



TRANSITIONS

*Collana di studi
sulla traduzione e l'interculturalità
nei paesi di lingua inglese*

VIII.

La collana intende investigare la centralità del concetto di interculturalità nei paesi di lingua inglese offrendo una prospettiva interdisciplinare tra lingue, letterature, culture e media. Il termine “traduzione” è dunque inteso nella sua accezione più ampia che prende in considerazione non solo gli studi di traduzione interlinguistica ma anche intersemiotica e si apre ad un discorso sulla traduzione come trasposizione, adattamento e ibridazione tra generi e arti. Il discorso sull’interculturalità, sempre più centrale anche in un’Europa multietnica e multilinguistica, è fondamentale nelle aree anglofone dove il processo di decolonizzazione, poi globalizzazione, ha portato ad un ripensamento dei concetti di lingua, identità, nazione e cultura. La collana intende proporre strumenti di analisi per approfondire competenze linguistiche e culturali muovendosi tra diverse aree di studio come gli studi di traduzione, gli studi postcoloniali e di genere, gli studi culturali, la sociolinguistica (in particolare le varietà della lingua inglese), la critical discourse analysis e i linguaggi specialistici. Se come afferma Adrienne Rich “negli interstizi delle lingue si nascondono significativi segreti della cultura” è proprio dallo studio di diverse tipologie testuali che può iniziare un percorso critico verso un approfondimento di ciò che viene definito come interculturalità.

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Emanuela Ammendola

POPULARISING SPECIALISED TERMINOLOGIES
LEGAL TERMINOLOGY IN TV SERIES:
A CORPUS-DRIVEN ANALYSIS ON *Suits*

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Introduction

TV SERIES BETWEEN ENTERTAINMENT AND EDUCATION

The last decades have seen a huge rise in the number of TV series which have considerably changed in both quantitative and qualitative aspects. One of the reasons behind such change is the development of new forms of broadcasting, such as the media-service provider Netflix which has radically modified the entertainment market in terms of availability of products and time as well. With the advent of Netflix, viewers no longer need to wait for episodes as in the case of traditional TV series; they are able to watch an entire season in one day, to manipulate the episode pausing it, by going back and forth through the episodes (Daniel Smith-Rowsey, 2016). However, regardless the service-provider, fictional television series «can capture an audience's involvement in a way equalled by few contemporary media» (Creeber, 2004: 4), which is why TV series are consumed by billions of viewers worldwide, characterising a significant part of the audiovisual market. TV series easily enter everyone's life not only as a form of entertainment but also as an educative tool making some fields of knowledge and special domains, previously shared by only a restricted community of speakers, partially accessible to everybody. The rapid advances of TV series in the entertainment market of visual media have enabled languages for special purposes (LSP) to get a wider range of people

favouring a process of “popularisation” of LSP and their respective terminologies (Laudisio, 2016; D’Avanzo, 2018).

This book has been conceived in response to the dissemination of LSP in audiovisual texts like TV series which are worthy of terminological analysis. Such type of analysis is justified by the fact that terminology, and more generally specialised lexicon, may be considered as the most distinctive part of a LSP as it is characterised by exclusive elements and features which do not belong to ordinary language. Unlike the morpho-syntactical dimension which differs from ordinary language for the peculiar use of pre-existing structures, the lexical level is characterised by the use of exclusive signs that meet the communicative and referential needs of the special domain they belong to. (Cortelazzo, 1994). Moreover, for an effective terminology analysis of multimodal texts like TV series, it is worth considering the heterogeneity of non-verbal resources that are used as modes of communication alongside verbal language. In this regard, several studies have developed on multimodality since the early 1990’s, paving the way for multiple approaches like the social semiotic perspective which has been widely adopted based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics proposed by Halliday (1978). Scholars have explored single modes such as visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), sound and music (Van Leeuwen, 1999), and the ways in which different modes co-operate in multimodal texts (e.g. Lemke, 1998; Royce, 1999; O’Halloran, 2004; Zabalbeascoa, 2008).

Texts involve many different interacting systems of different kinds on different levels of textual organisation. [...] Multimodal texts integrate selections from different semiotic resources to their principles of organisation. [...] These

resources are not simply juxtaposed as separate modes of meaning-making but are combined and integrated to form a complex whole which cannot be reduced to, or explained in terms of the mere sum of its separate parts (Baldry and Thibault, 2006: 3).

In recent years, the integration of different modes has shown an increasing representational complexity in terms of dynamic multimodal discourse such as that of videos and films, whose multisemiotic nature requires the accuracy of supporting computer tools and investigation methods. In summary, the popularisation of terminology through TV series cannot be limited to the analysis of special terms or expressions present in the series, but it must also consider the multiple semiotic resources used in the meaning-making processes and the way they co-operate.

