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Text and context revisited within a multimodal framework

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Abstract. We are now faced with a flow of documents. But how do all these digital texts circulate between senders and prosumers? Can we assume that texts today are similar in terms of meaning-making, coherence, interpretation to texts produced, perceived, used before the technological changes? The current developments in textuality require us to re-examine the materiality, contextualisation, genres and readings of these “new” texts. Three decades of the Internet, the Web, have changed our concepts of text and context, our experience of reading, writing, translating multimodal texts. First, we revisit the concept of text – to understand what is changing. Second, we revisit the concept of context to problematise it in the new framework, in which digital productions are open, fluid, de-/re-textualizing, de-/re-semiotising, de-/re-contextualising texts. How do multimodal texts shed light on these changes and how do they participate in them? All the articles discuss text and context and highlight different instances of re-contextualisation. The whole issue does not pretend to provide definitive answers but will hopefully contribute to making translation scholars aware of the changes and how they will use text and context from now on.

Keywords. Text, context, multimodality, de-/recontextualization.

We are now confronted daily with a flood of data and documents (interactive or not) circulating online, in the media (print and audiovisual), for companies, administrations, associations, etc. – confronted with, or perhaps subject to. The intellectual and moral rights related to these data and documents are supposed to protect users, customers, creators, and broadcasters. We consult, exchange, and produce all kinds of content (written or oral), semiotically complex and in a serial relationship (referring to each other with an incessant and more or less controlled mutation of form and meaning).

The Austrian Chancellor (Sebastian Kurz) was dismissed from office on 9 October 2021 on suspicion of embezzlement, corruption, and influence peddling – charges based on

“snippets of text messages taken out of context.” In April 2023, the Dalai Lama outraged many netizens with a video in which he asked a child to “suck his tongue.” Disinformation on the Net, fake news, and conspiracy theories are often the result of a decontextualization of information and images: an event, an encounter, or a fact is reported without the slightest context, only counting that of the receivers, reducing everything to their own world. Cancel culture also denies the role of contextualization, of the context of production, in interpreting literary texts, films, songs, historical narratives and decontextualizing to better censor. The same is true of *The Ballad of Mulan*, a poem composed in China in the 4th century BC, turned into a novel by Maxine Hong Kingston in 1976 (*The Woman Warrior*) and then into an animated film in 1998, an illustrated book, and a video game. Similarly, the English-language audio guide available at a museum in China is supposed to serve the needs of both American and Italian tourists with different cultural backgrounds.

These few disparate examples are enough to show how the absence of context or its vagueness, the ambiguity of non-verbal signs and symbols (emojis, gifs, etc.), and the speed of diffusion can lead to hasty interpretations, cultural conflicts, unconscious misunderstandings, deliberate parodies, etc. The political subtext of the video game *Six Days in Fallujah* has caused controversy, reminding some of the links between the US military and the gaming industry. A quote, an image, a photo, or a video can thus give rise to countless variations, imitations, and distractions – a meme becoming a viral phenomenon, sometimes a playful exercise, sometimes harassment, sometimes propaganda. There is both decontextualization (or erasure of the conditions of initial production) and recontextualization (which gives new meaning). Between the six metres that separated Putin from Macron when they met in the Kremlin in February 2022, we were able to slip Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*. Texts and images, out of context, become truly mind-blowing when they are created

by software like ChatGPT: the Pope outdoors with a down jacket while he was in a hospital, for example.

All the examples cited are documents, multimodal materials. What happens to the “text”? What relationship do these productions have with the “context”? Can we continue with the notion of text as an exclusively verbal linear sequence? As there has been a return to the translator, a corporeal, cognitive, emotional entity translating more than only languages, the “text,” in terms of the technological changes underway, requires us to re-examine its materiality as well as its dematerialization, the new techno-genres, and the transformations of our ways of reading.

1. Perspectives on the text

To perceive the change in our conceptualization of “text,” we must make a review, at least partially, of this notion to better understand what is changing.

