Reporting Gesture and Voice in Reporting Speech: Co-verbal Language in Literature

Maria Paola Tenchini

Reporting Gesture and Voice in Reporting Speech: Co-verbal Language in Literature

Maria Paola Tenchini

Maria Paola Tenchini est docteur de recherche en Sciences linguistiques, philologiques et littéraires. Actuellement elle est collaborateur expert linguistique et enseigne l'allemand à la Faculté de Sciences linguistiques et de Littératures étrangères à l'Université Catholique du Sacré-Cœur de Brescia. Ses intérêts de recherche comprennent l'ordre des mots en Allemand, le discours rapporté, la communication non verbale et l'histoire de la linguistique.

In this paper we will focus on the synergistic contribution of verbal and co-verbal language to communication within the framework of reported speech in literary narrative texts. The analysis is based on two famous novels by Sciascia. First we will highlight the double audio-visual structure of co-verbal language. Then we will review the different ways – different degrees of verbalization or transcription – in which one can report the vocal and kinesic behaviours which accompany speech in a written text. Finally, we will focus on the possible relations between co-verbal behaviour and meaning, evaluating which pragmatic and narrative functions result from the synergy between co-verbal language and propositional content in building up the meaning of an act of speech and of reported speech.

co-verbal language, reported speech, literary text, synergy, functions

Dans cet article nous examinons la contribution synergique du langage verbal et du langage co-verbal à la communication entre le cadre du discours rapporté dans textes littéraires romanesques. Le point de départ de notre analyse sont deux romans de Leonardo Sciascia. Nous délinéons d'abord la double structure audio-visuelle du langage co-verbal. Ensuite nous examinons les différents moyens de traduction et de transmission écrite – verbalisation ou transcription – de la composante vocale, mimo-gestuelle ou proxémique de la communication. Enfin nous mettons au point les possibles relations entre le langage co-verbal et le sens en évaluant les fonctions pragmatiques et narratives qui résultent de la synergie entre langage co-verbal et contenu propositionnel pour la construction du sens d'un acte du discours et du discours rapporté.

langage co-verbal, discours rapporté, texte littéraire, synergie, fonctions

English

Introduction

In natural face-to-face interaction verbal communication always occurs in association with some expressions of non-verbal behaviour: facial expressions, eye behaviour, body movements (i.e. gestures and physical actions), body postures, spatial behaviour, automatic physiological and physio-chemical reactions, vocal behaviour (i.e. prosodical behaviour, pauses ecc.).

Experts agree in saying that in oral communication the rate of the non-verbal amount is much higher than that of the verbal one. For instance, according to a famous study by Mehrabian the total impact of a message breaks down as follows: 7 percent verbal (words), 38 percent vocal (volume, pitch, rhythm, tone of voice, inflections, silence, etc.), 55 percent body language (mostly facial expressions, gestures, posture, proxemics, haptics and appearance)[1]. The percentages may be slightly different, but in any case they seem to confirm that the meaning of an oral message is conveyed mostly by non-verbal signs.

The contribution of non-verbal behaviour to the meaning of the message and to its effects often fulfils multiple communicative functions which differ according to the context (i.e. objects which the utterance refers to, speaker's intentions or beliefs, interpersonal relations between speaker and addressee, nature and aim of the message, situation) and to the enunciative structure of the message (i.e. original speech vs. reported speech).

When in reporting speech one reports not only "words" but also the non-verbal behaviour that accompanies them, such quotation turns out to be always functional to the textual and narrative process because it always serves as a signifier for the addressee.

Although in conversation and written texts a non-verbal act or description can introduce reported speech replacing the traditional "introducer" (*verba dicendi* or similar illocutionary verbs), a distinction between oral and written texts has to be pointed out.

In a face-to-face conversation the non-verbal behaviour can be quoted directly, by making it vocally[2] or bodily scenic, or indirectly, by describing it. In the latter case the speaker "translates" non-verbal signs into verbal ones. Such non-verbal descriptions may be regarded as non-necessary if one considers the act of reporting speech a bare act of reporting words and if one reports them in a non-dramatic way. The use of non-verbal means is necessary only if the propositional content of the utterance itself is insufficient for its interpretation. Sometimes, as for example in the case of deictic gestures or of illustrators, the non-verbal behaviour might be thought to be "redundant" or "non-obligatory" if the referent is already mentioned and one considers only the information such gestures convey *in se*.

---

[1] Cf. Albert Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication*, Chicago, Aldine-Atherton, 1972. Actually Mehrabian states that this "7%-38%-55% rule" is applicable only to situations dealing with the communication of feeling and attitudes but as a matter of fact it has often been overly interpreted.

