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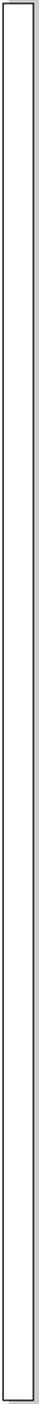
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INTRODUCTION



Introduction

□ 1. SCOPE AND FOCUS

This volume has evolved from a pedagogic research in Cognitive Linguistics applied to the analysis of English discourse for the Social Sciences, conducted in an Italian academic context. Its aim is to gradually introduce functional, cognitive-semantic, and pragmatic concepts into the description of syntactic structures and apply them to the processes of acquisition and use of English as a 'lingua franca' in social contexts of intercultural communication. By the expression 'intercultural communication' it is not simply implied the interaction between people from different cultures, languages, nationalities, or ethnic groups. In fact, this expression is also meant to be inclusive of communication asymmetries in: power relations, social, institutional, or professional status, as well as age, gender and religion, all of which influence pragmatic uses within the boundaries of the same community. All such asymmetries often make social interactions difficult, if not impossible, mainly because the interacting people have not developed common conceptual, 'experiential' systems (or 'schemata') allowing them to view and interpret communicative situations in the same way. Consequently, communication failure may occur either when people do not share the same native language (and so they have to resort to a 'lingua franca' to communicate), or even when they do actually share the same native language, but not the same 'socio-cultural' background. The need for experts in intercultural mediation operating in such situations is thus becoming more and more urgent, particularly in today's multicultural societies.

This is a need that the present volume intends to meet, as it has been primarily designed to address university students interested in the use of specialized registers and varieties of English in the professional domains of the Social Sciences. More specifically, this volume is concerned with the uses of English as a 'lingua franca' within intercultural working contexts *in Italy*, where students, as prospective welfare officers, educators, sociologists, psychologists, or experts in social, institutional or community mediation, are expected to interact with local ethnic, socio-cultural, and linguistic minorities. In helping the achievement of this professional aim, the forms and functions of the English language are investigated in relation to authentic instances of written and spoken genres concerning a number of discursive domains in the Social Sciences. Such domains range from socio-political, economic, and educational areas of debate in Great Britain and in the USA to transcriptions of authentic cross-cultural conversations between speakers belonging to different ethnic communities and often using dialectal or interlanguage varieties of English. This implies a systematic analysis of the extent to which such genres, and the registers and dialects actualizing them, may be influenced by the speakers/writers' different cognitive strategies and native pragmalinguistic uses in such a way as to determine the success or failure of cross-cultural interactions in social practice. The underlying theoretical assumption, therefore, is a view of discourse focused on the socio-cognitive nature of communication, emphasizing contextual and conceptual aspects of meaning which are not only determined, but also challenged and renegotiated by the social relations and identities of the participants in intercultural communication.

□ 2. THEORY AND METHOD

Particularly influential in the development of this rationale has been, on the one hand, the cognitive-functional dimension of Halliday's view of language as 'social semiotics', assuming that all discourse – and its pragmatic textualization into written or spoken registers – is the socio-cultural outcome of an interaction between 'ideational' (cognitive) and 'interpersonal' (communicative) functions. On the other hand, Langacker's notion of a 'cognitive grammar' that is 'generative' in an 'experiential' way – namely, in its accounting for all the physical, biological, behavioural, psychological, social, cultural and communicative factors of human cognition – has also cogently contributed to the view of language advanced in this volume, meant as a creative adaptation to the experiential constraints and pressures of its own particular circumstances.

This presupposes the notion of 'discourse' as people's pragmatic achievement of meaning in reference to a whole range of socio-cultural and psycho-physical contexts. As such, this notion can also cast light on the process by which particular meanings and even socio-cultural identities come to be attributed to an individual (or to a whole group) on the basis of the language variety s/he uses within a multicultural society. For instance, it may provide an understanding of how, in cross-cultural communication, 'diatopic' varieties of a language (e.g., dialectal, pidgin and creole varieties, depending on geographical spread) often come to be perceived as 'diastratic' varieties (i.e., determining meanings on the basis of their speakers' social status and ethnicity). This multicultural dimension of discourse, however, may also explain the widespread need for the acquisition of a standardized language variety recognized as a shared international 'lingua franca' (e.g., the Standard British/American English).

Language acquisition – and particularly second-language acquisition – has conventionally concentrated on morpho-syntactic, lexico-semantic and phonetic patterns of a standardized language variety. In the approach proposed in this volume, these patterns remain the basis of English language knowledge. However, the introduction of a principled method of discourse analysis also requires students to focus on how to put this knowledge into pragmatic action for the development of communicative skills, and how to achieve successful communication by 'critically' trying out these skills within specific socio-cultural contexts of professional practice. A 'critical view' of discourse analysis is therefore systematically encouraged in order to equip students with the intellectual means enabling them to discern how semantic and syntactic choices in the construction of discourse may actually influence its interpretation.

To help students achieve these aims, the volume has been designed in a modular and flexible format so as to allow its principled use at different levels of linguistic-communicative competence (from the pre-intermediate to the advanced levels). For this purpose, the eight chapters, and the twenty modules within them, are all interrelated according to a thematic and grammatical cross-reference plan. Moreover, the initial part of each module ensures the gradual, accessible and contextual introduction of key concepts and terms (emphasized in bold) from Cognitive Semantics, Transformational Syntax and Discourse Pragmatics. These concepts are then applied to the description of English grammatical structures in a systematic comparison with the equivalent Italian ones. The second part of each module brings both key linguistic concepts and grammatical patterns to bear pragmatically on the social topics in question. These are introduced by a number of selected

extracts from authentic texts concerning relevant social issues, such as: immigration, social policy, educational policy, social exclusion, youth culture, popular scientific discourse, inter-ethnic conflicts and unequal encounters, among many others. Sets of ‘tasks’ are then designed to engage students in a critical evaluation of ‘what is said and how it is said’ in such texts. Students are encouraged to give reasons for their critical evaluations based on an identification and description of relevant syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features. Reasons should be logical and reveal competent use of the previously introduced key concepts and appropriate linguistic terminology. Furthermore, ‘tasks’ provide suggestions for social action projected into the contexts of students’ future work. The focus, in sum, is on critical discourse awareness as a basis for effective social action.

□ 3. ORGANIZATION OF THE VOLUME

On such action-theoretical grounds, therefore, Part One explores in detail some notions from Cognitive Grammar and Schema Theory, and applies them to a number of fundamental semantic, morpho-syntactic and phonetic patterns of the English language. The same cognitive ‘Experientialism’ that justifies the forms and functions of the examined grammatical patterns is also applied to the critical interpretation of the pragmatic design shaping the selected texts. Chapter One considers some relevant approaches to the description of language, viewing it as the outcome of cognitive and communicative processes. After introducing the models advanced by Chomsky, Halliday, Hymes, and Gumperz and Levinson, the chapter assesses their strength and weaknesses against the Experientialist model. This model provides a basis for the description of English phonetic sounds and, then, of prepositions (also viewed in their phrasal-verb co-texts), both regarded as the speakers’ conceptualization of physical and, then, socio-cultural (diatopic/diastratic) ‘embodiment’ of certain ‘image schemata’ they have experientially developed over time within their minds. The social effects of possible diverging schemata, reflected in the allophonic and, more in general, the diatopic varieties of English, are explored in the pragmatic part of this chapter, devoted to a discourse analysis on ‘culture gaps’.

Chapter Two examines the semantic notions of Present and Past Tenses matched with the Simple and Perfect Aspects, marking the speaker’s perspective on present or past events. Transformational explanations of syntactic movements, typical of the Chomskyan Minimalist tradition, are here reinterpreted in an Experientialist key, showing how syntactic change is determined by semantic motivations aimed at pragmatic effectiveness. The relevance of this cognitive-grammar explanation to discourse pragmatics is then assessed in reference to the critical analysis of socio-political texts, where the use of specific tenses and aspects often serves the covert conveyance of particular ideological stances, making them pass for universally acknowledged ones. The same explanation also applies to texts reproducing the writer’s conceptualization of past events as a ‘time sequence’ that, as it is demonstrated, is culture-relative and, thus, differently codified in different English varieties (also pidgin and creole varieties). Finally, the chapter examines the construction of words and pro-forms, again, from an Experientialist perspective, with a special emphasis on the cognitive-semantic motivations for change in the syllabic structure, which justify the iconic processes involved in derivational and inflectional morphology.

Chapter Three explores 'processes in progress', thus focusing on the semantic and pragmatic role that the Continuous Aspect plays in linguistically rendering this experiential perception of progression of actions or events. The emphasis here is also placed on the possible effects of such a perception, which may be of an emotional kind (e.g., distress, elation, urgency, and so on). The syntactic and semantic dimensions and the pragmatic presuppositions of verbs expressing mental processes of cognition, perception and affection, or indicating, through different syntactic structures, facts that are 'actualized' or 'still to be actualized' (i.e., 'try/attempt', 'stop/finish', 'remember/forget') also fall within this context. Discourse applications, this time, are focused on the socio-political issues concerning the on-going changes in their natural environment, but also on the developing computer-mediated communication modes and their socio-cultural and cognitive impact on educational discourse.

Chapter Four continues the cognitive-semantic and syntactic exploration of tenses and aspects begun in Chapter One. This time the focus is on the way the English language categorizes the perception of future actions or events, which is different from the Italian grammaticalization of Future as a separate tense. Various syntactic modes for the expression of future processes are then semantically analyzed, including the modalization of the Present Tense by means of the auxiliaries 'shall' and 'will'. This semantic analysis is then assessed in terms of its pragmatic applications to socio-political discourse, concentrated on a critical analysis of the ways by which politicians may rhetorically employ modal auxiliaries to achieve their persuasive aims. The same explorative procedure applied to the notion of Future, is also adopted for the examination of the ways by which the English language expresses the semantic notions of Conditional. This chapter ends with an exploration of the 'mental spaces' underlying the cognitive perception and linguistic expression of comparatives and superlatives, putting such perceptions into pragmatic practice when there is a need to 'construct' specialized discourses specifically aimed at the 'marketing' of social services or psycho-educational messages. As the texts presented here illustrate, such a discursive 'construction' often reflects the fact that specialists, in formulating their persuasive messages, need to question the established power relations between themselves and their receivers (clients/patients) in order to make their discourse more accessible and acceptable. This may imply a devising of novel hybrid registers that challenge the conventional parameters of 'tenor', 'field' and 'mode' so as to comply with the newly established power relations.