In general linguistics, for a long time, investigations were limited to the sentence, if not to the word or the syntagm. Rhetoric and stylistics have sought to understand the rules of constructing a statement, selecting elements available in the language, and evaluating the values to be attributed to these elements. The text could then coincide with a slogan, a paragraph, or an entire book – defined by its autonomy. In distributional linguistics propositional analyses, we have hardly gone beyond syntagms, propositions, and their relations. Only one type of text analysis addressed groups of more than one clause: narratives or sequences of at least three clauses. In most cases, the approach excluded semantic aspects. Obviously, general linguistics has undergone various evolutions according to the traditions related to the treatment of language and the position of literature. Thus, narrative semiotics and the materialist perspective of the play of signifiers that produce effects of meaning have sometimes, here and there, shaken up the idealist-logocentric paradigm. Discourse analyses

have attempted to reintroduce another dimension where the utterance (written or oral) was articulated to the conditions and constraints of its enunciation. The “text” (written or spoken) had a purpose, a function, a kind of coherence (related to a field or a genre) and in principle satisfied the expectations of readers or listeners. In Text Linguistics (see, e.g., Petöfi and Rieser 1973; Coseriu 1980; Adam 1999), Pragmatics and Conversational Analysis have deepened the complex problematics of text, particularly in its relationship with context, intertext, and interaction. As a hierarchical structure, the “text” would now offer both a semantic macrostructure (thematic coherence and isotopy) and an illocutionary macrostructure (see, e.g., van Dick 1977; Rastier 1989). Other approaches (philological, hermeneutics, relevance, corpus-based, lexicometric, psycho-cognitive, deconstructive, etc.) have also been developed. Nevertheless, for a long time, the seven principles or criteria of textuality (De Beaugrande and Dressler [1972] 1981) predominated: cohesion, coherence (on the structuring of the text), intentionality (on the attitude of the speaker), acceptability, informativity (on the attitude of the receiver towards the text), situationality (on the relationship to the context) and intertextuality (on the relationship to other texts). Halliday and Hasan (1976) also considered the text not as a string of sentences but as a whole, as a semantic unit in a context where content (information contained in the text), meaning (information carried by the sentence), and meaning (information designated by syntactic constructions, syntagms, words, morphemes) are closely related.

Be that as it may, while the definition of “text” has never been unanimous, and while it has varied according to linguistics and authors, it can be said that all approaches have converged to affirm that a text is organized at various levels. Three common points bring together most of the definitions: the text is only verbal and linear (even if such an order does not determine the thematic progression, the meaning). The text is a weaving of elements, as reflected in its Hebrew origin (*doi*) as an act of weaving baskets (each row clinging to the one

that precedes it and in turn becoming support for the row to come) and its etymology in Latin (*textus*, or that which unites, gathers and organizes various elements).¹ Moreover, the text has long been perceived solely from the perspective of its production to the detriment of the effects of its transmission and reception.

The paradigm of the “text” (literary or not) dominated discussions and certain approaches in Translation Studies until the 1990s – whether we refer to the Skopos theory, the hermeneutic approach in translation, the interpretive theory, corpus-based studies, models dealing with quality, research on machine translation or on the genetics of translations, etc. The notion of text is central in translation if we also think about the sequence attached to it: source text, target text, pragmatic text, literary text, texteme, etc. There can be no question here of exhausting the subject of the relationship between translation and text, between interpretation and discourse, between Translation Studies and text/discourse (see, e.g., Hatim 1997; Hatim and Mason 1990), especially since the relations between agents and intermediaries caught in a network and struggling with technological tools are still far from well understood. However, we must not forget here that semiotics has also confronted the “text,” from Barthes to J. Kristeva, from Juri Lotman (Tamm 2019) to the Tartu school, as a semiotic system (broadly speaking) and not only as a written work. Hence, a certain current return to semiotics in TS.