[2] For further details about the various interactive goals of the use of voicing, prosodic and voice quality features in reported speech in everyday conversations cf. Susanne Günthner, « Polyphony and the ‚layering of voices' in reported dialogues: An analysis of the use of prosodic devices in everyday reported speech », *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, 1999, pp. 685-708 and Peggy Katelhön, *Das fremde Wort im Gespräch. Rededarstellung und Redewiedergabe in italienischen und deutschen Gesprächen*, Berlin, Weidler, 2005, cf. pp. 291-297, 318-319.

In a written text, on the contrary, non-verbal behaviour can be reported only indirectly through a description or, more rarely, through a transcription. Anyway, in both cases we are in presence of a double translation: an intersemiotic one, from non-verbal to verbal signs, and a diamesic one, from spoken to written medium of use. Usually in a written text the descriptions of non-verbal behaviour in a context of reported speech (in its direct or indirect forms) are not considered redundant because they are the only mean for the reader to recreate, as accurately as possible, the "original" communicative situation.

We call the non-verbal behaviour which is settled in a context of verbal exchange *co-verbal language* in order to better express the synergy between verbal and non-verbal in building up the meaning of a communicative act of speech as a whole. Two novels by Leonardo Sciascia[3], *Il giorno della civetta* and *A ciascuno il suo*, are the starting point for analyzing the valence of reporting the co-verbal language while reporting speech in literary narrative texts.

After having outlined the features of the co-verbal language, the present study aims to highlight within the framework of the reported speech the structural-narrative aspects of the intersemiotic translation which the co-verbal behaviour undergoes when used in novels and the functional components of this act of reporting. In section 1 we will display the double audio-visual structure of the co-verbal language. In section 2 we will review the different ways in which one can report in a written text the co-verbal behaviour characterizing the original act of speech: we will focus on the possible relations between the description of the non-verbal behaviour and its meaning, pointing out the most frequently used means of its verbalization. In section 3 we will evaluate which communicative/pragmatic functions characterize the relation between the co-verbal behaviour and the propositional content of the reported speech and which narrative functions are conveyed by the description of the co-verbal behaviour in narrative literary texts.

1. Non-verbal and co-verbal language

There are different definitions of non-verbal communication. According to the interdisciplinary approach of Fernando Poyatos, the following is a broad definition, which includes not only human but also environmental and artifactual signs as communication-bearing:

> The emission of signs by all the nonlexical somatic, artifactual and environmental sensible sign systems contained in a culture, whether individually or in mutual construction, and whether or not those emissions constitute behavior or generate personal interaction. Communication was equated in that cultural context to the emission of information and its perception by humans and animals (Poyatos 1983: xvi).

---

[3] Leonardo Sciascia (1921-1989), born in Sicily, is one of the most eminent Italian writers of the 20th c. and active in politics as well. In a number of works he demonstrates how the Mafia manages to exercise power in his native island or in the Italian political scene by reason of the "unbreachable wall of silence" (*omertà*) inherent in the society. In particular, the short novel *The day of the owl* (1961) is his most famous and powerful work about the inability of the State to fight the phenomenon Mafia. In the detective novel *To each his own* (1966) Sciascia reveals the bonds of corruption among Sicilian best-known families, political parties, Institutions and Mafia.

As far as our study concerns, we will not take into account such broad definitions because we focus on non-verbal behaviour in a context of speech and because they do not distinguish between the human signs that are both communicative and/or informative (expressive)[4] and the environmental signals that can be only expressive.

Narrower definitions of non-verbal communication like the following include only body signs:

> …we can define body language as non verbal behaviour (movements and postures, facial expression, glances and eye contact, automatic reactions, spatial and touching behaviour) which is "meaningful" in both natural and fictional communication (Korte 1997: 3-4).

But this definition is too limited since vocal elements are involved in non-verbal communication as well.

Our definition should include all non-verbal signs, both vocal or kinesic, that have a message value in an interactional situation, in other words "all non-verbal behavior that can be decoded – that is potentially significant to a receiver – whether it is conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional" (Korte1997: 28-29).

Now if we focus on the non-verbal behaviour settled in a context of verbal exchanges, which constitutes the framework of reported speech as well, we consider the label *co-verbal language* more suitable to describe the non-verbal contribution to communication, because both verbal and non-verbal signs act *in synergy* to build up the meaning of the message.

Co-verbal language consists of all the non-verbal – vocal and/or kinesic – behaviours accompanying speech which from a communicative point of view are synergistically functional to the meaning of an act of speech. As it is settled in a verbal context and acts in synergy with the verbal utterance, from our analysis we will exclude any narrative part of a literary text consisting in a "mere" authorial description of or comment on the behaviours of one character outside verbal exchanges used, for example, in order to make the setting more vivid or to describe apart the mental states or attitudes of one character.

Co-verbal traits

Co-verbal language is a double audiovisual structure made up basically by vocal behaviours and kinesic behaviours.

Vocal behaviours consist of segmental or suprasegmental effects (non-distinctive voice qualities or modifiers), vocalizations (hesitation vowels or full pauses), manners of speech, pauses or silences with which one "affects" the synergistic – simultaneous or alternating – verbal message and/or behaviour[5].

