)



Intercultural communication is thus transformed in a spiral process, in which people from different cultures compare their maps. In this process, meanings are manifested and cultural lacunas are filled.

The third and last task is that of creating a shared intercultural space based on the continuum principle. This implies the communicator realises that s/he “can have it both ways” and that different communicative options or world’s narratives are not necessarily conflicting. They are simply contributing to generate a shared perception. Intercultural communication is thus transformed in a process whereby people from different cultures continuously construct a shared space where meanings are discernible by their distance from each other. If this awareness is achieved, communicators are able to identify and overcome biconceptual thinking (Lakoff, 2008: 69-74).

The interplay of culture and identity, as instantiated by language, should by now be acquired and favour an intercultural dialogue that does not ignore each participant's perceptual group, but is the ground for a real and peaceful "dialogue as exchange" and willingness to understand the other (Panikkar, 2002). At the same moment, the spiralling of communication, which I was previously referring to, contributes to generate a group identity for the newly formed identity group through common ground. This principle (Clark, 1996: 92-124) entails that other things being equal, the higher degree of similarity of perception that exists among a number of individuals, the easier communication among them is likely to be, and more communication among them is likely to occur.

Psycholinguistics (Lakoff, 2002 and Clark, 1996) have demonstrated that as the number and importance of identity groups that individuals share rises, the more likely they are to have a higher degree of group identity. Thus, every individual must inevitably be a member of a myriad of different perceptual and identity groups simultaneously. Nowadays, these identities are shaped and influenced by communication environments. In fact, the environment in which a communication occurs can be a major factor in determining how effective one can be when taking part in an intercultural communication process. Even professional and mediated communication can be considered intercultural because they take place between members of different discourse communities. An interest case is offered by viral marketing techniques (NOTE 8). These target even more frequently younger generations by means of blogs. The latest interesting example of this practice is offered by the US Air Force (USAF). Recently Meerman Scott has discovered that:

"the U.S. Air Force has its own Twitter feed, staffed by Captain David Faggard, who holds the title of Chief of Emerging Technology at the Air Force Public Affairs Agency in the Pentagon.

Scott interviewed Faggard and reports that his team's "mission is to use current and developing Web 2.0 applications as a way to actively engage conversations between Airmen and the general public." Faggard says the focus is on "Direct Action within Social Media (blogging, counter-blogging, posting products to YouTube, etc.); Monitoring and Analysis of the Social Media landscape (relating to Air Force and Airmen); and policy and education (educating all Public Affairs practitioners and the bigger Air Force on Social Media)."

In addition to a Twitter feed, Scott reports that

Capt. Faggard writes The Official Blog of the U.S. Air Force; has pages on YouTube, MySpace and Facebook; helps publicize a Second Life area called Huffman Prairie; contributes to iReport (user name USAFPA); and is on Friendfeed, Digg, Delicious, Slashdot, Newsvine, Reddit. There's Air Force widgets. And there's even a video mashup contest for high schools to show school spirit sponsored by the Air Force.

Other branches of the military are also getting into the social networking game, along with other branches of government. The Army also has its own Twitter feed, as does the Department of Homeland Security, the Bush White House, and the U.S. Joint Forces Command, the U.S. Department of State, and the Israeli Consulate in New York.

Just a few months ago, U.S. military analysts raised concerns that Twitter and other online social networking technologies could become terrorist tools. It appears they've decided that they can be useful for their own purposes as well." (NOTE 9)

As it can be read several institutions have a genuine interest in the Social Media landscape and USAF has even developed an "Air Force Blog Assessment" chart that specifies the "Rules of Engagement" for dealing with bloggers. For space reasons I cannot include the flow chart here, but I suggest to address the relative page and view it. It will show that the need for a specific training for future intercultural communicators and decision makers is a must.

## Unlocking complexity

As I said before, better, future intercultural communicators must be trained today disclosing to them the full potential of intercultural and mediated communication. In the complex training process I described, *MMTA* encourages participants to take a small piece of theory, add it on to other theoretical principles and apply the combined tools in ever-escalating sequences of complexity. The fine detail of analysis achieved in *MTTA* allows viewing meaning as being instantiated through a fundamental complex activity such as intercultural communication. This is possible because the text itself, either visual or verbal, is derived from such activity. The latter, together with action, are thus the fundamental meaning-making units and text is derived from meaning-making activity. *MMTA* allows students to understand that multimodality, an essential element of today's communication, transcends the view of meaning potential and action potential as separate entities and sees them, instead, as an integrated whole. Once again, the cultural oppositional perspective on discourse highlights the difference between the diversity of cultural discourses as a difference in power. In this way, we go back to the beginning of the process and of the theoretical framework I discussed, i.e. considering *CAD* as a form of active cultural politics. In this sense, the power differences may take the form of unequal relations between cultural discourses and discursive practices of domination, discrimination and exclusion on grounds of 'race', colour, ethnicity, language or 'culture' (Shi, 2005: 65). *MMTA* offers students a methodological approach that is suitable to their perceptual models and mediated communication consumption styles. In fact, given the power saturation of social and cultural life, the discourse of cultural plurality and diversity is not sufficient. *MMTA* compensates this hidden