¹ *Textus* in Latin: literally what is woven, and later the word of God (in the C9th, *textus* means the Gospel), as opposed to gloss (from the C13th onwards), *textus* also meaning at the same time a set of written signs. In the Middle Ages, *textus* is made of a warp of written words and a vocal weft connected when reading aloud – reading is to put your voice at the disposal of the written form, to give your voice to the power of what is written (reading in Ancient Greece and Rome was sometimes done by slaves). The “T” of the topic of the text is different from the “T” of the reader who is at one with the text. In this perspective, a text is never static: it is a relationship between a written form and a voice listened to by an audience, between a scribe and a reader.

The emergence, over at least three decades, of digital “texts” and translation/localization of websites, YouTube videos, video games, blogs, etc., changes the game. What happens to the “text” in the virtual space when fluidity, immediacy, and the emphasis on the receivers (surrounded by algorithms) modify the structuring of texts? Obviously, there is still a representation of language; there are references to other realities: a text is there, on the screen, independent of a context and any individual interpretation, but how does it work? Who is it for? How does it make sense? Does its accessibility and usability necessarily make it a readable, understandable object? Regarding SMS, chats, tweets, blogs, and any exchange in social media, the text is the new meeting place: the contributors (anonymous or not) are made to believe that their communication is instantaneous, with an immediate understanding of their points of view, their knowledge, their representations, but in fact there is no possibility of regulation as there is in a face-to-face situation where the input of non-verbal signs helps to adjust the relevance of what is said. In this type of technical environment, each participant is forced to constantly re-contextualise what is written by commenting, explaining, and justifying his/her own utterance, etc. The set of utterances loosely related to a theme, a piece of art, or a current event is a way to compensate for the absence of a common, shared context. Those online interactions are delayed but thought of as simultaneous and delocalised (the place of production and reception do not coincide: one is not expected to know where one’s interlocutor is acting from) and mimic orality, dramatizing impromptu speech. We have here both de-contextualisation and a reinforced co-textualisation: the individuals themselves are the (new) context.

From now on (without resorting to the book in electronic form, for example, on an e-reader, which retains its forms derived from the printing press), the “text” on the Net can be reconfigured by its users (readers?) thanks to its hyperlinks and the interactivity allowed: one can link the content to other sites on the Web, add his words and images. One reads an

electronic text while additionally referring to an interview on YouTube, a public lecture, a map, as one watches a film and additionally a video clip, a trailer, rushes, etc. Two users can open a website with the same webpage but can end their navigation after opening different links. From now on, “texts” are fluid, with other “texts” and other systems of signs (fixed or moving images, graphs, colours, fonts, sounds, etc.). A “text” has become poly-semiotic or multimodal and exists in a permanent intertextual relationship with other “texts.” While printed texts could always be dated, allocated to an author, editor, or printer, digital/ audiovisual texts can be constantly updated and offered in different versions. To the materially finished and semantically open printed text (as it existed, diffused during the Gutenberg parenthesis: 1450 to the beginning of the 21st century), there now follows (or still coexists) a hypertext, materially and semantically open. Three decades of the Internet and Web, including audiovisual products, has transformed our concepts of text and book, and our experience of reading, writing, and translating. The latter can now generate various forms of collaboration and thus modify work procedures (workflow) and evaluation. One can participate in the translation process and compare the different translated versions offered rather than comparing the source text and the target text. As for the modalities of reading, there is a tension between the conventional “text,” the reading of which would proceed mainly from duration (temporality of linearity, narration), a specificity of the left brain, while the digit-multimodal “text” would depend mainly on space (global input; navigation structure), a specificity of the right brain. Interactive multimedia forces the alternation between the two specificities of the brain.

To this change from “text” (verbal, linear, and unidirectionally produced) to hypertext is added the presence of other sign systems – non-alphabetic, symbolic, graphic, visual, and audial. The design, circulation, and reception of these new texts not only involve the participation of various stakeholders (individuals, groups, activists, public figures, etc.) but

also the articulation between words, images, sounds, colours, etc. – reconfiguring our practices and our uses of “texts.” These can range from playful hobbies (e.g., on social media) to persuasive strategies guiding each other’s actions.