The report of such behaviours may entail, for instance, the description of loudness, pitch register or emotional changes of the voice, rhythm or speed of utterance, hesitations, any manner indicating the speaker's emotion, both explicitly

---

[4] For example, head-scratching may be a signal of puzzlement or a simple reaction to scalp itch: the first one has a communicative value, the second one an informative / expressive one.

[5] On this point, cf. for example Fernando Poyatos, *Nonverbal Communication across Disciplines*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, J. Benjamins, 2002, I, pp. 114-116 and II, pp. 1-182 and 310-321; Fernando Poyatos, *Nonverbal Communication and Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, J. Benjamins, 1997, pp. 24-27, 40-43 (notes 4-9); Federico Albano Leoni, *Sulla voce*, in in Amedeo De Dominicis (ed.), *La voce come bene culturale*, Roma, Carocci, 2002, pp. 39-62.

and implicitly, respiratory control, differentiators (i.e. laughter, crying, sighing, gasping, yawing, coughing, etc.).

Vocal behaviours exclude all the prosodic features and the intonation profiles which are linguistically "encoded", or distinctive, that is pitch accents or tones associated with stressed syllables (lexical stress), sentence intonation associated with the sentence modality (declarative, imperative, interrogative), focus stress. Vocal behaviours exclude primary qualities of the voice and qualifiers that are distinctive as well (timbre, resonance which is physiologically determined etc.) because they do not really affect the meaning of the communicative act[6].

The kinesic component consists of conscious and unconscious gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, manners, body movements and postures, of visual, visual-audible, tactile and/or kinesthetic perception, which, whether in alternative to or in combination with words and/or vocal co-verbal behaviours, possess (intended or unintended) communicative value[7].

In short, co-verbal vocal and kinesic behaviours may be conscious or unconscious, learned or somatogenic, isolated or combined, (intended or unintended) communicative and may be perceived differently.

2. Reporting gesture and voice while reporting speech

As stated above, there exist differences in reporting gestures and voice in face-to-face conversations and in written texts.

Without taking into account the potential meanings of a message according to the context and its possible readings but only its structure, we shall consider the following situation. John is a well-known skilful angler and a sincere fellow. One day while he is coming back from fishing, he meets his friend Paul by chance. John may tell him, both in neutral or in a vivid manner of speech:

> **1)** Hey, today I've caught a huge fish!

without any gesture or, on the contrary, keeping his palms at a certain distance to make Paul see the dimension of the fish. Or he may tell:

> **2)** Hey, today I've caught a fish like this!

In absence of verbal description of the fish dimension like in 2) the resort to the illustration gesture is necessary to complete the meaning of the message.

Later Paul meets some other friends and reports John's words. He may say (for reason of brevity we take in account only the traditional forms of direct and indirect speech):

> **3)** Paul said / told me: "[Hey] Today I've caught a huge fish!"
> (± voc., ± gest.)

---

[6] For discussion on this point cf. Mario Baggio, *Linguaggio verbale, non verbale e coverbale*, in Giuseppe Bernardelli, Mario Baggio, *Gesti ϙparole. Il linguaggio coverbale e le sue emergenze nella narrativa letteraria*, (*forthcoming*), Brescia, La Scuola.

[7] Poyatos' complete definition is the following: "Conscious and unconscious psychomuscularly-based body movements and intervening or resulting still positions, either learned or somatogenic, of visual, visual-acoustic and tactile and kinesthetic perception, which, whether isolated or combined with the linguistic and paralinguistic structures and with other somatic and object-manipulating behavioral systems, possess intended or unintended communicative value" cf. Fernando Poyatos, *Nonverbal Communication across Disciplines*, II, p. 187; the same definition in Fernando Poyatos, « The nature, morphology and functions of gestures, manners and postures as documented by creative literature », *Gesture*, 23, 2002, pp. 99-117, p. 101.

4) Paul said / told me: "[Hey] Today I've caught a fish like this!" (+ gest., ±voc.)

5) Paul said / told me he had caught a huge fish! (± voc., ± gest.)

6) Paul said / told me he had caught a fish like this! (+ gest., ± voc.)

All these forms *in se* are admissible in a face-to-face conversation, but not all *in se* are possible in a written text. 4) and 6) are possible only if the co-verbal language accompanying the utterance is "translated", that is verbally reproduced and appropriately settled in the narrative texture of the communicative exchange in which the characters are involved. It's a double translation act: an intersemiotic one, from non-verbal to verbal signs, and a diamesic one, from spoken to written medium. Its intrinsic difficulties are well illustrated by the following literary passage:

7) "Who is 'he'?" Mayella pointed to Tim Robinson. "I'll have to ask you to be more specific, please," said Mr. Gilmer. "The reporter <u>can't put down gesture very well</u>". (H. Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*: 198, emphasis mine)

In addition it's not an easy operation because if some gestures have a conventionally binding meaning which could be easily replaced by a verbal expression (for example the emblems), other types of gestures often possess a vagueness of meaning which can only get a "specific" meaning in a specific context:

This vagueness is also retained in the narrative text, unless the body language is interpreted by the narrator or a fictional character. Such an act of clarifying the meaning of an instance of body language within the text will be referred to as "glossing" (Korte 1997: 85).