Part Two of this volume explores in a deeper way the Experientialist notion discussed in Part One, focusing on how mental representations of processes of the world are rendered differently into language according to the various experiential perceptions that speakers have of such processes. Chapter Five, therefore, examines how the different transitive conceptualizations of the English Active and Passive Voices are expressed by means of different syntactic movements in the sentence-structure in such a way as to allow a pragmatic focusing or defocusing of the Agent in a process. This pragmatic application of the Transitivity System to discourse introduces a critical perspective on how texts are produced according to different generic conventions conveying specific points of view. Texts representing instances of different scientific genres (whose specificity is determined by the frequency of different process types, such as mental, material, verbal, etc.), but dealing with the same topic ('medical evidence for torture'), are therefore proposed to focus on the scientific convention of 'depersonalization' by means of the Passive Voice. Applied to the registers of political texts, instead, the use of the Passive Voice may imply a relieving of

the Agent's responsibility in a process, thus ideologically manipulating the audience, as the critical discourse analyses on some texts by a number of well-known politicians illustrate. The Active Voice shaping the discourse of medical popularization, instead, has got a different way of manipulating readers by directly, and often authoritatively, addressing them. The discourse of mental illness, which confuses the mental, material and verbal dimensions of processes is also examined here.

Chapter Six deals with English Modality, again from an Experientialist perspective. After showing the semantic and syntactic equivalence between English and Italian ways of conceptualizing and expressing modal verbs, the attention focuses on the Deontic and Epistemic types of Modality applied to the discourse of intercultural and international miscommunication in business and foreign policy. Sweetser's experiential view of how Deontic and Epistemic modal meanings evolved over time is finally introduced.

Chapter Seven examines clause relationships in argumentative discourse, by concentrating on the cognitive dimensions of 'coherence' and 'schematic inference' which make sense of the semantic patterns underlying the syntactic structures of conditional sentences. Austin's pragmatic notions of 'locution', 'illocution' and 'perlocution', as well as van Dijk's concepts of 'micro-/macro-structures' of discourse are also discussed here in relation to conditional-based argumentative discourses dealing with topics about 'eating disorders' and 'ethnic nutrigenomics'. Also Halliday's functional view of 'interdependency' relations (i.e., parataxis, hypotaxis and embedding) and 'logical-semantic' relations (i.e., expansion and projection) between the phrases and clauses of a sentence is here revisited under a cognitive perspective and applied to the pragmatic construction of different stances in socio-political texts about controversial international issues.

Chapter Eight focuses exclusively on spoken discourse and, more precisely, on intercultural conversation. In it, the two main models of Conversation Analysis – i.e., the structural model (framing conversation into 'acts', 'moves' and 'exchanges') and the ethnomethodological model (describing conversation in terms of turn-taking and adjacency pairs), are applied to the analysis of a cross-cultural interaction taking place in an educational setting. The socio-cognitive basis of Grice's conversational cooperation, together with Speech Act Theory are also discussed here in terms of underlying declarative and procedural knowledge of speech act uses, in particular 'requests' and 'apologies'. How speech acts are syntactically transformed and pragmatically reinterpreted in reported speech and, more precisely, in the context of forensic reports, represents another crucial subject of discussion. This chapter ends with a survey of the research methods that 'students as ethnographers' may find professionally useful in investigating social discourse (for example, cross-cultural unequal or 'gatekeeping' encounters), collecting naturally-occurring data and analyzing them by means of qualitative, quantitative or experimental methodologies. Accordingly, synthetic and analytic approaches to heuristic or deductive research methods are examined and, then, applied to a number of cross-cultural conversation samples.



1.

LANGUAGE AS COGNITION
AND COMMUNICATION

Module 1

LANGUAGE, MIND, AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

□ 1.1. DEFINITION OF LINGUISTICS

Linguistics is the scientific study of human language. As such, it regards the ways in which members of a particular discourse community conceptualize their experience, encode it into a linguistic form, and then use that code in social interaction. The linguist Edward Sapir (1949: 162) asserts: “language is a guide to ‘social reality’. Though language is not ordinarily thought of essential interest to the students of social sciences, it powerfully conditions all our thinking about social problems and processes”. This explains why the systematic study of language necessarily regards both **cognition** (i.e., the way in which language structures thoughts in the human mind) and **communication** (i.e., the way in which language serves social interaction). Indeed, as we acquire language during childhood, we also discover:

- a. our identity as individuals (when we use it to refer to ourselves and our ideas or opinions), and
- b. our identity as social beings (when we communicate with other people).

That is why Linguistics has a significant impact on different disciplines, such as: sociology, cognitive psychology, anthropology, philosophy, language learning and teaching, neuroscience, artificial intelligence. Cognitive psychology, for example, is at the basis of the psycholinguistic view developed by the famous linguist Noam Chomsky. Sociology, on the other hand, informs the sociolinguistic view advanced by another outstanding linguist, Michael Halliday. Let us begin by examining Chomsky’s cognitive point of view.

□ 1.2. LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN MIND

○ 1.2.1. Text 1: Noam Chomsky on ‘Language and Mind’

Why study language? There are many possible answers, and by focusing on some I do not, of course, mean to disparage others or question their legitimacy. [...] One reason for studying language – and for me personally the most compelling reason – is that it is tempting to regard language, in the traditional phrase, as ‘a mirror of mind’. [...] More intriguing, to me at last, is the possibility that by studying language we may discover abstract principles that govern its structure and use, principles that are universal by biological necessity and not mere historical accident, that derive from mental characteristics of the species. A human language is a system of remarkable complexity. [...] A normal child acquires this knowledge on relatively slight exposure and without specific

training. He can then quite effortlessly make use of an intricate structure of specific rules and guiding principles to convey his thoughts and feelings to others, arousing in them novel ideas and subtle perceptions and judgments. For the conscious mind, not specially designed for the purpose, it remains a distant goal to reconstruct and comprehend what the child has done intuitively and with minimal effort. Thus language is a mirror of mind in a deep and significant sense. It is a product of human intelligence, created anew in each individual by operations that lie far beyond the reach of will or consciousness.

(N. Chomsky, *Reflections on Language*, 1975: 3-4)

○ 1.2.2. Task 1: Sense Relations – Synonyms

A **synonym** is a word that is similar in meaning to another word. Synonymy, therefore, expresses a **sense relation of equivalence** between the meanings of two lexical words.

Examples:

(a) attempt – try; (b) select – choose

Notice that the first synonym in couples (a) and (b) is of Latinate origin ('attempt', 'select'), whereas the second one is of Germanic origin ('try', 'choose'), which is a characteristic of English synonymy.

The following List A reproduces a series of words from Text 1. List B reproduces their synonyms. Please, match each word with its corresponding synonym.

A:	B:
1. focusing	a. irrepensible
2. disparage	b. easily
3. compelling	c. little
4. intriguing	d. afresh
5. remarkable	e. stimulating
6. slight	f. concentrating
7. effortlessly	g. communicate
8. convey	h. reflection
9. arousing	i. grasp
10. mirror	j. depreciate
11. anew	k. fascinating
12. reach	l. extraordinary

○ 1.2.3. Task 2: Reading Comprehension – True/False

Decide if the following statements are true or false in reference to Text 1.

1. Chomsky is interested in language as a reflection of the cognitive processes of the mind. [T] [F]
2. A child needs a long time to acquire language. [T] [F]
3. Rules and principles of language are too simple and inadequate to express the intricate structure of thought. [T] [F]
4. Language is generated by intelligence, but it is difficult to understand how this process takes place. [T] [F]

○ 1.2.4. Theory: Focus on Language as Cognition

In Chomsky's *Transformational-Generative Grammar* (Chomsky 1965, 1981), the aim of Linguistics is not simply to focus on how language is structured. In fact, he (together with other generative linguists – see Horrocks 1987; Radford 1988; Aarts 1997; Tallerman 1998; Ouhalla 1999) is principally interested in understanding more about language in order to understand more about the processes of the human mind. Chomsky starts from the observation that although different groups of people speak different languages, all human languages are similarly governed by common rules, or principles, that are universal. Every language has rules that govern pronunciation, word formation, and sentence construction, providing a means for making assertions or requests, asking questions, and so on. This means that languages differ from each other only at the level of their **surface structure**, but their **deep structure** is the same, reflecting the general rules of a universal linguistic system typical of the human species. This universal linguistic system is a genetic endowment of all human beings. Chomsky defines it as an innate **Language Acquisition Device (LAD)** genetically programmed in the human brain. The LAD provides a series of common grammatical **principles**, or **Universal Grammar (UG)**, and their realizations as variable **parameters** to be adapted to the varying 'settings' of the different languages. The presence of the LAD in the human brain would explain why language development in children occurs so easily and spontaneously, and does not require any explicit teaching of the grammar rules on the part of the adults. Moreover, children are extremely creative in their use of language, because they can say and understand words and sentences that they have never heard before.

In Chomsky's perspective, therefore, language is exclusively a cognitive, abstract knowledge developing in the human mind completely detached from the social contexts in which it is used. This, in fact, represents another way of looking at language – that is, as a socially motivated system developed to allow social communication. Let us analyze this different point of view on language as it is expressed by Michael Halliday.

□ 1.3. LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN SOCIETY

○ 1.3.1. Text 2: M.A.K. Halliday on 'Language Functions'

The particular form taken by the grammatical system of language is closely related to the social and personal needs that language is required to serve. [...] Language serves for the expression of 'content': that is, of the speaker's experience of the real world, including the inner world of his own consciousness. We may call this the *ideational* function [...] In serving this function, language also gives structure to experience, and helps to determine our way of looking at things [...]

Language serves to establish and maintain social relations: for the expression of social roles, which include the communication roles created by language itself – for example the roles of questioner and respondent, which we take on by asking or answering a question; and also for getting things done, by means of the interaction between one person and another. Through this function, which we may refer to as *interpersonal*, social groups are

delimited, and the individual is identified and reinforced, since by enabling him to interact with others' language also serves in the expression and development of his own personality.

(M.A.K. Halliday, *Language Structure and Language Function*, 1970: 142-143)

○ 1.3.2. Task 3: Sense Relations – Antonyms

An **antonym** is a word that is opposite in meaning to another word. Antonymy, therefore, expresses a **sense relation of opposition** between the meanings of two lexical words.

Examples:

love – hate; swift – slow; ask – answer; questioner – respondent

List A reproduces a series of words from Text 2. List B reproduces their antonyms. Please, match each word with its corresponding antonym.