The impact of the medium on the nature of the “text” (translated or not) and on our modes of reading implies recognizing the materiality of the “text” (printed, digital/multimodal). From now on, the study of digital/multimodal texts confronts the researcher with new materiality (technogenres, memes, gifs, hyperlinks, and clickability, along with increased and accelerated circulation of these texts, human-computer interaction, etc.). There is no “text” without transmission through languages, media, and territories, and this has happened since early modern times in Europe with the discovery of printing, hence the term “ttextuality” recently discussed at a conference held in Turku (7-9.9 2023) (<https://www.finlit.fi/en/ttextuality>).

A last remark: a text, especially from the printing period, is not to be confused with the book. If not all texts lead to a book, the latter necessarily consists of the former. The paper format and formats of a book differ from those of a text, even if they have an impact on it (Illich 1991).

2. Back to “context”

There is no simple, no single relationship between a text (printed or online) and its context of production and reception. How can we problematize it with our concepts of time, space, and agency? There are journals entitled *Contexts* (since November 2002, about sociological research) and *Language, Context and Text* (since 2019, on the use of social semiotics as originally proposed by M.A.K Halliday). In the *Translation Studies Bibliography* (online), there are 1072 publications on (socio-political) context and translation (as of 18.9.2023). Context often coexists with macro-/micro-context, (sociocultural) situation, (working)

setting, circumstances, environment, landscape, location, zone, (institutional) reality, etc.

This shows both the semantic ambiguity and polysemy of the term, covering aspects ranging from geopolitics to psychology.

It is not uncommon to see it noted, in the press, for example, that a particular sentence or quotation has been taken out of context, thus promoting or rejecting polemics and manipulation. Freud was criticized for his analysis of the Wolf Man for ignoring the (cultural) context from which his dreams were derived, limiting them to individual experience alone. In many interactions, from Parmenides and Plato's dialogues to a contemporary domestic dispute, the tensions between the said and the intention to say ("I did not mean that") are never fully resolved, as if nothing in the context (from the place of enunciation to the mimo-gestuality of the speakers) made it possible to know more. Descartes is often criticized today for his positions on nature, empathy, sensitivity, and animals by decontextualizing what he wrote, that is to say, by denying the mental and philosophical categories, the commonplaces of his time against which he rose up to make "science" happen. Between the cinema where we are seated (perception space) and the scenes of a film (space of the "story" on the screen), we do not doubt the "reality" of the characters because we know the rules of the game on the conventions of representation. We know that Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) is a urinal that became an art object by leaving its usual context (in a public place) and entering a gallery, a museum, with his signature. Bourdieu has stated many times (e.g., in 2002) that texts (literary or not) circulate without their original context and that their new readers, inserted in another field of production, transform them by reinterpreting them according to their position in this field of reception.² As in translation, context (including its

² It should be noted that in *Translation Studies Reader* (in its four editions between 1998 and 2021), excerpts from Nietzsche, Steiner, Benjamin, Derrida, etc., are proposed by Venuti out of context, outside the author's other productions, thus des-historicizing these texts.

multimodal aspects) has also often been referred to in conference and community interpreting (see, e.g., Salerts and Brône, 2020; De Boe et al. 2021), sometimes to describe how the conference interpreter “decontextualized” the speech to understand it and then “recontextualized” it (to formulate his interpreted speech) (see, e.g., the work of Ebru Diriker between 2004 and 2014), sometimes to capture how the interpreter could, for instance in court, send information to the defendant by paraphrases and additions, information not explicitly provided by the prosecutor.