In novels, the reproduction of sensible co-verbal signs can be transcribed or verbalized.

The transcription means consist in punctuation signs (exclamation marks, dots, dashes), italics, block letter or in their combination. Often, besides transcription, a lexical gloss is present as well, although it is not always absolutely necessary. In the following passage of *The day of the owl*[8], the original version contains only a description whereas the English translator recurs to a transcription as well:

8) "Non l'ho mai saputo" farfugliò Giuseppe. (civetta: 21) "Er…I…I never heard about it," stammered Giuseppe. (owl: 20)

The verbalization of the co-verbal language can occur by the mean of single words or monolexemes, like *smile* or *nod*, polilexemic units or idioms, like *shrug one's shoulder*, "free" descriptions. Obviously if "some lexicalized expressions, such as, for example, 'to frown', are connected with quite precise images", others, such as *to smile*, "can be used for a wide range of non-verbal behavior and allow the reader to imagine various kinds of body language" (Korte 1997: 94). The verbalization may concern not only the execution but also the effects or the functions[9] of a co-verbal behaviour which in this case must be inferred.

---

[8] Henceforth referred to as *civetta* for the Italian version and *owl* for the English translation.

[9] On this point see for instance Harald Burger, « "die achseln zucken" – Zur sprachlichen kodierung nicht-sprachlicher kommunikation », *Wirkendes Wort*, 26, 1976, pp. 311-334, cf. pp. 316-322; Fernando Poyatos, *New Perspectives in Nonverbal Communication*, pp. 308-310; Barbara Korte, *Body Language in Literature*, pp. 93-95.

According to Poyatos, the verbalization of co-verbal behaviours can occur as follows:

a) by describing the behaviour and explaining its meaning (both signifier and signified are given). This is the only one way that should always allow comprehension, even of co-verbal signs belonging to other cultures, because it eliminates vagueness. Nevertheless some differences may appear in the textual result of a translation:

> **9)** "Lo so, disse il maresciallo alzando al cielo occhi che invocavano pazienza (civetta: 13-14)
> "I know," said the sergeant-major, raising his eyes to heaven, imploring patience. (owl: 13)

In 9) the original let the eyes "speak" and the gloss explains the signified of the gesture; the impatience of the sergeant-major is to be inferred through the co-verbal language. The English version (see punctuation) milder the process of inference attributing impatience more directly to the mood of the sergeant.

b) By describing the behaviour without explaining the meaning (the signifier is given but not the signified):

> **10)** "Oh eccellenza…" disse sua eccellenza sgusciando dal letto con un balzo, per la sua età e per il suo decoro, imprevedibile. (civetta: 88)
> "Oh, Excellency!" exclaimed His Excellency, leaping out of bed with an agility surprising in one of his age and decorum. (owl: 82)

c) By explaining the meaning without describing the behaviour (the signified is given but not the signifier). This includes also references to co-verbal language implied through its function or effects:

> **11)** No" disse il vecchio allarmato "è cattivo […] (civetta: 93)
> "No," said the old man in alarm, 'don't touch 'im he's wicked! (owl: 86)

In 11) again a translation which is richer than the original: the verbal utterance of the old man makes explicit the directive act implied in his being in alarm.

d) By providing a verbal expression always concurrent with the non-verbal one but not referred to at all. As we haven't found in the two novels of Sciascia examples of this type, we quote an example by Poyatos:

> **12)** "Me? It goes in this way and out the other" (Poyatos 1983: 310)

whereas instead of saying "ear" one indicates with the left and right forefinger respectively one ear after the other.

Limitations inherent textual linearity

Non-verbal behaviour has a temporary dimension which in the written narrative text can be reproduced only "imperfectly". In fact in written texts the stream of events must necessarily be segmented into discrete linguistic units and reproduced linearly[10]. In particular, simultaneous behaviour (both of the speaker and of the listener) is difficult to render, as the following passage from *A ciascuno il suo*[11] shows:

---

[10] On this point cf. Barbara Korte, *Body Language in Literature*, pp. 95-103; Fernando Poyatos, *New Perspectives in Nonverbal Communication*, pp. 177-180 and Hartwig Kalverkämper, « Literatur und Körpersprache », *Poetica*, 23, 1991, pp. 328-373, cf. ch. 4.

[11] Henceforth referred to as *il suo* for the Italian original and *his own* for the English translation.