This book is aimed to discuss the possibility of familiarising with a specific domain and its terminology by means of a multimodal product whose dialogues are «an artfully-constructed selective simulation of natural realistic speech» (Toolan, 2011: 181) and whose communicative intentionality is determined by the cooperation of verbal and non-verbal components. Then, starting from the hypothesis that the huge number of viewers of TV series makes them a fertile ground to popularise LSP terminologies, the legal terminology used in the TV series *Suits* (2011-2019, Universal Cable Production) was investigated from a quantitative and qualitative perspective with the purpose of drawing up to what extent legal discourse is embedded in the fictional representation of the legal dimension and determining the different levels of abstraction of legal terminology in the series. However, as already mentioned, dialogues are only one side of the coin and the fictional nar-

rative under investigation is made of verbal and non-verbal signs included in the expression “telecinematic discourse” coined to define the language of both cinema and television (Piazza et al., 2011: 1). In this respect, the analysis also considered the role of the visual channel in supporting the transmission, comprehension and acquisition of technical contents and terminological units on the part of the non-expert audience. This present investigation aims to explore a) to what extent legal terminology is present in legal drama; b) which is the degree of abstraction of legal terminology in a TV series like *Suits*; c) whether the interplay of different sign systems support the acquisition of technical knowledge and terminological proficiency on the part of the lay audience; d) whether it is possible to consider TV series a viable tool to popularise technical terminology.

The first part of this book (Chapters 1-2) is devoted to giving a theoretical background and a methodological framework of reference introducing legal English as a LSP (Picht and Draskau, 1985; Cortelazzo, 1994; Sobrero, 2000) and illustrating the idea that the specific knowledge and terminology shared by specialists, which distinguish LSP from ordinary language, may be partially extended to non-specialists through entertainment products like movies and TV series. Then, following a description of Legal English as a variety of natural languages, an overview of the terminological peculiarities of this special language is provided considering technical words, jargon, foreign influences and morphological and phraseological traits as well. Terminology of special domains reveals different levels of abstraction that are bound to different communicative functions and contexts; while a conversation between specialists implies the use of a highly specialised language, a discussion on

the same topic between non-specialists inevitably leads to a lower degree of abstraction (see Hoffmann, 1987; Sager, 1990). Legal English, like other LSP, shows different degrees of abstraction which are associated to heterogeneous communicative situations; such heterogeneity is often represented in the fictional language of TV series.

The representation of legal discourse on the screen involves issues related to the socio-cultural context connected to legal language; a legal TV series that is broadcast outside its country of origin inevitably shows culture-bound aspects of the legal language that are closely tied to the juridical system represented. In the last decades different perspectives have been adopted in the analysis of legal English in TV series in order to answer different research questions; among them, Laudisio (2015; 2016) who focused on the popularisation of medical and legal language in «specialised TV series» and discussed the possibility of popularising legal knowledge using legal drama as a genre, analysing it from a macro-and micro-linguistic viewpoint. Laudisio's work was selected as the basis for investigating the potential popularisation of legal terminology through a form of entertainment like TV series. For the terminology analysis of the corpus under investigation, corpus linguistics tools and methodology were employed selecting a corpus-driven approach to the data. In addition, methods and tools of multimodal analysis were given as the basis for discussing the role of the visual channel in clarifying legal terminology in the series. Thus, an interplay of LSP, terminology and multimodality theories was selected as background for exploring the presence of legal discourse in *Suits* and investigating the role that the visual channel plays in the transmission of legal terminology in relation to specialised contents.

An introduction to the plot and the main characters of the nine seasons, given in chapter 4, presents the corpus under investigation and provides a comprehensive description of the criteria used for selecting and collecting the scripts of *Suits* as a corpus of investigation. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of legal terminology in *Suits* is featured in the third and fourth chapters. The first phase of the analysis is devoted to investigating the presence of terminological units in the series exploring different degrees of technicality, while a second phase focuses on each season to outline the distribution and the development of legal terminology over the years.

The last section of the book (Chapter 5) focuses on the cooperation between verbal and non-verbal components in the series and investigates the supporting role of the visual dimension in facilitating the reception of information and technical terminology on behalf of the audience. This last part explores the process of familiarisation with legal terminology from a multimodal point of view. Due to space constraints, this last part does not intend to provide a full and adequate multimodal analysis of the series, but rather explore some relevant scenes to determine to what extent the visual channel can contribute to the process of understanding and acquiring legal terminology.

The wide range of users and the global success of TV series broadcast on Netflix could make this study replicable for other languages and language varieties, contributing to investigate whether audiovisuals are a viable means to convey linguistic, cultural and technical knowledge to a non-expert audience, serving as a useful starting point for further research into LSP, Terminology and Education and Translation Studies.