We could multiply the examples: where does the context of a statement, a situation, an event or a point of view end? In Translation Studies, two schools of thought have especially referred to context. The relevance theory has defined context as “the set of premises used in interpreting an utterance,” “a psychological construct, a subject of the hearer’s assumptions about the world ... A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment” (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 15–16). “The cognitive environment,” that is, everything that individuals can perceive, remember, or infer, and facts that they are not currently aware of, is bound up with these assumptions in a dynamic process: new information impacts upon “old” assumptions. The context becomes a contextual effect in relation to a processing effort. In such a framework, relevance is both maximising the contextual effect and minimising the viewer/listener’s processing effort: the more positive cognitive effects and the less processing effort, the more relevant the utterance. Context is seen here in a psycho-cognitive dimension within a conceptualisation of communication as an interaction between a speaker/author and a receiver/addressee (accepting the communicative intention of the other interlocutor). Applied to translation, the relevance theory suggests four possible contexts: the set of assumptions by the author, by the translator as a reader, by the translator as a writer, and by the reader of the target text. Through these filters, there is always a risk of contextual mismatches (about knowledge of

the field of references, about linguistic competence, about sensitivity or the lack of appreciation of the style, etc.). The other approach is that elaborated by Derrida in the 1960s: deconstruction is first a critical analysis of the meaning-making of texts. According to an often-cited expression, *il n' y a pas de hors texte* : a text is first a *textus*, a web of historical, social, institutional, and political realities. A text is a text-context; there is nothing before, out there; it welcomes the real and all kinds of references. A text is to be read, understood in its own texture, and not by calling elements from outside (contextual elements) and a transcendental meaning (being always there).

How can we understand the “context” in digital productions? When localizing a website, for example, we immediately recognize that the layout, colours, and typographic characters, all with culturally marked value, transform our reading. Websites are rarely dated and, apart from their topic (referring to artefacts, goods, machines, services, local places, etc.), users do not bother to search for the producer of the site to discover when and why it has been produced. The text in the title bar, keywords, menus, hyperlinks, images, sound and audiovisual files, and the main body text are simply there, with no explicit justification, no cross-references. Parts of the context collapse in online texts.

The context could be understood as the set of elements (linguistic and other, such as those visual and audial) necessary for the production and reception of the text (oral or written) – it would be both the cotext (discursive environment), the communication situation *hic et nunc* (participatory framework, socio-spatio-temporal framework and purposes of the text), encyclopaedic, cultural and discursive knowledge that makes our interpretation oriented, for instance, by the rules related to this or that genre (while recognizing here that digitization has created new genres: tweets, blogs, home pages, non-profit websites, online magazines, radio websites, online stores, forum discussions, gaming sites etc.), evolving more or less rapidly in their conventions and structuring (Jiménez-Crespo 2013, ch. 4). The

context would therefore be both on the horizon of intersubjectivity and in the conditions of possibilities linked to speakers' ways of being, doing and thinking, and therefore attested in the "text". This conception is closer to the text-context (with its contextualization indices) and moves away from the context outside the text (sometimes synonymous with "culture," as often used in Translation Studies); it merges with the discursive modalities of experience, their individual and collective linguistic expressions, and with the reflexive capacity of agents capable of making their "text" intelligible. However, much remains to be done to understand how, for example, a (multi-semiotic) tweet produced on the microblogging platform Twitter/X combines enunciation, interaction, and hypertext. The definition proposed above goes far beyond the opposition between context external to the text ("sociologist" approaches that seek the *raison d'être* of texts in the outside world) and context as part of the text ("textualist" approaches).

Two issues still need to be raised about context: that of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and that of the output of machine translation (MT).

In anglicized texts and speeches, written and read by speakers of very different linguistic origins and cultural backgrounds, it becomes difficult to trace the underlying cultures of these writers/listeners and to predict the standards followed due to the various levels of proficiency in English and the deliberate or unintentional transfers of certain linguistic structures of the author's native language and of the speaker (including rhetorical conventions related to the composition of texts and speeches). ELF production receivers constitute ephemeral, fluid, transient, and contingent communities, able to accommodate ad hoc strategies to negotiate meaning. There is a whole set of unspoken illusions associated with the practice of a lingua franca, as in the past with the procedures linked to the acronym GILT: globalization, internationalization, localization, and translation. Several steps took place: first, seeking a global world with the belief that a document can be created and be

readable without any cultural frame, as if English were neutral, then, second, using a controlled language (in fact simplified English), with as few culture-specific features as possible, as if the website could be de-contextualised (creating the illusion of a neutral, cultureless technical world) and re-contextualised through localisation and translation. The “start text” is not always a source text, and the output is a moving text, with more or less regular modifications and updates, never stable in the virtual world. With videos, games, fan practices, groups, or communities created via computer-mediated interactions, misunderstandings and ambiguities (misalignment) can easily multiply.