13) – A me una lettera anonima? – disse il farmacista dopo un lungo silenzio: stupito e indignato nel tono ma nell'aspetto atterrito. Pallido, lo sguardo perso, gocce di sudore sul labbro. E al di là della vibratile curiosità in cui era teso, il postino condivise stupore e indignazione [...] (il suo: 10)

"An anonymous letter for me?" the pharmacist said, after a long silence. His voice was surprised and indignant, but his face was terrified: pale, eyes flickering, tiny beads of sweat on his upper lip. Apart from the quivering curiosity that gripped him, the postman shared that amazement and indignation. (his own: 5)

Scholars (for instance Poyatos 1983: 97; 2002: 54) usually take for granted that in natural face-to-face conversation the non-verbal behaviour is either preceding or simultaneous or succeeding the verbal utterance. Korte quotes Beattie according to whom when the synchrony between verbal and non-verbal is not absolute gestures precede most frequently lexical items because "there is a greater repertoire of lexical items than of gesture to choose from" [12].

In a written text, the introducing context of a direct or indirect speech containing co-verbal elements can be "placed" before the verbal, after the verbal, can interrupt the verbal or contain it like a parenthesis. But the written textual linearity does not necessarily match to the three possibilities stated above.

Korte claims that in a literary narrative text the semiotic importance of non-verbal would seem to be "either strengthened or weakened according to its position relative to the character's speech" (Korte 1997: 99). According to her, of the three linear textual positions (initial, medial and final), the final or medial position

> can be considered the norm of the narrative text since the nineteenth century; the initial position is a departure from this norm and may thus have an effect of <u>foregrounding</u> the body language described (Korte 1997: 101, emphasis mine).

Korte also states that

> body language in final or medial position is often rendered in a subordinate clause. This <u>not only suggests the simultaneity of verbal and non-verbal behavior</u>, but also tends <u>to tone down</u> the importance of body language it presents"; again "the non-verbal elements, which come after the speech, have the effect of <u>information that is added</u> as an aside" (Korte 1997: 103, emphasis mine).

But now two remarks are mandatory.

The division of the timing of execution in preceding, simultaneous and succeeding is not functional to the analysis of the co-verbal behaviour in a context of real conversation because it is descriptive but not explicative and it isn't economic. In fact, simultaneity and non-simultaneity are the extremes of a logical, binary opposition: the co-verbal is *either* simultaneous *or* non simultaneous, so in order that this opposition can be functional we do notneed to describe it through three labels.

Secondarily, in written reported speech foregrounding or backgrounding are *only* stylistic effects that can result from a syntagmatic disposition but they are not apt to identify the nature and the value of the synergistic relationship between verbal and co-verbal in a written text.

---

[12] Geoffrey W. Beattie, *Talk: An Analysis of Speech and Non-verbal Behaviour in Conversation*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1983, p. 75, in Barbara Korte, *Body Language in Literature*, p. 99.

According to the research group of the Università Cattolica S.C. of Brescia[13], in order to identify the pragmatic functions and the communicative value of the co-verbal elements (both in natural interactions and literary context of reported speech) we have to distinguish first of all between its simultaneity or non-simultaneity to the verbal utterance.

Simultaneous co-verbal language can be either obligatory (i.e. attitude or the face / voice one has or must have when saying something) or facultative (voluntary gesticulation, facial expressions, proxemics).

Non simultaneous co-verbal language can be either alternative (substitutive) or non-alternative (non- substitutive) to the verbal.

The following scheme illustrates the structure of the co-verbal language in its binary traits:

Co-verbal language
- simultaneous
  - obligatory
  - facultative
- non-simultaneous
  - alternative
  - non-alternative
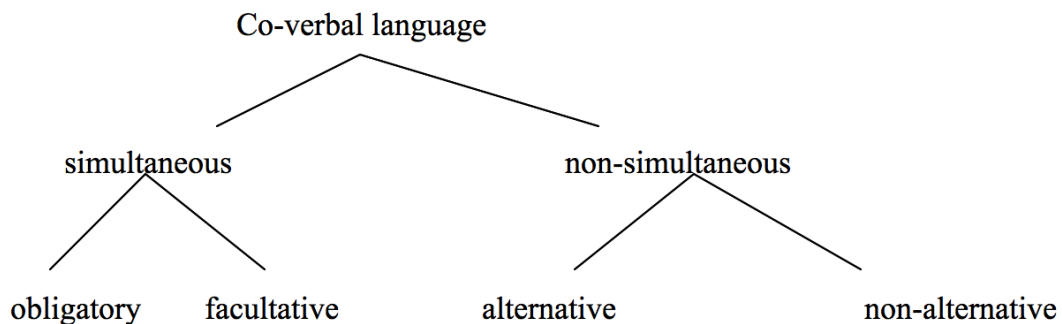
3. Gesture-Speech Interaction: Functions

In a gesture-speech interaction, the meaning of any communicative act results from the *synergistic* relation between the two sign systems. This relation spans a wide spectrum of functions.