A:

1. closely
2. inner
3. gives
4. social
5. communication
6. delimited
7. enabling
8. development

B:

- a. individual
- b. prohibiting
- c. isolation
- d. outer
- i. distantly
- f. takes
- g. regression
- h. expanded

○ 1.3.3. Task 4: Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice

Decide which of the three options meant to complete each of the following statements is the right one in reference to the meaning of Text 2:

1. The grammar of a language has developed:

- a. to serve communication needs
- b. to establish a precise linguistic form
- c. to close the development of a language once and for all

2. The ideational function of language is important because:

- a. it makes human beings use language with no consciousness
- b. it encourages communication among human beings
- c. it organizes experience in the mind and helps human beings to develop their own identity

3. The interpersonal function of language is important because:

- a. it serves social relations and, consequently, communication
- b. it is centred on the individual identity
- c. it serves the mental discipline of personality development

○ 1.3.4. Theory: Focus on Language as Communication

In Hallyday's *Systemic-Functional Grammar* (see Hallyday 1976, 1978, 1994/1985), the purpose of Linguistics is concerned with the study of language as **social semiotic**, that is to say, as *a system of signs that have been developed to serve the communicative needs of people living in a social context*. In other words, Halliday (together with other systemic-functional linguists – see, for instance, Morley 1985; Benson and Greaves 1988; Ventola 1991; Martin 1992) intends language not as a biological evolution of the human beings' brain (as in Chomsky's theory), but as a socio-cultural evolution prompted by the human beings' need to communicate with each other within their own communities. This means that language has evolved within a specific community in such a way that it fulfils three main functions:

- a. the **Ideational Function**, concerned with people thinking with language in order to interpret experience;
- b. the **Interpersonal Function**, concerned with people acting with language in order to achieve interpersonal communication;
- c. the **Textual Function**, concerned with the linguistic organization of a message.

These functions, in Halliday's view, are realized differently in different languages because they are coded into semantic and syntactic structures that reflect the different 'social semiotic' of different communities. Within each community, this semantic and syntactic code (representing the 'grammatical system' of its language) allows the expression of the social behaviour of people using it in various situational contexts. Within the grammatical resources of their code, people are free to choose those structures that best convey their expressive and communicative intents.

○ 1.3.5. Task 5: Discussion: 'Nativist' vs. 'Environmentalist' Positions

1. *What is the main difference between Chomsky's (Text 1) and Halliday's (Text 2) positions?*
2. *Do you agree with Halliday's view, or with Chomsky's view? (Please give reasons for your answer).*
3. *Do you think that these two views can be considered as complementary? (Give reasons for your answer). In the following extract, Halliday summarizes his own and Chomsky's views by defining them, respectively, as "environmentalist" and "nativist" positions:*

In the psychological sphere, there have recently been two alternative lines of approach to the question of language acquisition. These have been referred to as the 'nativist' and the 'environmentalist' positions. Everyone agrees, of course, that human beings are biologically equipped with the ability to learn language, and that this is a uniquely human attribute – no other species has it, however much a chimpanzee or a dolphin may be trained to operate with words or symbols. But the nativist view holds that there is a specific language-learning ability, distinct from other learning abilities, and that this provides the human infant with a ready-made and rather detailed cognitive model of the structure of language. Learning his mother tongue consists in adapting the patterns of whatever language he hears around him into the structure which he already possesses. The environmentalist view considers that language learning is not fundamentally distinct from other kinds of learning; it depends on those same mental faculties that are involved in all aspects of the child's learning processes. Rather than having built into his genetic structure

a series of universal categories of language, what the child has is the ability to process certain highly abstract types of cognitive relation which are at the basis of the linguistic system; the very specific properties of language are not innate, and therefore the child is more dependent on his environment – on the language he hears around him, together with the contexts in which it is used – for the successful learning of his mother tongue. In a sense, therefore, the difference of views is a recurrence of the old controversy of nature and nurture, or heredity and environment, in a new guise.

(Adapted from: M.A.K. Halliday, 1978, *Language as Social Semiotic*)

4. According to this extract, what are the main differences between the 'nativist' and the 'environmentalist' views of language acquisition?
5. What are your own motivations for studying the English language?

○ 1.3.6. Texts 3-5: Perspectives on Competence (Chomsky, Hymes, Gumperz & Levinson)

In the following *Text 3*, Chomsky states that Linguistics should regard exclusively an abstract knowledge of language, which he defines as **competence**. Then, he dissociates competence from the actual use of language, or **performance**. Contrary to this view, in *Text 4* Dell Hymes argues that language is not simply an abstract, idealized knowledge of rules, but it is also the use of these rules to achieve communication (**communicative competence**). In *Text 5*, Gumperz and Levinson claim that the rules of use in the various languages are different because they reflect the different socio-cultural experiences of their users (**linguistic relativity**).

Text 3: Noam Chomsky on 'Competence and Performance'

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors [...] in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. [...] We thus make a fundamental distinction between *competence* (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language) and *performance* (the actual use of language in concrete situations). [...] In actual fact, performance obviously could not directly reflect competence.

(N. Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, 1965: 3-4)

Text 4: Dell Hymes on 'Communicative Competence'

There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. [...] The acquisition of competence for use, indeed, can be stated in the same terms as acquisition of competence for grammar. Children develop a general theory of the speaking appropriate in their community, which they employ, like other forms of tacit cultural knowledge (competence), in conducting and interpreting social life.

(D.H. Hymes, "On Communicative Competence", in J.B. Pride and J. Holmes (eds.), *Sociolinguistics*, 1972: 281)

Text 5: Gumperz and Levinson on 'Linguistic Relativity'

Every student of language or society should be familiar with the essential idea of linguistic relativity, the idea that culture, *through* language, affects the way we think, especially perhaps our classification of the experienced world.

J.J. Gumperz and S.C. Levinson, "Introduction: Linguistic Relativity Re-examined", in J.J. Gumperz and S.C. Levinson (eds.), *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity*, 1996: 1)

○ **1.3.7. Task 6: Reading Comprehension – Multiple Choice and Summary**

1. *What is the view of 'speech community' that emerges from Texts 3-4-5, despite their theoretical differences?*
 - a. The three texts clearly convey the idea of a homogeneous speech community sharing the same grammatical/communicative competence.
 - b. Only *Texts 3 and 4* clearly convey the idea of a homogeneous speech community sharing the same grammatical/communicative competence.
 - c. Only *Text 5* clearly conveys the idea of a homogeneous speech community sharing the same grammatical/communicative competence.
2. *Can you summarize the notions of 'competence' emerging from each of these texts?*
3. *How would you relate the notion of 'language use in social life', expressed in Texts 4 and 5, and Halliday's notion of 'language functions' in Text 2?*

□ **1.4. THE EXPERIENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE**

So far we have examined two linguistic theories that are considered as antithetical: the formal-mentalist one, advanced by Chomsky's Transformational-Generative Grammar, and the functional-communicative one, informed by sociolinguistic theories of language use (see *Texts 4 and 5* above) and proposed by Halliday in his Systemic-Functional Grammar. Yet, a more recent Cognitive-Functional approach to grammar, informed by the Experientialist view in Cognitive Linguistics (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Sweetser 1990; Langacker 1991; Wierzbicka 1992) have to some extent succeeded in bringing together these two theories under a common rationale. To Cognitive-Functional linguists, *language is systematically grounded in human cognition since it is a conceptual system that emerges from people's everyday experience of their own physical and sociocultural environments*. Let us examine the Experientialist view expressed by the cognitive linguist Ronald Langacker.

○ **1.4.1. Text 6: R. Langacker on 'Cognitive Grammar'**

Though agnostic on the question of innateness, and the extent to which linguistic structure reflects special evolutionary adaptations, cognitive grammar does consider language to be indissociable from other facets of human cognition. Only arbitrarily can language be

sharply delimited and distinguished from other kinds of knowledge and ability. Rather, it emerges organically from the interaction of varied inherent and experiential factors – physical, biological, behavioral, psychological, social, cultural, and communicative – each the source of constraints and formative pressures. Because many of these factors are the same or very similar for all speakers, language structure evinces considerable universality [...]. At the same time, every language represents a unique and creative adaptation to common constraints and pressures as well as to the peculiarities of its own circumstances. It thus requires a full, explicit description that is nonetheless sensitive and individually tailored.

(R.W. Langacker, *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar*, Vol. II, *Descriptive Application*, 1991: 1)

○ 1.4.2. Task 7: Sense Relations – Synonyms

List A reproduces a series of words from Text 6. List B reproduces their synonyms. Please, match each word with its corresponding synonym.

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| A: | B: |
| 1. organically | a. neatly |
| 2. to evince | b. unbelieving |
| 3. pressures | c. bounds |
| 4. sharply | d. unpredictably |
| 5. arbitrarily | e. systematically |
| 6. agnostic | f. demands |
| 7. tailored | g. to deduce |
| 8. constraints | h. adapted |

○ 1.4.3. Task 8: Reading Comprehension – True/False and Summary

a. Decide if the following statements are true or false in reference to Text 6.

1. Cognitive grammar considers language as an innate capacity of human cognition, dissociated from all its other functions. [T] [F]
2. Language is the result of people's physical, psychological and sociocultural experience. [T] [F]
3. Some aspects of language are universally shared by all human beings. Some other aspects, instead, are relative to the specific circumstances in which a particular language is used. [T] [F]

b. Could you please summarize in your own words Langacker's position on the nature of language and, then, state in which ways it differs from the positions held by, respectively, Chomsky and Halliday?

6.

MODALITY IN THE DISCOURSE
OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Module 15

THE SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS OF MODAL VERBS

□ 6.1. THE SCOPE OF ENGLISH MODALITY

In the English language, Modality is a modification of the Indicative Mood, the only English mood (apart from the Imperative), used to state facts. Modality, therefore, is not used to state facts, but it is a non-factual pragmatic element which, in English, is grammaticalized in its expression. In other languages, on the contrary, it can be expressed by other moods, such as Subjunctive and Conditional. In our exploration of the semantics and pragmatics of English Modality, we will adopt, again, Halliday's (1994) Functional Grammar associated with an experiential view of Cognitive Semantics (Langacker 1978; Sweetser 1991), since they would give us the possibility of focusing on language use as cognition and social action.