As for MT, neural or not, how do we do search engine optimization (SEOs), data collection, monetization of content, and application of genres when it comes to translating sports, medicine, fashion, food information, etc.? How are raw, non-post-edited translations received? What impact does the purpose of the translated text have, for example, and the types of users with their specific expectations vis-à-vis raw MT? (See, e.g., Nurminen 2021 on four types of contexts in which MT gisting takes place). What types of contexts are needed to assess MT outcomes?

If we recall these two aspects – ELF and MT – it is because they have become central in contemporary communications and cannot be underestimated when trying to better situate the consequences of multimodality.

We talked above about de- and re-contextualization. In fact, in translation, the initial (multimodal) text undergoes some transformations – interventions of the translator who, with the interpretation of this text and the writing of the translated text, mediates with his particular voice, opting for certain strategies available to textualize his translation (which cannot be read word for word), making it acceptable, relevant, according to various criteria and going beyond simple language decoding/encoding. What do I mean by the prefixes de-/re-? Is it a question of omitting all background details? But what does it mean if the concept

of context is not specified? Is decontextualization the internationalization stage in the GILT process, a form of acculturation? Is it a question of detextualizing, desemiotizing, moving the (multimodal) text to be translated from its intertextual relations to place it in a new intertextuality? Is it a question of modifying the context in a kind of transfer where there would be deverbalization and decontextualization? The vagueness here probably justifies the occurrence of terms (synonymous, at least partially, with translation) such as reformulation, rewriting, transcreation, transediting, and reframing, indicating both a transfer and a novelty. What does recontextualization mean? Looking back, back to a previous situation? Or, on the contrary, to give a new context, a new framework of interpretation, to re-situate, to propose a re-vision, that is to say, a new vision of the text, supported by allophone texts, paratexts?

To this double movement – de/re-textualize, de-/re-semioticize, de-/re-contextualize, can be added the dematerialization of remote digital communication media: can we then affirm that there is both a retextualization of exchanges and a dematerialization of context? For example, in a series of comments and reactions, there are deferred, delocalized points of view about an event, a position; there is a kind of successive adjustment, regulating the absence or quasi-absence of common contextualization between the interlocutors. Speakers send written, voiced messages or pictures at any time, from any place, continuously, sometimes immediately, sometimes delayed, and are unaware of the whereabouts of their recipients. We can then say that only the textual flow, matter, and material, “Chinese box” structure remains – a discontinuous fragmented flow, made of short, numerous, instantaneous micro-messages, out of (re)known conditions of enunciation.

3. Questions on multimodality and proposed articles

There are countless publications (books, special issues of journals, articles and forums) on multimodality, which have been published over the past ten years, including journals

dedicated to the topics, its different theoretical approaches, concepts and methods, collection of materials etc., such as *Journal of Multimodal User Interfaces* (since 2007), *Multimodal Communication* (since 2012), *Frontiers in Communication* with a section on Multimodality in Communication (since 2016), *Multimodal Technologies and Interaction* and *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics* (both since 2017), and *Multimodality & Society* (since 2021). There is now a large range of fields of application: at workplaces, in education, in computational modelling, in language teaching, in leisure, in health and well-being, in public and business communication, in advertising, in media, in design, etc. Our issue covers a small number of those fields, dealing with several aspects of intermedial translation: social media, online video, and bullet-screen translation, advertising translation and brand transcreation, opera translation, cinema subtitling, graphic element transposition in creative subtitling, adaptation of poetry through paintings, transcreation of a dance performance from a painting, linguistic and analytic description of a photograph, adaptation of comic-book front covers and blind localization of a mobile game. In all the papers, language is not the sole mode of meaning in human communication; the meaning is created and conveyed through the co-deployment of languages, typography, images, gestures, symbols, etc., and across different cultures and “contexts.”