Different taxonomies or lists have been drawn up to describe the way in which co-verbal language can synergistically affect the verbal utterance. For example, with relation to the message one wishes to express verbally, the co-verbal language, if *simultaneous* or *non-simultaneous non-alternative*, can confirm, support, duplicate, emphasize, mask, disclaim, add pieces of information, fill verbal deficiency and allow to economize on words. If *non-simultaneous alternative /silence* co-verbal language can affect the verbal exchange replacing words in giving information, economizing on words, filling verbal deficiency (cf. Poyatos 2002a, I: 54 and 2008: 59-61, 261).

More concisely Poggi and Magno Caldognetto (1997: 154) claim that the non-verbal modality can duplicate, add information to, replace or contradict the verbal. Argyle (1972) singles out two macro-functions of the non-verbal behaviour: support and/or substitution of the verbal communication. Patterson (1994), who investigates the differences between spontaneous and deliberate or strategic behaviour, assumes that "perhaps" the most basic of all the functions of nonverbal behaviour is providing information about the partner's dispositions or qualifying the meaning of

---

[13] Cf. Giuseppe Bernardelli, Mario Baggio (eds.), *Gesti e Parole. Il linguaggio coverbale e le sue emergenze nella narrativa letteraria*, (*forthcoming*).

verbal comments. Ekman and Friesen (1969) suggest that non-verbal behaviour may repeat, contradict, complement or accent the verbal communication[14].

Classifications apart, what is important is that these pragmatic / communicative functions are mostly *independent from the modes of realization* of the co-verbal vocal and kinesic behaviours. For this reason these functions are the most interesting from a linguistic and textual perspective as they have the same value both in the internal communicative level (between the characters) and in the external one (between author / narrator and reader / addressee), both in literary narrative texts and in face-to-face conversations. In addition, the intended functions are the most interesting from a translational perspective as well, because in messages made up of verbal and co-verbal signs, they are the invariants as regard to the variants of the language structures which express them and for this reason they should constitute the translational starting point for choosing which linguistic structures may be used in the target language for reproducing the communicative and pragmatic purpose expressed in the source language.

We shall now analyze some passages from Sciascia's novels:

> **14)** In soccorso a Laurana schiacciato dalla possente cultura dell'onorevole, e con un sorriso che appunto <u>diceva</u> quanto amichevole e pietoso fosse il soccorso, Rosello intervenne chiedendo – E come mai da queste parti? Hai bisogno di qualcosa? (il suo: 80, emphasis mine)
> To rescue a Laurana thus crushed by the Deputy's potent cultivation, Rosello intervened, with a smile that <u>underlined</u> just how friendly and sympathetic was his help: "What's on earth brings you to these parts? Do you need something?" (his own: 92, emphasis mine)

In 14) the co-verbal is simultaneous (although preceding in the textual linearity) facultative. It adds information which helps the reader understand the meaning of the speech act. Without this glossing we could interpret Rosello's verbal utterance as a simple display of curiosity. The English translation of verbal "e come mai…" with "what's on earth…?" could even sound a little bit mocking or reproaching.

The Italian verb *diceva* explains the sense of the label "co-verbal *language*" which we use to classify the complexity of a speech act of this kind. The English translation *underlined* let the reader rather think of an emphasizing, which sounds a little bit different.

> **15)** – Eh sì, il destino… Ma che vuole? Quando penso a come eravamo tranquilli, felici, senza la minima preoccupazione, la minima ombra… E allora, il Signore mi perdoni, mi sento disperata, disperata… – Arrovesciò la testa in un silenzioso scoppio di pianto. (il suo: 50)
> "Destiny, ah, yes. …But what do you ask of me? When I think how happy, how contented, with never the slightest worry, the slightest shadow – then, may God forgive me, I feel desperate." She threw back her head with a small, silent cry. (his own: 54)

In this case the co-verbal is non-simultaneous (although succeeding) and non-alternative. This behaviour, which lets the reader see the mourning of the widow, supports the desperation displayed verbally. In the following scene, in fact, the old Signora Laurana will comfort her[15].

---

[14] For reason of brevity, at this point we can only invite the reader to refer to Adam Kendon's rich bibliography.

[15] We have to signal an ineffective translation in the English version of 15): "Ma che vuole?" is an idiom which, more or less, means: "That's life" and not "What do you ask of me?".