As already stated in the previous chapters, Halliday (*ibidem*) claims that using a language means acting within its established semantic code which has evolved in the course of time by being constantly informed by the cognitive and communicative functions of language. In this way, the code has been reflecting the changing mental and social reality of its users, as well as their variable communicative requirements. In the case of Modality, English semantics has codified modal verbs as **auxiliary verbs** used to regulate (modulate and modalize) requests for permission, injunctions of obligation, expression of willingness, or predictions of possibility which, if expressed straightforwardly, may result, in English conventional communicative code, too brusque (cf. Hermeren 1978; Palmer 1979, 1986; Coates 1983; Hinkel 1995). This specific pragmatic peculiarity of English Modality may explain why the English syntactic structure of modal verbs is so different from the Italian structure. In Italian, modal verbs follow the normal inflection typical of lexical verbs (e.g., *io posso, tu puoi, egli/ella può, noi possiamo, voi potete, essi possono; io devo, tu devi, egli deve, noi dobbiamo, voi dovete, essi devono*). In English, on the contrary, their form is 'defective' with respect to the other 'regular' verbs as it remains invariable for all persons (e.g., *I can, you can, he/she can, we can, you can, they can; I must, you must, he/she must, we must, you must, they must*). This means that English modal verbs have not got the suffix -s to mark the third-person singular (i.e., there is no such form as 'he cans'). Likewise, they have got neither a *to*-Infinitive form, nor a Gerundive *ing*-form like the other verbs. (i.e., there are no such forms as 'to can' and 'canning'). Moreover, the main verbs following modal verbs are always in the form of the Infinitive without 'to'. The only exceptions may be considered *Have to* and *Ought to* if "to" is regarded as part of the Infinitive of the main verb that follows (e.g., "[I ought/have] [to work]", rather than "[I ought to / have to] [work]" – the latter form being the conventionally accepted one).

Let us now begin our exploration of the syntactic structures of the English modal verbs, which are: *Can/Could, May/Might, Must / Have to, Need/Dare, Shall / Should / Ought to, Will/Would*. In our examples we will use "to finish" as the main verb following the modal verbs and, as such, being 'modalized' by them. We will examine, however, only the verbal forms

in the Simple and Perfect Aspects. As for the Continuous Aspect, we may make reference to its syntactic structures already discussed in *Chapters Four* (on Future and Conditional forms with modal auxiliaries *will/would* and *shall/should*) and *Five* (on the Passive Voice). Its exclusion from the present discussion on the syntax of modal verbs is motivated by the fact that the contribution given by the Continuous Aspect to the sentence in which it occurs is not simply syntactic or semantic, but principally pragmatic, as it adds the sense of progression to the represented process. In the following sections, instead, we need to closely scrutinize the syntactic structures of the English modal verbs by specially focusing on the basic semantic meanings they acquire when inflected in the forms of Present and Past Tenses. More semantic and pragmatic meaning nuances of the English modal verbs will be discussed in the following *Module 16*.

□ 6.2. SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC STRUCTURES OF *CAN/COULD* AND *MAY/MIGHT*

○ 6.2.1. *Can/Could*

The basic semantic meaning of *Can*, and its correlated past form *Could*, can be translated with the Italian lexical verb *Potere* (and also rendered by the English expression *to be able to*).

1. *Can*: Present Simple and Future Simple

The notions of *Present Simple* and *Future Simple*, applied to the modal verb *Can*, are syntactically rendered into the same sentence-structure, as shown by the examples below, whereas in Italian they are rendered into two distinct Tense structures, which are respectively: “*io posso*” (Present) “*io potrò*” (Future)”. The implied semantic motivation for this sameness of forms is clear: *Can* expresses the Agent’s *present capability* of performing, *in the future*, the process expressed by the main verb. Hence, the English Active form “*I can finish that work*” corresponds to the Italian Active forms “*io posso finire / potrò finire quel lavoro*”. Indeed *Can* (like all the other modal verbs) represents the Inflectional Node (*I-Node*) setting the Tense (*Present*) of the sentence.

The only form reproduced below in its full conjugation (i.e., accounting for all the personal pronouns), is the Present/Future Simple Affirmative one, in (1), as it exemplifies the use of all the other modal verbs whose sentence-structure is the same for all the persons. All the other forms that shall follow will be represented, instead, only by the corresponding Active and Passive versions of the first-person singular sentence-structure.

(1) *Affirmative*

a. *Active*

I *can* finish it
you *can* finish it
he/she/it *can* finish it
we *can* finish it
you *can* finish it
they *can* finish it

b. *Passive*

it *can* be finished by me
it *can* be finished by you
it *can* be finished by him/her/it
it *can* be finished by us
it *can* be finished by you
it *can* be finished by them

(2) **Negative** (two forms: *can't* and *cannot* – but also *can not*)

- a. *Active:* I *can't/cannot* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *can't/cannot* be finished by me

(3) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *can* I finish it?
b. *Passive:* *can* it be finished by me?

(4) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *can't/cannot* I finish it?
b. *Passive:* *can't/cannot* it be finished by me?

2. *Can*: Present Perfect and Future Perfect

Also the *Present Perfect* structure of *Can* shares the same syntactic form with the *Future Perfect* which, in itself, is a concept that does not exist in English, the implication being the same outlined in 1. above – that is to say, of the Agent's *present* capability for performing a *future* process. Therefore, the English Active form “I *can have finished* that work” corresponds to the Italian Active forms of “io *posso/potrò aver finito* quel lavoro (per la fine della settimana – *non l'ho ancora finito*)”, [“I *can have finished* that work (by the end of this week – *I haven't yet finished it*)”]¹. (Italicized clauses within round brackets represent the *sense implications* of sentences – cf. Levinson 1983: 177). However, the implication for the ‘Present meaning’ of this sentence, in both English and Italian, can also be this: “I *can have finished* it (probably, in the past, but now I can't remember – *it does not specify if I finished it*)”. [“Io *posso averlo finito* (forse, in passato, ma ora non riesco a ricordare – *non è specificato se l'ho finito*)”]. Here are the forms of the Present/Future Perfect of *Can*:

(5) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *can* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *can* have been finished by me

(6) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *can't/cannot* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *can't/cannot* have been finished by me

(7) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *can* I have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *can* it have been finished by me?

(8) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *can't/cannot* I have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *can't/cannot* it have been finished by me?

¹ Italian forms which may appear related in their syntactic structure to the forms exemplified above, have instead different syntactic realizations in English. For instance: the Italian sentence “io *ho potuto finire* quel lavoro (solo la scorsa settimana – *l'ho finito*)” can be rendered in English as: “I *was able/managed to finish* that work (only last week – *I finished it*)”. On the other hand, the corresponding Future form “io *avrò potuto finire* quel lavoro (qualche settimana fa, ma non ricordo con certezza – *l'ho finito*)” can be rendered in English as: “I *think I finished* that work (some weeks ago, but I don't remember for certain – *I finished it*)”.

3. **Could: Past Simple** and **Present Conditional**

The *Past Simple* and the *Present Conditional* of *Can* share the same syntactic structure introduced by its corresponding *Past form: Could*. This is indicative of the fact that in English there is not any Conditional Mood as in Italian – in fact, to express the ability/possibility to perform a process in the future, on some specific conditions, the English language resorts to the ‘deep semantic structure’ expressing ‘unreal/hypothetical situations’ by means of the Past Tense. This is the “Tense of Fiction” which is assumed to be a deeply-rooted ‘semantic principle’ in human cognition since it often emerges spontaneously also in languages that have set a specific syntactic parameter determining a Conditional form. Such deep semantic structure is particularly evident in the language of Italian children’s play – as, for instance, when they say: “let’s pretend that *you were* a pirate” (“facciamo che *tu eri* un pirata” – cf. Rodari 1973: 163). Thus, it seems inherent in the human mind to cast hypothetical, unreal situations in past time, rather than in future time.

This explains why the two meaning implications of an English sentence like: “I *could finish* that hard work” correspond in Italian to two different syntactic forms:

- (a) **Past Simple:** “io *potevo (riuscivo a) finire* quel lavoro faticoso (in un giorno, quando ero giovane – *l’ho finito*)”. [“I *could finish* that hard work (in one day, when I was young – *I finished it*)”]
- (b) **Present Conditional:** “io *potrei (riuscirei a) finire* quel lavoro faticoso (in due giorni – *non l’ho finito*)”. [“I *could finish* that work (in two days’ time – *I haven’t finished it*)”]

(9) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *could* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *could* be finished by me

(10) **Negative** (*could not* or *couldn’t*)

- a. *Active:* I *couldn’t* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *couldn’t* be finished by me

(11) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *could* I finish it?
b. *Passive:* *could* it be finished by me?

(12) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*could I not?*” or “*couldn’t I?*”)

- a. *Active:* *couldn’t* I finish it?
b. *Passive:* *couldn’t* it be finished by me?

4. **Could: Past Perfect** and **Perfect Conditional**

Also the *Past Perfect* and the *Perfect Conditional* of *Can* (*Could*) are represented in English by the same syntactic structure, whereas in Italian they have two different forms corresponding to:

- (a) **Past Perfect:** “io (*dissi che*) *avevo potuto finire* quel lavoro (solo il giorno precedente – *lo finii*)”. [“(I said that) I *could have finished* that work (only the day before – *I finished it*)” – with *Could* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time].
- (b) **Perfect Conditional:** “*avrei potuto finire* quel lavoro (ieri – *ma non ci sono riuscito*)”

[“I *could have finished* that work (yesterday – *but I didn’t manage*)”]

(13) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *could* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *could* have been finished by me

(14) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *couldn’t* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *couldn’t* have been finished by me

(15) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *could* I have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *could* it have been finished by me?

(16) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*could* I *not*?” or “*couldn’t* I?”)

- a. *Active:* *couldn’t* I have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *couldn’t* it have been finished by me?

○ 6.2.2. **May/Might**

The semantic meaning of **May**, and its correlated past form **Might**, correspond to the Italian lexical verb **Potere**. Yet, differently from *Can/Could*, their basic sense implication is not *ability*, but *possibility*. All the other meaning nuances of modal verbs, however, shall be dealt with in *Module 16*.

5. May: Present Simple and Future Simple

The forms of the *Present Simple* and *Future Simple* of the modal verb **May** are syntactically the same, whereas in Italian they are rendered, also in this case, into two distinct Tenses informing two different sentence-structures. Thus, an Active English sentence like: “I *may finish* that work” has two Italian equivalent translations: “io *posso/potrò finire* quel lavoro”, representing, respectively, the Present and the Future notions of time. The motivation for this identity in semantic concept and syntactic form between Present and Future has been already discussed above, in 6.2.1. (sub-section 1.) with reference to *Can*, and it is also valid for *May*, as well as for all the other modal verbs. *May*, in fact, expresses the Agent’s *present possibility* of performing, *in the future*, the process expressed by the main verb. What follows now is the series of Present/Future-Simple forms of *May*.