power unlocking the complexity of contemporary communication.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have discussed the principles implied in the integration of *MTTA* in an English Linguistics curriculum and syllabus at university level to favour students' cultural approach to discourse. Although some of these concepts or techniques might sound obscure to some readers without a specific interest in the field, I can say that in a short time students become aware that all things are relative to their surroundings. Strictly speaking, they are able to perceive that something that is one way to us will be another way to someone else. It might be very subtle, but there will be differences worth considering.

What do we do with this understanding? First, we have to consider that all things are connected, even at interdisciplinary level. Although the angles of relationships shift and differ for each of us, we must be aware of the actual connections and even take advantage of them.

Secondly, we have to understand that relationships are transitory. We must have constant awareness to fit ourselves into the changing constellations of life.

Thirdly, we have to understand the value of our own point of view. Out of this mass of changing concordances, we must pick out the coordinates by which we act at any given moment.

We should take comfort in this situation. As long as we engage life fully, we need not fear being separated from the essential current of life, it does not matter how complex it might appear.

To Chinese people this is the Tao, the context for everything. Context. Connection. Engagement. If we understand these words, we do not need esoteric terms and thus, students and ourselves experience practically and directly that, “without equality, diversity is merely a difference in power [...] which, unfortunately, has continued to characterize contemporary human communities and particularly intercultural communication” (Shi, 2005: 208).

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## NOTES

(NOTE 1) For an original approach to this problem see Mody (2003).

(NOTE 2). For a detailed discussion of the cultural implications of the narratives realised in English in Higher Education refer to Solly et al. (2008).

(NOTE 3). See Boyd-Barrett (2003) for an interesting historical and methodological review of the concept of "New World Information and Communication Order" (*NWICO*). Suffice it to say that "*NWICO* was a position statement, [made 30 years ago], moulded principally by the countries of the developing world...*NWICO* was a protest, whose proponents argued that the structure and operation of global communication had grossly inequitable consequences. They said that this structure advantaged established media proprietors and their sponsors in the developed world, allowing them to dominate global communication with the perspectives of the developed world." (Boyd-Barrett, 2003: 35). Thirty years later, Shi (2005) is discussing the same problem with a cultural approach to discourse.

(NOTE 4). See Luntz (2008). Luntz, owner of Luntz Research Companies, a spin doctor himself, is the author of several "reports" and PR communication strategies commissioned by the US Republican Party. Recently, some of them have been leaked and made available through the net. Two of them are particularly interesting: *The New American Lexicon* (a version is downloadable at [www.politicalcortex.com/special/Luntz\\_NAL\\_Introduction](http://www.politicalcortex.com/special/Luntz_NAL_Introduction)) and the Wexner Analysis, an Israeli PR strategy on the Palestinian conflict prepared by Luntz and the Israel Project (a version is downloadable at [www.adc.org/luntzwexneranalysis.pdf](http://www.adc.org/luntzwexneranalysis.pdf)). These documents unveil the level of sophistication language engineering can achieve when important political and economical issues are stakes.

(NOTE 5). At the moment I am researching on the impact of Intercultural / Interracial / Intergenerational mediated communication, i.e. in the Social Media Space, in Obama's Presidential campaign. The now President of the United States seems to have been able to fully understand and exploit the potentials offered to him by new technologies to contact new and different clusters of the potential electorate and to pass on his political message. Further implications on the use of the Social Media Space are discussed later on in the text and in Note 9.

(NOTE 6). This image and the following are taken from Valentina Monchiero's MA final dissertation "A Cultural Approach to Discourse of Chinese Communities in English" defended in July 2008 at the University of Turin, unpublished.

(NOTE 7). This image is taken from an assignment by Luna Bosso, Alessia Cecot, Sara Minucci, Gaja Ravasini, MA students of my course in Academic Year 2006-07.

(NOTE 8). "Viral marketing is a technique that uses word of mouth or email to reach and affect an audience...and is a common strategy in marketing and media relations techniques. The goal of a viral marketer is to create "buzz" about a product or idea, so that the idea spreads widely. If effective, viral marketing may require very little effort on the part of the propagandist, as the recipients of the message become the primary agents who spread it to other people. On the other hand, the weakest thing about this form of marketing is that it is hard to control. Like the "telephone game" that children play, the message may change as it passes from ear to ear. " Definition taken from the glossary of PR Watch website, [http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Viral\\_marketing](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Viral_marketing).

(NOTE 9). <http://www.prwatch.org/node/8105>