In 16) the non-simultaneous, alternative co-verbal language substitutes the verbal utterance in asking for more information:

> **16)** Già - constatò il farmacista: e fissò il postino, imbarazzato e inquieto, come aspettando una spiegazione o una decisione. (il suo: 9)
> "That's so," the pharmacist corroborated. He stared at the postman, uneasy and embarrassed, as if he were waiting for some explanation or decision. (his own: 4)

Co-verbal language in passages with indirect speech is present at a much lower degree in the novels of Sciascia, but it presents the same traits. For example:

> **17)** Laurana spiegò che era venuto per chiedere un certificato penale, e la ragione per cui lo chiedeva; e intanto guardava con vaga curiosità la persona che era in compagnia di Rosello e dell'onorevole e che si era ritirata in disparte. (il suo: 80) Laurana explained that he had come to get a certificate of his unblemished penal record and why he was requesting it. Meanwhile, with vague curiosity, he was watching the man who accompanied Rosello and the Deputy and who had moved somewhat apart. (his own: 92).

Also in 17) the co-verbal is simultaneous, openly facultative; the explained meaning of the described behaviour says that the verbal message does not have any particular value for Laurana: he is thinking about something else, so the co-verbal language weakens the propositional content.

Narrative functions

If we consider the non-verbal communication with regard to "the external communicative situation" (between author/narrator and reader/addressee), these "pragmatic/communicative" functions often represent narrative traits or constants which may vary from author to author, from literary period to literary period, from genre to genre. For instance, Korte (1997: 126-159) lists a range of narrative functions with some particular regards to the stylistic connotation of the characters (i.e. indication of mental states, indication of interpersonal relationships, characterization and character identification, authentication, dramatization), and of the text (i.e. body language used as "image", as thematic device, as *fil roug*e to increase the coherence and cohesion).

Nord (1997: 116-117), on her side, claims that the descriptions or transcription of co-verbal behaviours can be intended to have four macro-functions: a referential function (i.e. description of situations, characters, discourses, etc.), an expressive function (i.e. display of emotions, evaluation, etc.), an appellative function (i.e. to make the reader laugh or feel compassion with the character, etc.) and a phatic one (i.e. to keep up the communication with the readership)[16].

Sciascia uses the description of the co-verbal language of his characters with great mastery, often as indication of mental states or as emotional display, like in the following example, where once again the meaning of the co-verbal language, essential for rendering the intended meaning of the whole communicative act, is introduced by the *verbum dicendi* par excellence (which this time is maintained in the English translation as well):

> **18)** – Perché a volte tra perdere la pace in casa e il guadagnare la pace eterna uno sceglie la pace eterna, e non se ne parla più – intervenne

---

[16] Nord specifies sub-functions as well.

il commendator Zerrillo, con una faccia che <u>diceva</u> il rammarico di non essere stato capace, fino a quel momento, di fare la stessa scelta. (il suo: 22-23, emphasis mine)
"Because there are times when a man who has to choose between loosing peace at home and gaining peace in the hereafter chooses peace in the hereafter, and that's that," Commendatore Zerrillo intervened, with a face that <u>bespoke</u> his regret at having been incapable, to that moment, of making the same choice. (his own: 20, emphasis mine)

Often the report of the co-verbal behaviour is used as characterization and as a thematic cohesion-device within the text in order to represent exemplarily the contraposition of the forces operating in his stories. For instance, in *The day of the owl*, Captain Bellodi, an Emilian from Parma commanding a Carabinieri post in a small Sicilian town, always uses attitudes and tones of voice that distinguish his way of working from that of his Sicilian colleagues and which wrong-foot his interlocutors. For example:

19) "Lei non crede" domandò a un certo punto il capitano, tranquillamente, con tono di amichevole confidenza "lei non crede che sia più utile cercare altre connessioni?" (dalla glottide emiliana, per le due esse, la parola restò sospesa e baluginante: e per un momento distrasse gli spasimi del confidente). […]
Coloro che avevano preceduto in quell'ufficio il capitano Bellodi usavano rivolgere al *confidente* domande che, in esplicita premessa o nella minaccia del tono, facevano apparire ai suoi occhi il confino di polizia o la denuncia per esercizio di usura: e ciò dava a *Parrinieddu*, invece che paura, una certa sicurezza; il rapporto era chiaro, gli sbirri lo costringevano a fare infamità […] Ma con uno che ti parla con gentilezza, con confidenza, le cose si mettono in un altro verso. Perciò, alla domanda del capitano, con un movimento disarticolato delle mani e della testa, fece che sì, che era possibile (civetta: 32-33).
"Don't you think –"the captain quietly asked him after a while, in a atone of friendly confidence – "don't you think it might be more useful to explore other possibilities?" The double-s of the Emilian accent left the word incomplete and vague and for a moment distracted the informer from his flow. […]
Captain Bellodi's predecessors had been in the habit of questioning the informer in threatening tones with explicit alternatives of either internment by the police or a charge of usury. This, instead of frightening *Parrinieddu*, had given him a certain sense of security. The link was clear: the police were forcing him to some betrayal […] But with someone treating him kindly and taking him into his confidence, things were different. So he answered the captain's question with a disjointed motion of the hands and head: yes, it was possible (owl: 31).