One of the most striking features of many articles here is their reference to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Social Semiotics, both developed originally by M.A.K. Halliday, mainly in the 1970s. (See, for instance, Kim et al. 2021, and Chen et al. 2022, on SFL and Translation Studies). But his key concepts (mode, function, system, register, and genre) are often used in an uncritical way. SFL and the structuralist semiotics, describing the meaning-making of signs in different social interactions, are a framework but not really justified, hardly open to discussion with the cognitive approach, relevance theory, or critical discourse analysis. A few concepts, such as salience, semiotic redundancy, and semantic

convergence could have been developed because in their interplay the signs and the modes are applying different functions and draw our attention in different manners. This limitation is perhaps due to the fact that most of the contributions stop at the level of production (from the sign markers) and neglect the level of reception (from the sign takers), as if suddenly the communication were unidirectional and non-interactive. Linguistics and Translation Studies went through an identical path – focusing on the producer more than on the addressees (readers, viewers, users, clients). However, the studies in this special issue explore multimodal factors and intersemiotic shifts in intermedial transformation, very often with detailed analysis, showing how the poly-semiotic whole of the “original” is rearranged, reconstructed, recontextualized, and resemiotised. Nevertheless, the dynamic interplay between the modes, the different semiotic resources, remains unclear. Do pictures, for instance, do more than “illustrate” a textual advertisement? For Barthes (1964, 44–45), when studying the static image of an advertisement, the interplay between verbal and visual elements was asymmetrical and hierarchical: the verbal is first; the text is a *relais* (relay) (text and image are complementary) and an *ancrage* (anchorage) – the text directs the viewer-reader through the maze of possible meanings of the image. Today, after Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2001) and other scholars, we can underline the autonomy of visual signs. It is not the place to argue who is right or more relevant but to observe that both approaches insist on the importance of taking into consideration the multiple modes of sense-making. Nonetheless, more must be described and analysed in order to understand the combination of signs and modes as every day we are confronted with multimodal interactions. We know today that some people pay more attention to the iconic/visual cues, some more to the acoustic signals, and some more to the verbal signs. How do we decide on the causality and effect of this or that element in translated multimodal communication, recognizing that the coincidence of modes, their correlation, and the triggering of one sign on the appearance of

another is not necessarily the cause, let alone the determination, of multimodal dynamics?

The wind, the laws of gravity, the influence of the moon, underwater currents, the movement on the surface of the water and in deep waters, differences in temperature and atmospheric pressure, precipitation, the difference in salinity, coastal erosion, etc., all participate in wave formation. So, we do not have a simple, stable cause but a dynamic convergence of factors.

We can assume here that it is the same in multimodal interaction, in the diversity of its means, its supports, which is moreover translated.

What do the 12 articles offer for our consideration? The first seven texts aim to discuss and propose new definitions. Thus, **Marco Agnetta** suggests clarifying the notions of *co-text* vs. *context* through the status of the non-verbal and the semiotic levels of contextuality within the theory of synsemioticity. He exemplifies his demonstration with examples from the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762) by Gluck and its translations into German and French. As for **Peng Qiao**, he focuses on the interplay between *macro context* and *micro context*, blurring their boundaries and considering together interlingual and intersemiotic translation. This is based on subtitles, made in Chinese by fans, of videos of Cardi B. **Luis Moreno-García** examines the impact of the lack of context in “blind” translation in a mobile game localization situation in order to better apprehend the concept of web of texts, as text-context. **Junchao Wang** and **Min Li** reconsider text, context, meaning, and the categorization of translation within a systemic-functional sociosemiotic approach, studying the types and orchestration of *semiotic modes* in cases of brand transcreation where verbal instructions serve as a “source text.” **Irene Rodríguez-Arcos** also deals with *modes*, aiming at recognizing the elements that can be defined as modes and prompts, thus suggesting a hierarchy of modes from a semiotic perspective. Her analysis is based on an international advertising campaign in social media. With **Zhiwei Wu**, utilising social semiotic approach, the analysis is on the *modes* and *metafunctions* in a corpus of creative subtitles using graphic

elements; his data is from the YouTube channel, *Apenjie with Dawang*. **Olli-Philippe Lautenbacher** wonders about the reading of a photo, in particular its so-called global meaning and its individual interpretations, made by MA-level students in Translation Studies. His analysis, aiming at differentiating inferability and inference in the transfer process, refers to the theory of relevance and underlines how the still image continues to fascinate but that it is still necessary to learn to see and not just to read.