(17) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *may* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *may* be finished by me

(18) **Negative** (*may not* or *mayn’t*)

- a. *Active:* I *may not* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *may not* be finished by me

(19) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *may* I finish it?
b. *Passive:* *may* it be finished by me?

(20) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*may I not?*” or “*mayn’t I?*”)

- a. *Active:* *may I not finish it?*
b. *Passive:* *may it not be finished by me?*

6. **May: Present Perfect and Future Perfect**

Also the unique English form expressing both Present Perfect and Future Perfect corresponds to two Italian Active forms rendering, respectively, the notions of Present and Future times. Hence, the two Italian Active forms of “*io posso/potrò aver finito quel lavoro (possibilmente per la fine della settimana – non l’ho ancora finito)*”, are rendered in English by the Active sentence: “*I may have finished that work (possibly by the end of this week – I haven’t yet finished it)*”. As with *Can*, also in this case, however, the implication for the ‘Present meaning’ of this sentence, in both English and Italian, can also be: “*I may have finished it (probably, in the past, but now I can’t remember – it does not specify if I finished it)*”. [“*Io posso averlo finito (forse, in passato, ma ora non riesco a ricordare – non è specificato se l’ho finito)*”]. Here, together with the Active form, is the sequence of all the other forms of the Present/Future Perfect.

(21) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *may* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *may* have been finished by me

(22) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *may not* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *may not* have been finished by me

(23) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *may I* have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *may it* have been finished by me?

(24) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *may I not* have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *may it not* have been finished by me?

7. **Might: Past Simple and Present Conditional**

The notions *Past Simple* and the *Present Conditional* of *May* share, again, the same sentence-structure introduced by its corresponding *Past form: Might*. The cognitive motivations underlying the identification of the notion of Conditional with the notion of Past in English have already been discussed in 6.2.1. (sub-section 3.). Now, let us focus on the two meaning implications of an English sentence-structure like: “*I might finish that work*” corresponding in Italian to two different syntactic forms:

- (a) **Past Simple:** “*io (dissi che) potevo finire quel lavoro (Imperfetto: non è specificato se l’ho finito)*”. [“*I (said that) I might finish that work (Imperfect Aspect: it is not specified if I finished it)*”] – with *Might* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time].
(b) **Present Conditional:** “*io potrei finire quel lavoro (possibilmente in due giorni – non l’ho finito)*”. [“*I might finish that work (possibly in two days’ time – I haven’t finished it)*”]

(25) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *might* finish it
 b. *Passive:* it *might* be finished by me

(26) **Negative** (*might not* or *mightn't*)

- a. *Active:* I *mightn't* finish it
 b. *Passive:* it *mightn't* be finished by me

(27) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *might* I finish it?
 b. *Passive:* *might* it be finished by me?

(28) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*might I not?*” or “*mightn't I?*”)

- a. *Active:* *mightn't* I finish it?
 b. *Passive:* *mightn't* it be finished by me?

8. Might: Past Perfect and Perfect Conditional

Also the *Past Perfect* and the *Perfect Conditional* of *May (Might)* are represented in English by a unique syntactic structure. In Italian, on the contrary, they are represented, again, by two different forms corresponding to:

- (a) **Past Perfect:** “io (*dissi che*) *potevo aver finito* quel lavoro (e forse l'ho finito, non ricordo – *non è specificato se lo finii*)”. [“(I said that) I *might have finished* that work (and maybe I finished it, but I don't remember – *it is not specified if I finished it*)” – with *Might* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time]
- (b) **Perfect Conditional:** “*potrei aver finito* quel lavoro (a. entro domani – *ma non l'ho ancora finito* – oppure b. in passato – *ma ora non ricordo*)” [“I *might have finished* that work (a. by tomorrow – *but I haven't yet finished it* – or b. in the past – *but now I don't remember*”]

(29) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *might* have finished it
 b. *Passive:* it *might* have been finished by me

(30) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *mightn't* have finished it
 b. *Passive:* it *mightn't* have been finished by me

(31) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *might* I have finished it?
 b. *Passive:* *might* it have been finished by me?

(32) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *mightn't* I have finished it?
 b. *Passive:* *mightn't* it have been finished by me?

□ 6.3. SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC STRUCTURES OF *MUST* / *HAVE TO* AND *NEED/DARE*

○ 6.3.1. *Must* / *Have to*

The semantic meaning of the English modal verb ***Must*** and the semi-modal verb ***Have to*** corresponds to the Italian lexical verb ***Dovere***. *Must*, however, is only inflected in the Present Tense (also in this case, with Future implications). *Have to*, therefore, makes up for the lack of Past Tense in *Must*, though there are significant meaning distinctions between these two verbs, as the next *Module 16* will outline.

9. ***Must***: Present Simple and Future Simple

The Present-Simple form of ***Must*** is, also in this case, adopted to express the notion of Future – the basic implication being that of a present obligation to perform, in the future, the process conveyed by the main verb. Hence, the Present/Future Simple-notions of *Must* have the same syntactic form – e.g., the Active sentence “I *must finish* that work”. Conversely, in Italian the corresponding syntactic realizations of the same sentence are two – a Present one and a Future one, respectively – i.e.: “io *devo/dovrò finire* quel lavoro”. These are all the other Active/Passive forms of the Present/Future Simple of *Must*:

(33) ***Affirmative***

- a. *Active*: I *must* finish it
- b. *Passive*: it *must* be finished by me

(34) ***Negative*** (*must not* or *mustn't*)

- a. *Active*: I *mustn't* finish it
- b. *Passive*: it *mustn't* be finished by me

(35) ***Interrogative***

- a. *Active*: *must* I finish it?
- b. *Passive*: *must* it be finished by me?

(36) ***Negative Interrogative*** (Inversion: “*must I not?*” or “*mustn't I?*”)

- a. *Active*: *mustn't* I finish it?
- b. *Passive*: *mustn't* it be finished by me?

10. ***Must***: Present Perfect and Future Perfect

The Present Tense of *Must* can be associated not only with the Simple Aspect, as examined above, but also with the Perfect Aspect. Also in this case, the Present Tense of *Must* has got the double significance of Present and Future, as in “I *must have finished* that work (by the end of this week – *I haven't yet finished it*)”. In Italian, on the contrary, these two notions are represented by two distinct syntactic forms, as in the corresponding sentences: “io *devo/dovrò aver finito* quel lavoro (entro la fine di questa settimana – *non l'ho ancora finito*). Similarly to the corresponding forms of *Can* and *May*, however, also in the case of *Must* the implication for the ‘Present meaning’ of this sentence, in both English and Italian, can also be: “I *must have finished* it (probably, in the past, but now I can't remember – *it does not specify if I finished it*)”. [“Io *devo averlo finito* (forse, in passato, ma ora non riesco a ricordare – *non è specificato se l'ho finito*)”].

(37) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *must* have finished it
 b. *Passive:* it *must* have been finished by me

(38) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *mustn't* have finished it
 b. *Passive:* it *mustn't* have been finished by me

(39) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *must* I have finished it?
 b. *Passive:* *must* it have been finished by me?

(40) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *mustn't* I have finished it?
 b. *Passive:* *mustn't* it have been finished by me?

11. Have to: Present Simple and Future Simple

Have to can be defined as a semi-modal verb insofar as, on the one hand, it 'modalizes' the meaning of the main verb by adding to it the implication of obligation (like *Must*). On the other hand, however, differently from the irregular syntactic forms of the other modal verbs, the syntax of *Have to* is regular as it takes the 3rd-person-singular suffix *-s* as well as a different form (*had*) to signal the Past Tense.

Similarly to *Must*, also the Present-Simple form of *Have to* can express the notion of Future. So that, for instance, the English expression: "I *have to finish* that work", is rendered in Italian in two distinct syntactic forms to convey the notions of Present and Future times – as, respectively, in: "io *devo/dovrò finire* quel lavoro". This is the series of Active/Passive forms of the Present/Future Simple of *Have to*. As we can notice, with the exception of the Affirmative structure, there are two alternative forms for all the other structures: the former received from the British usage, the latter (with the addition of the auxiliary *do*) evolved from the American use.

(41) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *have to* finish it
 b. *Passive:* it *has to* be finished by me

(42) **Negative** (*have/has not to* and *haven't/hasn't to*, or *don't/doesn't have to*)

- a. *Active:* I *haven't to* finish it / I *don't have to* finish it
 b. *Passive:* it *hasn't to* be finished by me / it *doesn't have to* be finished by me

(43) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *have I to* finish it? / *do I have to* finish it?
 b. *Passive:* *has it to* be finished by me? / *does it have to* be finished by me?

(44) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *haven't I to* finish it? / *don't I have to* finish it?
 b. *Passive:* *hasn't it to* be finished by me? / *doesn't it have to* be finished by me?

12. Have to: Present Perfect and Future Perfect

Also the Present and Future Perfect forms of *Have to* have got the same syntactic structure,

as in the sentence: “*I have to have finished* that work (by the end of this week – *I haven't yet finished it*)”. Also in this case, in Italian these two notions are represented by two distinct forms, as in the sentences: “io *devo/dovrò aver finito* quel lavoro (entro la fine di questa settimana – *non l'ho ancora finito*). Here is the series of possible structures:

(45) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *have to* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *has to* have been finished by me

(46) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *haven't to* have finished it / I *don't have to* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *hasn't to* have been finished by me / it *doesn't have to* have been finished by me

(47) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *have* I *to* have finished it? / *do* I *have to* have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *has* it *to* have been finished by me? / *does* it *have to* have been finished by me?

(48) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *haven't* I *to* have finished it? / *don't* I *have to* have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *hasn't* it *to* have been finished by me? / *doesn't* it *have to* have been finished by me?

13. Had to: Past Simple

Had to is only a Past-Tense form with no Conditional implications. Hence, the meaning of a sentence in the Simple Aspect, like: “I *had to finish* that work” may be rendered in Italian as either a Simple or an Imperfect Aspect – as, respectively, in: “io *dovetti/dovevo finire* quel lavoro”.

