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(Section 6.5: "Translation problems", pages 76-79)

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LINKING WOR(L)DS

6.4.4 Analyse the words classes contained in the following sentences.

- a) I'm going to the States at the beginning of January when, hopefully, it won't be too cold.
- b) Cindy, whose brother is quite a famous jazz musician, has promised to take me to Greenwich Village, where there are a lot of jazz clubs.
- c) If I have enough money, I'll travel south to New Orleans. I hope to get there by the first two weeks of February.
- d) Whose is this book?
- e) What is the capital of Australia?
- f) We went to a restaurant for lunch last Sunday and the food was delicious.
- g) We bought another concert ticket in case Simon wanted to come with us.
- h) It snowed during the night.

6.5 Translation problems

Among the determiners that often pose problems in translation there is the definite article. It occurs more frequently in Italian than in English because it is not only used before a noun when we speak about a particular person, animal, place, object, event, or idea, but it is also used when we talk in general about somebody or something. In the latter case English tends to omit the definite article as illustrated by the following translation:

Source Text

Io sono contro la guerra, quindi partecipo alla manifestazione "Fermiamo la guerra all'Iraq".

Target Text

I'm against war, I'm therefore taking part in the demonstration "Let's stop the war to Iraq".

Similarly to Italian, English uses the definite article to talk about something in general with the following names and expressions:

- names of animals, flowers, and plants: *the dolphin is an intelligent animal* or *the orchid is a beautiful flower*;
- names of musical instruments and scientific inventions: *Linda can play the guitar and the saxophone* or *Marconi invented the radio*;
- some common expressions: *the town, the country(side), the sea(side), the mountains, the hills, the rain, the wind, the sun(shine), the snow, the cinema, or the theatre*;
- some adjectives with a general meaning: *the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the blind*;
- some nationality words: *the English, the Irish, the Welsh, the Dutch, the French, the Swiss, the Japanese*, meaning 'the people of that country'.

As for the names of geographical places and places of cultural interest, English, like Italian, uses the definite article with the following names:

- names of oceans and seas: *the Pacific, the Mediterranean*;
- names of rivers: *the Mississippi, the Nile*;
- place names that include a countable noun such as *union, republic, states, kingdom, isle*: *the United States, the United Kingdom*;
- plural place names: *the Netherlands, the West Indies, the Alps*;
- other place names: *the North/South Pole, the Arctic/Antarctic, the Middle/Far East*;
- names of canals: *the Panama Canal, the Suez Canal*;
- names of deserts: *the Sahara, the Kalahari*;
- names of island groups: *the Canaries, the West Indies*;
- names of hotels, cinemas: *the Plaza Hotel, the Cannon Cinema*;
- names of museums, clubs: *the Prado Museum, the Black Cat Club*;
- names of restaurants, pubs: *the Hard Rock Café, the Swan*.

Unlike Italian, English does not normally use the definite article with the names of the following places:

- continents: *Africa, Europe, Australia*;
- countries, states, counties: *England, Spain, Brazil, California, Hampshire*;
- lakes: *Lake Michigan, Lake Geneva*;
- individual mountains: *Mount Everest, Mount Fuji*;
- churches named after saints + the possessive 's: *St Mary's Church, St Paul's Cathedral*.

Finally, whereas English uses possessive determiners to talk about specific objects for example parts of the body or items of clothing, Italian prefers the definite article as shown by the following translation:

Source Text

'Well,' says Dad gruffly, glancing at his watch. 'They're here, anyway.' 'Oh Becky,' says Mum in a trembling voice. 'Good luck, darling.' She looks at me, then she shakes her head. 'Our little Becky, on television. I can't believe it.'

From *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic* by Sophie Kinsella 2000

Target Text

'Beh,' dice papà con voce arrochita dando un'occhiata all'orologio. 'Ad ogni modo sono qui.' 'Oh Becky,' dice mamma con un tremito nella voce. 'In bocca al lupo, cara.' Mi guarda, poi scuote il capo. 'La nostra piccola Becky, in televisione. Non posso crederci.'