The other five contributions highlight various occurrences of recontextualization. **Xi Wang** and **Rong Jiang**, working within Social Semiotics, reflect on the *impact of scholastic explanations* of a Chinese poem and the *role of painters' individual characteristics* when transposing and reconstructing the poem *Shan Gui* into three paintings, made in the 11th century, in 1943 and in 1945. **Vanessa Montesi** analyses the impact of location in the perception of Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1505–1515), as well as in the reception of a dance performance based on that painting (2018). The recontextualization has both semiotic and temporal dimensions and leads to different interpretations. The author proposes recontextualization as the operation to expose the source text's ambiguities, foregrounding the malleability of meaning-material. **Africa Vidal Claramonte** connects translation and contemporary arts, or how artworks use translation and words as images, the images communicating through non-verbal semiotic systems. **Guangzhe Huang**, approaching context from a functional perspective, deals with the impact of the perception of comics and of the original story when analysing the design of a comic book's front covers, *Zhuangzi Shuo* and its three translations in English (in the USA and in Singapore) and in German (from the Singaporean version). The covers represent different images of Zhuangzi through processes of recontextualization. **Jorge Díaz-Cintas** and **Francis Mus** are looking at the impact of reduction, translation experience, translator's profile, and target audience on the subtitling of a film for internationalization. They focus on the Québécois film *À tout prendre*

(1963), the draft versions of the French script, and the English version *Take It All* (translated/subtitled by Leonard Cohen). It is argued that the subtitles have not significantly contributed to the film's internationalization journey.

Our purpose was to reconsider text and context within the rapid multimodal change in the field of mediated communication in relation to technological advances. Clearly, we do not have definitive answers about the new ways of characterising communication situations which rely upon a combination of different forms and modes of communicating to be effective, accessible, and acceptable or about their effects on our conceptualisation of translation. This special issue contributes to making scholars aware of the changes and how they will use “text” and “context” in their future publications.

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Résumé. Un flux de documents nous assaille chaque jour. Mais comment tout ce matériau numérique circule-t-il entre les énonciateurs et les consom'acteurs ? Peut-on considérer comme certain que les textes d'aujourd'hui sont identiques, en termes de fabrique de sens, de cohérence, d'interprétation, à ceux d'hier – produits, perçus et utilisés avant les changements technologiques ? Ces changements exigent de réexaminer la matérialité, la contextualisation, les genres, la lecture de ces « nouveaux » textes. Trois décennies d'Internet et du Web ont transformés nos concepts de texte et de contexte, notre expérience de lecture, de rédaction, de traduction de ces textes multimodaux. Dans cette perspective, nous nous attachons d'abord à revoir le concept de texte – pour mieux appréhender ce qui change. Puis nous questionnons le concept de contexte de manière à le problématiser dans ce nouveau cadre où les productions numériques sont ouvertes, fluides, dé-/re-textualisant, dé-/re-sémiotisant, dé-/recontextualisant les textes. Comment les textes multimodaux éclairent-ils à la fois le changement et y participent-ils ? Tous les articles rassemblés dans ce numéro discutent du texte et du contexte et traitent de diverses occurrences de la recontextualisation. On ne prétend pas apporter des réponses définitives ou stables, mais espérons que les chercheurs en traductologie seront sensibilisés aux changements en cours et emploieront dorénavant les notions de texte et de contexte en pesant leurs mots.

Mots-clés: Texte, contexte, multimodalité, dé-/recontextualisation.