(49) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *had to* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *had to* be finished by me

(50) **Negative** (*badn't to* or *didn't have to*)

- a. *Active:* I *badn't to* finish it / I *didn't have to* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *badn't to* be finished by me / it *didn't have to* be finished by me

(51) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *had* I *to* finish it? / *did* I *have to* finish it?
b. *Passive:* *had* it *to* be finished by me? / *did* it *have to* be finished by me?

(52) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *badn't* I *to* finish it? / *didn't* I *have to* finish it?
b. *Passive:* *badn't* it *to* be finished by me? / *didn't* it *have to* be finished by me?

14. Had to: Past Perfect

Also the Perfect Aspect associated to the Past-Tense form *Had to* does not convey any implication of Conditional. In this case, the meaning of a sentence like: “I *had to have*

finished that work (*and I finished it*)” has got only one equivalent translation into Italian: “io *avevo dovuto finire* quel lavoro (*e lo finii*)”.

(53) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *had* to have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *had* to have been finished by me

(54) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *hadn't* to have finished it / I *didn't have* to have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *hadn't* to have been finished by me / it *didn't have* to have been finished by me

(55) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *had* I to have finished it? / *did* I *have* to have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *had* it to have been finished by me? / *did* it *have* to have been finished by me?

(56) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *hadn't* I to have finished it? / *didn't* I *have* to have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *hadn't* it to have been finished by me? / *didn't* it *have* to have been finished by me?

○ 6.3.2. Need/Dare

15. Need/Dare: Present Simple and Future Simple

Need and **Dare** can be translated into Italian as, respectively, **Avere Bisogno** and **Osare**. These verbs are also known as *semi-modals* as they can have two syntactic patterns: the modal one and the regular one. The use of modals *Need* and *Dare*, however, is restricted to the Interrogative and Negative forms of the Present/Future Simple, whereas the Affirmative one is regular as in the sentence: “I *need* to *finish* / *dare* to *finish* that work (*I have not finished it*)”, which in Italian can be rendered either as a form of Present, or as a form of Future, as respectively in: “io *ho/avrò bisogno di finire* quel lavoro (*Need*) / io *oso/oserò finire* quel lavoro (*Dare*) (*non l'ho finito*)”. The following series of forms also shows that *Dare* is an intransitive verb and, as such, it hasn't got the Passive form.

(57) **Affirmative (Regular)**

- a. *Active:* I *need* to finish it / I *dare* to finish it (*Modal exception: I dare say*)
b. *Passive:* it *needs* to be finished by me

(58) **Negative (Modal: need not or needn't / dare not or daren't)**

- a. *Active:* I *needn't* finish it / I *daren't* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *needn't* be finished by me
(*Regular*):
c. *Active:* I *don't need* to finish it / I *daren't* finish it
d. *Passive:* it *doesn't need* to be finished by me

(59) **Interrogative (Modal):**

- a. *Active:* *need* I finish it? / *dare* I finish it?

- b. *Passive:* *need* it be finished by me?
(*Regular*):
c. *Active:* *do* I *need* to finish it? / *do* I *dare* to finish it?
d. *Passive:* *does* it *need* to be finished by me?

(60) **Negative Interrogative** (*Modal*. Inversion: “*need/dare* I *not*?” or “*needn’t/daren’t* I?”)

- a. *Active:* *needn’t* I finish it? / *daren’t* I finish it?
b. *Passive:* *needn’t* it be finished by me?
(*Regular*):
c. *Active:* *don’t* I *need* to finish it? / *don’t* I *dare* to finish it?
d. *Passive:* *doesn’t* it *need* to be finished by me?

□ 6.4. SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC STRUCTURES OF *SHALL* / *SHOULD* / *OUGHT TO*

The semantic meaning of ***Shall***, with its correlated past form ***Should***, and ***Ought to*** correspond to the Italian lexical verb ***Dovere***. The meaning nuances of these verbs, however, are different from the ones inherent in *Must* and *Have to*, as we will examine in *Module 16*. Now, let us focus on the basic syntactic structures and semantic meanings of these modal verbs.

○ 6.4.1. Shall

16. ***Shall***: Present Simple and Future Simple

Also the *Present-Simple* form of ***Shall*** has the semantic implication of *Future* – or rather, similar to the modal verb *Will*, it is conventionally used to signal a future process expressed by the main verb. Hence, the English Affirmative form “I *shall finish* that work” can be rendered in Italian as either a Present or a Future sentence-structure, as in, respectively: “io *devo (sicuramente) finire / finirò* quel lavoro (*perché devo sicuramente finirlo*)”.

(61) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *shall* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *shall* be finished by me

(62) **Negative** (*shall not* or *shan’t*)

- a. *Active:* I *shall not* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *shall not* be finished by me

(63) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *shall* I finish it?
b. *Passive:* *shall* it be finished by me?

(64) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*shall* I *not*?” or “*shan’t* I?”)

- a. *Active:* *shall* I *not* finish it?
b. *Passive:* *shall* it *not* be finished by me?

17. Shall: Present Perfect and Future Perfect

Shall used in a *Present-Perfect* sentence-structure has also the semantic implication of a *Future-Perfect* form, as in: “I *shall have finished* that work (by Friday – I *haven't yet finished it*)”. In Italian, instead, we need again two structures to express the notions of, respectively, the Present and the Future Perfect, as in: “io *devo aver finito / avrò finito* quel lavoro (entro venerdì – *perché dovrò averlo finito e non l'ho ancora finito*)”.

(65) Affirmative

- a. *Active:* I *shall* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *shall* have been finished by me

(66) Negative

- a. *Active:* I *shall not* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *shall not* have been finished by me

(67) Interrogative

- a. *Active:* *shall* I have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *shall* it have been finished by me?

(68) Negative Interrogative

- a. *Active:* *shall* I *not* have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *shall* it *not* have been finished by me?

○ **6.4.2. Should / Ought to****18. Should: Past Simple and Present Conditional**

The *Past Simple* form of **Should** has also got the semantic implication of the *Present Conditional*, a Mood which is absent in English. The motivation for such an identity of forms and meanings between the Past Simple and the Present Conditional has already been introduced in 6.2.1. (sub-section 3). Here we need to explore the basic semantic meanings of an English sentence-structure like: “I *should finish* that work” corresponding in Italian to two different syntactic forms:

- (a) **Past Simple:** “io (*dissi che*) *dovevo finire* quel lavoro (Imperfetto: *non è specificato se l'ho finito*)”. [“I (*said that*) I *should finish* that work (Imperfect Aspect: *it is not specified if I finished it or not*)” – with *Should* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time].
- (b) **Present Conditional:** “io *dovrei finire / finirei* quel lavoro (*perché dovrei finirlo e non l'ho finito*)”. [“I *should finish* that work (*I haven't finished it*)” – without any verb in the Past Tense preceding *Should*].

(69) Affirmative

- a. *Active:* I *should* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *should* be finished by me

(70) Negative (should not or shouldn't)

- a. *Active:* I *shouldn't* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *shouldn't* be finished by me

(71) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *should* I finish it?
 b. *Passive:* *should* it be finished by me?

(72) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*should* I *not*?” or “*shouldn’t* I?”)

- a. *Active:* *shouldn’t* I finish it?
 b. *Passive:* *shouldn’t* it be finished by me?

19. Should: Past Perfect and Perfect Conditional

The *Past Perfect* form of *Should* has, again, the semantic implication of the *Perfect Conditional*, as with *Could* and *Might*. The English syntactic form to express these two notions, therefore, is the same, as in the following sentence: “I *should have finished* that work”. The two corresponding Italian forms, instead, are:

- (a) **Past Perfect:** “*io (dissi che) dovevo aver finito* quel lavoro (un anno fa, se ben ricordo – *l’ho finito*)”. [“(I said that) I *should have finished* that work (a year ago, if I remember rightly – *I finished it*)” – with *Should* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time]
- (b) **Perfect Conditional:** “*dovrei aver finito* quel lavoro (a. entro domani – *ma non l’ho ancora finito* – oppure b. in passato – *ma ora non ricordo*)” [“(I *should have finished* that work (a. by tomorrow – *but I haven’t yet finished it* – or b. in the past – *but now I don’t remember*)”]

(73) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *should* have finished it
 b. *Passive:* it *should* have been finished by me

(74) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *shouldn’t* have finished it
 b. *Passive:* it *shouldn’t* have been finished by me

(75) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *should* I have finished it?
 b. *Passive:* *should* it have been finished by me?

(76) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *shouldn’t* I have finished it?
 b. *Passive:* *shouldn’t* it have been finished by me?

20. Ought to: Past Simple and Present Conditional

The subtle sense differences between *Should* and *Ought to* shall be discussed in *Module 16*. Here we need to focus specifically on the basic semantic implications of this form, exemplified by the sentence: “I *ought to finish* that work” which retains again both meanings of Past Simple and Present Conditional. In Italian, instead, we need two different sentence-structures to express these two Tenses, as in:

- (a) **Past Simple:** “(*io dissi che*) a. *dovevo* / b. *dovetti finire* quel lavoro (a. *non si specifica se l’ho finito* / b. *l’ho finito*)”. [“(I (said that) I *ought to finish* that work (a. *it is not*

specified if I finished it / b. I finished it)” – with *Ought to* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time]]

- (b) **Present Conditional:** “io *dovrei finire* quel lavoro (*non l’ho finito*)”. [“I *ought to finish* that work (*I haven’t finished it*)”].

(77) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *ought to* finish it
b. *Passive:* it *ought to* be finished by me

(78) **Negative** (*ought not* or *oughtn’t*)

- a. *Active:* I *oughtn’t* to finish it
b. *Passive:* it *oughtn’t* to be finished by me

(79) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *ought* I to finish it?
b. *Passive:* *ought* it to be finished by me?

(80) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*ought I not to?*” or “*oughtn’t I to?*”)

- a. *Active:* *oughtn’t* I to finish it?
b. *Passive:* *oughtn’t* it to be finished by me?

21. *Ought to*: Past Perfect and Perfect Conditional

These two semantic meanings of *Ought to* are again expressed by the same syntactic form, exemplified by the sentence: “I *ought to have finished* that work”, whereas in Italian they are rendered by two different structures, as in:

- (a) **Past Perfect:** “io (*dissi che*) *avevo dovuto finire* quel lavoro (il giorno precedente – *lo finii*)”. [“(I said that) I *ought to have finished* that work (the day before – *I finished it*)” – with *Ought to* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time]

- (b) **Perfect Conditional:** “*avrei dovuto finire* quel lavoro (ieri – *ma non ci sono riuscito*)” [“I *ought to have finished* that work (yesterday – *but I didn’t manage to*)”].