The Italian preference for the definite article versus the possessive determiner can be noticed in business correspondence where this tendency contributes to creating an impersonal style that raises the level of formality (or tenor) of this particular register as illustrated by the following translations:

Source Text	Target Text
<i>thank you for your signed order given to our Advisor</i>	<i>La ringraziamo dell'ordine firmato consegnato al ns Consulente</i>
<i>once again many thanks for your order</i>	<i>ringraziandoLa ancora dell'ordine assegnatoci</i>
<i>because of our reduced cash flow we are unable to pay more than £2,000 a month</i>	<i>a causa del ridotto cash-flow non possiamo versare più di £2.000 al mese</i>
<i>as per our invoice</i>	<i>in conformità della suddetta fattura</i>
<i>payment due 60 days after receipt of our consignment</i>	<i>scadenza pagamento a 60 gg dalla ricevuta della merce</i>
<i>we are now expanding our operations in Eastern Europe</i>	<i>siamo attualmente impegnati nell'ampliamento delle operazioni nell'Europa orientale</i>
<i>as you know, our market has been rather depressed</i>	<i>come sapete, da tempo il mercato è alquanto depresso</i>
<i>at your earliest convenience</i>	<i>con la massima sollecitudine</i>
<i>with reference to your advertisement</i>	<i>in riferimento all'annuncio</i>
<i>for your further information</i>	<i>in qualità di informazione aggiuntiva</i>

From *Italian Business Correspondence* by Vincent Edwards and Gianfranca Gessa Shephard 1996 and *Corrispondenza Commerciale Inglese* by Elisa Cadorin 1996

With regard to prepositions, every language uses them differently. The mismatch between English and Italian often consists in using different prepositions to express the same relationship of meaning or in using a preposition in one language and no preposition in the other as illustrated by the examples listed in Table 2.

Table 2 – English and Italian prepositions

Different prepositions	English	Italian
	<i>to go to Italy</i> <i>to go to Luciano's</i> <i>to go on foot</i> <i>to leave in the morning</i> <i>to arrive on Monday</i> <i>to finish in half an hour</i> <i>to be interested in</i> <i>to be engaged/married to</i> <i>to go on holiday</i> <i>on television</i> <i>in the newspaper</i> <i>to depend on</i> <i>a novel by Tim Parks</i> <i>to think of/about him</i>	<i>andare in Italia</i> <i>andare da Luciano</i> <i>andare a piedi</i> <i>partire di mattina</i> <i>arrivare di lunedì</i> <i>finire tra mezz'ora</i> <i>essere interessato a</i> <i>essere fidanzato/sposato con</i> <i>andare in vacanza</i> <i>in televisione</i> <i>sul giornale</i> <i>dipendere da</i> <i>un romanzo di Tim Parks</i> <i>pensare a lui</i>
No preposition in Italian	<i>to look for</i> <i>to look at</i> <i>to listen to</i> <i>to wait for</i>	<i>cercare</i> <i>guardare</i> <i>ascoltare</i> <i>aspettare</i>
No preposition in English	<i>to approach</i> <i>to enter</i>	<i>avvicinarsi a</i> <i>entrare in</i>

As for conjunctions, in English the same word may sometimes be a subordinating conjunction or a preposition. In Italian, however, a different word would normally be used. For example, *before* and *after* can be used as either subordinators or prepositions. In Italian, *before* corresponds to *prima che* as subordinator and *prima di* as preposition. *After* corresponds to *dopo che* as subordinator and *dopo di* as preposition as in the following examples:

Source Text	Target Text
<i>Lui è arrivato prima di/dopo di me.</i>	<i>He arrived before/after me.</i>
<i>Lui è arrivato prima che/dopo che io partissi.</i>	<i>He arrived before/after I left.</i>