Furthermore I think it is not a case if Sciascia, when reporting dialogues between politicians and deputies in Rome, hardly uses co-verbal language. It is a way to tell the reader that the represented dialogues and situations are general, not bound to the occasion and independent from the "honorable" people involved. And it is his way to express his severe judgment on the Italian political scene.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have focused on the synergistic contribution of both verbal and co-verbal language to communication. In particular, after having outlined the constituents of the co-verbal language within the more general framework of non-

verbal behaviour / communication, we have highlighted the synergy between verbal and co-verbal language within acts of reported speech in narrative literary texts. The variety of pragmatic / semantic and narrative functions performed in parallel by this synergy in such texts confirms that co-verbal language is an important – mostly fundamental, if present – co-signifying system and supports the idea that the resulting act represents a communicative "meaning unit". The binary analysis model based on the primary opposition between simultaneity or non-simultaneity of verbal and co-verbal language seems to be the more effective in singling out the functions fulfilled by the co-verbal contribution, independent from the modes of realization of the co-verbal vocal and kinesic behaviours. This "independence" and the selection operated by the author, who reports only the co-verbal signs which serve as a carrier of meaning, might open interesting parallelisms between speech-gesture interactions and its perception in novels and in everyday face-to face conversations. Also in the latter case the meaning of a communicative act results from a selection among all the perceived verbal and co-verbal signs in order to give relevance to those which are significant for the meaning of the message.

ALBANO LEONI Federico, 2002, *Sulla voce, in* DE DOMINICIS Amedeo (ed.), *La voce come bene culturale*, Roma, Carocci, pp. 39-62.

ARGYLE M., 1972, « Non-Verbal Communication in Human social Interaction », *in* HINDE Robert A. (ed.), *Non-verbal Communication*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 243-269.

BERNARDELLI Giuseppe, BAGGIO Mario (eds.) (forthcoming), *Gesti e parole. Il linguaggio coverbale e le sue emergenze nella narrativa letteraria*, Brescia, La Scuola.

BURGER Harald, 1976, « "die achseln zucken" – Zur sprachlichen kodierung nicht-sprachlicher kommunikation », *Wirkendes Wort,* 26, pp. 311-334.

EKMANN Paul, FRIESEN Wallace V., 1969, « The repertoire of nonverbal behavior: Categories, origins, usage and coding », *Semiotica*, I, pp. 49-98.

GÜNTHNER Susanne, 1999, « Polyphony and the ‚layering of voices' in reported dialogues: An analysis of the use of prosodic devices in everyday reported speech », *Journal of Pragmatics*, 31, pp. 685-708.

KALVERKÄMPER Hartwig, 1991, « Literatur und Körpersprache », *Poetica*, 23, pp. 328-373.

KORTE Barbara, 1997, *Body Language in Literature*, Toronto/Buffalo/London, University of Toronto Press.

MEHRABIAN Albert, 1972, *Nonverbal Communication*, Chicago, Aldine-Atherton.

NORD Christiane, 1997, « Alice abroad. Dealing with descriptions and transcriptions of paralanguage in literary translation », *in* POYATOS Fernando (ed.), *Nonverbal Communication and Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, J. Benjamins, pp. 109-129.

PATTERSON Miles L., 1994, « Strategic Functions of Nonverbal Exchange », *in* DALY John A., WIEMANN John M. (eds.), *Strategic Interpersonal Communication*, Hillsdale, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 273-294.

POGGI Isabella, MAGNO CALDOGNETTO Emanuela, 1997, *Mani che parlano. Gesti ɛ psicologia della comunicazione,* Padova, Unipress.

POYATOS Fernando, 1983, *New Perspective in Nonverbal Communication: Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Social Psychology, Linguistics, Literature and Semiotics*, Oxford, Pergamon.

POYATOS Fernando (ed.), 1997, *Nonverbal Communication and Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, J. Benjamins

POYATOS Fernando, 2002a, *Nonverbal Communication across Disciplines*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, J. Benjamins, 3 vol.

POYATOS Fernando, 2002b, « The nature, morphology and functions of gestures, manners and postures as documented by creative literature », *Gesture*, 23, pp. 99-117.

POYATOS Fernando, 2008, *Textual Translation and Live Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, J. Benjamins.

KATELHÖN Peggy, 2005, *Das fremde Wort im Gespräch. Rededarstellung und Redewiedergabe in italienischen und deutschen Gesprächen*, Berlin, Weidler.

Literary Sources

LEE Harper, 1991, [1960], *To Kill a Mockingbird*, London, Minerva.
SCIASCIA Leonardo, 2004, [1961], *Il giorno della civetta*, Torino, Einaudi.
SCIASCIA Leonardo, *The day of the owl*, 2003, New York, Nyrb.
SCIASCIA Leonardo, *A ciascuno il suo*, 1980, [1966], Torino, Einaudi.
SCIASCIA Leonardo, *To each his own*, 2003, New York, Nyrb.