(81) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *ought to* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *ought to* have been finished by me

(82) **Negative** (*ought not to* or *oughtn’t to*)

- a. *Active:* I *oughtn’t* to have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *oughtn’t* to have been finished by me

(84) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *ought* I to have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *ought* it to have been finished by me?

(85) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *oughtn’t* I to have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *oughtn’t* it to have been finished by me?

□ 6.5. SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC STRUCTURES OF WILL/WOULD

The semantic meaning of **Will**, with its correlated past form **Would**, have the basic meaning implication of *volition*, *willingness*, corresponding to the Italian lexical verb **Volere**. Let us examine the basic semantic and syntactic structures of this last modal verb.

○ 6.5.1. Will

22. **Will: Present Simple** and **Future Simple**

Like the other modal verbs examined so far, also **Will** expresses in a unique syntactic form the two semantic meanings of Present and Future time, as in: “I *will finish* that work”. This structure, in fact, expresses the Agent’s *present willingness* to perform *in the future* the process expressed by the main verb (*finish*). In Italian, instead, there are two different sentence-structures to express the same time-notions, as in the sentences “io *voglio finire / finirò* quel lavoro (*perché voglio finirlo*)”.

(86) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *will* finish it
- b. *Passive:* it *will* be finished by me

(87) **Negative** (*will not* or *won't*)

- a. *Active:* I *won't* finish it
- b. *Passive:* it *won't* be finished by me

(88) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *will* I finish it?
- b. *Passive:* *will* it be finished by me?

(89) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: “*will I not?*” or “*won't I?*”)

- a. *Active:* *won't* I finish it?
- b. *Passive:* *won't* it be finished by me?

23. **Will: Present Perfect** and **Future Perfect**

The same identity of form and meaning between the *Present Perfect* and the *Future Perfect* of **Will** can be found in the kind of sentence-structure like: “I *will have finished* that work”. In Italian, this sentence may be rendered by the two distinct forms, as in: “io *voglio aver finito / avrò finito* quel lavoro (*perché vorrò averlo finito*)”.

(90) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *will* have finished it
- b. *Passive:* it *will* have been finished by me

(91) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *won't* have finished it
- b. *Passive:* it *won't* have been finished by me

(92) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *will* I have finished it?

b. *Passive:* *will* it have been finished by me?

(93) **Negative Interrogative**

a. *Active:* *won't* I have finished it?

b. *Passive:* *won't* it have been finished by me?

○ 6.5.2. Would

24. Would: Past Simple and Present Conditional

Would is the Past-Tense correlative of *Will*. Like the other Past-Tense forms of modal verbs, also *Would* incorporates the Conditional sense of a 'future process that is possible only on certain conditions'. In this case, the sense of the Past Simple and Present Conditional are rendered by the same sentence-structure, like: "I *would finish* it". In Italian, again, we need two syntactic forms to express these two concepts, as in:

(a) **Past Simple:** "io (*dissi che*) *volevo finire* quel lavoro (Imperfetto: *non è specificato se l'ho finito*)". ["I (*said that*) I *would finish* that work (Imperfect Aspect: *it is not specified if I finished it or not*)" – with *Would* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time]

(b) **Present Conditional:** "io *vorrei finire / finirei* quel lavoro (*perché vorrei finirlo e non l'ho finito*)". ["I *would finish* that work (*I haven't finished it*)"].

(94) **Affirmative**

a. *Active:* I *would* finish it

b. *Passive:* it *would* be finished by me

(95) **Negative** (*would not* or *wouldn't*)

a. *Active:* I *wouldn't* finish it

b. *Passive:* it *wouldn't* be finished by me

(96) **Interrogative**

a. *Active:* *would* I finish it?

b. *Passive:* *would* it be finished by me?

(97) **Negative Interrogative** (Inversion: "*would* I *not*?" or "*wouldn't* I?")

a. *Active:* *wouldn't* I finish it?

b. *Passive:* *wouldn't* it be finished by me?

25. Would: Past Perfect and Perfect Conditional

Once again we find the same English syntactic form, this time introduced by the modal verb *Would*, to express two different concepts: *Past Perfect* and *Perfect Conditional* in a type of sentence like: "I *would have finished* that work". In Italian, the same concepts are expressed, as usual, by two different sentence-structures:

(a) **Past Perfect:** "io (*dissi che*) *avevo voluto finire* quel lavoro (entro quella settimana – *ma non è chiaro se lo finii*)". ["I (*said that*) I *would have finished* that work (by that week – *but it is not clear if I finished it or not*)" – with *Would* preceded by a verb in the Past Tense (*said*) to contextualize it in the past time]

(b) **Perfect Conditional:** “*avrei voluto finire* quel lavoro (ieri – *ma non ci sono riuscito*)”
[“I *would have finished* that work (yesterday – *but I didn’t manage to*)”]².

(98) **Affirmative**

- a. *Active:* I *would* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *would* have been finished by me

(99) **Negative**

- a. *Active:* I *wouldn’t* have finished it
b. *Passive:* it *wouldn’t* have been finished by me

(100) **Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *would* I have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *would* it have been finished by me?

(101) **Negative Interrogative**

- a. *Active:* *wouldn’t* I have finished it?
b. *Passive:* *wouldn’t* it have been finished by me?

So far we have examined the basic syntactic structures and semantic meanings of the English modal verbs. Now, we need to contextualize them within special situations which often require the use of modality to ‘regulate’ social relationships. Typically, these are situations involving intercultural communication.

□ 6.6. SEMANTIC MEANINGS DETERMINING PRAGMATIC CONTEXTS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

○ 6.6.1. Modalized Discourses within High and Low Context Cultures

The choice of situations of intercultural communication to exemplify the use of English modal verbs is justified by the very nature of this type of interaction, which encompasses two crucial basic concepts: *culture* and *communication*.

There are many definitions of **culture**. Most are based on the idea that culture is a result or implication of human beings’ interaction with the natural and social environment from which certain common patterns emerge and are replicated, as ‘behaviour’ (e.g., “Dink culture” – the culture of many Western married couples with a “double income and no kids”),

² Notice that concepts similar to those conveyed by the sentence: “I *would have finished* that work” may be expressed, either in the *Past Perfect* or in the *Perfect Conditional*, by an alternative form: “I *would have liked to have finished* that work”, implying respectively: (a) the sense of a past accomplishment: as in: “(I said that) I *would have liked to have finished* that work (and I finished it)”, and (b) the sense of a past failure due to a lack of favourable conditions, as in: “I *would have liked to have finished* that work (but I didn’t manage to finish it)”.

Apparently similar constructions with “Like”, but with totally different meaning implications, are represented by the sentences: (c) “(I said that) I *would like to have finished* that work (by the following week – *but it is not specified if I finished it or not*)”. [In Italian: “(dissi che) *volevo aver finito* quel lavoro (entro la settimana successiva – *ma non è specificato se ce l’ho fatta oppure no*)”, and (d) “I *would like to have finished* that work (by tomorrow – *and I might be able to finish it*)”. [In Italian: “*vorrei aver finito* quel lavoro (entro domani – *e potrei riuscirci*)”].

‘style’ (e.g., “Hip-hop culture”), or ‘belief system’ (e.g., “Islamic culture”). However, Good-enough’s (1971: 22) definition of culture as “a body of knowledge shared by members of a society as to standards of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting” is perhaps the most appropriate one to introduce the cultural differences which play a crucial role in determining success or failure in cross-cultural interaction. This same definition, on the other hand, might seem to support the widespread view that culture is **prescriptive**, in that it sets a series of social norms to be observed by convention or tradition within particular communities and, consequently, to be ‘imposed’ upon newcomers. Such a view would establish specific cultural boundaries determined by notions of *Nationality* (or national culture), *Language* (giving expression to “national culture”), *Ethnicity* (marking it), *Religion* (influencing it), *Social Class* (binding it), *General or Specialized Education* (defining it). This prescriptive view of culture is therefore in conflict with other parallel views regarding culture as: (a) **communicative**, since it can be communicated to other people in the respect of their different cultural values; (b) **cumulative**, since it is open to the addition of new ‘layers’ in the course of time to the extent of changing the original patterns of behaviour; and (c) **dynamic**, since it adapts itself to new situations and contexts.

Seen in this light, the connection between *culture* and *modality* becomes conceivable only in relation to a notion of **communication** regarded as an interpersonal interaction by means of a linguistic symbol system and, more specifically, in relation to a view of **intercultural communication** meant as the interpersonal interaction between members of different groups. Such groups differ from each other not only in respect of the knowledge shared by their members, but also in respect of their linguistic forms of symbolic behaviour. Hence, the use of modality to regulate each other’s verbal behaviour becomes crucial. The assumption is that sociocultural and pragmalinguistic differences among the participants in intercultural communication represent the principal reason for misunderstanding and “cross-cultural pragmatic failure” in interaction (Thomas 1983; Knapp *et al.* 1987; Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993). Modal verbs, therefore, especially when the English language is used as a *lingua franca*, may help speakers to explore each other’s reactions and, thus, to learn how to understand and respect the multicultural subtleties of its multipragmatic use (Guido 2001).

Let us consider, for instance, a situation of cross-cultural business transaction between American and Japanese business people. Negotiation, in such circumstances, is characterized by a fixed series of *situational traits* to which each group of negotiators attributes different sociocultural and pragmalinguistic values. Hence, to the *Trait:Goal* American negotiators would attribute the value of a “contract” whereas Japanese would focus more on the “relationship” value. The *Trait:Attitude* is “win/lose” for Americans and “win/win” for Japanese business people, which is reflected also in the *Trait:Team Organization*, where there is “one leader” for the American team and “consensus” for the Japanese, despite the fact that the *Trait:Personal Communication Style* is “direct and informal” for the US negotiators and “indirect and formal” for the Japanese ones. Crucially, the *Traits:Time/Emotion Sense* is “high” as for the American team, whereas it is “low” as for the Japanese businessmen. Accounting for such sociocultural and pragmalinguistic discrepancies in specific situations means learning how to ‘modulate’ them by means of a conscious use of modality and, thus, determining the success of the cross-cultural interaction.

Hofstede (1983) claims that often cross-cultural discrepancies are caused by such factors as:

- (a) *Power Distance* – i.e., the extent to which people tolerate an unequal distribution of power within an organization (e.g.: high tolerance in Latin America vs. low tolerance in Scandinavia).
- (b) *Uncertainty Avoidance* – i.e., the extent to which people tend to feel threatened by uncertain, ambiguous or undefined situations (e.g.: Greece and Portugal, tolerating uncertainty, vs. Singapore, feeling threatened by uncertainty).
- (c) *Individualism/Collectivism* – i.e., collectivist societies have got a close knit social structure, and emphasis is placed on “in” versus “out” group membership. In individualist societies, the social structure is loose and individuals fend for themselves (cf. the individualist USA vs. the collectivist Latin America).
- (d) *Masculinity/Femininity* – i.e., the embodiment of feminine qualities such as nurturing, sharing, and interdependence is important in “feminine societies” (e.g.: Scandinavia), whereas aggression, assertiveness and display of wealth are important in masculine societies (e.g.: USA, Saudi Arabia, etc.).

Hall (1985, 1990) ascribes such communication discrepancies to specific cultural differences among nations, which he classifies in terms of *High* and *Low Context Cultures*. He points out that:

1. in nations characterized by ***Low Context Cultures***, messages are explicit because information is contained in the words of communicative acts so that words and meanings can be separated from the context in which they occur, and this is crucially regarded as a guarantee for a direct, clear, and unambiguous communication;
2. in nations characterized by ***High Context Cultures***, instead, messages are implicit because communication is indirect because it includes a great deal of extra information, such as the message sender’s values, positions, background, and associations. Moreover, non-verbal communication is an important part of the communicative process insofar as even the expressive manner in which the message is delivered is crucial in its interpretation.

Hall’s (1985) classification of the nations characterized by Low or High Context Cultures also shows how such cultural characteristics are reflected in the languages used by people belonging to the respective national groups. He therefore ranks the Swiss language as the one informed by lowest context culture. This is followed by German, Scandinavian, and American English languages. French, British English, and Italian are ranked midway between low and high context cultures. Then, Spanish, Latin American, African and, finally, Arabian and Japanese languages are instead ranked among the languages informed by high-context cultures. The implication of such a classification is that intercultural communication may be extremely difficult if it occurs between national groups with discrepant degrees of context cultures. Hence the importance of the use of modality to avoid defying with a too straightforward communication style the other people’ cultural values and pragmalinguistic codes.

○ 6.6.2. Text 33: ‘Big Business Blunders’

Read the following text and underline all the structures containing Modal Verbs.

Cultural differences are the biggest problems for multinational companies. The failure of managers to comprehend fully these disparities could lead to many international business blunders. To avoid making blunders, a person must discern the difference between what must be done, what must not be done, and what may or may not be done. For example, shoes must be removed before entering many religious buildings in the world, but the individuals doing so must not act as if they belong to that particular religion. If you want to be effective in a foreign environment, you ought to understand the local culture. In India, for example, it would be considered a violation of the sacred hospitality to discuss business in the home or on social occasions. At the same time, if a businessman from India offers "come any time," he means it. In the United States this may simply be a polite expression, but in India it must be considered as a serious invitation, so you must arrange the time of the meeting. If no time is set, the Indian shall assume that the invitation has been refused.

Even the rejection of a cup of coffee can cause big problems. While a very profitable opportunity was being negotiated, a Saudi Arabian businessman friendly offered a cup of coffee to a U.S. executive who innocently said that he would not take it. The American executive was in a hurry but this type of rejection is considered as an affront there. The Saudi felt offended and the negotiation process was less successful than it would have been.

American managers have encountered similar problems trying to understand time values in other cultures. One U.S. company lost a big contract opportunity in Greece because its managers would have tried to impose on the Greek negotiators the American way of setting time-limits for the meetings. American would have preferred the Greeks to first agree to principles and then consider the detail. But the Greek negotiators ought to have considered this time-limits insulting and deceptive. In fact, they would have preferred, instead, to consider every detail, regardless of the time this should have taken.

Gift-giving can also create problems. In Middle-East, for example, hosts would feel insulted if guests bring food to their homes (liquor, of course, must not be given because it is prohibited by the Islamic religion). In Latin America, cutlery or handkerchiefs should not be given because these gifts imply a cutting off of a relationship or a tearful event. In Asia, gifts should be given privately to avoid embarrassing the Asians, but they must be offered publicly in the Middle East to reduce the impression of bribery.

(Adapted from: David A. Ricks, 1983, pp. 7-10)

○ 6.6.3. Task 84: Vocabulary Translation

Match the following key-words from Text 33 in List A with their corresponding Italian translation in List B.

A:

- a. blunders
- b. multinational companies
- c. failure
- d. to lead
- e. to avoid
- f. to discern
- g. shoes
- h. to remove

B:

1. ambiente
2. negoziatori
3. vieni quando vuoi
4. togliere, rimuovere
5. agire
6. appartenere
7. errori grossolani
8. distinguere, discernere

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| i. buildings | 9. scarpe |
| j. to act | 10. condurre |
| k. to belong | 11. evitare |
| l. foreign | 12. fallimento |
| m. environment | 13. educato |
| n. come any time | 14. compagnie multinazionali |
| o. polite | 15. straniero |
| p. to arrange | 16. edifici |
| r. meeting | 17. senza badare, incurante |
| s. to cause | 18. avere fretta |
| t. profitable | 19. ingannevole |
| u. to be in a hurry | 20. decidere, organizzare, fissare |
| v. rejection | 21. dono |
| w. negotiators | 22. incontro |
| x. time-limits | 23. padroni di casa |
| y. to agree | 24. causare |
| z. details | 25. rifiuto |
| aa. deceptive | 26. lucrativo |
| bb. regardless | 27. imbarazzare |
| cc. gift | 28. alcolici |
| dd. Middle-East | 29. corruzione |
| ee. hosts | 30. limiti di tempo |
| ff. guests | 31. dettagli |
| gg. food | 32. posate |
| hh. liquor | 33. ospiti |
| ii. cutlery | 34. relazione |
| jj. handkerchiefs | 35. cibo |
| kk. to cut off | 36. accordarsi |
| ll. relationship | 37. fazzoletti |
| mm. tearful | 38. Medio Oriente |
| nn. to embarrass | 39. troncare |
| oo. bribery | 40. lacrimoso, doloroso |

○ **6.6.4. Task 85: Reading Comprehension: Multiple Choice**

Decide which of the three statements is the right one in reference to Text 33.

1. Cultural differences are the biggest problems for multinational companies because ...

- managers understand disparities very well and use them to their advantage.
- managers often fail to understand the local culture and make many unintentional business blunders.
- managers must always remove their shoes before starting business negotiations.

2. In India, it would be considered a violation of the sacred hospitality ...

- to discuss business in the United States.
- to go to the house of an Indian businessman after his polite invitation.
- to discuss business at home and to avoid a visit after an invitation.

3. *When an American executive refused the offer of a cup of coffee from a Saudi Arabian businessman ...*
 - a. their business negotiation did not proceed so productively as it would have been.
 - b. their business negotiation proceeded successfully and in a hurry.
 - c. their business negotiation proceeded more friendly.
4. *One U.S. company lost a big contract opportunity in Greece because ...*
 - a. U.S. managers would have preferred to impose on Greeks time-limits and a general agreement on principles.
 - b. U.S. managers agreed they would insult Greeks regardless of the time this should have taken.
 - c. U.S. managers were deceived by Greeks.
5. *Gift-giving can also create problems, as for example ...*
 - a. in the Middle-East, where guests would feel insulted if hosts offer food and alcohol in their homes.
 - b. in Latin America, where cutlery or handkerchiefs should not be given because they anticipate a breaking of a relationship or a sad event.
 - c. in Asia, where gifts must be offered publicly to reduce the impression of bribery, and in the Middle East, where gifts must be given privately to avoid embarrassing the receivers.

○ **6.6.5. Task 86: Summary and Creative Writing**

1. *In your own words, make a two-sentence summary of each paragraph of Text 33.*
2. *Write a self-help guide for business people dealing with international negotiations, by using the intercultural mistakes outlined in Text 33 – or other similar ones you might know (e.g., explain what they “can or cannot do”, “must or mustn’t do”, etc., using the structures of modal auxiliary verbs outlined so far).*

○ **6.6.6. Task 87: Syntactic/Semantic Modality Mistakes in Intercultural Communication**

The following dialogue reproduces an exchange (classroom-simulation data from M.G. Guido) between a female Italian trainee welfare officer (WO) and a newly immigrated Jordanian woman (JW). WO explains to JW her rights and duties in the Italian society. Both use English as the lingua franca for their interaction. Please, correct all the syntactic and semantic mistakes in WO's use of English in general and English modal verbs in particular.

- (a) WO: I will inform you of the way of behaviours and tradition in Italy. In first time, you shall know that the Italian law concerning that the woman have not submit, woman have equal opportunities like men and, at last time, that your children must to go to public schools, but you could know that in these schools mustn't to be taught the Koran.
- (b) JW: I know this. My children know that they must pray five times a day, this is one of the laws of our religion.
- (c) WO: I think that is important for you to know Italian law, Italian Family Law, okay?
- (d) JW: That's right.
- (e) WO: Now, here law is separated by religion, in fact one of the most important law is that the husband must not to repudiate her wife, or must not to punishment the wife for adultery, or not have many wife.
- (f) JW: Yes, our men can marry other women, but my husband and I agreed on monogamy. We can divorce three times in our life – after, you must not marry again.

(g) WO: I will also say you that in Italy women must not to cover the head with the foulard, and you can put every dress.

(h) JW: No, I can wear it here! It's a sign of my faith. God invites the woman to cover her head because she has to respect her own dignity and modesty.

(i) WO: Okay. But you could to know that your daughter must also to go to same school together with boys, and your daughter have same work opportunities, same future like boys.

(j) JW: That's right. Our religion is not against career for women.

1. Compare your corrected version of this exchange with the version reproduced in the **Key Section** at the back of this volume.
2. Who is the speaker belonging to a **Low Context Culture**, and who is the one belonging to a **High Context Culture**? (Please, give reasons for your answer).
3. Which of the two speakers in this exchange is making a **prescriptive** use of her culture? The Italian welfare officer (WO)? The Jordanian woman (JW)? Both? (Please, give reasons for your answer, possibly by making reference to the two women's use of modal verbs).
4. Could you find in this exchange any of the four factors identified by Hofstede (1983), determining cross-cultural discrepancies (i.e.: 1. Power Distance; 2. Uncertainty Avoidance; 3. Individualism/Collectivism; 4. Masculinity/Femininity)? (Please, give reasons for your answer).